Porównania 1 (39), 2026
DOI: 10.14746/por.2026.1.8

Jakub Muchowski
Uniwersytet Jagielloński w Krakowie

A Man of Many Worlds: Włodzimierz Ledóchowski, Polish Memory Cultures and Anti-apartheid Activism*

1. Introduction

In 1989, the Polish journal *Zeszyty Literackie* published a paper by Nadine Gordimer, a Nobel Prize-winner South African writer, entitled "Włodzimierz Ledóchowski, człowiek dwóch światów" (*Wlodzimierz Ledóchowski. Man of Two Worlds*).[1] It is a tribute in which Gordimer honors her friend Włodzimierz Ledóchowski, a Polish engineer, anti-apartheid activist and writer living in South Africa, who died in 1987 (see Kusek 2026b). Gordimer employs a relatively straightforward technique in her portrayal of Ledóchowski, depicting him as a resident of two distinct realms: his ancestral Poland and South Africa. In the opening sentences, Gordimer presents the character as someone different from herself in two ways. The author's writing focuses on Ledóchowski and his wife Barbara:

* This article is the result of research funded by a grant from the National Science Centre No. 2020/39/B/HS2/02083. Some parts of the article were presented at the conference "Transnational Comradeship: South Africa and Central Europe", 19–20 October 2023, Research Centre for Transnational Literary Studies at Jagiellonian University (2023). I would like to thank the seminar participants for their questions and comments.

1 In her paper, Gordimer uses the alternative spellings of the name Włodzimierz: "Wlodzimierz" and "Wlodek."

This is an open access article licensed under the Creative Commons CC BY ND 4.0 License (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nd/4.0/). © Copyright by the Author(s).

> I had never been anywhere – a little provincial from a South African mining town – and they came from the great world whose turmoil during and after the Second World War had scattered nationalities and broken class and cultural barriers. "Count Ledóchowski" was a world away, in every sense of the word – breeding, education, experience (Gordimer 1989: 2).[2]

Firstly, it is important to note that Ledóchowski was a count, thus occupying a position within the European aristocracy. Secondly, he was a participant in the "great world" of European or Western history, where the dramatic events of the Second World War took place, which, as Gordimer only alludes to, destroyed the world of the aristocracy. In turn, Gordimer situates herself in the South African province. She subsequently states that Ledóchowski recreated his native world for her during her visit to Poland in 1979, whilst simultaneously endeavouring to introduce her to the new reality of socialist Poland, which was radically different from the country of his childhood and youth.

At the same time, Gordimer explains that despite the fact that she and Ledóchowski occupied different spheres, they also had common domains. One such domain was that of the world of ideas. As she points out, "we shared a passion for the world of ideas – read the same books, admired the same poets, argued over literary criticism and political analyses" (Gordimer 1989). Another common world was involvement in the movement against apartheid.

> Wlodek and Basia, while retaining their innate Polishness, committed themselves to my country as I am committed: they were not content to shelter in White privilege but took on the responsibility to work within the Black struggle for justice (2).

As Gordimer observes, the Ledóchowskis upheld their Polish identity while residing within a milieu of the Polish diaspora. However, they also engaged extensively with the realities of the new country and participated in the anti-apartheid movement.

At this juncture, the readers of Gordimer's tribute may find themselves contemplating the number of worlds Ledóchowski inhabited. In the final sentences, Gordimer resolves this ambiguity by writing that she means two worlds, Poland and South Africa, but adds puzzlingly that "his sensibility made them one" (6). It is my belief that the necessary clarification of Gordimer's intended

2 Here I am using the English manuscript of Gordimer's article: tinyurl.com/ledochowski.

meaning can be derived from her previous passages in the text, wherein she characterises Ledóchowski as a person of culture:

> "What is a man of culture?" Knowing Wlodek gave me the definition that best satisfies me. A man of culture is a man who is open to cultures other than the one he was born to. Wlodek was that man. So many Europeans who come to Africa live out their whole lives on this continent without reaching into its vital sources, without making any connection with its pre-colonial base, without realizing that this will be the base of its future. At best, they develop some communion with nature, enthusing about their love of the beauty of the land. But Wlodek was not one of those who discount the people of the land, and live, mentally, as if they had never left Europe (4).

Gordimer describes a person of culture who opens himself to the totality of reality and confronts the problems of the surrounding groups of people and their worlds. Maintaining a connection to the culture in which he was born, Ledóchowski engages in others' cultures, and one can guess "his sensitivity" connects their elements to each other. The author juxtaposes Ledóchowski with individuals who fortify divisions between collectives, concentrate solely on indigenous culture and opt to interact exclusively with specific realms of existence, such as the natural world.

Gordimer writes of Ledóchowski as a man of two worlds, but her farewell suggests that there may be more to these, as the boundaries between them are unstable and can be crossed. Ledóchowski is involved in South African society, the Polish community there and the anti-apartheid movement, but he also values his connections to Poland, both in the present day and in the past, which continues to live on as memory culture despite the communist revolution of the 1940s and 1950s. One might also want to mention that other important groups that Ledóchowski was involved with, which partly overlap with those already mentioned, were the Catholic Church community in South Africa and the Polish community living abroad, which was mainly based in London and Paris. Gordimer seems to think that Ledóchowski operated in all these worlds and combined their components when he engaged in Polish *émigré*, anti-apartheid, Catholic activism and when he wrote his short stories.

In this paper, I will talk about the surprising cultural connections that can be seen in Ledóchowski's work. I will focus on how they manifest in his book published in Poland in 1988, entitled *Mój nierodzinny kraj* (*My Non-Native Realm*). These connections are between the memory culture of Poland as the country

of his childhood and youth, contemporary Poland, including its literature, and the anti-apartheid movement as a global social movement. In the context of these connections, solidarity ties are established, whereby Poland's memory cultures function as a medium for the expression of resistance against apartheid.

The article joins the discussion of Polish involvement in anti-apartheid activism and discourse. Its previous contributions have focused on the foreign policy of Poland's state socialist government and the contacts between Solidarity and the anti-apartheid movement (Christiaens, Goddeeris 2019); less attention has been given to anti-apartheid writing in Polish (Muchowski 2024). The proposed study will examine the case of a writer and publicist who, situated in South Africa, writes to Polish readers living there, but also in other diasporas (particularly in the Global North) and in Poland itself.

2. A Few Words on Włodzimierz Ledóchowski

I would like to begin by providing some additional information about Ledóchowski himself, given that he has only recently become the focus of research (Kusek 2026a; Kusek 2026b). Born in Poland in 1910, he came from an aristocratic family. His father, Ignacy, was a general in the Polish army; his uncle, Włodzimierz, was a general in the Jesuit order; his aunt, Urszula, founded the Ursuline Grey Order; and his other aunt, Maria, founded a missionary order operating primarily in Africa: the Clavierian nuns. Włodzimierz Ledóchowski fought in the Polish–German War in 1939 and was a member of the Polish resistance. He was also a soldier during the campaign in North Africa, fighting at Tobruk, and later became a diplomat for the Polish government-in-exile. In 1948, he and his wife Barbara left for South Africa. There, he worked as an engineer. As part of his anti-apartheid activities, he founded the Catholic Association for Racial Equality (CARE) and became chairman of the Justice and Peace Commission, a department of the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference. He began visiting Poland in 1956 and moved there permanently in 1984. He died in 1987. He published articles in various press outlets, including the British Catholic press (*The Tablet*), the Polish *émigré* press (*Kultura* in Paris, *Wiadomości* and *Dziennik Polski* in London), the Polish press in People's Poland (*Tygodnik Powszechny*, *Polityka*, *Kierunki* and *Tygodnik Polski*), and the South African anti-apartheid and Catholic press (*Rand Daily Mail*, *Grace* and *Truth and Trefoil*). His bibliography, compiled by his son, includes two books and more than 60 articles written from the 1940s to the 1980s (Ledóchowski Jan 2018).

Despite his acquaintance with Nadine Gordimer and the publication of two books of prose and numerous articles in important Polish diaspora magazines,

as well as a few texts in the press of the Polish People's Republic, Ledóchowski is not recognised as a member of the journalistic scene or a contributor to the history of Polish literature. His *My Non-Native Realm* received two reviews (Budny 1988; Lengren 1988), one of which was unfavourable. Published in Polish in 1990 *Pamiętnik pozostawiony w Ankarze* (*Memoirs Left Behind in Ankara*), it was only briefly discussed in the book's afterword by another forgotten writer and journalist, Mieczysław Pruszyński (Pruszyński 1990). This paper will therefore be one of the first discussions of his work.

3. *My Non-Native Realm*[3] (*Mój nierodzinny kraj*)

My Non-Native Realm is a collection of prose published by the esteemed publishing house Wydawnictwo Literackie. Consisting of fourteen short, more or less autobiographical stories, it is set among the Polish diaspora in South Africa.

The title of the volume, *My Non-Native Realm*, seems to have several meanings. A native country is the country of one's birth; a place where one spent one's childhood, to which one's family is connected, where one feels at home; and to which one feels strongly attached. In his *Native Realm*, Czesław Miłosz – who is an important point of reference in Ledóchowski's book – argued that he and other Eastern European intellectuals treat the whole of Europe as their own familiar space, to which they feel deeply connected (Miłosz 1981: 1–6). Ledóchowski's portrayal of South Africa as his non-native country suggests that he was not born there, did not spend his childhood there, and does not have family living there. Nevertheless, it is his country, and he has a strong bond with it. He also implies that his two countries, the native one and the non-native one, share many similarities in his literary imagination.

The first story, which shares the same title as the entire volume, reveals much about its subject matter and shapes the reader's interpretation of the whole. In the opening passages, the narrator ponders how to describe a foreign country, ultimately deciding on the most challenging approach: capturing its essence. We then learn that the most essential aspect of the country for the foreigner is apartheid. Ledóchowski then identifies his target audience: a young man who has just arrived in South Africa from Poland, for whom everything comes easily due to White privilege. Originally published in the London-based Polish-language magazine *Tygodnik Polski* in October 1981, the story appears to refer to the emigration of a large group of Poles to South Africa during the Solidarity period. The narrator's main task is to help the newcomer understand

3 It should be noted that the English translations of Ledóchowski writings were provided by the author of the paper.

apartheid. To do so, he configures apartheid with other doctrines and institutions, firstly comparing it with communism and fascism, and secondly with Catholicism (Ledóchowski 1988: 5–25).

The readership in the first story is narrower than in the other narratives in the volume. In the case of the latter, it is generally a Polish *émigré* living in South Africa, who remains part of the global Polish *émigré* community. Most of the collected stories were previously published in the London-based newspaper *Wiadomości*. The narrator is similar to the author himself, in that he is concerned with the affairs of his new country of residence, but is also strongly connected to the memory of old Poland and interested in its post-war fate. Few of the latter stories were addressed to a Polish audience in the Polish People's Republic. The subject matter outlined in the first story also needs to be expanded – an important theme in many of the collected writings is the comparison between apartheid and the Second Polish Republic.

Ledóchowski's statements on Polish migration to South Africa in the early 1980s are worth presenting in a broader context. Not only did the topic play an important role in his writing, it also sparked an international discussion involving various parties, and it may ultimately have been one of the reasons for Ledóchowski's departure to Poland. This topic has already been covered in previous scholarship (Christiaens, Goddeeris 2019), so I will only mention it briefly here. At that time, the migration of Poles, driven by economic and political crises, attracted the attention of the apartheid government. Despite coming from a communist country and being Catholic, the regime saw these young, educated, anti-communist Europeans as a valuable asset. The South African Immigration Service effectively encouraged Poles residing in West Germany and Austria to consider migrating to South Africa (Stola 2020: 303–310). This caused concern among the African National Congress and the South African Catholic Church. In October 1982, the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference (SACBC) issued *Letter to Polish Catholics from the Church in South Africa*, warning them that their arrival would likely strengthen the apartheid regime. In response, Jerzy Milewski, director of the Solidarność Coordinating Office Abroad, prepared an information campaign aimed at Polish migrants staying in Austrian refugee camps. He also made a series of trips to sub-Saharan countries, assuring them of Solidarity's full support for decolonisation and anti-apartheid movements. Conversely, Edward de Virion, who was a representative of the South African Polish community, the president of the Polish Association in South Africa, and the chairman of the Council of the Polish Diaspora in South Africa, spoke out against Milewski's actions and the stance taken by the South African Catholic Church. Among other things, de Virion refuted

allegations that the South African regime was exploiting Polish migration in the Paris-based magazine *Kultura*, thereby gaining the support of much of the Polish community (Christiaens, Goddeeris 2019: 294–298).

Ledóchowski adopted a different stance to that of most of the South African Polish community. Having previously spoken out against apartheid on numerous occasions, he criticised the community for supporting the racist regime. The short stories he wrote about migration in the 1980s revisited themes and arguments that had featured in his earlier prose about migration in the 1960s and 1970s. (Ledóchowski 1966; Ledóchowski 1977). Ledóchowski's conflict with the South African Polish community escalated, and in the spring of 1983, he was reported for translating and distributing a letter from the SACBC that was banned in South Africa. The case was taken up by the Special Branch of the South African police, whose task was to crack down (often brutally) on the anti-apartheid opposition. The police did not confirm the allegations. Ledóchowski resigned from his membership in the Polish Union and left South Africa a year later (Christiaens, Goddeeris 2019: 220).

Now I will discuss the two configurations by which apartheid is presented in the volume's stories: in relation to fascism, communism and Catholicism, and in relation to the Second Polish Republic.

4. Apartheid, Communism, Fascism, and Catholicism

Anti-communism is an important component of the apartheid doctrine. It views communism as a threat not only to itself, but also to the world in general, and it portrays its opponents as communists. This aspect of apartheid was readily accepted within the Polish *émigré* community, which was generally opposed to state socialism in Poland. The narrators of the short stories in this volume do not distinguish between the realities of Polish state socialism and the communist ideas embraced by anti-apartheid activists. Instead, they highlight apartheid's similarities with fascism and sometimes group communism, fascism and apartheid together as repressive forms of government.

In the title story, the narrator compares the wealth of White South Africans with the poverty of their Black counterparts, before addressing the aforementioned projected reader, whom he names Henryk:

> And yet you are still chasing this Bolshevik. You consider it your life's calling. It leads you to uncritically accept the rationale of those who barbecue sausages on braai-vleis and believe that the grievances of those who eat mamaliga were whispered to them by the Bolshevik. So do not rush to choose between these two truths. While balancing them,

> take into account that your insistence on chasing the Bolshevik obliges you to something. First and foremost, you must be unambiguous. You cannot blunt red oppression with impunity while agreeing with White oppression under the pretence that its victims are a different species of human being, at least in this country. Henryk, this is a transparent ploy, naive and, above all, unaesthetic. Miłosz noted in *Native Europe*[4] that, after the publication of his *Captive Mind* in the West, various fascists and semi-fascists admitted to having a spiritual affinity with him. So tie this Bolshevik to the racist. Only then will you be able to chase away this pair with a clear conscience (Ledóchowski 1988: 9).

In this passage, the narrator uses a three-step tactic. First, he encourages his readers-interlocutors to recognise the difference between being anti-communist in state socialist Poland and being anti-communist in apartheid South Africa. The narrator warns them against adopting the views of the fascists, who mistakenly regarded Czesław Miłosz as an ally after the publication of *The Captive Mind*, a work that criticised Polish Stalinism. Secondly, he equates apartheid with fascism, a form of government that was rejected by all Poles at the time because of the experience of WWII. Thirdly, he argues that all three violent systems of government – apartheid, fascism and communism – are similar. Therefore, if the reader is anti-communist, they must also be opposed to apartheid.

The aforementioned comparison of apartheid with fascism is articulated several times in Ledóchowski's writings. A substantial amount of attention is given to the prohibition of intimate interactions between individuals of different ethnic groups, as introduced by the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act (1949) and the Immorality Act (1950 and 1957). Ledóchowski almost always refers to these prohibitions using the Nazi term *Rassenschande*. For instance, in the short story *Las i step* (*The Forest and the Plain*), the term is employed in the narrator's statement recollecting his passive stance towards a woman he encountered fortuitously, who seeks to denounce her husband for conducting an affair with a Black maid (Ledóchowski 1988: 78). In the aforementioned story, *My Non-Native Realm*, the narrator emphasises that the ban on sexual relations between people of "different races" renders apartheid-era South Africa akin to the Third Reich: "No other regime in history, except for Hitler and the caste system in India, has dared to do this" (14).

4 The English translation of Miłosz's book is titled *The Native Realm*. The Ledóchowski version, "Native Europe," seems to be a combination of the English and original titles (*Rodzinna Europa*).

Another form of associating fascism with apartheid appears in an early journalistic piece from 1966, *Spacerkiem po Johannesburgu* (*A Walk Around Johannesburg*), in which Ledóchowski criticises the new Polish migration of the period for "standing and continuing to stand by the throne of apartheid" (Ledóchowski 1966: 3). He also evokes a conversation he had with a Jewish immigrant from Poland:

> How wrong that old Jew was when he told me years ago, after being miraculously rescued from the Nazi camps: "We Jews and Poles are cured of racism forever. Those who have experienced the humiliation of man by man first-hand…" Human memory is short, and today it takes effort to remember the separate entrances bearing the inscription "Nur für Polen und Hunde", through which one entered with a cowering body and heart (3).

Ledóchowski and the "older" generation of migrants clearly see the connection between apartheid and fascist racism. Having experienced the latter as victims in Poland during the Second World War, they are compelled to oppose apartheid in contemporary South Africa. They readily recognise the similarity between Nazi signs bearing the words "Nur für Polen und Hunde" and South African Apartheid "Net Blankes/For Whites Only" signs. However, Ledóchowski explains that the new migrants have "forgotten" this experience because their new "country and its system have given them prosperity and security, which they cannot easily renounce in the name of brotherhood and unity among peoples" (3).

The image of the fading memory of Nazi crimes, which prevents the recognition of similarities between the Third Reich and South Africa, is revisited a decade later in the story *Theory and Practice*. In the story, an elderly narrator explains the White privilege and the criminal nature of racial segregation to a young immigrant couple who have just arrived in South Africa.

> I am very scared when I read about what is happening in scientists' laboratories. It seems to me that the period of silence that prevailed in the world following Hitler's gruesome experiments in racism is now over. Scientists, building on seven miles of advances in biological knowledge, are putting forward arguments about the primacy of heredity over environmental influences. From there, it is only a small step to the scientific justification of racism (Ledóchowski 1977: 4).

The elderly man reflects that the scientific community has forgotten the lessons of the Holocaust. In its pursuit of scientific progress, it fails to recognise the dangers of racism. To him, the link between racism and Nazism is clear.

In Ledóchowski's writings, Catholicism frequently served as a counterpoint to apartheid. This appears to be an expression of the author's involvement in the life of the South African Catholic Church. While his views on Catholicism are not uncritical, primarily due to its legacy of collaboration with colonialism, it is important to his writings that Catholicism took the most anti-apartheid stance of all the Christian denominations operating in South Africa (Ledóchowski 1980b; 1980c). His short stories and other writings convey the universal Catholic message that all people are created in God's image and that Christ died on the cross for everyone. For example, in *My Non-Native Realm*, he wrote:

> This is where my non-native realm ends. From there, northwards, stretches the domain of the Black Man. We have been arguing about him for centuries. For some Christians, the question of whether Christ had him in mind when he died on the cross is still unresolved (Ledóchowski 1988: 8).

His writings acknowledged both the Catholic faith and the racist views of the majority of the Polish diaspora (both old and new). His work appeared to convey to his Polish readers that, as Catholics, they should not be racist.

5. Apartheid and the Second Polish Republic

The volume contains recurring scenes in which memories of the Second Polish Republic – the narrators' homeland during their childhood and youth – are linked with apartheid-era South Africa. The South African plain reminds the narrators of a forest in western Ukraine, and farms based on low-wage labour are reminiscent of estates based on Ukrainian labour. The legal ban on interracial marriage is similar to the customary ban on marriages between Poles and Jews (Kusek 2026a). In the short story *Październikowe róże* (*October Roses*), the narrator works in his garden one morning and reflects on South Africa and Poland:

> I looked at the newspaper, which featured three-inch-long headlines. I know from experience that this always means something bad. So let this Daily Mail lie there, rolled up like an innocent trumpet. Why should it spoil the taste of my coffee? I would swear that this gentleman, with his hair arranged in fine waves and a profile that is all too easy prey for the world's caricaturists, has done something wrong again. He met

> with someone, somewhere; he made a speech; he drafted a statement; he threatened with a flash of eyes from behind thick glasses… All of which will eventually result in Petrus and Jo – who until now considered me a decent person – believing that I am a villain. As a result, they will start sharpening their hacksaws and maybe even their pitchforks, ready to assume the role of their fair-haired predecessors in Ukraine. Having succumbed to a similar mental metamorphosis, they drove my uncles barefoot over barbed wire until they fell silent (Ledóchowski, 1988: 29).

The narrator is led by newspaper reporting on various applications of apartheid policy, most likely implemented by John Vorster (the short story is from 1977), to the revolution of the 1940s in Western Ukraine, where the Ledóchowski family-owned property, by successive associations. To the narrator, the apartheid system is akin to the regime in place during the Second Polish Republic. There, too, large class divisions frequently coincided with ethnic differences. In the narrator's country of birth, huge inequalities and violence against underprivileged groups prevented peaceful social change. A revolutionary outbreak took the lives of some members of the Ledóchowski family, who, like many White South Africans, belonged to the privileged group, while sentencing others to exile. The narrator fears that a similar thing will happen in South Africa. As he later confides to a friend in the story, this will be his third expulsion: first from Poland, then from the Congo and now from South Africa (Ledóchowski 1988: 30–31; see also Ledóchowski 1977).

A similar surprising analogy is drawn in the 1979 story *Noce i dnie emigranta* (*Nights and Days of a Migrant*). The protagonists, Roman and Ewa – former landowners who were "expelled from their estates" in pre-war Poland – "take up a position as administrators for a wealthy landowner" (4) in Rhodesia. According to the Polish migrant narrator living in South Africa, they are similar to Bogumił and Barbara, the protagonists of Maria Dąbrowska's novel *Noce i dnie* (*Nights and Days*) published in 1931, which is still very popular in Poland today. Deprived of their estates by the Russian imperial authorities, Bogumił and Barbara also served as administrators of a wealthy Polish landowner's estate at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. As the narrator explains, "instead of beetroot, flax and rapeseed, there are tobacco plantations and orange orchards", "instead of a foreman, there is a bass boy", and "instead of a horse-drawn cart, with which Bogumił oversaw the farm, there is a Land Rover" (4). The analogy serves to depict Roman and Ewa as individuals who, in the aftermath of the social revolution in Poland, refuse to succumb to "decline" or "loss of social status." In Rhodesia, where racial segregation is similar to South African apartheid,

they seek opportunities to maintain their status as landowners – people who run large farms and manage poor, uneducated peasant families in a patriarchal manner. However, just as in Dąbrowska's novel, they must settle for a position one step lower, subordinate to the estate owners, a situation which causes constant anxiety and frustration among the protagonists (Ledóchowski 1979: 4–5).

I would also like to add that Ledóchowski uses similar comparisons in his journalistic writing. In his article "Apartheid in Africa", reflecting on the possibility of a revolution in South Africa, he argues that the apartheid regime, like "every Polish countess in Podolia during the Belle Époque," constantly calculates what conditions would have to be met for the existing order to collapse (Ledóchowski 1970: 146–147). In a piece published a decade later, entitled "Africa at a Crossroads," he draws parallels between pre-war South Africa and 18th-century Poland. In both countries, he writes, power was exercised by the "farmer-noble class", and "90% of the population was deprived of all civil rights" (Ledóchowski 1980a: 38).

A comparison of South Africa in the 1970s and 1980s with the Second Polish Republic in the 1920s could lead the reader to a conclusion that South Africa is 'backward' in relation to Europe. In other words, readers may conclude that South Africa is "less developed" because it faces problems similar to those encountered by former European countries before they transformed into modern, democratic and egalitarian societies. Although this argument often recurs, particularly in older anti-apartheid statements, it is unclear whether Ledóchowski intended to reproduce it. It can be said with greater certainty that the figures of memory contained in the stories explain to the narrator and readers what apartheid is, and what it can lead to. Images of social differences, national prejudices and the efforts of the declassed to preserve elements of their former status and articulate their anxiety about the future, drawn from the cultural memory of the Second Polish Republic, offer insight into the situation of the Polish diaspora in apartheid South Africa.

6. Conclusion

Ledóchowski's writing occupies a striking position within the post-war anti-apartheid discourse in Poland. This discourse was shaped by writers, academics and reporters in the Polish People's Republic who published from a variety of perspectives, including socialist, communist, anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist, liberal and secular. Anti-fascism was the dominant component of these statements (Muchowski 2025). As domestic and *émigré* publications had developed partly separate lines of discourse, Ledóchowski joined this discussion in the 1980s when he started writing for domestic magazines and published his book.

When he links fascism with apartheid, he uses similar images and arguments to those of the anti-fascist approach. A new element is his configuration of these two alongside the opposition of communism and anti-communism, and Catholicism. His texts also introduce the perspective of the heir to the pre-war rural elite into the discourse, making surprising comparisons between social inequalities in pre-war Poland and contemporary South Africa.

I am in partial agreement and partial disagreement with Gordimer, and my reading of Ledóchowski's book suggests that he was a figure of many worlds, with permeable and changeable boundaries between them. Ledóchowski was South African and a member of the Polish diaspora, he preserved his ties to Poland, the contemporary Socialist Poland and the one of the past, the Second Polish Republic. He was engaged in an anti-apartheid movement, the Catholic Church community in South Africa and the Polish global *émigré* community anchored primarily in London and Paris. Among these identities and memory cultures, the national ones do not play a dominant role. Operating in all these worlds, Ledóchowski combined their components when he engaged in Polish *émigré*, anti-apartheid, Catholic activism and when he wrote his short stories.

| References

Budny, Łukasz. "Twarze prozy. Spóźnione lektury." *Kultura* 16 (1988): 3.

Christiaens, Kim, and Idesbald Goddeeris. "Solidarity or Anti-Apartheid? The Polish Opposition and South Africa, 1976–1989." In: Anna Konieczna and Rob Skinner, eds. *A Global History of Anti-Apartheid*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2019. 291–315. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-03652-2_10.

Dąbrowska, Maria. *Noce i dnie*. Vols. 1–3. Warszawa: Świat Książki, 2021.

Gordimer, Nadine. "Włodzimierz Ledóchowski, człowiek dwóch światów." *Zeszyty Literackie* 25 (1989): 148–151.

Kusek, Robert. "A Dis:connected Bloodland: Unearthing the Memory of Central European Violence in South Africa." *Memory Studies Review*, forthcoming.

—. "Infrastructure of Resistance: Nadine Gordimer's Polish Homes." In *Post--colonial Infrastructure*, edited by Timo Müller, Dominik Steinhilber, and Christina Wald, 63–79. Heidelberg: Heidelberg University Publishing, 2026.

Ledóchowski, Jan. "Włodzimierz Ledóchowski 1910–1987." 2018. https://www.ledochowski.eu/rodzina/wlodzimierz1910.html.

Ledóchowski, Włodzimierz. "Spacerkiem po Johannesburgu." *Wiadomości* 27 (1966): 3.

—. "Apartheid w Afryce." *Kultura* 7–8 (1970): 140–148.

—. "List z Rodezji." *Wiadomości* 50/51 (1977): 4.
—. "Teoria i praktyka." *Wiadomości* 40 (1977): 2.
—. "Noce i dnie emigranta." *Wiadomości* 19/20 (1979): 4–5.
—. "Afryka na zakręcie." *Kultura* 9 (1980a): 34–44.
—. "Marksizm vs chrześcijaństwo." *Wiadomości* 16 (1980b): 1.
—. "Chrześcijaństwo w Afryce." *Wiadomości* 28 (1980c): 2.
—. *Mój nierodzinny kraj*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1988.
Lengren, Magdalena. "Humanista w pułapce." *Nowe Książki* 9 (1988): 81.
Miłosz, Czesław. *Native Realm: A Search for Self-Definition*. trans. Catherine S. Leach. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981.
Muchowski, Jakub. "Apartheid, antyfaszyzm i misja cywilizacyjna: Dyskurs antyapartheidowski w Polskiej Rzeczpospolitej Ludowej w latach pięćdziesiątych i sześćdziesiątych XX wieku." *Studia Litteraria et Historica* 13 (2024). https://doi.org/10.11649/slh.3186
Pruszyński, Mieczysław. "Kilka słów o autorze Pamiętnika pozostawionego w Ankarze." In: Włodzimierz Ledóchowski. *Pamiętnik pozostawiony w Ankarze*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Ministerstwa Obrony Narodowej, 1990. 273–278.
Stola, Dariusz. *Kraj bez wyjścia? Migracje z Polski 1949–1989*. Warszawa: IPN, ISP PAN, 2020.

| Abstract

JAKUB MUCHOWSKI

A Man of Many Worlds: Włodzimierz Ledóchowski, Polish Memory Cultures, and Anti-Apartheid Activism

The article discusses the uses of Polish memory cultures in anti-apartheid writings. This surprising transnational connection is analyzed on the basis of a case study of the writings of Włodzimierz Ledóchowski (1910–1987) an anti-apartheid activist and writer who lived in the Polish diaspora in South Africa after World War II. After Ledóchowski's death, Nadine Gordimer, Nobel Prize-winning South African Writer, in her Tribute called him a man of two worlds, Polish and South African. Partly in agreement with Gordimer, partly in contrast to her, my reading of Ledóchowski's writings suggests that he was a figure of many worlds and that the boundaries between them are permeable and changeable. Ledóchowski is South African and a member of Polish diaspora, he preserves his ties to Poland, the contemporary Socialist Poland and the one of the past, the Second Polish Republic. He is engaged in an anti-apartheid movement, the Catholic Church community in South Africa

and the Polish global émigré community anchored primarily in London and Paris. Among these identities and memory cultures, the national ones do not play a dominant role. Within these connections solidarity ties are drawn in which Poland's memory cultures serve the practices of resistance against apartheid.

Keywords: Włodzimierz Ledóchowski; Nadine Gordimer; antiapartheid; Polish memory cultures; Polish diaspora in South Africa; comradeship

| Bio

Jakub Muchowski is an adjunct professor at the Department of History of Jagiellonian University, Poland. His research focuses on the theory of historical writing, Polish memory cultures, transnational history of Poland and labour history. His ongoing work centres on reading historical writing, transnational relations between Poland and South Africa and forms of invisibility of labour in industrial museums. He has authored articles in journals including *Journal of the Philosophy of History*, *História da Historiografia*, *International Journal of Heritage Studies* and *Rethinking History*.
E-mail: jakub.muchowski@uj.edu.pl
ORCID: 0000-0003-1193-6966