

Press market in Poland A.D. 2010

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ABSTRACT:

With the collapse of communism in 1989, the Polish press market has changed. In 2010, the foreign press companies are the biggest press publishers in Poland. The article describes changes in Polish press after 1989 and shows the main players on the Polish press market, which are still fighting for their positions and are trying to attract new readers.

KEYWORDS: Poland, press, history of the press in Poland, communism, free market, press companies in Poland, journals, newspapers.

Poland is one of the biggest European countries. It is situated in central Europe and has about 38 million people.¹ In 2009 it was publishing 50 titles of newspapers (nationwide and local) with the total circulation of 1168.3 million copies (total single average circulation was 4563 thousand copies) and 7160 titles of magazines with the total circulation of 1504.7 million copies (total single average circulation was 84095 thousand copies).² It means that the Polish press market still has a big potential and is an important part of the democratic system.

The Past and the Present

The present shape of the press market in Poland is a result of multiple processes, started in 1989: the democratic changes in Polish political system and the fall of communism. Before 1989, the functioning of the press in Poland was based on an authoritarian doctrine (or further on its variant: communist doctrine of the media). According to this doctrine, the media belonged to the state, which was governed by the communist party. The party influenced the state, as well as everyday life of the citizens. As the mass media were propaganda tools, they were strictly controlled. They were to build national unity and mobilize society to receive aims presented by the communist party. Journalists were not allowed to criticize the party and the government; they could only show the government as a successful one. The important tools of controlling the media were: preventive censorship,

¹ CENTRAL STATISTICAL OFFICE: *Demographic Yearbook of Poland 2009*.
Warsaw: Central Statistical Office, 2010, p. 72.

² CENTRAL STATISTICAL OFFICE: *Concise Statistical Yearbook of Poland 2010*.
Warsaw: Central Statistical Office, 2010, p. 270.

licensing of the media and repressions.³

From 1945 to 1989 Poland was governed by the communist party called “the Polish United Workers’ Party” (PZPR). The editing of the press was licensed. Most newspapers and magazines belonged to the organization called Workers’ Cooperative Publishing “Press-Book-Move” (RSW Prasa-Książka-Ruch). About 95% of shares in RSW belonged to PZPR, i.e. nearly all the profits were picked by this party. There were about 250 titles of magazines and all (except 4) nationwide and regional newspapers edited in RSW. It was also the owner of 19 printing houses and 18 distribution companies.⁴ It means that RSW had practically a monopoly in editing the press in Poland.

Before being edited, press publications were controlled by censorship - Central Press and Entertainment Board of Inspection which had its seat on Mysia Street in Warsaw (the capital of Poland).

In 1989, after the negotiations between PZPR and political opposition, called “The Round Table”, PZPR agreed to semi-free parliamentary elections. As a result, the opposition won and succeeded in changing Polish law, especially the Constitution. In January 1990, PZPR was dissolved. With the change of the socio-political system, the media law also altered. In 1990, two regulations were enacted. They concerned the liquidation of RSW and of censorship. Press law, stated in 1984, also changed. In 1992, the Law of Broadcasting was stated. Subsequently, other laws adjusting Polish law to European Union law were enacted. In 1997 the new Polish Constitution was introduced. According to it, the freedom of the press and other media in Poland is guaranteed. Censorship and licensing of the press are prohibited, yet licensing of broadcasting is accepted.⁵ Press titles must be registered only in the court. It’s not strictly defined, whether the online papers must be registered, or not. Now, the government is working on new regulations in this field.⁶

In other words, we can say that “the main post-communist media developments include: privatization of the press sector, transformation of the state radio and television into public broadcasting organizations, licensing of the private broadcasters, influx of foreign capital on the Polish media market, and European integration of audiovisual media policies”⁷.

As a result of the liquidation of RSW, Polish press titles had new owners.

³ MROZOWSKI, M.: *Media masowe. Władza, rozrywka i biznes*. Warsaw, 2001, p. 195.

⁴ GRAJEWSKI, A.: *Bitwa o prasę. Krótka zarys likwidacji koncernu prasowego RSW*. In: *Więź* 35 no. 11(1992), Warsaw, p. 43.

⁵ MIELCZAREK, T.: *Monopol pluralizm koncentracja. Środki komunikowania masowego w Polsce w latach 1989-2006*. Warsaw: WAiP, 2007, p. 13.

⁶ ADAMSKI, A.: *Strony internetowe a wymóg rejestracji prasy*. In: *Państwo i Prawo* no. 2(2010), Warsaw, p. 30-31.

⁷ LARA, A.: *Media Landscape – Poland*. In: European Journalism Centre, [online], http://www.ejc.net/media_landscape/article/poland/ (accessed September 10, 2010).

Numerous journals and magazines were bought by foreign media companies. They brought both capital and know-how. In editorial offices across the land a technical revolution took place: computerization of offices and a switch to offset print. New magazines in new market segments emerged.⁸ The Polish press market is still viewed as a young one, i.e. it is still changing. Multiple press titles edited before 1989 have fallen, but an increasing number of new ones are created.

As a consequence, the Polish press market has been growing very dynamically since the first half of 1990s. The number of newspapers and magazines has increased by almost half, from 3,007 in 1990, to 4,340 in 1995. By 2001, there were already 5,837 press titles - nationwide and local ones (as stated before, today there are more than 7000 titles). The newspaper boom affected the local market to a great extent. However, the development of the Polish media is not a matter of a growing number of new titles. At the beginning of the 1990s, the press had to respond to various questions, such as: How to function in a free market? How to change the ways of thinking in managing the media?⁹

After 20 years of transformation the Polish press differs significantly from the one of the 1990s. Now, it is free. Direct political influence on the press has ended. At present, "the state influence on the press is manifested in different forms of subsidies (financial support, exemption from VAT taxes, etc.) given to some periodicals (...). Nonetheless, there exists a problem of informal influence, which the world of politics has on the media contents, for example, hidden connections between publishers associations (or journalists alone) and the power centers".¹⁰

Companies

Nowadays, it seems that almost everybody can be a press publisher in Poland. The press publishers are individual persons, private companies, state, local authorities and various levels of government, foundations, trade unions, socio-cultural associations, and others.¹¹ However in reality, publishing the press

⁸ MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF POLAND: *Changes in the Polish media since 1989*. In: *Official Promotional Website of the Republic of Poland*, [online], <http://www.poland.gov.pl/Changes,in,the,Polish,media,since,1989.,515.html> (accessed September 10, 2010).

⁹ MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF POLAND: *Development of a Free Press*. In: *Official Promotional Website of the Republic of Poland*, [online], <http://www.poland.gov.pl/Development,of,a,free,press,516.html> (accessed September 10, 2010).

¹⁰ PRESS RESEARCH CENTRE (OBP): *Political system and the media in Poland*. In: *Press Research centre*, [online], <http://www.obp.pl/03-raport/2001/Politics.htm> (accessed September 10, 2010).

¹¹ DRZEWIECKI, P.: *Prasa regionalna w Otwocku po 1989 roku*. In: „Rocznik

requires much funding. It means that only big companies can be perceived as serious players on the media market. Most media concerns owning the press titles in Poland are of the foreign origin. It is sometimes called “the media colonialism”.¹²

The biggest press companies in Poland include: Agora, Bauer Media Group, Polskاپresse Publishing Group, Ringier Axel Springer Poland, Mecom. Another press companies in Poland are: Gruner+Jahr Poland, Edipresse Poland, Marquard Media Poland and a few smaller: Cooperative Work “Polityka”, Media Platform Point Group (PMPG), Burda Media Poland, Bonnier Business, “Przekrój” Publishing House, United Entertainment Enterprises (ZPR) and Infor Business. 6 of this all companies represent German capital, 6 – the Polish one, and the rest the British, Swedish and Swiss capital.

The major Polish press companies

Agora

Agora was established in 1989 by Andrzej Wajda, Aleksander Paszyński and Zbigniew Bujak. The main reason why it was created was editing “Gazeta Wyborcza”, considered as “the first totally independent newspaper in post-communist Poland”.¹³ Today, “Gazeta Wyborcza” is main press title of Agora and one of the biggest Polish newspapers.

In 1993, the shareholder of Agora became American Company “Cox Enterprises”.¹⁴ It is said that “Cox was not only a source of capital, but also knowledge of the strategies best suited to developing modern media concerns. Gazeta's daily themed supplements are today, for example, one of the key elements of the overall product that turns sales turnover”.¹⁵

In 1999, Agora went public in Warsaw.

After success of “Gazeta Wyborcza”, Agora has consistently developed. In 1996, it purchased a network of local radio stations. In 2002, the outdoor advertising company A.M.S. was also bought by Agora. It is also present on the field of the Internet.¹⁶

Otwocki”, 2008, vol. X, p. 177.

¹² ONISZCZUK, Z.: *Strefy wpływu kapitału niemieckiego w polskich mediach*. Chap. in: WOLNY-ZMORZYŃSKI K., FURMAN, W., NIERENBERG, B., MARSZAŁEK-KAWA, J.: *Prawo, etyka czy rynek? Zmiany w polskich mediach po 1989 roku*. Toruń: Adam Marszałek, 2010, p. 197.

¹³ LARA, A.: *Media Landscape – Poland*. Op. cit. [online].

¹⁴ KLIMKIEWICZ, B., ed.: *Własność medialna i jej wpływ na pluralizm oraz niezależność mediów*. Kraków: WUJ, 2003, p. 73.

¹⁵ MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF POLAND: *Development of a Free Press*. Op. cit. [online].

¹⁶ KLIMKIEWICZ, B., ed.: op. cit., p. 73.

Nowadays, Agora is one of the biggest media companies in Poland. It owns the following media:

- Edited press: nationwide newspaper “Gazeta Wyborcza” with circulation of about 430,000 copies (about 296,000 sold) in 2010, July¹⁷; “Metro” (complimentary nationwide newspaper) with circulation of circa 390,000. In addition, 15 various journals. From November 2005 to February 2006 Agora was editing a daily tabloid “Nowy Dzień”. However, it didn’t succeed and hence, was closed after 102 days since its debut on Polish press market.¹⁸
- Radio: Agora is a major shareholder of cross-regional radio station TOK FM. The company has also 26 regional radio stations, divided into 2 networks: “Złote Przeboje” and “Roxy FM”.
- The Internet: The portfolio of Agora is very rich. It has inter alia, a portal “gazeta.pl”, announcement service “trader.com”, blog site box.pl” and other.

In addition, Agora owns the outdoor advertising company A.M.S., 3 printing houses and satellite TV channel “TUBA TV”¹⁹.

In 2002, Agora was linked to “the Rywin affair” – after the owners of Agora received the proposal for corruption (the well-known Polish film producer Lew Rywin offered help in stopping the government to amend law. Those changes were harmful for Agora, because they could prevent Agora’s plans from buying the shares in Polsat - Polish private TV station). In December 2002 “Gazeta Wyborcza” published the article “Przychodzi Rywin do Michnika” (“Rywin is coming to Michnik”), which revealed the aforementioned proposal. Consequently, the Investigative Commission of Parliament was established. However, the report of the Commission still remains numerous doubts.

Bauer Media Group

The Bauer Media Group portrays himself as the biggest editor of magazines in Poland on its Internet site, www.bauer.pl. The company also owns RMF FM – a radio group, which is the biggest one in Poland in terms of audience; the Internet portal “interia.pl” – one of the three biggest ones in Poland. It is also the co-owner of the largest companies for direct sales “Klub dla Ciebie” on

¹⁷ ASSOCIATION OF PRESS DISTRIBUTION CONTROL (ZKDP): *Information about press circulation and distribution in Poland in 2010, July*, [online], <https://www.teleskop.org.pl/zkdp/index.jsp?p=publicData> (accessed September 22, 2010).

¹⁸ ADAMSKI, A.: *Media w Polsce. Guide for students of University of Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński in Warsaw (typescript)*. Warsaw, 2010, p. 69.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 45-46.

the Polish market.²⁰

The Bauer Media Group started its business on the Polish press market in 1991. Its first magazine was “Bravo”. Afterwards, it has developed its portfolio. Today, the main segments of Bauer’s press are: tv-guides (Bauer is said as a potentate on the Polish press market in this field), women’s press, youth newspapers, computer press, automotive newspapers, true stories press.²¹

The Bauer Media Group edits 33 titles, which are sold in 350 million of copies per year.²² Since May, 2009, Bauer has also 79% of shares in Phoenix – the Polish company, which owns 28 magazines, especially in true-stories segment.²³

Bauer was only the newspaper publisher in Poland before 2006. In 2006, it purchased a nationwide radio station RMF FM from Polish businessman Stanisław Tyczyński. Now, it has the whole radio group, known as “RMF Group”. It includes nationwide radio station RMF FM and two networks of local stations for different audience: RMF Maxxx and RMF Classic. From the beginning RMF FM was linked to the portal “Interia.pl”, which now also belongs to Bauer. One of the elements of RMF Group is also online music platform “Miasto muzyki”.²⁴

Additionally, the Bauer Media Group owns two printing houses.

Mecom

Mecom is a new player on the Polish press market. It is a British company. According to its official website, “Mecom Group plc is a European content and consumer business. The Group owns over 300 printed titles and over 200 websites in its four divisions, with substantial operations in the Netherlands, Denmark, Norway and Poland”.²⁵ Mecom bought all its assets in Poland in 2006, from Norwegian company Orkla Media for about 920-930 million euro.²⁶ The Polish division of Mecom owns 25 titles. It operates 51 websites

²⁰ THE BAUER MEDIA GROUP: *Internet official site*, [online], <http://www.bauer.pl> (accessed September 23, 2010).

²¹ KLIMKIEWICZ, B., ed.: op. cit., p. 75.

²² THE BAUER MEDIA GROUP: *Wydawnictwo Bauer*, [online], http://www.bauer.pl/c_article.php/cmkid,2/pt,4/title,Wydawnictwo/ (accessed September 23, 2010).

²³ ADAMSKI, A.: *Media w Polsce*. Op. cit., p. 44.

²⁴ *Ibid*, p. 42-43.

²⁵ THE MECOM GROUP PLC: *Business overview. Official Website*, [online], <http://www.mecom.com/Businessoverview.aspx> (accessed November 01, 2010).

²⁶ WIRTUALNEMEDIA.PL: *Mecom coraz bliżej Orkla Media*, [online], <http://www.wirtualnemedial.pl/artykul/mecom-coraz-blizej-orkla-media> (accessed November 01, 2010); RZECZPOSPOLITA: *Grupa zmieni właściciela w przyszłym tygodniu*. The Rzeczpospolita Online Editions Archive, [online], [6](http://new-</p></div><div data-bbox=)

and 8 small print plants which print both Group and third-party publications as well.²⁷ The Mecom's Polish division comprises wholly-owned Media Regionalne regional newspaper and content business, and 51 per cent share of Presspublica (the remaining shares are owned by Przedsiębiorstwo Wydawnicze Rzeczpospolita SA). Media Regionalne is the second-largest regional daily newspaper publisher in Poland (current name was given to it in 2006, before it was named "Orkla Media"). Presspublica is the owner of "Rzeczpospolita", one of the most respected titles of the opinion press in Poland.²⁸ Furthermore, Presspublica is the owner of a small business of the newspaper daily "Gazeta Giełdy Parkiet", a regional daily "Życie Warszawy" and two printing houses.²⁹ Media Regionalne's portfolio includes 9 regional dailies, 2 regional weeklies, 9 regional free-sheets. It also operates a number of websites. Media Regionalne also owns the "Moje Miasto", which is a combination of local weekly freesheet and local community website. Launched in Szczecin area in 2007, it has expanded its reach to Lublin and currently has 16 stand-alone local community websites in the biggest cities in Poland (status April, 2009).³⁰

Polskapresse Publishing Group

The owner of Polskapresse Publishing Group is the German company Verlagsgruppe Passau. In 1994, it bought shares in 8 of the biggest Polish regional newspapers from French concern of Robert Hersant.³¹ In 2007, the aforementioned regional newspapers (except for "Express Ilustrowany" in Łódź, which is a tabloid) were merged in nationwide newspaper "Polska The Times", published with co-operation with "The Times". A new regional editions of "Polska The Times" was created in the regions, where Polskapresse didn't have its dailies. But this new project didn't succeed: in 2009, March 9 of them were closed.³²

arch.rp.pl/artykul/642110.html (accessed November 01, 2010).

²⁷ THE MECOM GROUP PLC: *Poland*. Official Website, [online], <http://www.mecom.com/poland.aspx> (accessed November 01, 2010).

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ THE MECOM GROUP POLSKA: *Presspublica*. Official Website, [online], <http://mecom.com.pl/mecom/polska/media/presspublica> (accessed November 01, 2010).

³⁰ THE MECOM GROUP PLC: *Media Regionalne Business Overview*. Official Website, [online], <http://www.mecom.com/Media%20Regionalne%20Business%20Overview.aspx> (accessed November 01, 2010).

³¹ DĄBROWSKA-CENDROWSKA O., *Niemieckie koncerny prasowe w Polsce w latach 1989-2008*. Warszawa: Elipsa, 2009, p. 63.

³² WIRTUALNEMEDIA.PL: *Polska' już nie ogólnopolska*, [online], <http://www.wirtualnemedi.pl/artykul/polska-juz-nie-ogolnopolska> (accessed October

Apart from “Polska The Times”, Polskاپresse publishes a free newspaper “Echo Miasta” in 7 of the biggest Polish cities. Furthermore, it owns six printing houses.

Ringier Axel Springer Poland

Among many German press concerns in Poland, Axel Springer started its activity in Poland at the latest (in 1994), after Burda, G+J and Bauer.³³ In July 2010, Axel Springer AG and Ringier AG merged their companies in Poland, Czech, Hungary, Slovakia and Serbia. The new company is known as Ringier Axel Springer Media AG.³⁴

Initially Axel Springer was not interested in publishing the opinion press. It published popular magazines. In 2003, it started publishing the yellow daily “Fakt”. In 2006, the next daily newspaper of Axel Springer appeared on the Polish press market. It was expected to be a strong rival of “Gazeta Wyborcza” and was titled “Dziennik. Polska-Europa-Świat”. Now, at the end of 2010, “Fakt” with circulation 582,000 and 434,000 sold copies is the leader in Polish dailies.³⁵ “Dziennik. Polska-Europa-Świat” in 2009 was sold to Polish concern Infor Business and was merged with the other newspaper – “Gazeta Prawna”. Now it’s titled “Dziennik-Gazeta Prawna” and is the typical economic newspaper.

Since 2001, Axel Springer has published the weekly opinion magazine “Newsweek Polska”. It is being published on the license of the Newsweek Inc. and has a circulation of 190,000 (114,000 copies sold).³⁶

In June 2007, Axel Springer exchanged 4 women’s magazines for the nationwide sport daily newspaper “Przegląd Sportowy” and regional one “Sport” with Marquard Media Poland.³⁷

Another press companies in Poland

Agora, Bauer, Polskاپresse, Mecom and Ringier Axel Springer are the biggest companies in the Polish press market. However, another press companies also operate within it.

The Bonnier Business Press is the Swedish company. It has an international

31, 2010).

³³ DĄBROWSKA-CENDROWSKA O., op. cit., p. 53.

³⁴ AXEL SPRINGER POLAND: *Start środkowoeuropejskiego joint venture - Ringier Axel Springer Media AG*, [online], <http://www.axelspringer.pl/prasa,Start-srodkowoeuropejskiego-joint-venture-Ringier-Axel-Springer-Media-AG,1785,1.html> (accessed October 31, 2010).

³⁵ ASSOCIATION OF PRESS DISTRIBUTION CONTROL (ZKDP): op. cit., [online].

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ ADAMSKI, A.: *Media w Polsce*. Op. cit., p. 46-47.

range: it has its press and online titles in Bulgaria, Denmark, Estonia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovenia, Russia and Ukraine.³⁸ In Poland, it publishes business daily newspaper “Puls Biznesu” as well as medical bi-weekly journals “Puls Medycyny” and “Puls Farmacji”. It also owns a portal “pb.pl”, which is addressed to the members of the business community.

Burda Media Poland is the first German media company which entered into the Polish market after 1989. It started its activity in Poland in 1990. After several transformations (including the fusion with Hachette Filipacchi Poland in 2006), today Burda Media Poland publishes more than ten magazines (first of all, bi-weeklies and monthlies). A vast majority of them is addressed to women, but there are computer magazines and Polish edition of “Top Gear” as well.³⁹

Edipresse Poland represents a Swiss capital. Now it publishes 20 magazines, especially female and parental. In 2009, Edipresse sold the weekly opinion magazine “Przekrój” to Grzegorz Hajdarowicz – Polish businessman, and also sold the magazine “Hot Moda&Shopping” to the Marquard. In return, Edipresse bought three other magazine: “Pani domu” (female hint magazine), “Cienie i blaski” and “Sekrety serca” (true stories magazines).⁴⁰

Gruner+Jahr Poland publishes 10 magazines (female, gourmet and travel profile). Marquard Media Poland publishes 8 magazines – it is noteworthy that it has two male magazines (CKM and Playboy). Moreover, it publishes some female magazines.

Infor Business is a publisher of business-economic profile newspaper “Dziennik-Gazeta Prawna”. Another Polish nationwide newspaper is a tabloid “Super Express”, which is published by “Murator” – a part of United Entertainment Enterprises (ZPR). “Murator” is a publishing house, specialized mainly in interior press. “Super Express” was published by ZPR and Bonnier Business a few years ago. Now, it is owned by ZPR only. In addition, ZPR operates also on the radio market in Poland and it is known as the owner of the Time Radio Group, which includes radio networks such as “Eska”, “Eska Rock” and “Radio Wawa”.⁴¹

It is interesting, that the biggest Polish weekly opinion magazines are not (except of “Newsweek Polska”) published by the big press companies. “Polityka”, which has circulation of 190,000 (and 143,000 copies sold) [ZKDP 2010], is published by Cooperative Work “Polityka”. “Wprost” was published by AWR “Wprost” until the end of 2009, but now Media Platform Point Group (PMPG) its owner. PMPG is Polish company, created by a young

³⁸ BONNIER BUSINESS PRESS: *About BPP*, [online],

<http://www.bonnierbusinesspress.com/?id=10340> (accessed September 23, 2010).

³⁹ ADAMSKI, A.: *Media w Polsce*. Op. cit., p. 53; DĄBROWSKA-CENDROWSKA O., op. cit., p. 41-43.

⁴⁰ ADAMSKI, A.: *Media w Polsce*. Op. cit., p. 50-51.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, p. 48.

businessman Michał Lisiecki. "Przekrój" is published by "Przekrój" Publishing House, owned by Grzegorz Hajdarowicz, who bought this magazine from Edipresse in 2009. Additionally, there are two nationwide weekly magazines published by the Catholic Church: "Gość Niedzielny", which has the biggest circulation between Polish opinion weeklies (200,000 copies - 132,000 copies sold).⁴² and "Niedziela", which circulation is not precisely known (according to data provided by the publisher it has circulation about 170,000). It is believed, however, that the Church in Poland has a much worse position as publisher of the press than before World War II.⁴³

The Polish press market is a young one. This is why it is very dynamic. Foreign media companies (especially German ones) are of a particular importance on it. Additionally, it can be noticed that there are two phenomena on the Polish press and media market. They are known all over the world as consolidation and convergence. The former is connected with large media companies buying smaller ones. The latter refers to companies combining the ownership of the press titles with the possession in other media.⁴⁴ [Poland 2010c].

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⁴² ASSOCIATION OF PRESS DISTRIBUTION CONTROL (ZKDP): op. cit., [online].

⁴³ ŁĘCICKI, G.: *Media katolickie w III Rzeczypospolitej (1989-2009)*. In: "Kultura - Media - Teologia", 2010(2) nr 2, p. 115-117, [online:] <http://www.kmt.uksw.edu.pl> (accessed December 10, 2010).

⁴⁴ MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF POLAND: *Consolidation of the media market*. Official Promotional Website of the Republic of Poland, [online], <http://www.poland.gov.pl/Consolidation,of,the,media,market,519.html> (accessed September 10, 2010).

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