

Naród członków bractw —
obraz Ku Klux Klanu
w polskiej prasie w latach
1920–1940

**The Nation of Joiners.
The image of Ku Klux
Klan in Polish press of
1920–1940's**

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ABSTRAKT

Omawiając postrzeganie wydarzeń międzynarodowych w polskiej prasie przedwojennej należy zwrócić uwagę, że były one częstym tematem w czasach utraty niepodległości, takich jak rozbiory Polski i późniejsze wojny światowe. Niektóre z wydarzeń, które miały miejsce w historii Stanów Zjednoczonych, były przedmiotem zainteresowania prasy lokalnej i ogólnopolskiej. Dotyczyło to nawet jednej z najbardziej brutalnych i rasistowskich organizacji amerykańskich — niesławnego Ku Klux Klanu. Celem artykułu jest zapoznanie czytelników z obrazem najpotężniejszego Klanu lat dwudziestych XX wieku w polskiej prasie.

ABSTRACT

When discussing the perception of international events in the Polish pre-war press, it should be noted that these were frequently the subject matter in times of loss of independence such as partitioning of Poland and subsequent world wars. Some of the events happening in the history of the United States were of interest to local and national press. It applied even to one of the most violent and racist of American organizations — the infamous Ku Klux Klan. The purpose of this article is to acquaint readers with the image of the most powerful Klan of 1920's in the Polish press. It is intriguing that the subject of Klan remains relatively unknown to Polish scientific literature. As of April 2020 there have been published only four monographies about the Invisible Empire written by Polish authors. This is puzzling because, as stated above, the subject matter of the Klan already existed in the Polish press at the time of its greatest power. Moreover, Polish-language readers during the partitions of Poland could familiarize themselves with current social and ethnic issues in the United States*. One example would be a series of articles in Galician press on the William Cody's *Wild West Show* which toured Polish lands in 1906**.

* **Partitions of Poland**, (1772, 1793, 1795), three territorial divisions of Poland, perpetrated by Russia, Prussia, and Austria, by which Poland's size was progressively reduced until, after the final partition, the state of Poland ceased to exist. Details at: <https://www.britannica.com/event/Partitions-of-Poland> [accessed on: 08.04.2020].

Streszczenie

Poniższe omówienia wybranych tytułów prasowych świadczą o tym, że prasa polska dwudziestolecia międzywojennego żywo interesowała się najnowszymi doniesieniami z całego świata. Było to możliwe między innymi dzięki przedrukowi artykułów, w tym z prasy amerykańskiej, a w niektórych przypadkach zatrudnieniu korespondentów zagranicznych. Na podstawie omawianych artykułów prasowych możemy stwierdzić, że polscy dziennikarze posiadali gruntowną wiedzę na temat historii Klanu, jego założeniach programowych, a nawet nazwisk najważniejszych liderów.

Intrygujące jest to, że tematyka bractw amerykańskich, w tym Ku Klux Klanu wciąż pozostaje stosunkowo nieznana w polskiej literaturze naukowej. Według stanu na kwiecień 2021 roku ukazały się tylko cztery monografie o Niewidzialnym Imperium napisane przez polskich autorów. Jest to zagadkowe, ponieważ, jak stwierdzono powyżej, tematyka Klanu istniała już w polskiej prasie w czasie gdy był on najpotężniejszy w USA.

** The story of William Cody's Wild West visit to partitioned Poland was subject of recent academic research by Bartosz Hlebowicz. Details to be found in: Hlebowicz, Bartosz. "‘They Stepped on Their Toes’. Reception of the Buffalo Bill's Wild West and Congress of Rough Riders of the World in Polish Press of Galicia, 1906". *Acta Ethnographica Hungarica: An International Journal of Ethnography*, vol. 64, no. 1, 2019, p. 153+. *Gale Academic OneFile*, Accessed 27 Apr. 2020.

Methodology of the research

When describing the content of the articles, the method of analyzing the content of the press was used, presented in the book by the Polish scientist Walery Pisarek entitled *Analysis of the Content of the Press* published in Krakow in 1983.

The statistical methods of sampling used in media studies are mainly used in quantitative analysis. Due to the fact that the discussed topic of the article is highly dispersed in the mentioned titles, the use of a statistical sample could result in the lack of finding the topic in question. Bearing in mind the dispersion of the subject of the study, the entire content of individual journals was analyzed, selecting only interesting texts in terms of their content and relevance to the general subject matter of the publication.

The primary reason for conducting the research and writing this article was the purchase by the author of this publication of the oldest text in Polish about the *Ku Klux Klan* from 1921. Moreover, the choice of the Polish press as the subject of the analysis was related to the fact that until recently the subject matter of the *Ku Klux Klan* had not been the area of great interest of Polish researchers. Some scientists, such as Jerzy Sobieraj, emphasized that in the case of the *Ku Klux Klan* there are no older publications in Poland than the publication by Henryk Jankowski from 1934, and the literature on the subject is relatively poor.¹

The repositories of local digital libraries were scanned in searching for information about the image of *Ku Klux Klan* in the Polish press. Then the databases were searched by entering key terms such as: *Ku Klux Klan*, Klan, nativism, racism, etc. Information was also extracted from catalogues of antique shops and auction houses.

The criterion for selecting specific editions of Polish newspapers was also the years of the greatest activity of the second *Ku Klux Klan*, covering the period of 1915–1925, the pre-war years, as well as the rebirth of the organization in the USA after the end of World War II. In the latter case, only one article was found, which is discussed in more detail in this publication. It is worth noting that the oldest Polish text about the *Ku Klux Klan* was written at the time of its greatest activity and

¹ J. Sobieraj, *Ku Klux Klan*, Warszawa 2004, p. 7.

spectacular achievements in the USA. In addition, the authors of the articles also drew attention to the increasingly fascist face of the Klan, which established official cooperation with the American Nazis in the 1930s.

History of the Ku Klux Klan

The history of the second *Ku Klux Klan* is inseparable from its predecessor of the second half of the nineteenth century. Therefore, to understand the sense of the emergence of such organizations at least partially, one should return to the past. The provincial image of the country was often characterised by calmness and tranquillity of life. Thus lack of meaning, loneliness and monotony of life could serve as the foundation for numerous clubs and associations.² This was noted already in the past by a famous Frenchman Alexis de Tocqueville, who once named United States as a *country of joiners*.³

In addition to social aspect, participation in such fraternities meant substantial benefits. During hardships of life members could rely on financial support from clubs. Max Lerner in his famous work *America as a Civilization* noted that Americans were inclined to associate in numerous clubs.⁴ One of examples was Newburyport, Massachusetts, having 17, 000 citizens, chartered 800 different clubs and associations.⁵ Organized membership was always a matter of clannishness. Formalized structures, secret rituals and mystery characterized most of American fraternities. One of the oldest and most influential were American masonic lodges. One of the most important was the *Elks Order*, whose fifteen members were American presidents.⁶ Freemasonry has had old traditions and well-established influence in the USA. Warner noted that club membership depended largely on social class.⁷ Membership in such organizations frequently made it easier to gain influence and power.

The nineteenth century was a period of economic, moral, and political divisions in multiethnic American society. Soon, this situation led to the outbreak of armed conflict — the *Civil War*. One of the main causes of war was the issue of slavery. When the war ended, the reunited Union was again a state of contrasts. The ruined

² S. Mierzeński, *Amerykanie*, Warszawa 1966, p. 156.

³ A.M. Schlesinger, *Biography of a Nation of Joiners*, “The American Historical Review”, vol. 50, no. 1, 1944, pp. 1–25. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/1843565 [accessed 29 Apr. 2020].

⁴ M. Lerner, *America as a Civilization: Life and thought in The United States Today*, New York 1957, p. 68.

⁵ S. Mierzeński, *Amerykanie...*, p. 158.

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 160.

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 161.

South, which suffered the greatest cost of war, required support. It soon was to be provided by the *Reconstruction* and equation of rights of all residents of the country.⁸ At the end of the *Civil War*, the industrialization process caused new conflicts. Employers opposed the activities of trade unions. Strikes were often broken by the army. Media and newspapers portrayed labor unions as controlled by foreign powers acting on behalf of minorities. Thomas Sowell noted that "...White reluctance to deal with black hair, bodies or souls led to the creation of black professional groups".⁹

With the end of the *Civil War*, the myth of life beyond the Union vaped. For many African Americans there came a chance of emancipation and equal status with other citizens. This was sanctioned by Congressional legislation, introducing the *Thirteenth Amendment* to the *Constitution* in 1865.¹⁰ The vision of sharing rights with former slaves, the loss of power raised serious concern among the white part of the Southern community afraid of losing their free, in principle, workforce. The threat of possible litigation and claims for damages by African Americans and the poor financial condition after the war meant the end of prosperity for the agricultural South. This also marked the beginning of the *Ku Klux Klan*.

The nineteenth century Klan was originally organized as a social club by Confederate veterans in Pulaski, Tennessee, in 1866.¹¹ In the summer of 1867, the Klan was structured into the *Invisible Empire of the South* at a convention in Nashville, Tennessee, attended by delegates from former Confederate states. The group was presided over by a *Grand Wizard* and former Confederate cavalry general Nathan Bedford Forrest.¹²

The organization quickly became a vehicle for Southern white resistance to radical *Reconstruction*. Klan members sought the restoration of white supremacy through intimidation and violence aimed at the newly enfranchised Black freedmen. Vested in white robes and sheets they frightened superstitious Blacks. Klansmen whipped and killed them and their white supporters during nighttime raids.

The nineteenth century Klan reached its peak between 1868 and 1870. A potent force, it was largely responsible for the restoration of white rule in North Carolina, Tennessee, and Georgia. However General Forrest ordered its dissolution in 1869, largely because of the group's excessive violence. Klan was however still active prompting Congress to pass the *Force Act* in 1870 and the *Ku Klux Klan Act* in 1871. In the waning years of *Reconstruction*, the Klan disbanded.

The idea of the Klan appeared again in the minds of the whites at the turn of the century. It was due to literary works of Thomas Dixon. It is worth to emphasize the

⁸ M. Gołębiowski, *Leksykon kultury amerykańskiej*, Warszawa 1996, p. 365.

⁹ T. Sowell, *Markets and Minorities*, New York 1981, p. 61.

¹⁰ Ch.A. Beard, M.R. Beard, *A Basic History of the United States*, New York 1944, p. 286n.

¹¹ P. Sims, *The Klan*, Lexington 1997, p. 16.

¹² D. D'Souza et al., *Wybaczyć Ameryce, czyli co Stany Zjednoczone dały światu*, Warszawa 2015, p. 175.

importance of two of his novels: *The Leopard's Spots* from 1902 and *The Clansman* from 1905. In 1914, Dixon considered transferring the latter to cinema screens. Adaptation rights were granted to then outstanding director — David Ward Griffith.¹³ In this way, in 1915, a film was made to glorify Klan and racism — *The Birth of a Nation*. The film's content appealed especially to the poor whites, who began to blame their difficult economic situation on Blacks, and then Jewish bankers. Portraying Klansmen as great heroes this picture undoubtedly contributed to the renewed interest in the *Ku Klux Klan*. It was reborn in 1915 near Atlanta, Georgia, by colonel William J. Simmons, a former preacher and member of fraternal orders. He belonged, among others, to Freemasonry, the *Royal Arch-Mason League*, and *Knights Templars*.¹⁴ He often stressed the fact that he was a fraternalist. Simmons to gain new members attached Klan leaflets to the posters of the Griffith film.¹⁵ Klan revivalist, who in the past made its living by selling memberships in fraternal organizations such as the Woodmen of the World, looked to the Klan as a new source of his income.

The twentieth century Klan was rooted in the American nativist tradition. The new organization remained relatively small until Simmons received support from Atlanta public-relations professionals Edward Young Clarke and Mary Elizabeth Tyler. Their company, *Southern Publicity Organization*, helped to turn the initially anaemic second *Ku Klux Klan* into a mass-membership organization with a broader social agenda.¹⁶ Promised four of every five dollars collected the two agents laboured diligently digging up recruits. In sixteen months 100000 white protestant men had each paid ten dollars to join Klan.¹⁷

The basic principles of the *Invisible Empire* were formulated in the *Constitution and Rights of the Ku Klux Klan* of 1915. According to this document, the basic issue was: “unification of Caucasian men, native citizens of the United States of America who are over 18 years of age and have no obligations, loyalty to another government, nation, institution, sect, ruler, person or people”.¹⁸ In addition, Klan members undertook to protect the weak, the poor and the innocent from violence and lawlessness. The Bible was accepted as a direct and unchangeable word of God.¹⁹ The abuse of rum also belonged to the list of serious offenses. Despite the existence of the *Eighteenth Amendment* introducing *Prohibition*, many Americans did not respect its provisions. Illegal trade in alcohol led to general promiscuity of life and prostitution. The Klan also cared

¹³ W.C. Wade, *Fiery Cross*, New York 1988, p. 123.

¹⁴ K.T. Jackson, *The Ku Klux Klan in the City, 1915–1930*, Chicago 1992, p. 29.

¹⁵ S. Lay, *Revolution, War, and the Ku Klux Klan in El Paso: a Study in Intolerance on the Border*, El Paso 1984, p. 51.

¹⁶ W.L. Katz, *The Invisible Empire: the Ku Klux Klan Impact on History*, Seattle 1987, p. 79.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 79.

¹⁸ J. Sobieraj, *Ku Klux Klan...*, p. 58.

¹⁹ K.T. Jackson, *The Ku Klux Klan...*, p. 18.

for upbringing in the spirit of patriotism and the “true — Protestant religion”. Flags were often brought to schools, churches, and private institutions. The strong need for education of young generations was to guarantee the prosperity of the country, preservation of the Protestant face of America and a stable government.

The revived Klan known as Invisible Empire, was fueled partly by patriotism and romantic nostalgia for the old South. But more importantly, it expressed the defensive reaction of white Protestants in small-town America who felt threatened by the Bolshevik revolution in Russia and by the large-scale immigration that had changed the ethnic character of American society.

From 1890 an increased influx of immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe, from Roman Catholic countries such as Poland or Italy, can be observed. Over time, Catholics constituted a significant percentage of the nation, reaching 36% of the country’s population in 1920.²⁰ Catholics were considered not only as representatives of a certain church, but as citizens who pledged their love and devotion to the Vatican over duties towards the United States. They were considered “fanatics who, if only given a chance, can restore the tyranny chain, revive the inquisition and burn stakes”.²¹ The pope was considered as an autocrat who wanted to extend his empire on the other side of the Atlantic. Finally, Catholics were accused of three attacks on presidents and 90% desertion during World War I.²²

Jews, like Catholics, were a religious group persecuted by the Klan as well. Semite was described as a fierce shopkeeper rather than a pioneer, builder of the empire, creator of the nation. Most of the inhabitants of the South considered them to be “a separate race, many Southerners did not regard them as whites”.²³ Jews were also associated with Bolshevism and communism. Bolshevism identified with communists and Jews also posed a serious threat to the country. Soon anti-communist activities became the official policy of the government. When four million of women and men went on strikes in 1919 *Reds* were blamed.²⁴ Fear of *Red Revolution* blossomed into a massive hunt for US communists and radicals.

The Klan opposed the existence of organizations such as the *American Federation of Labor* or the *Congress of Industrial Organizations*. These unions demanded an equal level of wages for white and colored people and a reduction of working hours.²⁵ Second Klan peaked around 1925, when its membership exceeded 4, 000, 000 nationally, and profits rolled in from the sale of membership cards, regalia,

²⁰ Ch.C. Alexander, *The Ku Klux Klan in the Southwest: Charles C. Alexander*, University of Kentucky Press, 1965, p. 13.

²¹ K.T. Jackson, *The Ku Klux Klan...*, s. 20.

²² Ibidem.

²³ D. Goldfield, *A Sense of Place: Jews, Blacks, and White Gentiles in the American South*, “Southern Cultures” 1997, vol. 3, no. 1, p. 68.

²⁴ W.L. Katz, *The Invisible Empire...*, p. 66.

²⁵ W.C. Wade, *Fiery Cross...*, p. 260.

costumes, publications, and rituals.²⁶ Burning cross became the symbol of the new organization, and white-robed Klansmen participated in marches, parades, and night-time cross burnings all over the country. Invisible Empire cared also about the fate of its members. Its official slogan — *Not for self, but for others* emphasized charity.²⁷

To the old Klan's hostility toward Blacks the new Klan — which was strong in the Midwest, South and North — added bias against Roman Catholics, Jews, foreigners, and organized labour. The Klan enjoyed a last spurt of growth in 1928, when Alfred E. Smith, a Catholic, received the Democratic presidential nomination. During the *Great Depression* of the 1930s the Klan's membership dropped drastically, and the last units of the organization were disbanded temporarily in 1944.²⁸

The image of Ku Klux Klan in Polish press of 1920's until 1940's.

ŚWIAT (Eng. 'The World')

The oldest account of the Ku Klux Klan in Polish press comes from the Evangelical weekly journal *Świat* (Eng. *The World*) published in Warsaw in 1921.²⁹ Number 46 of the stated title informed Polish readers about the rebirth of Ku Klux Klan in the United States. *The Illustrated Weekly Journal 'The World'* (full name in Polish: *Ilustrowany Magazyn Tygodniowy „Świat”*) was a social and cultural weekly editorial published in Warsaw between 1906 and 1939. The weekly was founded by Stefan Krzywoszewski. It was published by the *Society of Orgelbrand and Sons* (Pol. *Towarzystwo Akcyjne Orgelbranda i Synów*). It was edited by, among others: Leon Chrzanowski, Eustachy Czekalski (editorial secretary), Witold Giełżyński, Waclaw Grubiński, Lucyna Kotarbińska, Janusz Makarczyk, Czesław Podwiński and Stanisław Sierosławski. *World* was one of the first in Poland to regularly publish photojournalism (photos by M. Fuchs). Along with the weekly, the literary supplement *Romance and Novel* (Pol. *Romans i Powieść*) was published. There the most outstanding Polish writers shared their work with readers. These included, among others, Kazimierz Przerwa-Tetmajer, Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz and the Noble prize laureate Władysław Reymont. The average circulation of the weekly was 10–15 thousand copies. In October 1929, the weekly received a gold medal at the *General National Exhibition* in Poznań.

²⁶ “Ku Klux Klan”. *Southern Poverty Law Center*, www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/ideology/ku-klux-klan, [accessed: 20.05.2020].

²⁷ W.L. Katz, *The Invisible Empire...*, p. 77.

²⁸ J. Sobieraj, *Ku Klux Klan...*, p. 89.

²⁹ This is the oldest account of the Ku Klux Klan in Polish press as of April, 2020.

The article entitled *Ku Klux Klan* was printed in the supplement *Romans i Powieść* on 12 November 1921. The author (known only by initials — G. S. from New York) states that the Anglo-Saxon race loved various forms of cults and sects, freemasonry, and secret rituals. The Klan dressed in masonic costumes, used trowels, swords, and secret slogans to spread knightly tradition. G. S. describes Klan activities as innocent, childish behaviour. He concentrates on the benevolent aspect of Klan doing acts of mercy through financial aid for its members. Subsequently, author shares the description of a Klan's meeting led by the *Great Leader* assisted by a *Great Hermit*, with members waving swords in a bizarre ritual. After leaving some financial contribution they were joyously returning their homes. Article firmly states that there existed a multitude of such fraternities in the United States. *Knights of Golden Eagle*, *Independent Order of Redskins* based on native customs, *Knights of Columbus*, *Knights of Pythia*, *Maccabees* and *Mephasoph*s would serve as examples of the stated.³⁰ They were not interested in politics and hardly anyone cared about them. Author states that the original Klan was initially established to protect white people from the freed Negroes. It used lynch, spread fear and death. G. S. states also that the Klan was resurgent in 1921 (the year of article's publication) by Simmons in Georgia. This time, however, Klan acted against Blacks, Catholics, Jews, and anything foreign and un-American.



³⁰ S. Mierzeński, *Amerykane...*, p. 499.

The article emphasises also the fact that the reborn Klan spread to the Northern states. Its deeds were unrelenting, cruel, and called for its demise. Assaults committed on whites, whipping of women, rolling of guilty people in tar and feathers, throwing into water and lynching were all used by Klan. Simmons had a staff of propaganda specialists, capering around in the North.

Author had a prediction that in the nearest session of Congress Klan would cease to exist. Simmons established factory producing Klan paraphernalia. Finally G. S. concludes that the Klan name was derived from Greek word *kyklos*, meaning the circle and Scottish word *clan*. The article is supplemented with a photo of Klansmen presiding over the meeting with the Bible and American flag.

NOWOŚCI ILLUSTROWANE

(Eng. Novelty Illustrated)

The second oldest account of the Klan was written in Krakow weekly newspaper *Nowości Illustrowane* (Eng. *Novelty Illustrated*) on February 3, 1923. It was a socio-cultural weekly published in Krakow in 1904–1925. Articles about literature and art, as well as news from the country and the world with serialized novels appeared on the pages. The circulation reached 3, 500 copies.

The article written by unknown author states that the news about the secret *Ku Klux Klan* had circulated around the world. The Klan was a secret society that expanded its activities in the USA. As the main principle, it adopted the quest for the supremacy of the white race. The author states that it was not a new union, but a continuation of the association founded in 1866. He uses the noun *union* describing the Klan. At that time, it used bizarre costumes, symbolic names of members. It was organization reminiscent of ancient associations. According to the article Klan derived its name from the Greek *kuklos*, meaning circle. The Klan of that time was known for its unpredictability. It appeared suddenly, served justice, and disappeared spreading fear and terror. It called itself an invisible government. Klan applied its own unwritten law. Absolute obedience was obligatory for members. Before joining the organization, each member had to answer five questions, the most important of which concerned the superiority of the white race. The author states that the Klan suspended its operations and remained for some time as forgotten.

The second period of the Klan's activity begun in 1916. The author informs that according to American press reports, it operated based on an expanded and altered number of program assumptions. The struggle against black race as well as everything that was not *native American* remained a serious challenge. The organization stood against Catholics, Protestants and Jews. The Klan was compared in the article to Italian fascism.

The new Klan was established in Atlanta, Georgia. The author notes that in 1920, three years preceding the publication of the article, it was so powerful that it was

considered dangerous to the internal state system. The candidates for judges had to declare that they were not members of the Klan. The Klansmen continued to use strange costumes and met at night. The article also draws the attention to the fact that the Klan became a self-proclaimed defender of morality and law.

Cruel lynching was administered to punish enemies. The article cites an example of an Anglican pastor of an unknown name, whom the Klan stripped naked, flattened, and covered in tar and feathers. The article also stresses the cruelty of methods used by the *Invisible Empire*. Women accused of infidelity or sexual contact with Blacks were shaved. For a Black man harassing a white woman, the Klan prepared a knife, noose or burning at a stake. According to the newspaper, the initials of the organization were also branded on foreheads of the punished. Klan chased thieves, suppressed alcoholism. According to the newspaper, its leader was called Emperor with a prediction of *His Majesty*.

Unlike its nineteenth-century protoplast, a very local organization, the new Klan used spectacular events as one of its propaganda elements. The author provides the reader with an example of such an event that took place on May 20, 1921, when 1000 Klan members on horseback crossed the streets of Dallas. Fiery cross was carried on the front, followed by numerous banners with slogans such as: chastity of women, supremacy of whites. The article also includes two large-sized photos. In the first one, the reader sees the members of the Klan sitting on horses in Annapolis, Maryland. The second photo shows local leaders dressed in paraphernalia standing in front of a burning cross. The event is taking place in an unknown location in Georgia.

EXPRESS NIEDZIELNY ILUSTROWANY
(Eng. Sunday Express Illustrated)

Express Niedzielny Ilustrowany (Eng. *Sunday Express Illustrated*) was a daily tabloid published in Łódź since August 2, 1923. *Sunday Express Illustrated* appeared as a newspaper of the publishing group *Republika*. Its founders and shareholders were three journalists — Władysław Polak (long-time editor-in-chief), Czesław Ołtaszewski (aka Czesław Nusbaum-Ołtaszewski) and Leszek Kirkien, as well as two businessmen — Maurycy Ignacy Poznański and Sergiusz Cynamon. The newspaper initially under the name of *Republika* was published on January 6, 1923. In the same year, the first issue of the *Evening Express Illustrated* was published. Number 64 from March 4, 1928 informed readers about the Klan.

In the article titled *The Fall of the Ku Klux Klan*, published in number 64 on March 4, 1928 an unknown author informs readers that an announcement was made in American newspapers about the dissolution of the *Ku Klux Klan* on February 23, 1928. The author points to the fact that information about the fall of the Klan had appeared in the press multiple times. The organization, once powerful, was in decline. However, the author expresses doubts about the final dissolution of the orga-

nization considering the upcoming presidential election in which Catholic Al Smith was racing for the office. The invisible empire of *Ku Klux Klan* was an enemy of Catholicism. Already during the presidential election in 1924, the Klan's aim was to force Catholic candidate to withdraw.

Ku Klux Klan tried to interact primarily with the appearance of mystery. White hoods covering faces were ghostly at night and frightening in petty minds. In this way Klansmen created the mood needed for their actions. The article informed that only white, US-born Protestants were allowed as members of the Klan. Everyone else was persecuted. This applied to Catholics, Jews, blacks, and immigrants.

The author of the article quotes data from one of the statistics in the state of Texas, where within 18 months the Klansmen carried out over 500 sentences. These were: arson, abduction, beating and even homicide. One of the most favourite ways of punishing the enemy was stripping, covering with tar and feathers, and beating to the blood with wet whipcords. These were the methods of those modern robber knights who annexed the motto *America for Americans* and wanted to implement it with the help of terror.³¹ The fiery cross under which it held its night meetings, intended to be a symbol, was actually perceived as gross abuse and desecration.

In addition, the article notes that the described Klan was resurgent from a relatively old secret organization. It was founded by supporters of slavery in the Southern states in 1867 to eradicate all the whims of freedom among the Blacks. The author states that the Klan's development was not actually a corollary of nationalist-fascist views, but rather an outflow of its "mystery". This was a "romantic" affair for the American public and aroused interest in this secret organization in which there was a "great wizard" with all the extensive structure adorned with fantasy and bizarre rituals.

Additionally, according to the ceremonial modelled after the masonic lodges, every candidate was compelled to take a solemn oath at night. Under pain of death, he pledged himself not to reveal the secrets of the Klan. According to the author it was the hocus-pocus of rites that surrounded this secret organization. This piqued the childishness of Americans. The article states that as a close-knit organization, Klan rarely performed outside. The largest public manifestation was a parade organized in August of 1925 by 50, 000 members dressed in white coats in front of the *White House* in Washington. But this mass manifestation was the beginning of the end of this organization. The American people were reluctant to hear more about the mad-

³¹ Historically during the Interregnum (1250–1273) of Holy Roman Empire robber barons began to earn their newly-coined term of opprobrium by robbing ships of their cargoes, stealing, and even kidnapping entire ships. They resorted to banditry. In the 19th-century and early 20th-century, this term was applied to a business tycoon who had great wealth and influence but whose methods were morally questionable. More about robber knights in: H. Zmora, *State and Nobility in Early Modern Germany: the Knightly Feud in Franconia, 1440–1567*, Cambridge 2002, p. 2003.

ness of ultra-nationalism and the Klan's terror. As post-war psychosis gave way to normalized social relations in the world, there was no room for the terror on the left (Bolshevik), or on the right as it was exemplified by the KKK.

ILUSTROWANY KURIER CODZIENNY
(Eng. Illustrated Daily Courier)

This title appeared on the Krakow press market a short time before beginning of the First World War. First published in 1910, the *Ilustrowany Kuryer Codzienny*, was a modern, twelve-page illustrated daily, edited by Maryan Dąbrowski. He was referred to by Nathaniel Wood as the *Cracovian press pioneer*.³² *Kurier* was information and sensational news oriented daily, which became the most popular newspaper of the country a few years later.³³ Dąbrowski launched *Ilustrowany Kuryer Codzienny* in December of 1910, with an initial press run of 20, 000 copies, thus capturing a sizable share of the reading public in a town of 150, 000. Within a year *Ilustrowany Kuryer Codzienny* was printed in 40, 000 copies a day.³⁴ Leading Polish journalists as well as representatives of Polish culture and science cooperated with the newspaper. Despite some early glitches with its much-ballyhooed rotary press, the fastest in Cracow, the paper was set to become city's favorite. The title expressed anti-communist and anti-Soviet views. Its business and stock reports were designed to appeal to the city's upper-crust businessmen, while special fashion sections targeted women readers. It had additions, among others *Kurier Literacko-Naukowy*, published in 1924–1939, and *Kurier Kobiety*, published in 1927–1939. The publishing of the *Illustrated Daily Courier* was interrupted by war. The last issue was published on October 26, 1939.

The attention of readers was dedicated to the Klan in number 14 of 1932. On page number 4 we can see a photograph of the funeral service of a Klansman. The information printed next to the photo shows that it was the original funeral of a member of the *Ku Klux Klan*, which took place in New York. At the head of the procession the flag of the United States was carried by a member of the *Invisible Empire*. The deceased was grieved and accompanied to his final resting place by Klansmen vested in paraphernalia.

³² N.D. Wood, *Becoming Metropolitan: Urban Selfhood and the Making of Modern Cracow*, DeKalb 2010, p. 57.

³³ W.M. Kolasa, J. Jarowiecki, *The major Polish newspapers published until the beginning of the First World War in context of heritage preservation (characteristics, research, resources)*, 2006. In *Newspapers: resources, processing, preservation, digitization, promotion/information*, Poznań, 19–21 X 2006. in: <http://eprints.rclis.org/16342/>

³⁴ P. Borowiec, *Jesteśmy głosem milionów: dzieje krakowskiego Wydawnictwa i Koncernu Prasowego Ilustrowany Kuryer Codzienny (1910–1939)*, Kraków 2005, p. 3.

MERKURIUSZ POLSKI ORDYNARYJNY
(Eng. Mercury Polish Ordinary)

One of the pre-war articles mentioning the Klan was published in 1937 in *Mercury of Poland* Nr 38. (Polish: *Merkuriusz Polski*) is the oldest preserved Polish periodic newspaper, printed in mixed Italian and Swabian font, published for the first time in Krakow on January 3, 1661. The name comes from the Roman god *Mercury*, patron of merchants and couriers. It was given according to the seventeenth-century custom of naming prints depicting recent events as mercurians. There were several newspapers bearing similar names in Europe at the time. These were: *Scottish Mercurius Caledonius — Comprising The Affairs now in Agitation in Scotland With A Survey of Forraign Intelligence*, *English Mercurius Aulicus* and *Mercurius — Britannicus communicating the affaires of great Britaine: For the better information of the People*. The last of this edition was printed in Poland on July 15, 1661. The title was resumed in 1933–1939 in Warsaw in the form of the political weekly by Władysław Zambrzycki. Together with Julian Babiński and Jerzy Braun, they published right-wing political and social weekly magazines: *Mercury Polish Ordinary* (Polish: *Merkuriusz Polski Ordynaryjny*) and *New Economic and Scholarly News* (Polish: *Nowe Wiadomości Ekonomiczne i Uczzone*). Journalism in these weeklies was very nippy and aggressive (in content), directed mainly against people with leftist, democratic views and against people of Jewish origin. The sharp language used brought editors to court proceedings on several occasions. One of such trials ended in June 1939 with the sentence of Władysław Zambrzycki to six months in prison.

The short article entitled *Men in Hoods* published on October 3, informed the reader about the history of French fascist-leaning and anti-communist terrorist group, *La Cagoule* (Fr. *Comité secret d'action révolutionnaire*) that used violence to promote its activities from 1935 to 1941. This organization, which members dressed in hoods sought to violence, was compared to American *Ku Klux Klan*.

POBUDKA (Eng. Reveille)

The theme of *Ku Klux Klan* was mentioned in Polish post-second war press for the first time in the weekly *Reveille* (Polish: *Tygodnik Pobudka*) in number 04 of 1947. The title was published by the local unit of *Polish Socialist Party* (Pol. *Polska Partia Socjalistyczna*) in Łódź. Tadeusz Rojek in the introduction to his article entitled *The grim mafia operates in the USA* defines the *Ku Klux Klan* as an association of American terrorists. The Klan was an organization founded in the Southern states, which in terms of mental and spiritual levels were not equal to the Northern ones. The Klan's activity was based on religious discrimination, racial struggle (purity of blood), fight against Blacks (written in capital), jews (written originally

in small letters), syndicalists. Organization also used lynchings. During the *Civil War*, when it was created, it was a small and miserable movement. From 1916, the Klan began to grow. William Joseph Simmons was its leader, and the Klan took the name of *Mystical Union*, sought to provide social and patriotic care to the people it supported. The author seems to be less informed when discussing the true name of this fraternity. To preserve the appearance of social activity, the Klan occasionally offered white farmers the land previously forcibly taken over from the Negroes. The Klan according to the author was a mafia of terrorists using fire, gallows, murder, revolver, or whip. The methods used by the organization were simple, primitive. In the villages where the local police were supported by the *Invisible Empire*, Negro settlements were burned, Jewish houses and temples plundered in daylight. The mystery of the night rides, costumes, aroused fear in the minds of simple people. The road the Klan walked on — was densely dotted with bodies of Negroes. Burning crosses were for some a sign of worship, for others a synonym of misery and death. During secret meetings, Klan members vested in ritual costumes consulted on new murders. Religious and mystical elements were visible in ceremonies. There were also elements seen as comic among bystanders.

The Negro was still the most formidable opponent for the Klan. African Americans were not seen as human beings but working animals. According to the author this was still a popular view in the South. Tadeusz Rojek also draws attention to the fact that the Klan had become an organization with strong political influence. Politicians were supported and protected by *Invisible Empire*.

The author also declares that part of American society maintained the opinion that *KKK* was a harmless maniac of people arranging childish fun in night parades by the fire. The author compares the Klan processions to equally harmless celebrations referring to old German mythology, which once took place in Nuremberg, giving rise to Nazism.

The author draws reader's attention to the fact that the Klan made contacts with fascist organization *America First Party* led by Herald Smith. Once more, the author reveals the level of ignorance or lack of his knowledge. He mistakenly uses the name of Herald Smith, who in fact was called as Gerald Lyman Kenneth Smith. It advocated a reactionary version of isolationism and was notable for "flourishes of racism and Anti-Semitism".³⁵ According to the title Klan well cooperated with *Kentucky Continental League of Christian*, headed by man called Grebb. The leader's name was in fact Millard Dee Grubbs.

The author also states that the *Grand Wizard* of the Klan — Cowscoot aimed to unite all pro-fascist organizations to purge the country of hyphenated citizens and all that was un-American. Naturally, the author misspelled the name of the *Imperial Wizard*

³⁵ S.H. Ainsworth, B.M. Harward, *Political Groups, Parties, and Organizations That Shaped America: an Encyclopedia and Document Collection*, Santa Barbara 2019, p. 8.

of the Klan. His name was James Arnold Colescott. The author noted that according to the *Ministry of Justice*, the Klan cooperated with the *Union of German Americans* (proper name: *German American Bund*). It was proved that both unions in 1937–1941 focused on inciting public opinion in the United States to racial discrimination.

Finally, Tadeusz Rojek concludes that under the supervisions of American law, it was difficult to paralyze the union's activities. Freedom of association, thought and speech was the cornerstone of American civil rights. However, the slow decline of the Klan caused by the agents of secret services was evident.

Summary

The Polish media system has been a product of its history. The tradition of press focuses however on a limited intellectual audience since, historically, there was little local capital for an extensive and permanent mass press, especially given there was a high level of illiteracy in Poland as elsewhere in Eastern Europe, following World War II. During the partition of Poland press was the voice of national interests. During interwar period, the first readers were intelligentsia, followed by mass of the population.³⁶

The above excerpts from selected newspaper titles prove that the Polish press of the interwar period presented the latest reports from around the world at the time. This was possible to the fact that Polish newspapers were reprinting American articles and, in some cases, hired foreign correspondents. Based on the above excerpts we may see that Polish journalists possessed thorough knowledge of the Klan's history, program assumptions and even names of its most important leaders.

The list of earliest accounts of Ku Klux Klan in Polish press (as of February, 2021):

1. *Świat* number 46/1921
2. *Nowości Ilustrowane* number 5/1923
3. *Express Niedzielny Ilustrowany* number 64/1928
4. *Ilustrowany Kuryer Codzienny* number 14/1932
5. *Merkuryusz Polski* number 38/1937
6. *Weekly Pobudka* number 04/1947

A complete list of Polish-language monographies about Ku Klux Klan:

1. *Ku Klux Klan* by Henryk Jankowski, published by Uniwersum in Warsaw in 1934.

³⁶ J.L. Curry, *Poland's Journalists: Professionalism and Politics*, Cambridge 1990, p. 69.

2. *Białe Kaptury* (Eng. *White Hoods*) by Ireneusz Łapiński, published by Polish Ministry of Defence Publishing House in 1963 in Warsaw.
3. *Ku Klux Klan* by Jerzy Sobieraj, published by Bellona Publishing House in Warsaw in 2004.
4. *Ku Klux Klan 1915–1945* by Krzysztof Kasiński, published by MyBook in Szczecin in 2007.
5. *Ku Klux Klan tu mieszka miłość* (Eng. *Ku Klux Klan, here lives love*) by Katarzyna Surmiak-Domańska, published by Czarne in Wołowiec in 2015.

Polish translations of foreign language books about the Ku Klux Klan:

1. *Tajne Stowarzyszenia*, (Eng. *The Most Evil Secret Societies in History*) by Shelley Klein, published by Muza in Warsaw in 2007.
2. *Tajne kultury zła*, (Eng. *Cannibals and Evil Cult Killers*) by Ray Black, published by Bellona in Warsaw in 2010.

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