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## NOWA HUTA IN PRACTICE: THE PROBLEMS OF EVERYDAY LIFE FOR ITS INHABITANTS

### Abstract

Nowa Huta was to be the perfect socialist city, giving employment in a metallurgical conglomerate and many related institutions. Despite its laudable objectives, it was not a place of stability and security. The construction of Nowa Huta was publicised by an extensive propaganda campaign stating, among other things, that everyone could find their place in life there if they wanted to work honestly. In practice, it was different. In the early years, there was a lack of space and crimes such as property vandalism.

**Key Words:** Nowa Huta, propaganda, everyday problems.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Nowa Huta, propaganda, życie codzienne.

### Introduction

The year 1948 brought an enormous power to the political scene – the Polish United Workers' Party (*Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza* – henceforth PZPR). Its members began to consolidate its power and form its superstructure with redoubled strength. The superstructure was to consist of the expansion of heavy industry. In numerous speeches and propaganda posters, the Party explained that this development was essential for the proper functioning of the state and would stimulate the development of light industry and agriculture. Enormous financial investment was contributed for this aim, while public consumption and spending on agriculture were reduced. However, only a selected group of people realised and understood this new policy.

The decision to build Nowa Huta came from Josef Stalin himself, who gave Bolesław Bierut an order he could not refuse: to establish a huge steelworks in Poland. This had not only political, but also economic underpinnings, relying on

the idea of the so-called Six Year Plan (1950–1955), which called for the rapid industrialisation of the country. At the Fifth Plenum of the Central Committee of the PZPR, Bierut said: “The Six Year Plan is a plan that will create new and unshakable foundations for a new social system in Poland, the foundations of socialism. In this sense, the Six Year Plan is fleshed form of implementation of the ideology of our Party.”<sup>1</sup> The area of the villages of Mogiła and Pleszów<sup>2</sup> was chosen as the location<sup>3</sup> for Poland’s largest metallurgical conglomerate. This satisfied the Kraków authorities, as it raised their prestige in construction of the new state. Due to the close Polish – Soviet co-operation,<sup>4</sup> the Commission for the Construction of Nowa Huta was established. The expropriation of peasants from their farms, which were on very fertile lands, was the issue addressed next. On July 28, 1949, the first excavators and the 60<sup>th</sup> Brigade of the Służba Polsce (Service to Poland) entered the fields outside the village of Mogiła. The event was widely discussed not only by engineers and party officials, but also by inhabitants of Kraków. Testimony to this can be found in many memoirs. Jan Anioła was nominated to be the first director of the Nowa Huta steelworks.

This article refers, thematically and in terms of time, to the period of the 1950s and 1960s. It was a time of breakthrough civilisational leaps that shaped the image of the everyday for the residents of this socialist neighbourhood and created issues for the first settlers that were very different from the problems that subsequent generations had to face. The first and biggest issue they had to address was how to survive in conditions of permanent construction, which was combined with the desire to normalise living conditions. In later years, the residents of Nowa Huta began to shift their interest towards needs that appeared to be of second importance at the time of the creation of the conglomerate and the district such as religion, culture and education.

### Propaganda

The construction of Nowa Huta was publicised by an extensive propaganda campaign,<sup>5</sup> which included statements such as “everyone can find their place in life here, if they want to work honestly.”<sup>6</sup> It was supposed to be an indicator of the country’s industrialisation: a modern industrial facility, “a city of planned devel-

<sup>1</sup> M. Brzóstowicz-Klajn, W. Tomasik, “Planu sześćoletniego temat”, [in:] *Słownik realizmu socjalistycznego*, ed. Z. Łapiński, W. Tomasik, Kraków: Universitas, 2004, p. 196.

<sup>2</sup> The decision to build the conglomerate was taken on 17 May 1947.

<sup>3</sup> J. Sałwiński, “Decyzje o lokalizacji Nowej Huty pod Krakowem. Stan wiedzy”, [in:] *Narodziny Nowej Huty. Materiały sesji naukowej odbytej 25 kwietnia 1998 roku*, ed. J.J. Małecki, Kraków: TMHiZK, 1999, p. 78.

<sup>4</sup> A. Fitowa, A. Kozanecki, “Z dziejów Krakowa”, [in:] *Kraków. Rozwój miasta w Polsce Ludowej*, ed. J. Jasiński, Warszawa: PWN 1971, p. 89.

<sup>5</sup> A. Lepa, *Świat propagandy*, *Tygodnik Katolicki “Niedziela”*, 1994, p. 16.

<sup>6</sup> A. Lach, *Kraków wita was*, Kraków: Krajowa Agencja Wydawnicza, 1988, p. 61.

opment, a city where – in similarly located, shaped and fitted residential blocks – similar housing conditions are created for a heterogeneous population.”<sup>7</sup> This project became the pride and measure of success of the young state. “People rejoiced that the investment will contribute to improving the lot of the poor from rural areas and small towns.”<sup>8</sup> The construction was “celebrated in numerous literary works written in the style of socialist realism by the most eminent authors.”<sup>9</sup> Poland as a whole participated in the work of its creation, hence this pervasive ideology. The posters said: “The whole nation is building Nowa Huta,” and “Build Nowa Huta with us.” Songs about Nowa Huta were very popular. One example was *O Nowej to Hucie Piosenka* [A Song About Nowa Huta],<sup>10</sup> with lyrics by Stanisław Chruślicki and music by Jerzy Gert.

The press also wrote volumes about the spectacular and rapid construction of the conglomerate and the surrounding developments. “Labour leaders were decorated, the construction of buildings was celebrated, interviews with distinctive workers who expressed a patriotic desire for Polish revival through the toil of their hands were printed in the papers.”<sup>11</sup> Reports from the construction site and information about the conditions under which the crew lived, worked and relaxed appeared very often. Nowa Huta was a matter of concern and pride of the government at the time, the flagship investment complementing the construction of the new post-war Poland. Hence, the authorities spared no resources and efforts for it. The best architects were hired, cutting-edge urban solutions were applied and the entire society was included in the idea by creating social enthusiasm, the foundation of which was the belief that this is the beginning of a new, better life.

The reality, however, significantly differed not only from the assumptions, but also from the images that were directed toward the public. In all fairness, it must be said that the supply was better in Nowa Huta than in the Kraków city centre, but the residents struggled with mud, dust, the lack of basic sanitation solutions, flats, ineffectual communication and lumbering bureaucracy. Like others, they were subjected to indoctrination, which seldom fell on deaf ears, as many residents owed their rise in social status to working in the conglomerate. However, some of them were characterised by a constant attachment to their old habits and lifestyles: they did not repudiate their faith, and their children regularly attended religious classes in the Cistercian monastery. When the period of permanent building ended, they began to demand the establishment of a church.

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<sup>7</sup> F. Adamski, “Nowa Huta na tle procesów urbanizacyjnych Polski powojennej”, [in:] *Rocznik Nauk Społecznych*, Vol. III, Lublin 1975, p. 229.

<sup>8</sup> A. Chwałba, *Dzieje Krakowa. Kraków w latach 1945–1989*, Vol. 6, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2004, p. 208.

<sup>9</sup> J. Małeckie, *Historia Krakowa dla każdego*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2008, p. 231.

<sup>10</sup> [http://www.bibliotekapiosenki.pl/Piosenka\\_o\\_Nowej\\_Hucie](http://www.bibliotekapiosenki.pl/Piosenka_o_Nowej_Hucie) [access 11.06.2013].

<sup>11</sup> T. Kwiatkowski, *Panopticum*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1995, p. 276.

Contrary to the haunting propaganda, residents of the new town, who came from various parts of Poland, clung to the church. They filled the Cistercian monastery church in Mogiła, the church in Pleszów and a small chapel in Bieńczyce. Some – like young Bolek Jackiewicz – entered the monastery in Mogiła almost straight after the construction, others who belonged to the Communist Party secretly married and baptised their children. It was no coincidence then that the largest group that entered the monastery of Mogiła was admitted in the years 1945–1956.<sup>12</sup>

When creating Nowa Huta, the authorities deliberately neglected to include the creation of a parish and the building of a church. It was to be a truly socialist neighbourhood void of religion. In the 1960s, however, riots broke out, as a result of which the government allowed the erection of a cross and promised the construction of a church at an unspecified point in the near future.

### The housing estate

The haste related to the need to provide housing for employees and to the implementation of the plan within the deadline meant that the construction of developments begun without any architectural plans. Tadeusz Ptaszycki was appointed the general designer of Nowa Huta. He wanted to merge a perfect city with a garden city – that is, he wanted to build a development away from the Kraków city centre with plenty of green areas. First, small two-storey blocks of flats with hip roofs and no ground-floor retail and service spaces were built. Two-bedroom apartments with a kitchen, hallway and bathroom, often with a balcony, dominated. After the beginning of the construction of the Wanda and Na Skarpie neighbourhoods, the construction of the “external” ones – Teatralne, Krakowiaków, Górali, Sportowe and Zielone – began. The programme assumptions for the city were developed quite late, in 1950, which resulted in construction chaos. Plac Centralny [Central Square] was to become the centre of cultural life, and a Community Centre with a library, a theatre, a common room, a bookshop and a restaurant were constructed there. The northern part was to contain a promenade and the southern area was left open for further development. A radial transport system was created, with a clear internal division based on the symmetric Plac Centralny. The main sectors with district centres were to provide housing for about 15,000 people. They were divided into estates ranging in size from 2–5,000 people and their centres had schools and kindergartens. In this way, “a populous metropolis was created in 1950s, with little resemblance to the sleepy, pre-war Kraków.”<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> J. Franczyk, *Na fundamencie Krzyża*, Kraków: Dom Wydawniczy “Rafael”, 2004, p. 10.

<sup>13</sup> M. Rożek, *Kraków. Przewodnik historyczny*, Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie, 1997, pp. 180–181.

However, the number of completed dwellings did not keep up with the rapidly increasing number of workers. Many of them lived in barracks and workers' hotels. At times in the summer, the members of the *Śłużba Polsce* brigades slept in tents. "In 1953, Nowa Huta had grown to more than 30,000 permanent residents. This number grew steadily, reaching in 1955 more than 70,000, in 1960 – 105,000, in 1965 – 120,000, and in 1970 it exceeded 165,000."<sup>14</sup> This also had good sides. It created a mixture of generations, of people from the countryside and the city who pumped fresh blood into Kraków and revived the city. The propaganda emphasised that the new blocks of flats were a break from the realities of the Interwar Poland and were a step into modernity. In fact, flats equipped with hot water, plumbing and central heating were a new innovation. From this perspective, we must admit that the official assumptions were correct and there was a great deal of improvement in living conditions. The architecture of these buildings and their quality was initially relatively good. However, with the passage of time and increasing demand, construction technology changed. Laying bricks proved to be too time-consuming, so large panels were introduced. However, the prefabs were of low quality, and some elements were damaged or undersized, making them difficult to assemble. The connection points between the panels were difficult to seal and the builders did not always do the work diligently. This resulted in a large number of defects and reduced the comfort of living. Residents issued complaints regarding this:

In August 1961, I received an apartment (room). Immediately after moving in, on the second day, I spotted a wet spot on the wall next to the pipes leading to the toilet, half of which is in this room. I reported this to the housing office immediately; an installer came and said that the pipe was sweating. As the leak was getting worse, I went to the housing office again, a technician came and said that the pipe was sweating. As my shoes, bedding, bread, etc. began to get mouldy, I went to the manager and he came over and said it was our fault that the pipe was sweating and ordered a renovation in November... I had a month-old child and where was I to go? He said that [it would take] two days, so nothing would happen to the child when they banged on the walls a bit, so I do not have to move out... I had to ventilate the apartment. I ventilated it for 7 months, and in the meantime the damp patch on the wall is 80 centimetres and the mould grows on it like a cancer... It is a horror and a matter very harmful to the poor people who scrimp last penny and pay... for what someone carelessly does and executes. (Wójcik, Józef; Centrum A B1 6/17a).<sup>15</sup>

The residents also complained about the lack of or broken lifts, leaky windows, mismatched doors and broken parquet.<sup>16</sup> To reduce costs, high blocks of flats were built with lower standards: very small and non-functional apartments with blind kitchens appeared at the time. This resulted in infrastructure problems, as is was not sufficient for the large numbers of people.

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<sup>14</sup> F. Adamski, *op. cit.*, p. 231.

<sup>15</sup> Archiwum Narodowe Kraków (ANKr), Prezydium Dzielnicowej Rady Narodowej Nowa Huta w Krakowie, Wydział Gospodarki Komunalnej i Mieszkaniowej, Odpowiedzi na skargi, 1961–1962, number 29/703/772.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*, 1963, number 29/703/773.

## Infrastructure

The main part of life in Nowa Huta was working in the conglomerate and the institutions associated with it. Therefore, it was decided that the workers should be provided with access to essential services – health care, education and entertainment. Social and service buildings as well as technical and installation bases were built. Schools, kindergartens and nurseries were erected. Natural growth significantly exceeded the projections, and so they were overcrowded and the teachers were forced to work on two or three shifts. Other establishments were often built only due to pressure from the press and the public.<sup>17</sup> There was a lack of qualified staff, so it often happened that the children were ill-treated, as is evidenced by the complaints to the Department of Health: “Weronika Kowalska hit a child in the third group; as I, the manager, knew and I notified the Department of Health and no disciplinary measures were taken by Kowalik M. against the aforementioned Mrs. Kowalska, and the issue was neglected. (by Janina Góral, an instructor in nursery No. 9 Nowa Huta 19.4.1958).”<sup>18</sup>

Sales and service centres, health clinics, post offices, green squares, cinemas, theatres, libraries and community centres, restaurants, cafés and sports facilities were also built at the time. The *Świt* and *Światowid* cinemas, located in buildings typical for the architecture of socialist realism, were opened in the mid-1950s. “Among the cultural activities provided for the builders of Nowa Huta in the area of this large construction, a prominent role is played by film. [...] For several days now, the first permanent cinema has been opened and is functioning.”<sup>19</sup> The landscape architecture consisted of playgrounds with swings and sandboxes and carpet-beating stands.<sup>20</sup> However, before the grass was sown, shrubs and trees were planted and walkways were marked out, the residents drowned in mud. The residents of many developments took part in maintenance work as part of community action works. This was also a sign of the new times, as evidenced by the “List of interesting objects in the Nowa Huta District created as part of community action works”. The one printed on 14 November 1963 includes the covering the Czyżyny area with greenery and the construction of playgrounds, parks, pavements and roads, and the fountain in the Urocze neighbourhood.<sup>21</sup> In this

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<sup>17</sup> ANKr, Prezydium Dzielnicowej Rady Narodowej Nowa Huta w Krakowie, Dzielnicowa Rada Narodowa Komisja Oświaty i Kultury, Wnioski Komisji sprawozdania z realizacji, 1961–1965, number 29/703/252.

<sup>18</sup> ANKr, Prezydium Dzielnicowej Rady Narodowej Nowa Huta w Krakowie, Wydział Zdrowia i Opieki Zdrowotnej, Skargi i zażalenia, 1966–1968, number 29/703/1446, p. 26.

<sup>19</sup> *Dziennik Polski*, 19 II 1951, number 50, p. 3.

<sup>20</sup> ANKr, Prezydium Dzielnicowej Rady Narodowej Nowa Huta w Krakowie, Dzielnicowa Rada Narodowa Komisja Oświaty i Kultury, Wnioski Komisji sprawozdania z realizacji, 1958–1960, number 29/703/251.

<sup>21</sup> ANKr, Prezydium Dzielnicowej Rady Narodowej Nowa Huta w Krakowie, Prezydium Zespół Koordynacji czynów społecznych, Wykaz obiektów Dzielniczy wykonanych w czynie, 1963, number 29/703/487.

way, a green city was built. The greenery can especially be seen today, as the trees planted in the 1950s have grown and now form the “lungs” of the district. The “old” Nowa Huta is full of green spaces, places for rest and recreation, while the newer part is much poorer and greyer. Propaganda activities speak of a number of investment activities in Nowa Huta also touched on another important issue: communication with Kraków. The first tramline was established only in 1952, and that should have been one of the first investments to facilitate the inhabitants’ lives. Until then, buses operated irregularly and in small numbers.

### Residents

Nowa Huta became a home for many people who were seeking a better life. Usually, they did not know how their daily life would look in this great construction site. Nevertheless, they came, tempted by the promise of housing because getting one’s own apartment was one of the most troublesome problems of the time. The people who settled in Nowa Huta were mostly residents of nearby villages and the regions of Kraków, Rzeszów, Kielce and Lublin, representing approximately 70% of the population and creating a unified community. Unskilled workers lived in hotels, and the first residential blocks of flats of the Zakładowe Osiedla Robotnicze [Workers’ Settlements, ZOR] were granted to qualified workers who came mainly from Silesia.<sup>22</sup> In 1951, the district had a population of 5,000 people and at the end of the 1950s, this number increased to 100,000.<sup>23</sup> Among the people who settled in Nowa Huta were Romani who were prohibited from travelling in wagon trains around the country,<sup>24</sup> Ukrainians deported from the Bieszczady Mountains as part of Operation Wisła, repatriates returning from Western Europe, as well as Greeks and Macedonians fleeing from the civil war.<sup>25</sup>

Migration to Nowa Huta often included whole families because, after settling down, other family members were brought here so that many people could live close to their brothers and sisters. Stanisław Janka says: “I came to work normally from a village, because there were no work opportunities there anymore. My brother came in 1949, so I arrived soon after. I went to the employment office and got a referral to the Conglomerate.”<sup>26</sup> Often, all the neighbours moved into their

<sup>22</sup> A. Matejko, “Struktura ludności Nowej Huty”, *Przegląd Statystyczny*, 1956, z. 2, p. 162.

<sup>23</sup> J.A. Karnasiewicz, *Nowa Huta. Okruchy życia i meandry historii*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Towarzystwo Słowaków w Polsce, 2003, p. 13.

<sup>24</sup> “Chłopak z gitarą. Rozmowa Anny Miodyńskiej z Augustynem Mirgą”, [in:] *Nowa Huta. Księga uwolnionych tekstów*, ed. Ł. Piekarska-Dukaj, Kraków: Małopolski Ośrodek Kultury, 2005, pp. 144–147.

<sup>25</sup> “Z ziemi greckiej do huckiej. Rozmowa Jacka Dargiewicza z Niki Wiecheć”, [in:] *Nowa Huta. Księga uwolnionych tekstów*, ed. Ł. Piekarska-Dukaj, Kraków: Małopolski Ośrodek Kultury, 2005, pp. 66–76.

<sup>26</sup> *Rozmowa z panem Stanisławem Janka – wieloletnim przodownikiem pracy w budowie Nowej Huty*, Internet source: <http://www.nowahuta.yoyo.pl/jan.html> [access 10.06.2013].

homes during the same week and no major changes followed. Routine activities and institutions created around the conglomerate bound them tightly together, taking away the uncertainty of the war and occupation. They were involved in the stabilisation of life, increasing or starting a family, arranging their flats. They often worked, went on holiday and stood in lines for shopping together. Emerging bonds between the neighbours produced a source of support and facilitated stability in life. However, the “massive influx of people with different habits, cultural and civilizational standards, resulted in a lot of difficulties for the organisers of urban life in Nowa Huta.”<sup>27</sup> Many Nowa Huta residents brought their former habits to the urban area, hence the legendary stories of cases of breeding poultry or pigs in bathrooms or strolling through the neighbourhood in a bathrobe and curlers:

The people who came here were faced with the difficult problem of adapting to completely new conditions of life. This process includes not only working and living conditions, but also the patterns and standards of conduct. Relationships took on new forms and a new model of family was shaped, the relationship between generations were founded on new bases and new stereotypes were applied in everyday life.<sup>28</sup>

Some people came alone without the mediation of recruiting teams. One of the important factors for the influx of people was the opportunity to gain fair pay. Marianna Brzezińska said: “When I came to the steel mill and filled my stomach, I was happy. For the first month I got 670 złoty and I did not know what to do with the money. No one had ever dreamed of such money in my poor village.”<sup>29</sup> Recruiting crews were mainly engaged in the search for specialists needed to run the conglomerate. Many of them, after performing their tasks, returned to their hometowns.

### Problems

Nowa Huta, despite its laudable objectives, was not a place of stability and security. Many people were disappointed with living here. Firstly, they were deterred by difficult work conditions. The plant was under construction and the work was badly organised. Work sometimes had to be stopped due to the lack of materials, so the workers had to stay after hours to fulfil the established plan. There was also no equipment, so much of the heavy work had to be done manually. Workers also complained about the poor social conditions, the lack of basic sanitation and dirt. “There are departments in which they appreciate a clean and tidy environment.

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<sup>27</sup> T. Kwiatkowski, *op. cit.*, p. 276.

<sup>28</sup> F. Adamski, *Rodzina nowego miasta. Kierunki przemian w strukturze społeczno-moralnej rodziny nowohuckiej*, Warszawa: Ośrodek Dokumentacji i Studiów Społecznych, 1970, p. 21.

<sup>29</sup> J. Sadecki, “O Nowej Hucie to piosenka”, [in:] *Najnowsza historia Polaków. Oblicza PRL, Rzeczpospolita*, 20.11.2007, p. 5.

[...] However, the Commission states that in the current year, cleaning and cleanliness generally deteriorated.”<sup>30</sup>

Steel production contained many health risks and even risks to one’s life, hence the number of accidents. There was dust and toxic fumes in the air in the production halls. It was also very loud. The workers did not know the consequences of eyestrain, working with high voltage devices, inhaling dust and paint fumes, and having contact with insulation materials. Many people were not used to such hard work and suffered from different ailments (they had corns, their limbs were swollen and their backs ached). Many of the workplace accidents were hidden. The result and the plan took priority. The most important thing for the managers was the performance of workloads, or rather exceeding them. Medical clinics, ambulances, laboratories and rehabilitation rooms were built nearby the conglomerate. In collaboration with the Medical University, the Department of Occupational Medicine and Occupational Diseases was established. In February 1952, the construction of the Żeromski Specialist Hospital was started. Similarly to health care across the country, the health authorities in Nowa Huta were the most corrupt professional group besides the officials. Low-paid doctors and nurses obtained many benefits, not only material, from patients, but it was difficult to prove this. Many cases such as this one were discontinued as they were designated as anonymous and thus unfounded since the person in question did not live at the provided address: “A complaint to the Minister of Health. It has been brought to my attention by a number of patients that Dr Indyk from the clinic in Nowa Huta in the Kolorowe neighbourhood treats women in an outrageous manner and even men face a very bad and rough attitude. The doctor undermines the authority of the Polish People’s Republic [...] and takes 200–300 zł for a visit for himself. (Łazęga, Janina).”<sup>31</sup>

Alcoholism was a major issue at the time. Libations from the proverbial mustard jar in the workplace and workers’ hotels happened on a daily basis. Several complaints were received by the management of the conglomerate pertaining to this issue, among others, from the management of the workers’ hotel:

On 1.II.1963 from 3 PM to 7:30 PM, the employees held a party combined with drinking, dancing and singing, which disturbed the peace in the hotel. All interventions by the hotel service, as well as by the residents of the hotel in order to stop the party and calm the people down had no effect, and only the threat of calling M.O. [Citizen’s Militia] put an end to the shouts and the fun. We demand the punishing of the guilty.<sup>32</sup>

Drinking alcohol was sometimes a reaction to the harsh conditions of work and residence, an aid against longing distant family and support in making new acquaintances. And there were many opportunities for drinking – completion cer-

<sup>30</sup> *Głos Nowej Huty*, 16 IX – 23 IX, 1961, number 38 (249), p. 4.

<sup>31</sup> ANKr, Prezydium Dzielnicowej Rady Narodowej Nowa Huta w Krakowie, Wydział Zdrowia i Opieki Zdrowotnej, Skargi i zażalenia, 1958, 1960–1961, number 29/703/1445.

<sup>32</sup> ANKr, Prezydium Dzielnicowej Rady Narodowej Nowa Huta w Krakowie, Wydział Gospodarki Komunalnej i Mieszkaniowej, Odpowiedzi na skargi, 1963, number 29/703/773.

emonies for newly constructed buildings, exceeding the planned workload, name days and holidays. Sausage and bread were the usual accompanying snacks, and mustard jars with alcohol were passed from hand to hand along with numerous toasts. The phrase “Masonry Monday”, meaning a day off from work to recover from a Sunday hangover, entered the colloquial language. One of the taunts to the popular low-grade vodkas was the saying “swim like Vistula to Baltic.”<sup>33</sup> Also popular were acid wines called *J-23* or *Kloss*.<sup>34</sup> Beer straight from the barrel, called the “champagne of the working class”, could be purchased at a number of round kiosks. Mugs, and even elbows, were put on the outside windowsill as the clients had to drink while standing around. The most popular kiosk in Nowa Huta was probably the one at Plac Centralny.

Alcoholism affected all sections of society and influenced the growth on the number of pathologies or marital conflicts, and so a special unit was created to combat it. Its plan included: the publication of the names of employees who committed crimes under the influence of alcohol, lectures and educational films (also in schools), increased working times for anti-alcoholic clinics, rehabilitation (AA clubs, control of treatment, family psychotherapy, peer self-control), visual propaganda (exhibitions, newsletters, posters), and inspections in the workplace.<sup>35</sup> At the same time, the state, as the major manufacturer and distributor of alcohol, cared for the growth of its revenue. In 1978, at the peak of alcohol consumption in the People’s Republic of Poland (henceforth PRL), there was one sales point per 631 people – and thus, the PRL was the best alcohol-stocked country in Europe.<sup>36</sup> These proceedings brought huge profits, despite the fact that the quality of the product was not high. Spirits of poor quality were used, and the bottles that were bought – kerosene, gasoline and solvent bottles – were usually cleaned manually and therefore did not meet sanitary standards.

Corruption was also a big problem. It mainly concerned food (queues, cards, supply shortages), but also industrial products. Its causes should be sought in the characteristics of a centrally planned economy. People complained about the hidden raising of prices by the state, as cheaper items were often withdrawn from sale and replaced with new ones that were not always better. Despite their laudable objectives, the Nowa Huta shops were badly and irregularly stocked and the salespeople were rude.<sup>37</sup> One could often buy more expensive meats (beef,

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<sup>33</sup> After research finding toxicity of Vistula its production was stopped, following: B. Koziczyński, *333 popkultowe rzeczy PRL*, Poznań, Vesper 2007, p. 398.

<sup>34</sup> W. Kot, *PRL czas nonsensu Polskie dekady 1950–1990. Kronika naszych czasów*, Poznań: Wydawnictwo Publicat, 2007, p. 188.

<sup>35</sup> ANKr, Prezydium Dzielnicowej Rady Narodowej Nowa Huta w Krakowie, Program walki z alkoholizmem i pijaństwem w dzielnicy, 1972, number 29/703/411.

<sup>36</sup> K. Kosiński, “Polityka alkoholowa w czasach PRL”, [in:] *Życie codzienne w Polsce 1945–1955*, red. K. Kersten, Warszawa: Instytut Historii PAN, 2001, p. 38.

<sup>37</sup> “Z ksiąg skarg i zażaleń”, [in:] *Absurdy PRL-u. Antologia*, ed. M. Rychlewski, Poznań: Vesper, 2006, pp. 115–116.

ham, dry sausage), but an average worker could not afford them. There was a short supply of cheaper products such as ham sausage, fat, black pudding and meat offal. The standard was that change was issued in candy, matches or soup cubes, which was usually seen as an additional benefit by the buyers and not as an abuse by the sellers.<sup>38</sup> Children did not have a large selection of sweets – they had to settle for chocolate-like products in replacement packs, lollipops, boiled sweets and ice cream. Exotic fruits were rare; they usually appeared only around Christmas and Easter.

The problem of corruption was also present in the housing economy because apartments were a scarce commodity. The dependence on the decision made by an official led to abuse. Corruption mechanisms also appeared in the administration, and they were accompanied by a huge increase in the number of officials, on who's decision depended whether one got an apartment or a car. Most often they were not liable for wrong decisions<sup>39</sup> and were poorly paid, so they easily agreed for a variety of benefits: soap, alcohol, meat, money, or materials stolen on the construction site or in the conglomerate<sup>40</sup>. In this way, the system of dependences and pathological gratitude perpetuated. This aroused the opposition of many, as, in theory, Nowa Huta was to be erected by workers, for workers.

### Leisure

In the 1950s Nowa Huta was mostly inhabited by young people who, due to their age, needed a variety of entertainments. Dances were organised in clubs and venues (such as Gihant, Stylowa), and in the summer they were held outside in Plac Pocztowy (Postal Square) or in the Mogilski Wood, called “the Monkey grove” because the area was not prepared and arranged. The first jukeboxes, cabinet gramophones with storage containing several low-speed discs, appeared at the end of the 1950s. The tango, foxtrots, Viennese and English Waltzes, and polkas were the most popular dances. However, young people also had parties with rock and roll songs. A football-speedway stadium and sports hall with a number of fields were built for recreational purposes. The conglomerate had its own holiday centres (including Rożnowskie Lake in Bartkowa, In Koniki near Limanowa, and in Niepołomice).<sup>41</sup> They were financed from conglomerate funds, so the staff

<sup>38</sup> W. Kot, *op. cit.*, p. 138.

<sup>39</sup> W. Markiewicz, *Konflikt społeczny w PRL*, Poznań: Krajowa Agencja Wydawnicza RSW “Prasa-Książka-Ruch”, 1983, p. 81.

<sup>40</sup> K. Madej, “Siermiężna i dolarowa korupcja w PRL w latach 1956–1980”, [in:] *PRL – trwanie i zmiana*. ed. D. Stola i M. Zaręba, Warszawa: Wyższa Szkoła Przedsiębiorczości i Zarządzania im. Leona Koźmińskiego, 2003, p. 267.

<sup>41</sup> There were plans to build a camping site there with a swimming pool, sports and play-ful places and parking following: ANKr, Prezydium Dzielnicowej Rady Narodowej Nowa Huta w Krakowie, Dzielnicowa Rada Narodowa Komisja Sportu i Turystyki, Wnioski Komisji sprawozdania z realizacji, 1961–1963, number 29/703/269.

could go spend their holidays there at a rather cheap price. Usually, there were more interested than accommodation places. Outside of the holidays, the authorities organised trips to Kraków's cultural institutions, as well as weekend trips such as mushrooming. "Many attractive sightseeing tours were organised this year by the Lenin Steel Mill Works Council. [...] There is a 50 per cent discount for steel mill workers and members of Trade Unions."<sup>42</sup>

Children were also cared for – they could go on summer camps and day camps.<sup>43</sup> In their spare time, they played on the playgrounds built in their neighbourhoods, which were often tiled with concrete tiles and where the lawns were guarded by "Do not tread on the grass" signs. Their decor was limited to a few swings, ladders, a sandbox and a carpet beater. They were not children-friendly, but were a place for football games, air hockey,<sup>44</sup> playing with metal balls and throwing knives. They did not require special funding and could be played by everyone interested. For boys, they were pitches and battlegrounds where they fought with sling-shots. The girls played hopscotch, and, since the 1960s, they also played "guma" (a children's game in which one jumps over a stretched elastic band). They drew on the pavements with chalk they took from school, arranged rag dolls to sleep, and held lavish parties where flowers, rocks and grass made pretend food to be served on tableware made of leaves. The post-war period was marked by unprecedented growth of modern means of social communication. For the first time after the Second World War, the Polish Radio restarted broadcasting and kiosks filled with numerous press titles. Later on, television was popularised and it became the undisputed leader in shaping the public opinion. The Ministry of Propaganda have used this to publicising spectacular successes while covering up failures and muting unwanted reports on life in Nowa Huta.

### Conclusions

Nowa Huta was to be the perfect socialist city, giving employment in a metallurgical conglomerate and many related institutions. The residents were to rest in comfortable homes after work and to enjoy numerous cultural and sporting institutions in their free time. Despite the laudable objectives, it was not a place of stability and security. In the early years, there was a lack of space; crimes such as vandalism of property, theft, assault, corruption, prostitution and drunkenness were also major issue. People stood in lines for food and industrial products, struggled with living in cramped and noisy flats, and negligence in healthcare. In its relatively short history, Nowa Huta was presented as a socialist city, a city

<sup>42</sup> *Głos Nowej Huty*, 15 IV–22 IV 1960, number 16 (175), p. 1.

<sup>43</sup> ANKr, Prezydium Dzielnicowej Rady Narodowej Nowa Huta w Krakowie, Dzielnicowa Rada Narodowa Komisja Sportu i Turystyki, Wnioski Komisji sprawozdania z realizacji, 1961–1963, number 29/703/270.

<sup>44</sup> A. Kozioł, *Smakownie*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Radamsa, 2001, p. 29.

of struggle and work,<sup>45</sup> a town of peasants and immigrants, a bastion of the One Party, a city without God<sup>46</sup> and later as a bastion of Solidarity. Each of these different “versions” of Nowa Huta can be found in the propaganda and press of the time, academic works, reportage, and memoirs of the people working there. “It was an element of imaginary reality, an idea freed from the problems arising from everyday experience and was to bring the solution to all social problems. On the one hand, it was the only one, on this scale, socialist realist urban design in Poland, on the other – an unusual sociological experiment, an attempt to create a truly socialist city of the future.”<sup>47</sup> The new authorities, however, failed to build a socialist society with their model city.

On 1 January 1951, Nowa Huta was included in the boundaries of Kraków, “by which the economic and social unity of the newly formed industrial and urban development with the old centre of the city was emphasised.”<sup>48</sup> It should be remembered that Nowa Huta played an important role in the history of Kraków and the entire country. The conglomerate and its related institutions that provided employment to many people became an important town-forming factor. This common goal, but also overcoming many hardships, resulted in the formation of a fairly coherent local community. It was here, as in no other single place, that all threads of post-war Polish history focussed. Nowa Huta was the place of the struggle against the remnants of the Interwar Period – forced expulsions, the great migration, industrialisation, offensive propaganda, the formation of a new society and the fight against the Church.

*Agnieszka Chłosta-Sikorska*

## NOWA HUTA W PRAKTYCE. PROBLEMY ŻYCIA CODZIENNEGO MIESZKAŃCÓW

### Streszczenie

Artykuł podejmuje problematykę cieni i blasków życia codziennego mieszkańców Nowej Huty w latach 50. i 60. XX wieku. Był to okres swoistego skoku cywilizacyjnego, który zmienił postrzeganie codzienności przez mieszkańców owego nowego socjalistycznego miasta przemysłowego. Jak magnes działały – stałe zatrudnienie, terminowa i co więcej zależna od wielkości wykonana-

<sup>45</sup> More on this topic: R. Terlecki, M. Lasota, J. Szarek, *Nowa Huta – miasto walki i pracy*, Kraków: IPN, 2002.

<sup>46</sup> A. Dudek, Z. Zblewski, *Utopia nad Wisłą. Historia Peerełu*, Warszawa–Bielsko-Biała: Wydawnictwo Szkolne PWN, 2008, p. 191.

<sup>47</sup> A. Matykiewicz, “Nowa Huta – socrealistyczna utopia”, [in:] *Socrealizm. Fabuły – komunikaty – ikony*, ed. K. Stępnik, M. Piechota, Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, 2006, p. 405.

<sup>48</sup> A. Kozanecki, “Z dziejów Krakowa”, [in:] *Kraków. Rozwój miasta w Polsce Ludowej*, ed. J. Jasiński, Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1971, p. 91.

nej pracy (współzawodnictwo pracy) wypłata wynagrodzenia, wizja mieszkań pracowniczych (w pierwszej kolejności przyznawanych przodownikom pracy), możliwość awansu (robotników często mianowano kierownikami, pomimo że nie posiadali pełnego wykształcenia). Jednocześnie powstały problemy nieznane pierwszym przybyszom do nowego miasta, pochodzącym z różnych środowisk, zresztą borykali się z nimi przedstawiciele pokolenia żyjącego w Nowej Hucie w czasach późniejszych (biurokracja, korupcja). Największym wyzwaniem, jak się wydaje, było przetrwanie w warunkach ciągłej budowy, równocześnie próbując prowadzić normalne codzienne życie. W późniejszych czasach mieszkańcy Nowej Huty zaczęli zwracać uwagę na potrzeby, które wydawały się nieistotne w chwili powstawania miasta, takie jak religia, kultura czy wykształcenie.