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FORMATION OF THE CENTRALISED PUBLICATION DISTRIBUTION NETWORK IN POLAND.

‘DOM KSIĄŻKI’ IN 1950–1953

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ABSTRACT

The paper tackles questions related to the formation of the ‘Dom Książki’ retail network in the early 1950s. This institution, responsible for all forms of book distribution, took over 899 retail facilities that were once property of publishing and bookselling cooperatives and no longer extant state publishers. As a result, an uneven retail network was created, which failed to meet bookselling requirements for quality of premises or territorial spread. The first two years of the operations of ‘Dom Książki’ were dedicated to the rational planning of the network by closing or merging already existing retail facilities or founding new, already professional, bookshops. Presenting her findings, author shows how the distribution network of ‘Dom Książki’ changed and what factors affected its size.

KEYWORDS: ‘Dom Książki’ - book distribution - bookselling - retail network - Communist Poland (Polish People’s Republic, PRL)

Not only did WWII bring about unprecedented material and human devastation to Poland, but it also changed its political system. In 1944–1945, the establishment of the new political regime coincided with the simultaneous takeover of Poland’s territory by the Red Army, which initiated significant changes to existing ownership and social structures. At the initial stage of transformation, elements of the existing market economy and new corporate systems such as the nationalisation of industry coincided. The same process was observed within publishing and bookselling sectors, which were gradually transformed by new political interests, since the new regime considered the printed word an effective tool of political control and means to shape Communist ways of thought and behaviour. Publishing interested activists in the PPR, the Polish Workers’ Party, who decided that it could directly serve doing politics as an instrument to win, hold, and consolidate power.¹

The task was to be accomplished by dominating means of social communication means, primarily by taking control of the printing industry. The political monopolisation of the printing industry was not impeded by any legal restrictions for removing previous owners from their companies. In late 1944 and early 1945, when no legal policies on the nationalisation of industries were in place, the state takeover of printing businesses was frequent. The *Law of 3 January 1946 on Nationalisation of Core Branches of National Economy*, which included the printing industry, merely institutionalised the status quo.²

Furthermore, reorganisation of the relatively independent publishing industry, which was based on free-market economy princi-

- 1 S. A. Kondek, *Władza i wydawcy. Polityczne uwarunkowania produkcji książek w Polsce w latach 1944–1949*, Warszawa 1993, pp. 15, 17; M. Tymiński, *PZPR i przedsiębiorstwo. Nadzór partyjny nad zakładami przemysłowymi 1956–1970*, Warszawa 2001, p. 22; R. Habielski, *Polityczna historia mediów w Polsce w XX wieku*, Warszawa 2009, pp. 171–172.
- 2 Ustawa z dn. 3 stycznia 1946 r. o przejęciu na własność Państwa podstawowych gałęzi gospodarki narodowej, *Dziennik Ustaw* 1946, No. 3, Item 17; K. Bolesta-Kukulka, *Gra o władzę a gospodarza. Polska 1944–1991*, Warszawa 1992, p. 71.

ples, was conducted to transform it into a centralised book market model following the Soviet model.³ In 1945–1950, private businesses, cooperatives, and state companies simultaneously controlled publishing and bookselling. While this tri-sector division was officially tolerated, the freedom of private publishers was limited by administrative means such as censorship, paper rationing, additional taxes. At the same time, ‘socialised’, that is state or cooperative, publishing institutions were hastily founded, for example the ‘Książka’ Publishing Cooperative or ‘Czytelnik’ Publishing Cooperative. With the consolidation of Communist powers, the private sector was systematically eradicated from the publishing market, and not always legally, since this market was seen by the Communists as an instrument of propaganda and key way to influence public opinion. In the latter half of 1947, the final eradication of the free-market economy began with a state takeover of all the businesses that did not belong to the state or to the Party. These moves also applied to publishing and bookselling institutions. In 1948, the Polish United Workers’ Party, PZPR, formed as a hegemonic and absolutist Communist Party. That year, the Party founded the Committee for Book Dissemination to handle planning publishing activities in alignment with Communist mandates. In July 1949, the Central Publishing Committee was established, a state entity responsible for eradicating private publishers and coordinating

3 It is worth emphasising that monopolies on publishing and bookselling activities and their strong alignment with the ideological principles of the authoritative regime also occurred in other countries of the former Soviet Bloc. On this topic e.g., Y. Gvosdev, ‘Publishing and book distribution in the U.S.S.R.’, *The Library Quarterly*, 28 (no. 4), 1958, pp. 269–276; G. Walker, *Soviet book publishing policy*, Cambridge 1978; M. Friedberg, M. Watanabe, N. Nakamoto, ‘The Soviet book market. Supply and demand’, *Acta Slavica Iaponica*, 2, 1984, pp. 177–192; *Books in Russia and in the Soviet Union*. Wiesbaden 1991; A. Möldre, ‘The book publishing system in Estonia during The Soviet Rule in 1944–1991’, *Knygotyra*, 47, 2006, pp. 105–121; G. P. Hueting, ‘Book publishing in the German Democratic Republic’, *The Library Quarterly*, 52 (no.3), 1982, pp. 240–259; Ch. Links, *Das Schicksal der DDR-Verlage*, Berlin 2009; S. Barck, M. Langermann and S. Lokatis, “*Jedes Buch ein Abenteuer*”. *Zensur-System und literarische Öffentlichkeiten in der DDR bis Ende der sechziger Jahre*, Berlin, Boston 2015; E. Forstová, *Knihy podle norem: ulturní instituce v systému řízené kultury. Státní nakladatelství krásné literatury, hudby a umění*, Praha 2013. Z. Šimeček, J. Trávníček, *Knihy kupovati...: Dějiny knižního trhu v českých zemích*, Praha 2014.

the operations of state and cooperative publishing enterprises. One of its mandates was also to prepare central publishing plans. As a result, the autonomy of publishing culture was entirely abandoned within the new socio-economic system.⁴

After 1950, centralised book production and distribution systems were formed following the elimination of private and cooperative businesses. In accordance with prior administrative decisions, printing houses were nationalised, while publishing, printing, and bookselling activities were separated. Private publishing houses that supplied almost half books were closed.

As of 1950 until the end of Communist Poland (Polish People's Republic, PRL), 'Dom Książki' was responsible for book retail and wholesale distribution. As a state institution reorganised on several occasions, it initially operated as the 'Dom Książki' Bookselling Central Office, and subsequently as 'Dom Książki' State Enterprise. In its later period, after it had been incorporated into the Central Office of Publishing Houses of Printing Industries and Bookselling (CUWPGiK), the 'Dom Książki' Central Authority was renamed as the Bookselling Central Authority. The formation of 'Dom Książki' was a direct consequence of the gradual elimination of non-state and non-Party publishing and printing businesses, and of state-led aspirations to nationalise bookselling. Bookselling facilities taken over from independent publishing and bookselling cooperatives, and sometimes also from closed private bookshops, provided the infrastructure for the new institution responsible for book distribution. The book distribution monopoly did, indeed, allow full control of the market, yet it also resulted in economic difficulties. As it operated independently from publishing activities, it had no in-

4 S. A. Kondek, *Władza i wydawcy...*, pp. 172-176, 120-122; idem, *Papierowa rewolucja. Oficjalny obieg książek w Polsce w latach 1948-1955*, Warszawa 1999, pp. 50-54. See also J. Zmroczek, 'Ruch wydawniczy w Polsce po r. 1945', *Zeszyty Historyczne*, fasc.100, 1992, pp. 210-212; M. Tobera, 'Władza i księgarze prywatni 1945-1950', in: *Nie po myśli władzy. Studia nad cenzurą i zakresem wolności słowa na ziemiach polskich od wieku XIX do czasów współczesnych*, eds. D. Degen, M. Żynda, Toruń 2012, pp. 99-128; idem, 'Księgarstwo spółdzielcze i prywatne w okresie trójsektorowości polskiego rynku książki (1945-1950)', *Przegląd Biblioteczny*, fasc. 4, 2014, pp. 329-363.

fluence on either the selection of publications or number of copies in an edition. The thematic selection of books was dominated by political and ideological literature, which was not of much interest customers. Such titles accumulated in warehouses, new titles were distributed with much delay, and small and poorly stocked bookshops did not fulfil their functions; in effect, the organisation and operations of 'Dom Książki' were criticised on a number of occasions.

In 1950–1953, 'Dom Książki' was a single-state national enterprise with its Head Office in Warsaw and branches in voivodeships. In 1954, the branches were transformed into independent enterprises that operated in accordance with rational economic principles. Therefore, the period spanning 1950–1953 formed a separate stage in the organisational redevelopment of state-run retail and wholesale book production and distribution.

The issue of book production and distribution in post-WWII Poland and in its years as PRL have been extensively studied. Adam Bromberg was one of the first academics to tackle the topic,⁵ publishing a rich archival study on the publishing movement in 1959. The same period also yielded Lucjan Biliński's studies⁶. These publications, however, need to be approached with caution due to period biases from the time they were published; still, they provide us with essential information on the problems of the market at the time and the accomplishments of several publishing houses. After 1989, Stanisław A. Kondek was the first to analyse the post-WWII book market. His work primarily emphasised the political conditions of the publishing sector,⁷ but was also interested in the official

5 A. Bromberg, *Książki i wydawcy. Ruch wydawniczy w Polsce Ludowej w latach 1944–1957*, Warszawa 1958, and its second censored edition under a slightly altered title: *Książki i wydawcy. Ruch wydawniczy w Polsce Ludowej w latach 1944–1966*, Warszawa 1966.

6 L. Biliński, *Ruch wydawniczy i księgarstwo w Polsce Ludowej*, Warszawa 1974; idem, *Institucje wydawnicze i dystrybucja książki w Polsce*, Warszawa 1975; idem, *Zarys rozwoju ruchu wydawniczego w Polsce Ludowej*, Warszawa 1977, idem, *Książka w Polsce Ludowej: wydawnictwa i księgarstwo*, Warszawa 1981.

7 S.A. Kondek, *Władza i wydawcy...*, Warszawa 1993.

circulation of books from 1948–1955.⁸ Dariusz Jarosz was interested in slightly later period in PRL's history, studying questions related to the operations of the publishing and bookselling sectors from a political perspective.⁹ Jarosz also prepared the *Selection of Sources for the History of Books in 1944–1989*.¹⁰ Tadeusz Hussak, a committed activist and President of the Association of Polish Booksellers, analysed the operations of 'Dom Książki' and booksellers in Communist Poland from the perspective of participants in key historical events.¹¹ Marek Tobera tackled the topic of the book market from 1945–1950,¹² Grzegorz Nieć addressed questions of bookselling in Polish studies within broader book history.¹³ Agnieszka Chamera-Nowak published an extensive monograph on organisation of the bookselling and publishing movement in Poland from 1951–1956 through a case study of the *Central Office of Publishing, Graphic Industry, and Bookselling*.¹⁴

Most of the above-mentioned publications focus on the production and distribution of publications. However, a more extensive

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- 8 Idem, *Papierowa rewolucja. Oficjalny obieg książek w Polsce w latach 1948–1955*, Warszawa 1999. Kondek also discusses the organisation of the book market in PRL in the paper 'Organizacja obiegu książek w PRL jako eksperyment bibliologiczny', in: *Bibliologia. Problemy badawcze nauk humanistycznych*, ed. D. Kuźminy, Warszawa 2007, pp. 316–325.
- 9 D. Jarosz, 'Władza a książka społeczno-polityczna w PRL 1956–1989', *Z Badań nad Książką i Księgozbiorem Historycznymi*, vols. 7–8: 2013–2014, pp. 133–172; idem, 'Jakich książek potrzebują Polacy? Odpowiedź władzy', in: *Na co dzień i od święta. Książka w życiu Polaków w XIX–XXI wieku*, eds. A. Chamera-Nowak, D. Jarosz, Warszawa 2015, pp. 441–458; idem, 'Jak tworzone książkę socjalistyczną? Narady wydawców i księgarzy państw bloku wschodniego 1965–1988', *Z Badań nad Książką i Księgozbiorem Historycznymi*, vol.10, 2016, pp. 317–334.
- 10 Idem, *Dzieje książki w Polsce 1944–1989. Wybór źródeł*, Warszawa 2010.
- 11 T. Hussak *Księgarstwo bliskie czytelnikom. Nie zmarnowaliśmy szansy*, Olsztyn 1999; idem, *Byliśmy służbą społeczną. Rzecz o Stowarzyszeniu Księgarzy Polskich*, Olsztyn 2004.
- 12 M. Tobera, 'Władza i księgarze prywatni 1945–1950...', pp. 99–128; idem, 'Księgarstwo spółdzielcze i prywatne...', pp. 329–363.
- 13 G. Nieć, 'Problematyka księgarska w polskich badaniach nad książką do 1989 roku', in: *Oblicza współczesnej bibliologii. Konteksty i transgresje*, eds. G. Czapiński, Z. Gruszka, J. Ladorucki, Warszawa 2014, pp. 167–184.
- 14 A. Chamera-Nowak, *Książka a stalinizm. Centralny Urząd Wydawnictwa, Przemysłu Graficznego i Księgarstwa i jego rola w kształtowaniu ruchu wydawniczo-księgarskiego w Polsce 1951–1956*, Warszawa 2019.

study of the operations of ‘Dom Książki’, which retained a monopoly on book distribution at the time, have yet to be conducted. Only Tobera’s paper¹⁵ refers to the beginnings of socialist bookselling. An article by Wanda A. Ciszewska’s examines the operations of the ‘Dom Książki’ facilities from a regional perspective.¹⁶ Ciszewska’s recently published paper¹⁷ focuses on the plans to restructure ‘Dom Książki’ in 1951.

‘Dom Książki’ began its operations on 1 January 1950, yet the establishment of a state bookselling network had been planned much earlier. The new institution was to be based in bookshops taken over from publishing and bookselling cooperatives. While accepted and even promoted in the first years after WWII, the cooperative movement lost the favour of the regime’s decision-makers over time and was eventually regarded as a form of capitalist entrepreneurship. In 1948, the cooperative movement was restructured, and the Central Cooperative Association was formed, featuring different centralised offices for cooperatives grouped according to their trades. The Central Office of Publishing and Bookselling Cooperatives, CSWiK, was one of these offices, which was grouped with other publishing, bookselling, and bookshop and paper cooperatives. The last months of 1949 witnessed subsequent restructuring phases, which assembled all the cooperatives into 14 central offices that covered operational territories reflecting the administrative division of Poland. These were later nationalised, allowing the state takeover of substantial assets comprising retail facilities, stocks (including books), and staff.¹⁸

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- 15 M. Tobera, ‘Trudne początki księgarstwa socjalistycznego. „Dom Książki” 1950–1953. Struktury detalu i hurtu’, in: *Książki mają swoją historię. Studia ofiarowane Profesor Barbarze Bieńkowskiej*, academic ed. J. Puchalski, coop. E. Maruszak, M. Ochmański, D. Pietrzakiewicz, K. Seroka, Warszawa 2021, pp. 441–468.
 - 16 W. A. Ciszewska, *Książka w Toruniu w latach 1945–1950. Ruch wydawniczo-księgarski*, Toruń 2005; eadem, *Skażone władzą. Ruch wydawniczo-księgarski na Kujawach i Pomorzu w latach 1945–1956*, Toruń 2015.
 - 17 W. Ciszewska-Pawłowska, ‘W sprawie zamierzonej reorganizacji „Domu Książki”’. Projekty i propozycje z 1951 r.’, in: *Książki mają swoją historię....* pp. 424–440.
 - 18 S. A. Kondek, *Władza i wydawcy...*, pp. 119–123; W. A. Ciszewska, *Skażone władzą...*, pp. 170–182, M. Tobera, ‘Księgarstwo spółdzielcze i prywatne...’, pp. 345–347.

The restructuring of the cooperatives was officially accounted for by claims regarding irregular spread of shops throughout the country, attempts to provide readers with a full range of available titles range, or basic economic motives. Within trade press publications, members of cooperatives commented on contemporary developments.¹⁹ Data from December 1948 tallies the network of bookshops as including 1,523 bookshops and stationers (Table 1). At that point, the average nationwide number of individuals per bookshop stood at 5,400:1. This number was in line with the standard pre-war data point of 5,000 to 7,000 of residents per bookshop. However, regime authorities claimed that cooperative shops were too fragmented geographically and badly located, and proposed the solution to merge small bookshops into larger and better supplied stores.²⁰

TABLE 1. BOOKSHOP NETWORK IN DECEMBER 1948

No.	Voivodesip	Bookshops and stationer's also selling books		
		Total number	Nationalised	Population (1000 individuals: 1 shop)
1.	Białostockie	44	30	4.1
2.	Gdańskie	67	37	7.1
3.	Kieleckie	108	47	3.4
4.	Krakowskie	130	47	4.5
5.	Lubelskie	87	45	3,5
6.	Łódzkie and the city of Łódź	133	56	6.5
7.	Olsztyńskie	41	31	4.0
8.	Pomorskie	102	51	5.3
9.	Poznańskie	224	76	4.2
10.	Rzeszowskie	54	27	4.4
11.	Szczecińskie	58	34	7.9
12.	Śląsko-Dąbrowskie	169	87	7.4
13.	Warszawskie and the capital city of Warsaw	198	68	4.9
14.	Wrocławskie	108	62	8.8
Total		1,523	698	5.4

Source: Author's study after A. Klimowicz, 'Za mało czy za dużo księgarń?' [Too Few or Too Many Bookshops?], *Praca Księgarska*, 1949 no. 2, p. 18.

19 The overview of the opinions of cooperative members on the reorganisation of bookselling cooperatives has been presented by W. A. Ciszewska in *Shazone władzą...*, pp. 170, 175-176.

20 A. Klimowicz, 'Za mało czy za dużo księgarń?', *Praca Księgarska*, no.2, 1949, pp. 18-20.

847 nationalised bookshops existed by end of 1949. 827 private shops operated at that time there still operated,²¹ amounting to a total of over 1,701 bookshops throughout the whole country.²²

Formally established on 15 January 1950 pursuant to the *Ordinance of the Prime Minister on Establishing the State Enterprise Called 'Dom Książki' Bookselling Central Office*, 'Dom Książki' was responsible for the retail and wholesale of non-periodical publications, stationery, and office supplies in a network of bookshops.²³ The above Ordinance assigned to 'Dom Książki' indefinite possessions of the State Treasury as specified by the Prime Minister, yet stipulated no mention of potential compensation to cooperative members deprived of their property.²⁴

As a result, in early 1950 'Dom Książki' took over 899 bookshop and stationery shops that sold books. Additionally, it took over 94 warehouses housing publications worth 3,393,888,000 zlotys and assumed ownership of paper, office supplies, and other paraphernalia worth 858,710 zlotys. Previously, 43 different institutions, including 29 state publishing houses and cooperative enterprises

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- 21 For more on the circumstances surrounding the closing down of private publishing and bookselling businesses see S.A. Kondek, *Władza i wydawcy...*; W. A. Ciszevska, *Książka w Toruniu w latach 1945-1950...*; eadem, *Skażone władzą...*; M. Tobera, 'Księgarstwo spółdzielcze i prywatne...', pp. 345-347; idem, 'Władza i księgarze prywatni 1945-1950...'
- 22 *Ruch wydawniczy, prasa, drukarstwo i księgarstwo w latach 1945-1954. Biuro Rady Czytelnictwa i Książki*, Warszawa 1955, p. 226; S. Siekierski, *Książka literacka. Potrzeby i ich realizacji w latach 1944-1986*, Warszawa 1992, p. 109.
- 23 'Zarządzenie Prezesa Rady Ministrów z dnia 15 stycznia 1950 r. o utworzeniu przedsiębiorstwa państwowego pod nazwą Centrala Obrotu Księgarskiego „Dom Książki”', *Monitor Polski*, no. A-7, 1950, item 72 and D. Jarosz, *Dzieje książki w Polsce 1944-1989. Wybór źródeł...*, pp. 37-38. See also S. A. Kondek, 'Kontrola, nadzór, sterowanie. Budowa państwowego systemu wydawniczego w Polsce w latach 1945-1951', in: *Piśmiennictwo - systemy kontroli - obiegi alternatywne*, eds. J. Kosteczki, A. Brodzka, vol. 2: Warszawa 1992, p. 213; T. Hussak, *Księgarstwo bliskie czytelnikom...*, pp. 11-12; D. Degen, *Polityka wydawnicza w sferze nauki w latach 1944-1959*, Toruń 2014, pp. 110-111.
- 24 'Zarządzenie Prezesa Rady Ministrów z dnia 15 stycznia 1950 r....' The question of appropriate compensations for nationalised assets was only settled formally in 1952. See 'Uchwała Prezydium Rządu w sprawie przeprowadzenia rozliczeń za przejęte przez przedsiębiorstwo państwowe „Dom Książki” składniki majątkowe jednostek gospodarki społecznej' of 10 October 1952, *Monitor Polski*, no.A-93, 1952, item 1439.

affiliated with the regime, and 14 centralised offices of bookselling cooperatives, held ownership over these assets.²⁵

14 state-owned bookshops of Państwowe Zakłady Wydawnictw Szkolnych, nine state-owned bookshops of Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 182 shops of the 'Książka i Wiedza' Cooperative, 53 shops of the 'Czytelnik' Cooperative, and 23 bookshops of other publishing houses comprised the newly established bookselling network, with the largest group made up of the 618 facilities belonging to cooperatives grouped within CSWIK.²⁶

An uneven retail network emerged that did not meet local or territorial bookselling requirements. It was assessed that much of the retail network that had been taken over 'was not fit to fulfil the tasks of the new enterprise',²⁷ while out of 899 shops, as many as 500 were 'bookshops in name only'.²⁸ Books and school textbooks were on sale only when children went to school or at Christmas, while the main stock was comprised of office or school supplies. The poor conditions of bookshop premises and their uneven territorial spread resulted from wartime destruction. Initial actions to sort out and reorganise the network had already begun in 1950.²⁹

25 AAN CUWPGiK, cat. no. 372, *Sprawozdanie z przeprowadzonej kontroli Ekspozytur Wojewódzkich, Biura Handlu Hurtowego, Biura Handlu Zagranicznego i Dyrekcji Naczelnej C.O.K. „Dom Książki”* of 22 November 1950; *Ruch wydawniczy, prasa, drukarstwo i księgarstwo w latach 1945–1954...*, p. 31. The impressive amount of assets acquired by 'Dom Książki' is well documented in the case of one cooperative from the Pomorskie Voivodeship, the 'Jutrzenka' Cooperative Bookshop in Świecie. The handover protocol of this entity included plots, land, edifices and buildings' furnishing, small livestock, materials, and supplies, content of wholesale warehouses, and employees (see W. A. Ciszewska, *Skażone władzą...*, p. 262).

26 S. Maławski, *Obrót księgarski. Organizacja i technika*, Warszawa 1960, p. 33; Cz. Ożarzewski, *Zarys dziejów książki i księgarstwa*, Poznań 1963, p. 175; L. Biliński, *Instytucje wydawnicze...*, p. 131.

27 AAN CUWPGiK, cat. no. 372, *Uwagi na temat rozmieszczenia sieci detalicznej „Domu Książki”...*, p.[1].

28 K. Majerowicz, 'Dom Książki 1950–1974', *Przegląd Księgarski i Wydawniczy*, nos.1/2, 1975, p. 1.

29 AAN CUWPGiK, cat. no. 372, *Uwagi na temat rozmieszczenia sieci detalicznej „Domu Książki”...*, p.[1]; M. Tobera, 'Trudne początki księgarstwa socjalistycznego. „Dom Książki” 1950–1953...' , p. 454.

The initial organisational structure of ‘Dom Książki’ covered the departments of wholesale, retail, foreign trade, and non-bookselling sales, as well as 14 voivodeship branches. The takeover of assets and stocks of publishing and bookselling cooperatives and the bookselling departments of state publishing houses required large-scale inventories to be drawn. This translated into a halt in publication sales in early January 1950. A chaotic turn in the book trade was observed in the aftermath of this interruption, which was only partially overcome in March 1950.³⁰ Despite this chaotic interruption, plans for the further development of the retail network of ‘Dom Książki’ were already in place in June 1950. These plans envisioned foundation of new bookshops mainly in small towns, workers’ districts in cities, and in new housing estates. At the same time, these plans anticipated that private bookshops would be eliminated within six years. Officials aimed for ‘Dom Książki’ to have 1,928 bookshops in its retail network by 1956.³¹

Reservations were already voiced against the guidelines for the ‘Dom Książki’ retail network development plans in the first year of its implementation. To boost its poor financial standing and substantially increase sales in paper and other items, ‘Dom Książki’ introduced small musical instruments, records, toys, and games into their offering from 1951. This range of items was already offered by other trading institutions, such as municipal retail, while the task of ‘Dom Książki’ was to ‘maximally distribute publications.’ Besides:

‘if “Dom Książki” is to fulfil the political task of reaching wide masses of workers and peasants with books, imposing on them other tasks at the expense of the political assumptions only to improve their questionable financial standing, would be a big mistake.’³²

30 S. A. Kondek, *Papierowa rewolucja...*, pp. 56–57.

31 AAN CUWPGiK, cat. no. 366, *Główne założenia do 6-letniego planu obrotu towarowego* of 15 June 1950, pp. 2, 17; W. A. Ciszewska, *Skażone władzą...*, pp. 264–265.

32 AAN CUWPGiK, cat. no. 372, *Notatka dla Obywatela Dyrektora Biura Kontroli i Nadzoru* of 6 November 1950, p. 3.

The 1951 plan included an intention to increase the number of kiosks established by 'Dom Książki' at workplaces from 18 to 287. The kiosks did not yield much profit; in fact, they were an uneconomical investment. Opinions were voiced questioning this mode of distribution, particularly as regarded workplace distribution,³³ the activities of social distributors, and the assumption that four out of five of the planned kiosks would be loss-generating.³⁴

The intended development of the 'Dom Książki' retail as outlined in the 1950 plan were unrealistic and not accomplished in its first year. In the *Note to Citizen Director of the Control and Supervision Office* of 6 November 1950, interesting rationale for calculating the proper number of bookshops was quoted:

'... out of 271 rural counties (powiat) ca 170 have small county towns in which one county bookshop would suffice, 100 counties with larger towns where two bookshops would be needed, 33 municipal counties where two additional bookshops should be placed, ten larger voivodeship towns with a need for eight additional bookshops, and ca 50 larger towns which do not house county authorities (one bookshop), this giving in total: 170 + 200 + 66 + 80 + 50 = 566 bookshops, rounded to 600 at most.'³⁵

928 'Dom Książki' bookshops existed by the end of 1950 (Table 2), with one shop catering to 27,977 inhabitants, far below the pre-war standard.³⁶

33 Workplace distribution developed in Poland in the early 1950s thanks to the support of the political authorities and active support of youth organisations and trade unions. See W.A. Ciszewska, 'Kolportaż zakładowy i instrukcje „Domu Książki” z lat 1950–1951', in: *Książka, biblioteka, informacja. Między podziałami a wspólnotą*. [vol. 5], eds. J. Dzieniakowska, M. Olczak-Kardas, Kielce 2016, p. 161-172.

34 AAN CUWPGiK, cat. no. 372, *Notatka dla Obywatela Dyrektora Biura Kontroli i Nadzoru* of 6 November 1950, p. 3.

35 Ibid., p. [1].

36 S. Połec, 'Z bilansu dziesięciolecia', *Praca Księgarska*, nos.1-2, 1960, p. 8; L. Marszałek, *Podstawowe wiadomości z edytorstwa i księgarstwa*, Warszawa 1988, p. 74.

TABLE 2. NUMBER OF BOOKSHOPS IN 1950

Number of bookshops	1950
In total	928
including:	
Katowice	100
Capital City of Warsaw	45
Wrocław	81
Kraków	66
Poznań	78
Bydgoszcz	67
Rzeszów	39
Łódź	72

Source: Author's own study after L. Marszałek, *Podstawowe wiadomości z edytorstwa i księgarstwa*, Warszawa 1988, p. 74.

In the first year of its activity, 'Dom Książki' C.O.K was criticised for its improper structure and faulty distribution practices. Negative opinions against the institution referred to its excessive number of staff and inappropriate division of activities, as well as lack of work regulations and contradictory instructions, lack of internal financial control and cooperation between various departments. Bad organisation and excessive bureaucracy prohibited the proper functioning of the retail network and its goal toward increasing publication sales in bookshops. For example, goods were sold on credit in the Łódź branch, the head of the Wieluń bookshop faked his high turnover to receive a bonus, the Poznań branch ran as many as 13 warehouses, while the Cracow branch kept Soviet newspapers and magazines for up to 10 months in their warehouses. As a result, the Presidium of the Council of Ministers demanded an analysis of the 'Dom Książki' retail network and for a reduction in the 'abnormal density of retail units' in many towns, while at the same time requesting an extension of the retail network in workers' districts in large urban centres.³⁷

37 AAN CUWPGiK, cat. no. 372, *Biuro Kontroli i Nadzoru do Dyrekcji Naczelnej C.O.K. „Dom Książki”* [post-inspection recommendations] of December 1950, pp. 7, 9–10. For more on the 'Dom Książki' inspection and its results see W. Ciszewska-Pawłowska, 'W sprawie zamierzonej reorganizacji „Domu Książki”...', pp. 428–430.

935 of ‘Dom Książki’ retail shops operated in July 1951, with about as many as 750 acting as book-cum-stationery shops. The dominance of stationery sales in terms of the distribution of goods other than books caused a serious problem. For the ‘Dom Książki’ Head Office, the distribution of the auxiliary range including paper, office supplies, or toys, impeded the fulfilment of the publication sales plan. Selling of auxiliary goods was a challenge in terms of transportation, warehouse space, and staffing, while transferring distribution to urban retail centres or the Central Office of the Agricultural Cooperatives would facilitate book distribution at the expense of the ‘Dom Książki’ staff.³⁸

A solution to such problems of flawed distribution involved incorporating ‘Dom Książki’ into the structures of the Central Office of Publishing, Graphic Industry, and Bookselling, CUWPGiK, founded on 2 August 1951.³⁹ Though ‘Dom Książki’ continued to sell publications within its bookshop network, it was further responsible for book dissemination through distribution at workplaces, schools, institutions, public enterprises, and the dissemination and sale of books in rural areas.⁴⁰ Mass sale formats were adopted to achieve this goal, such as fairs, lotteries, street stands, and subscriptions.

However, ‘Dom Książki’ continued to operate below its intended financial goals due to its expansive and inappropriately located retail network. According to the Supervision Office of the Presidency of the Council of Minister, the inappropriate location of ‘Dom Książki’ bookshops resulted from the following circumstances:

38 W. Ciszewska-Pawłowska, ‘W sprawie zamierzonej reorganizacji „Domu Książki”...’, pp. 433-434.

39 S. A. Kondek, *Papierowa rewolucja...*, p. 66; A. Chamera-Nowak, *Książka a stalinizm. Centralny Urząd Wydawnictw...*, pp. 70, 73.

40 For more on distribution of publications in rural areas, for example through the network of commune shops run by the ‘Peasants’ Self-help’ Cooperative and through the structures of ‘Peasant Self-help’ Agricultural Cooperative Central Office, see A. Chamera-Nowak, ‘„Książki, szwarc, mydło i powidło...” Dystrybucja książek na wsi w latach pięćdziesiątych XX w. w świetle dokumentów Centralnego Urzędu Wydawnictw, Przemysłu Graficznego i Księgarstwa’, *Z badań nad Książką i Księgozbiorami Historycznymi*, vol. 6, 2012, pp. 127-141.

- the number of retail facilities in respective branches was not in proportion to plans for publication turnover, e.g., the Rzeszów branch had 41 retail facilities with operational aims to turn over 7.4 million zlotys in publications and 5 million zlotys in other items;
- the number of retail facilities in respective towns was not based on 'certain economic and political premises'; in some cases, two towns from the same voivodeship with the same population and the same 'economic and political structure' differed in number of bookshops;
- despite attempts to set up retail bookshops mainly in county towns and larger urban estates, many branches continued to run facilities in small towns.

The office suggested a close analysis of the spread of the network in county towns with populations of up to 50,000. Additionally, they recommended to wind down or reduce operations or merge bookshops, as well as to transfer retail facilities in small towns of fewer than 4,000 inhabitants to the 'Peasant Self-help' County Cooperatives,⁴¹ following the Decision of 5 January 1951 in accordance with the Presidium of the Council of Ministers. Between 1 January and 31 August 1951, 110 retail facilities were transferred to county cooperatives or their operations were slowed down, while 140 new ones were created. 'Dom Książki' transferred over 100 bookshops to rural cooperatives, which soon 'changed their business' under their new owners.⁴²

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- 41 The 'Peasant Self-help' Agricultural Cooperative Central Office (CRS 'Samopoc Chłopska') and its county cooperatives existed from 1948. Their task was to satisfy the needs of the rural public related to education, culture, and entertainment. Beginning in the latter half of 1950, 'Dom Książki' initiated the distribution of books in rural areas through the units of CRS 'Samopomoc Chłopska'. At that time, county bookshops were instructed to supply commune cooperative shops. The former took advantage of this opportunity to get rid of publications that were difficult to sell, a decision that also suited rural consumers. It is estimated only 15% among the supplied books worth 9 million zlotys were sold. See W. A. Ciszewska, *Skażone władzą...*, p. 303.
- 42 AAN CUWPGiK, cat. no. 372, *Uwagi Biura Nadzoru na temat zagadnień PP „Domu Książki...”, p. 5; Uwagi na temat rozmieszczenia sieci detalicznej „Domu Książki”...*, p. [1]; S. Połec, 'Z bilansu dziesięciolecia...', p. 8; W. A. Ciszewska, *Skażone władzą...*,

The *Remarks on the Location of the Retail Network of 'Dom Książki'...* in November 1951 outlined that, in many towns 'Dom Książki' did not have adequate sales floors in their bookshops and, as a result, it had to run several shops to provide appropriate services. Accumulation, rather than consolidation, was the pursued solution. Nonetheless, the Remarks emphasised that a 'mechanical winding down' could make the publication distribution more difficult. Financial resources obtained by credit could facilitate the restructuring of the retail network and increase sales floors so that 'one appropriate retail facility could work more effectively than two or more current ones'.⁴³

Special recommendations were advanced for merging bookshops: instead of 2-3 small bookshop facilities, a facility that would hold one large bookshop should be built to cater to the town's population. Another solution might involve the selection of one centrally located bookshop, with one or two adjacent bookshops to provide corollary services. By means of renovation and interior design, a larger sales floor appropriate for an 'accumulated bookshop' could be developed.⁴⁴

The Remarks also specified conditions for the territorial spread of 'Dom Książki' bookshop facilities. For example, they stipulated that a general urban bookshop, specialised bookshops, and a specialist shop with stationery and non-book related publications should be in the centre of a voivodeship. Meanwhile, general bookshops should be founded in the districts of large cities, while 'mixed assortment' shops were recommended for workers' estates and in the suburbs of large cities. In exceptional cases, permission

p. 280; W. Ciszewska-Pawłowska, 'W sprawie zamierzonej reorganizacji „Domu Książki”...', pp. 435-436.

43 AAN CUWPGiK, cat. no. 372, *Uwagi na temat rozmieszczenia sieci detalicznej „Domu Książki”...*, p. 5. In 1951, 6 million zlotys were allocated out of the credited financing to rearrange the retail network, while 2 million was allotted for the renovation of the 'Dom Książki' warehouses. See W. Ciszewska-Pawłowska, 'W sprawie zamierzonej reorganizacji „Domu Książki”...', p. 436.

44 AAN CUWPGiK, cat. no. 365, *Instrukcja w sprawie zasad opracowywania planu obrotu towarowego na 1952 r.* of 4 February 1952, p. 13.

was granted to run a specialist shop in town to sell non-book publications and stationery, which implied that it was unnecessary always to offer stationery in other bookshops. It was also specified that running 'Dom Książki' bookshops in small towns of under 4,000 residents without the average turnout of 10,000 zlotys per month was not appropriate.⁴⁵

As of July 1951, 'Dom Książki' retail facilities were classified into four categories depending on their 'assortment profile', in other words, their thematic offerings. These categories were developed because of the insufficient stock of bookshops offering merely 15% of publications available in 'Dom Książki' warehouses. First-category bookshops only set up in large cities offered publications across all sectors of knowledge, amounting to 10,250 copies. Second-category bookshops were run in voivodeship towns and larger county towns, and their assortment was smaller: 7,100 copies. Third-category bookshops, which held 4,100 copies, were typical in county towns. Fourth-category bookshops, which held 2,023 copies, were book-cum-stationery shops that operated in small towns. The bookshops in respective categories were obliged to contain publications from defined thematic groups among their offerings: Group I: Marxism and Leninism; Group II: societal and political publications; Group III: technical and economic publications; Group IV: agricultural publications; Group V: sciences and medical studies; Group VI: literature, art; Group VII: miscellaneous; Group VIII: school textbooks. While nine thematic groups were initially outlined, their number was limited to eight in 1952, when Group IX: imported publications, was eliminated.⁴⁶

As of 1951, specialty bookshops were introduced into the 'Dom Książki' retail network, which comprised general assortment bookshops, Soviet bookshops, antiquarian bookshops, bookshops with specific areas of focus, mixed assortment bookshops (books-

45 Ibid, pp. 11-12.

46 W. A. Ciszewska, *Skazone władz...*, pp. 283, 286-291.

cum-stationery shops), distribution sorting offices, and permanent kiosks. The general bookshops offered publications across all knowledge domains, while specialty bookshops sold products related to one area, such as medical, musical, scientific, agricultural, socio-political, educational-pedagogical, technical-economic, or military-sports ones. Those bookshops had all the publications in the domain they represented, both domestic and foreign, in stock. A separate system applied to bookshops offering imported publications, mainly in Russian. Antiquarian bookshops formed another distinct category of bookshops; these were initially established only in voivodeships towns.⁴⁷ In late 1951, shops with non-book publications were introduced that offered propaganda and decorative materials, including posters, painting reproductions, portraits, paper craft letters, and bust or figure plaster casts.⁴⁸

By October 1951, 69 specialised bookshops had been launched, including thirty Soviet, nine scientific, eight technical, five medical and five musical, four agricultural and four military, two pedagogical, and two technical-agricultural bookshops.⁴⁹ In May 1952, 'Dom Książki' boasted 854 retail shops nationwide (Table 3), which included 180 general assortment bookshops, 86 specialty bookshops, and 529 bookshop-cum-stationery facilities. Additionally, 59 shops operated selling non-book items as did 36 out of the 40 planned distribution sorting offices. In total, by May 1952, the 'Dom Książki' retail network, including kiosks, comprised 910 facilities.⁵⁰

47 For more on antiquarian sales see G. Nieć, *Wtórny rynek książki w Polsce. Instytucje, asortyment, uczestnicy*. Kraków 2016.

48 W. A. Ciszewska, *Skażone władzę...*, pp. 284-285.

49 M. Tobera, "Trudne początki księgarstwa socjalistycznego. „Dom Książki” 1950-1953..."', p. 460.

50 *Książka w Polsce Ludowej. Materiały do artykułów, komunikatów i przemówień. Dni Oświaty, Książki i Prasy 3-18 maja 1952 r.*, Warszawa 1952, pp. 62-63; L. Biliński, *Instytucje wydawnicze...*, p. 132.

TABLE 3. 'DOM KSIĄŻKI' RETAIL NETWORK AS OF MAY 1952L

Retail network	Number of facilities
General assortment bookshops	180
Specialised bookshops, including:	86
• foreign publications	31
• antiquarian	7
• socio-political	8
• scientific and academic	13
• technical	11
• agricultural	3
• medical	3
• musical	6
• legal-economic	1
• pedagogical	3
Bookshop-cum-stationery facilities	529
Stationery shops with non-book publications	59
Total	854
Kiosks	20
Distribution sorting offices	36
Total	910

Source: Author's own study after *Książka w Polsce Ludowej. Materiały do artykułów, komunikatów i przemówień. Dni Oświaty, Książki i Prasy 3-18 maja 1952 r.*, Warszawa 1952, pp. 62-63.

In the first three years of the book distribution system, the territorial spread of the retail network was substantially rearranged by closing bookshops in many towns and establishing new facilities where there had been none and where, according to decision-makers, there was a need for them. The number of bookshops was gradually decreasing, and so was the number of bookshop-cum-stationery facilities. On several occasions, the central authorities considered excluding the sale of stationery and non-book publications from the operational scope of the 'Dom Książki' retail networks. The Director of the Supervision Office Stanisław Kowalski advanced one such opinion in November 1951, who based on an analysis of the operations and financial results of some branches (Poznań, Koszalin, and Szczecin) in the latter half of October 1951,

observed ‘the negative impact of the sale of stationery on publication distribution’ and recommended the end to paper distribution in the first six months of 1952. His negative opinion led to the closing down of many bookshop-cum-stationery facilities and, in 1952, those that sold school and library materials. ‘Dom Książki’ later passed these recommendations to urban retail.⁵¹

In August 1953, 831 ‘Dom Książki’ facilities were in operation, including 365 bookshops, 322 bookshop-cum-stationery facilities, 23 artistic and graphic shops, 57 stationery shops, 41 distributing sorting offices, and 23 kiosks. Within the total number of 365 bookshops were 259 general assortment and 106 specialised bookshops, included among these 22 Soviet bookshops, 17 scientific and mail order bookshops, and 12 agricultural bookshops.⁵² Plans were also made for the distribution network to include a ‘Dom Książki’ bookshop in every county town. These bookshops were to boast at least 50 sq. m surface areas.⁵³

Upon its establishment, ‘Dom Książki’ took over the responsibility for book distribution, having no impact either on publishing policies or editorial strategies. Meanwhile, the Communist authorities demanded a society favourable to all processes of organisational restructuring and political change, an obedient society existing in harmony with policies advanced by decision-makers’. A ‘cultural offensive’ aimed at creating a ‘new man’,⁵⁴ whose identity and values were to be reflected in literature developed under Party guidance and in reformed curricula. The above-mentioned Committee for

51 AAN CUWPGiK, cat. no. 372, *Uwagi na temat rozmieszczenia sieci detalicznej „Domu Książki” ...*, pp. 1, 12; ‘Obok książek — artykuły papiernicze’, *Księgarstwo na Pomorzu. Jednoznaczność wydana z okazji X-lecia działalności P.P. „Domu Książki” w Bydgoszczy*, 1960, p. 15.

52 AAN CUWPGiK, cat. no. 54, *Projekt Planu rozmieszczenia sieci księgarskiej „Domu Książki” na rok 1955*.

53 M. Tobera, ‘Trudne początki księgarstwa socjalistycznego. „Dom Książki” 1950–1953...’, p. 460.

54 On the shaping of socialist attitudes and new public see e.g., K. Kosiński, *O nową mentalność. Życie codzienne w szkołach 1945–1956*, Warszawa 200; M. Mazur, *O człowieku tendencyjnym. Obraz nowego człowieka w propagandzie komunistycznej w okresie Polski Ludowej i PRL 1944–1956*, Lubin 2009.

Book Dissemination (1948), responsible for the approval of publishing plans and implementation of centrally organised book circulation, supported these social efforts.⁵⁵ The regime's administrators aimed on to disseminate culture and win over a mass population of readers, while also 'publishing the best books and limiting the production of the worthless and harmful ones' in harmony with their policies.⁵⁶ Shaping the needs of 'appropriate' readers' by publishing works that boosted socialist awareness was characteristic of a book market model based on centralised state institutions and obedient to the Party's goals. Book production at that time took no interest in the needs and preferences of readers who were not interested in provided titles.⁵⁷ The monopolisation of book distribution networks secured full Party control over the sector and demonstrated a political-ideological success, yet it contributed to the problems of the publishing and bookselling industry still based on consumer wants. The policy on the forced reception of all publishing activities led to an increase in stock reserves deposited in warehouses.⁵⁸

The poor financial results of the enterprise and the continuous accumulation of book reserves were heightened by a lack of analysis of sales results, which led to printing additional copies of unsellable titles; irregular supplies from the printing houses; or the poor quality of the books. Attempts were made to meet challenges posed by accumulating stocks of politically correct publications. One solution involved the so-called 'special stocktaking', which excluded propaganda brochures or Marxist-Leninist classics from financial reports. Unsellable titles were either recycled or removed

55 S. A. Kondek, *Władza i wydawcy...*, pp. 178–179; M. Korczyńska-Derkacz, 'Książki szkodliwe politycznie, czyli akcja „oczyszczania” księgozbiorów bibliotek szkolnych, pedagogicznych i publicznych w latach 1947–1956', in: *Niewygodne dla władzy. Ograniczanie wolności słowa na ziemiach polskich w XIX i XX wieku*, eds. D. Degen, J. Gzella, Toruń 2010, p. 337.

56 A. Bromberg, *Książki i wydawcy...*, Warszawa 1958, p. 16.

57 See e.g., M. Korczyńska-Derkacz, 'Badania czytelnictwa w Polsce w latach 1945–1950. Między potrzebami czytelnictwa a oczekiwaniami władzy', in: *Czytanie, czytelnictwo, czytelnik*, eds. A. Żbikowska-Migoń, A. Łuszczyk, Wrocław 2011, pp. 323–336.

58 S. A. Kondek, *Papierowa rewolucja...*, pp. 70–73.

from bookshop warehouses and placed directly into library collections as part of the ‘Special Assistance to Libraries’ actions.⁵⁹

Upon its establishment, ‘Dom Książki’ had to reorganise the bookshops they took over to turn them into an effective and evenly spread distribution network. General bookshops or bookshop-cum-stationery facilities were either closed, merged, or new ones were established. This reorganisation effort was made more difficult because of ideological issues and economic requirements that contradicted its principles. Decision-makers emphasised the necessity for bookshops to operate among workers’ circles, a choice that could not always be economically justified. Furthermore, the first years of the ‘Dom Książki’ operations unfolded among broader attempts to shape the ideologies and principles of state-run institutions:

- an exclusive monopoly with respect to publishing houses or sharing the responsibility of book distribution with other enterprises, such as commune (*gmina*) cooperatives; the latter finally took over the distribution of books in rural areas,
- a wide range of stock in bookshops (e.g., toys, music-related items, painting reproductions, stationery) focusing beyond the sale of publications, or the transfer of the non-book materials to other shops, which often happened with stationery and artistic materials.

Attempts to solve economic problems of book distribution and sales involved the classification of bookshops into four categories according to thematic specialties, which the so-called ‘title distribution list’. Additionally, new forms of publication distribution were explored in the form of kiosks or distribution sorting offices. Nonetheless, these operations faded following the obligatory acceptance of highly ideological publishing standards; ‘Dom Książki’ had no say on title selections.

Changes occurred in the operations of ‘Dom Książki’ from 1954. On 1 January, voivodeship branches were transformed into independent enterprises, while the ‘Dom Książki’ Central Authority

59 Ibid, pp. 68, 74.

became the Central Bookselling Authority, CZK. CZK was a part of CUWPGiK and after it had been dissolved in 1956, formed part of the Ministry of Culture and Art. Beginning in 1954, central distribution lists of publications and bookshop supplies were gradually given up and in 1955 they were entirely rejected, while bookshops were given the right to independently make choices about their stock.⁶⁰

In 1956, the 'Dom Książki' State Enterprise of Bookshop Wholesale was founded, and its operations were positively judged by booksellers. In 1957, more economical prices for paper and printing services were introduced, leading to an increase in book prices by 50% on average. In 1958, the wholesale enterprise was transformed into the 'Składnica Księgarska' State Enterprise. Relations between publishing enterprises and 'Dom Książki' were altered, and from that time publishers assumed responsibility as well as financial risk for unsold titles. The output size of publications was balanced and the number of copies in each edition was rationally planned; as a result, the distribution lists were rejected.⁶¹

In the following years, the autonomy of publishing houses increased, while some positive changes in publishing programmes were introduced. Regional publishing institutions were formed, while and universities as well as associations were allowed to participate in publishing operations. Nevertheless, a producer market continued to dominate that was not often aligned with reader expectations. Apart from ideological factors, book production was impacted by paper shortages, the limited number of printing houses, and outdated technology. Publishers had to operate within those restrictions, which further impeded their ability to react to the preferences and needs of readers and society.

Translated by Magdalena Iwińska

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- 60 'Księgarskie trzydziestolecie', *Księgarz*, nos.2/3, 1974, p. 8; L. Biliński, *Ruch wydawniczy i księgarstwo w Polsce Ludowej...*, p. 82; S. Dippel, op. cit., p. 252; S. Połec, '15 lat Domu Książki', *Księgarz*, no.1, 1965, p. 10.
- 61 A. Bromberg, *Książki i wydawcy...*, Warszawa 1958, pp. 64-65; S. Połec, '15 lat Domu Książki...', pp. 6-7; idem, *Ekonomika księgarstwa. Cz. II*, Warszawa 1968, pp. 251, 279; 'Księgarskie trzydziestolecie...', pp. 9-10; T. Hussak, *Księgarstwo bliskie czytelnikom...*, p. 65.