

ABSTRACT

“Pixie Dust.” *Ameryka* Magazine within USIA’s Programming for Poland 1959-1992

This dissertation aims to address a historiographical gap by providing the first comprehensive study of *Ameryka* as a unique media phenomenon published by the U.S. Information Agency from 1959 to 1992, within the cultural and political context of the People’s Republic of Poland. Employing a holistic approach, this study considers *Ameryka* as a multifaceted cultural diplomacy medium. Rather than analyzing individual topics, the research examines how *Ameryka* integrated various elements of American soft power, such as art, science, music, technology, economy, politics, religion, and narratives about Polish Americans, into a unified, accessible, and coherent ideological package. By tracing *Ameryka*’s evolution across three decades, this research illuminates the U.S. strategy of projecting an integrated American “way of life” in all its spheres.

The magazine’s content, including its carefully crafted narratives, images, and designs, conveyed ideological meanings. Despite its wide-ranging themes, each topic was treated with expertise, contributing to a coherent narrative about the United States. Although the magazine was produced by Americans, a skilled Polish editorial team localized it ensuring its resonance with Polish readers behind the Iron Curtain while maintaining its strategic communicative goals.

Based on American archives available in the U.S. and in Europe, interviews, and meticulous analysis of the magazine’s content, this work is based on heuristics and historical synthesis using the inductive method. It combines historical research on American-Polish relations in the sphere of USIA’s public diplomacy programming with critical discourse analysis and media studies. The analysis of *Ameryka* uses qualitative and quantitative methodologies to capture the magazine’s full scope. The following research questions guide this study: How did the USIA consistently weave together diverse strands of cultural diplomacy into a coherent ideological package, using *Ameryka* as a case study. Which American soft power messages were emphasized, downplayed, or omitted? What image of *Ameryka* was projected onto Poles? Did *Ameryka* maintain a consistent image of the United States, or did it adapt in response to changing circumstances between 1959 and 1992?