

## THE LANGUAGE OF SOCJALDEMOKRACJA RZECZYPOSPOLITEJ POLSKIEJ BETWEEN 1993 AND 1997

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**Resum.** El llenguatge del Socjaldemokracja Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej entre el 1993 i el 1997. El propòsit d'aquest article és presentar i analitzar els trets lingüístics bàsics del SdRP, la força socialdemòcrata polaca més important dels anys noranta. En aquest estudi, es comparen els pronunciaments i les declaracions fetes per aquest partit amb els trets característics del llenguatge polític de sistemes democràtics i totalitaristes, tot enllaçant-ho amb el context de la situació política de Polònia durant el període de temps analitzat. Per bé que el partit es presenta amb una imatge de progressisme i eficàcia propis del moviment socialdemòcrata internacional, el llenguatge emprat pels seus representants deixa entreveure els seus orígens basats en una estreta relació amb el *newspeak* orwellià dels anys vuitanta (com ara en els conceptes de l'enemic del poble, les frases fetes i locucions, el ritualisme i la màgia). Per consegüent, el llenguatge del SdRP s'analitza com una continuació de l'estil totalitarista, és a dir, moderat en forma i contingut. Aquest treball és una combinació de sociologia política, sociolingüística i estudis culturals.

**Paraules clau:** llenguatge polític, *newspeak*

**Abstract.** The objective of the study is to present and analyse the essential linguistic features of SdRP – the most significant Polish social-democratic force of the nineties. The pronouncements and declarations issued by the party are compared with the characteristics of political language of both democratic and totalitarian systems and related to the context of political situation in Poland during the analysed span of time. Although the party presents itself as a progressive and effective political force connected with the international social-democratic movement, the language used by its elite reveals its origin, namely, strong associations with newspeak of the eighties (especially in such elements as: the objective enemy, idiomatic phrases, rituality and magic). Therefore, the party's language is examined as the continuation of the totalitarian style, moderate in form and substance. The approach to the subject is a combination of political sociology, socio-linguistics and cultural studies.

**Key words:** political language, newspeak

The present paper is concerned with the main linguistic features of Socjal-demokracja Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej (The Social-Democratic Party of the Polish Republic, further: SdRP) — the leading political force during the 1993–1997 period, when it co-led the successive Polish governments. The main argument of the work implies that the SdRP's public pronouncements can be labeled as a moderate kind of *newspeak*, that is the language of totalitarian power.

The main features of political language can be enclosed in the following characteristics: *manichaeism*, *rituality*, *magic*, *arbitrariness*, *indeterminacy of terms* and *idiomatic nature of the totalitarian language*. The first four features are probably distinctive for every kind of political language and consist of its uniqueness as a type of *language* itself and its phatic functions in the mass communication. Indeterminacy of terms and idiomatic character of language are connected mostly with the pronouncements uttered by totalitarian power and, thus, underline bizarre, idiosyncratic and unrepeatable aspects of the texts issued in *newspeak*.

SdRP was formed in 1990 and presented itself as a leftist alternative to the Center and Right wing parties. In fact, almost all of the SdRP's members were known as the activists of the Polish United Worker's Party (later: PZPR) during the seventies and eighties. According to its leaders and programs, SdRP in its doctrine and ideology maintains the traditions of Polish and worldwide socialist and social-democratic movements.

The main basis for the present analysis comes from two main sources: firstly, the founding documents issued by SdRP, that is *Deklaracja Socjal-demokracji Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej* and *Statut Socjaldemokracji Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej* and, secondly, the political and public pronouncements of such leaders of the party as Józef Oleksy, Aleksander Kwaśniewski, Leszek Miller, Marek Borowski or Jerzy Szmajdziński. The documents mentioned and the speeches of the leaders provide a wide linguistic spectrum and allow observation of the main tendencies and features in the language of the party.

## 1 Manichaeism in the political language of SdRP

Manichaeism constitutes the most significant feature of *newspeak* and implies that every aspect of social life, including language, has its own value equivalent. Moreover, from the Manichaean point of view, the whole world is divided into strictly separated parts: *good* and *bad*. The former can be

described as progressive and revolutionary; the latter can be labeled as retrogressive and reactionary (cf. Głowiński [4, p. 8]). The consequence of this division of the world is the division of people into the familiar ours and the unfamiliar aliens or strangers. In this way, the category of the *objective enemy* appears, that is one who is perceived as an enemy by the leader and managing staff of the leading party (cf. Bäcker [1, p. 79]).

As regards manichaeism in the SdRP's language, the following hypothesis may be formulated: SdRP as an inheritor of the PZPR is likely to employ manichaeism as a basic characteristic in its language. Manichaeism was the most important factor in Polish political language of the eighties and it was present in almost every political text uttered by the authorities. In the case of the SdRP, the presence of manichaeism in times of political stagnation is almost invisible, in times of political struggle, however, its intensity is high.

As regards such documents as *Declaration* and *Status* of SdRP, the figure of an objective enemy does not exist. Value labels do not explicitly divide the world into the good and the bad spheres. The SdRP enumerates positive items as the constitutive values which are essential for Poles and the Polish state. The figure of a general non defined enemy and negative values are, however, hidden in the deep structure of the texts and are uttered implicitly. Thus, the enemy can be defined as the one who does not support values promoted by SdRP and who is against the party itself. Therefore, SdRP's enemies should be sought amongst those who are against a strong Poland, social justice, democratic socialism, pluralism in political life, strong local authority, the development of science and culture, privatization, joining NATO and the European Union, and social-democratic ideas. Most of the values enumerated above are general ones and are widely accepted by citizens and political parties. Several, however, can be labeled as questionable for other political groups and form the platform on which the political struggle against the party is undertaken. Among these are the following issues: social-democratic ideology and connections with international social-democratic movements, social justice, and, finally, democratic socialism. These statements can be indicated as the remnants of the PZPR's program and compromised communist past.

The above category consist of people who did not believe in the SdRP's success on the Polish political scene, and then, when the party became most popular, those who perceived SdRP's governments in coalition with Polish Peasants Party — PSL as a threat to democratic transformation in Poland. As Aleksander Kwaśniewski pointed out [5, stenograph from the 44th session of Sejm RP 01.03.1995, p. 32]:

During the recent sixteen months none of the disasters came to Poland which Poles and the world were frightened with by some people in Autumn 1993 after the electoral victory of the Left actually happened. The principles of democracy were not impeded [...] The predicted retreat from economic reforms did not happen. Neither the breakdown of economical growth nor restraint of the tempo of integration with the European structures took place.

Quite the contrary, economic growth was maintained, unemployment was limited, inflation decreased [...].

Using the figure of non-defined enemy allows the speaker to indicate a foe and label him or her without pointing at particular persons. However, the figure of a non defined enemy, first of all, creates a certain linguistic and political background on which the figure of a defined enemy is presented.

The second type of enemy, that is, a defined enemy consists of specific persons who act against the SdRP. In the pronouncements of the party leaders, several specific opponents can be indicated: firstly, President Lech Wałęsa, his co-workers and advisors Lech Falandysz and Mieczysław Wachowski; and secondly, Marian Krzaklewski, the leader of the 'Solidarity' trade union, and Right wing coalition Electoral Action 'Solidarity' (AW'S').

### 1.1 LECH WAŁĘSA AND HIS CO-WORKERS

Undoubtedly, Lech Wałęsa is the most important and powerful enemy of SdRP. His position as President of the Polish Republic (between 1990 and 1995) and his personal past, as the former leader of 'Solidarity' social movement and trade union since 1980, make him the unquestionable moral and *de facto* leader of anti post-communist opposition.

Probably the most significant and heated political struggle between Wałęsa and SdRP took place at the turn of 1994–1995 when the President threatened to legally dissolve Parliament. Moreover, the parliamentary crisis accompanied the personal conflict between the two most important candidates for the Presidency position Wałęsa and Kwaśniewski and was an important factor in the 1995 presidential campaign.

The most significant pronouncements of the SdRP concerning the crisis and its political effects took place in the Sejm. During its 42nd session (04.02.1995), Aleksander Kwaśniewski describing the president's activities used such strong phrases as *politically mottled acts; a dangerous means of destabilization of the state and a violation of the Constitution; a constitutional*

*coup d'état; violation of the Constitution and extra-legal activities.* During the Sejm sessions in winter of 1995 he proclaimed:

This is the President's pronouncement against the very rule of the law and against parliamentarism. And this must go against the protest of the whole Parliament (the 42nd session of Sejm, 04.02.1995)

I should love to believe, that soon, playing with the economy, budget and taxes will be finished, a game undertaken by Lech Wałęsa for electoral purposes.

[The problem is caused by the fact] that the president's center wants to represent many contrary options simultaneously. It preaches "development by inflation", and, at the same time, supports ideas close to extreme monetarism. [...] The President all the time, from the beginning of his term of office, is "for, and even against". We think, that such politics should be ended precisely for the good of Poland [...]. (the 44th session of Sejm, 01.03.1995)

## 1.2 MARIAN KRZAKLEWSKI AND 'SOLIDARITY' TRADE UNION

The indication of 'Solidarity' leader Marian Krzaklewski and 'Solidarity' itself as SdRP's enemies was connected with the constitutional campaign in 1996 and 1997. Although the movement was pointed out as one of the main opponents of the SdRP in the whole post-communist period, the struggle between the two intensified before the constitutional referendum in May 1997. Krzaklewski severely criticized the Constitution's project advertised by President Kwaśniewski and the SdRP, and proposed the opposite project accepted by the 'Solidarity' movement. The SdRP, in turn, criticized the 'Solidarity' standpoint. As Marek Borowski proclaimed [8, pp. 45–46]:

Only a few days ago Solidarity's project was compared with the Third of May Constitution, while the authors of the Constitutional Committee of National Assembly were compared with Targowica.

[The real difference lies] in the controversy between those who since 1989 have changed Poland in an evolutionary way and those who dream about a revolution.[...]

## 2 Magic in the political language of SdRP

Magic in political language is based on the fact that the act of expression of a particular sentence is not only an utterance but also the act of constituting

the non linguistic reality. In this kind of thinking, the word is not a simple description of non linguistic reality but also serves as a means of creating this reality (Malinowski [6, p. 214]). As Głowiński [3, p. 10] pointed out, magical wishes are more or less effective but in every example, the manifestation of magical thinking employs a rule which can be presented as a simple equation: *wish = reality*.

Magic in the SdRP's language determines almost every political text uttered by the party leaders. Texts of the SdRP's pronouncements, program, status and program declarations are full of the spells and magical formulas which fill their discourse. The incantations are connected with positive values and a positive image of the party as an advancing, progressive, thoughtful, and successful political formation. In the texts analyzed such spells and formulas such as: democracy, civilization, free market economy, pluralism, dialog, privatization, unemployment, freedom, progress, civil society, law-abidingness, social equality, development of national culture, private property, rationality, ecology, NATO, the European Union are used. Most of them can be labeled as general formulas without meaning or with meaning created by the sender of the message. By using a magical word, the sender of information can manipulate the receiver and create new meanings from old words. NATO, for example, was perceived during the communist period as the root of all aggressive imperialistic evil and it had a negative label. In recent years the situation has changed, and NATO has a positive mark. Amongst other expressions which went through similar changes one can find such phrases as: the *European Union*, *democracy*, *civil society* or *private property*.

Political magic describes the world in which a non-existing desirable state is spoken about as a real existing object. The SdRP presents itself as a progressive formation which acts in different social fields within the framework of the democratic political system. Consequently, the party's political and social program can be perceived as a certain patchwork of fashionable and reasonable ideas for the average citizen who is supposed to provide wide social support to the formation. The main trace of linguistic magic in the SdRP's pronouncements is the fact that the party is presenting itself as a formation which has always had wide social support [9, p. 3]:

Society needs a Left which is strong, effective, efficient and capable of raising itself above divisions and particular aspirations for the good of the state and its citizens. Which can express, defend, and realize the interests of various social groups and society as a whole.

SdRP leaders very often quote the results of general public opinion polls

to prove the social support to the party. The examples below come from speeches by Jerzy Szmajdziński and Aleksander Kwaśniewski uttered during the sessions of Sejm:

Szmajdziński (the 96th session of Sejm, 19.12.1996): The Prime Minister [Józef Oleksy] was forced to quit when he himself and his government were reaching high scores in social public polls.

Kwaśniewski (the 44th session of Sejm, 01.03.1995): Solid social support for both formations [which form the governmental coalition, that is SLD and PSL] is maintained. All the polls confirm it.

The other issue connected both with magic in the SdRP's language and presenting the party as a positive and progressive formation is that of ecology. As a fashionable topic, it is included by the block in order to present the Left as a modern and progressive alliance which cares not only about the politics but also about issues important for the modern world and its inhabitants. In *Program SdRP* [9, p. 17] one can find declarations about ecological issues:

Structural changes in the economy should assume among others:

- gradual limitation of the production damaging for the environment [...]
- development of less arduous means of transport, including public communication.

Ecological politics should find support in the legislative sphere [...]. As a particular matter we assume pro-ecological methods of influencing the economy. The devastation of the environment should be first of all unprofitable, and initiatives which lead to its improvement - supported [...].

### 3 Rituality in the political language of SdRP

The rituality of political language is based on the fact that in certain circumstances there is only one acceptable way of speaking (M. Głowiński [4, p. 8]). As the result of ritual comes the petrification of gestures and the language itself by creating certain *clichés*, patterns, stereotypes and language taboos. These formulas are fixed in language and the way of behaviour of a certain society and cannot be changed under any circumstances.

The most popular ritual phrases of the Polish *newspeak* were the following: *further development*, *leading*, *complex*, *wrong* or *zabezpieczyć*. The SdRP in

its political image and real activities tries to avoid the presentation of itself as the inheritor of the communist formation, although they are constantly labeled by its opponents as the post-communist party, and, consequently, the image of the party as those who have taken up the legacy of communism is functioning in Polish society. In this inconvenient political situation it would probably be better for SdRP's public image to avoid the vocabulary taken from the discredited *red* communist past.

Surprisingly, the party leaders quite often use the phrases or even single words which come from the communistic period and were encountered in *newspeak's* structures. It seems that among the party leaders Józef Oleksy uses words of *newspeak* origin most often. In his speech during the 44th session of Sejm 03.03.1995, for example, he used such terms as *historical, further development, complex, leading, wide social understanding, mutual collaboration* or *zabezpieczyć*. Oleksy's favourite expression, used very frequently in his political pronouncements is the word *complex*.

Presumably the most compromising *newspeak* phrase was the grammatical structure named by Michał Głowiński as *postulate accusative*. According to Głowiński [4, p. 25–26], such phrases as *further improvement, further betterment, further development* should be treated as a trade mark of totalitarian propaganda. Although the language of the SdRP tries to avoid the phrase, in *Program SdRP*, one can find sentences which contain the discredited incantation:

SdRP opts for further increases in budget outlays [...] [9, p. 25]

We promote activities for further limiting [...] [9, p. 26]

The other examples of the use of the above phrase come from Józef Oleksy parliamentary speech 03.03.1995 (steno-gram from the 44th session of Sejm) and Aleksander Kwaśniewski speech pronounced 10.01.1997 [2, Annex n. 3]:

Oleksy: Further development is not possible without a complex reform of the widely understood sphere of social services [...]

Kwaśniewski: Elections should bring [...] further economic development.

The reasons why the party leaders use such vocabulary in their political speeches probably should be found in their personal past. All of them were active as PZPR members and their public life was formed during the communist period and their political pronouncements were uttered in *newspeak*. Consequently, it was impossible for them to avoid certain patterns fixed in their language and personalities.

#### 4 Arbitrariness in the political language of SdRP

This feature of political language implies that those who have political power can manipulate language by imposing or excluding certain words and phrases or changing their definitions (Głowiński [4, p. 9]). In this way propaganda can not only manipulate language according to its wishes but also change the whole definition of a situation within a particular society.

Undoubtedly, the most important problem connected with arbitrariness in the political language of the SdRP is the issue of the past concerning both leaders and the party itself. In the *Program Socjaldemokracji Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej* the party presents its standpoint in regard to its own past, the communist period 1945–1989 and the post communist epoch 1989–1993 when Poland was driven by ‘Solidarity’ governments. The party underlines its traditions rooted in the social-democratic movements of the ninetieth and twentieth century. Considering the totalitarian period in Poland, the SdRP does not deny its communist basis; the past and red origin, however, is criticized very moderately. The SdRP condemns the genocide of the Stalinist period and states that those who are guilty should not escape from responsibility. *Program SdRP* declares that the whole communist period in Poland cannot be measured in the same manner [9, p. 7]. As Józef Oleksy pointed out in the speech pronounced 08.02.1997 (*Informacja o działalności Klubu Parlamentarnego SLD*, Annex 9):

We referred to the past, [...] and separating from all the evil which the former system caused to people by non compliance of human rights, by its non-democratic character, the domination of the mono-party system, the lack of competition.

Consequently, the party points at such good sides of socialism in Poland as [9, p. 7–8]: the reformist direction within the communist party, ideas of pluralism, social and political reforms, the elimination of unemployment, common education, medical services, and workers mutinies against the totalitarian authority in 1956, 1970, 1976 and 1980. Reading the SdRP’s program one can think that Poland was an authoritarian country only in the decade between 1945 and 1956, and the rest of the period was filled with more or less successful attempts at introducing such positive values as: democracy, pluralism, market economy and principles of civil society undertaken by both party and underground intelligentsia or workers opposition movements.

## 5 Indeterminacy of terms in the political language of SdRP

The fifth feature of totalitarian language can be labeled as indeterminacy of terms, that is bluntness and indeterminacy of certain, most often pejorative, terms which are used by the senders of propaganda texts. The words and terms used most often in propaganda discourse are such qualifications as *a certain, well-known, definite, circles, some, miscellaneous* or *forces*.

Similarly to rituality, it is surprising that SdRP leaders *use* the amorphous expressions; however, they try to avoid this vocabulary, and, therefore, do not use them as often as during the communist regime. The following examples of blunt phrases used by SdRP leaders in their public pronouncements come from such speeches and documents issued by the party as *Oświadczenie SdRP*, *Oświadczenie Prezydium Rady Naczelnej SdRP*, speech by Jerzy Szmajdziński pronounced 07.01.1997, speech by Józef Oleksy uttered 08.02.1997, all of them gathered in the *Informacja o pracy Klubu Parlamentarnego SLD*: *some, leaders, inspirers, definite, environments, a certain, forces, others, political opponents, many, alleged, or groups*.

## 6 Idiomatic character of the political language of SdRP

The last main feature of political language is its idiomatic character, *id est* a rule that main ideas or doctrines of totalitarian ideology can be expressed only in *newspeak* and only as idiomatic phrases (Orwell [7, p. 314–316]). Consequently, totalitarian language is untranslatable into different languages which do not use *newspeak* as a basic feature.

As regarding the idiomatic character of the language of the SdRP, generally the party tries to avoid using untranslatable utterances of *newspeak* origin; in times of political struggle, however, the social-democratic party issues whole documents written in such wooden language. The following example comes from *Oświadczenie SdRP* dated 19.03.1997 [2, Annex n. 17]; the document is concerned with the government's project of closing the *Gdańsk Shipyard*, a place with strong emotional and symbolic connotations for the 'Solidarity' trade union.

The conflict caused by a situation in Gdańsk Shipyard and its workers threatened by unemployment is getting worse. That conflict is being cynically employed for a political struggle.

The shipyard's workers are still fooled by trade union leaders. Today, realizing the electoral scenario of AWS, they call for a strike, organize street actions, multiply conflicts, slight the law and democratic institutions. [...]

In all this political noise around the Shipyard the real human problems are relegated to second place. [...]

We call on 'Solidarity' to cease the actions which break the law and arouse social anxieties.

Zaostrza się konflikt wywołany sytuacją Stoczni Gdańskiej i jej pracowników zagrożonych bezrobociem. Konflikt ten jest cynicznie wykorzystywany do walki politycznej.

Pracownicy Stoczni są nadal oszukiwani przez przywódców związkowych. Dziś realizując wyborczy scenariusz AWS wzywają oni do strajku, organizują uliczne akcje, mnożą konflikty, lekceważą prawo i demokratyczne instytucje. [...]

W całym politycznym zgiełku wokół upadłości stoczni na drugi plan schodzą rzeczywiste ludzkie problemy. [...]

Wzywamy 'Solidarność' do zaprzestania akcji łamiących prawo i wzniciających niepokoje społeczne.

Probably the above document should be treated as a program declaration of the party. The document's vocabulary, phraseology and grammar structures bring the reader back to the times of the communist regime when all the texts issued by the authority were written in a way similar to the above announcement. The language contained in the document, qualified as a pure epitome of *newspeak*, identifying the roots of the SdRP, can be regarded as a link between the communist past and the contemporary battle on the political scene.

## 7 Conclusions

The language of politics is first of all connected with the quest for efficiency. In the case of a political party the quest should be perceived as a fundamental issue of its existence. Consequently, a party should present itself as the most effective and attractive for the electors in order to gain their votes. Undoubtedly, Social-Democracy of the Polish Republic shows pragmatic features in the pronouncements of its leaders and uses language which is specially oriented in order to gain the support of as many voters as possible. Moreover, the SdRP, as the inheritor of the PZPR, has taken over not only its ideology but also the linguistic features presented in the pronouncements of its leaders and program documents.

To sum up, it is worth underlining that the study of linguistic features of the SdRP's language led to the following conclusion: the language used by Socjaldemokracja Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej can be described as contemporary *newspeak*. Regardless of its strongly value-oriented dualistic structures, SdRP's pronouncements employ magic as a most significant factor. While Polish *newspeak* of the eighties was 'overloaded' with the *manichaeistic* perception of the world, the social-democrats perceive the political arena through the perspective of *magic*. The above conclusion is based on the analysis of the traces of the *newspeak* in the language of SdRP's political pronouncements. Other characteristics such as *arbitrariness*, *rituality*, *indeterminacy of terms*, and *idiomatic character* occur in SdRP's language with lower intensity. The degree of their presence is connected with the political situation in Poland and increases during political campaigns and decreases in period of relative calm in public life.

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