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Dariusz Magier  
(Siedlce University of Natural Sciences and Humanities)  
ORCID 0000-0001-9367-7448

## From Satire to Tanks in the Streets. Communist Regime against 'Solidarity Carnival' in Poland<sup>1</sup>

**Annotation:** Since more than half a century, introducing martial law on 13 December, 1981 is a most memorable event in the collective memory of Polish people. A nation which, living in a democratic world, strived to acquire basic human rights under communist reign. A nation, against which the authorities launched a series of terrorist and propaganda actions which in turn extended the period of totalitarian regime by a decade and resulted in negative changes in the Polish society. This article focuses on multiple reasons, actual course of events and the outcome of introducing martial law in Poland by the communists according to the latest research.

**Keywords:** communism, martial law, Poland, solidarity, Solidarność.

### Od satyry do czołgów na ulicach. Władza komunistyczna wobec „karnawału Solidarności” w Polsce

**Streszczenie:** Wprowadzenie stanu wojennego w Polsce 13 grudnia 1981 r. to jedno z najgłębiej zakorzenionych w pamięci Polaków wydarzeń z historii ostatniego półwiecza. Przeciwno narodowi, który pokojowymi metodami zbliżył się do uzyskania minimalnych w warunkach komunistycznej dyktatury praw człowieka żyjącego w demokratycznym świecie, władza zastosowała szereg terrorystyczno-propagandowych działań, które przedłużyły o dekadę istnienie totalitarnego reżimu i przyniosło wiele niekorzystnych zmian w polskim społeczeństwie. Artykuł omawia przyczyny, przebieg i efekty wprowadzenia przez władze komunistyczne stanu wojennego w Polsce w świetle najnowszych badań.

**Słowa kluczowe:** komunizm, stan wojenny, Solidarność, Polska

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## От сатиры до танков на улицах. Коммунистическая власть перед лицом «Карнавала солидарности» в Польше

**Аннотация:** Введение военного положения в Польше 13 декабря 1981 года является одним из событий, глубоко укоренившихся в памяти Поляков из истории последнего полувека. Против нации, которая мирными методами приблизилась к достижению минимальных прав человека, живущего в демократическом мире при коммунистической диктатуре, власти использовали ряд террористических и пропагандистских мер, которые продлили существование тоталитарного режима на десятилетие и принесли много неблагоприятных изменений в польском обществе. В статье рассматриваются причины, ход и последствия введения военного положения коммунистическими властями в Польше в свете последних исследований.

**Ключевые слова:** коммунизм, военное положение, солидарность, польша

### Introduction

Events leading to the introduction of martial law by the Polish People's Republic generals associated with Wojciech Jaruzelski are called 'Solidarity Carnival'. It refers to a 16-month period from August, 1980 to December, 1981 and the development of the Independent and Self-Governing Trade Union 'Solidarność' (NSZZ Solidarność, Eng. solidarity) at that time. It marked the first mass social movement in Poland independent from the communists since 1940s. Undoubtedly, the emergence of such a movement as well as its scale and importance within the socio-political arena were the direct reasoning behind the introduction of martial law and re-establishing the autocratic rule in Poland by leaders of PRL (Polish People's Republic).

Despite a deteriorating economic situation, there was nothing in particular that could have evoked a premonition of future political issues of a system built by the Soviet Union with Polish communists acting as Moscow's local governors. At that time, the government in power was that of Edward Gierek - the first secretary of the Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR) which obtained its mandate during a Communist Party convention in December, 1975. Additionally, on 10 February 1976, PZPR strengthened its position even more when the Sejm of PRL, a puppet government, adopted an amendment to Stalin's constitution by including a claim by which PRL was then a socialist state and that 'its society's leading political power in building socialism is PZPR'<sup>2</sup>. A subsequent, equally undemocratic election to Sejm in March 1976 did not bring any significant changes.

### The birth of democratic opposition and Solidarity

Due to an inefficiency of the economic system so conventional for a communist system in practice, public dissatisfaction was usually caused by people's poor material conditions. Officially, such were the bases for a political crisis in June 1956, December 1970 as well as June 1976, and July & August 1980. Let us however not be deceived by this perception. After all, the unstable economic situation in Poland was merely partly a slogan, partly a symbol underneath which there was an inexpressible longing for freedom held by a substantial part of the society as well as certain aversion to the system imposed by the Soviet Union. In Poland, price rises and shortages of meat, work cloth-

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<sup>2</sup> Law of 10th February 1976 concerning Amendments to the Constitution of the Polish People's Republic, *Journal of Laws* 1976: 5, item 29.

ing and cigarettes as well as workers' solidarity which was manifested by demanding to reinstate workers previously removed for having been involved in unions independent from the regime were merely a pretext for a political crisis. In an inefficient economy, price increases and shortages of goods constituted a standby excuse for public outbursts. At the beginning of 1980s, the 1976's workers' riots in Poznan were still very much alive in the memories of the Polish people which was particularly inconvenient for the government as the working class was considered to have legitimised communists' claim to power in the first place. The aforementioned riots had been the basis for brutal interventions of law enforcement and they laid the grounds to the emergence of first signs of organised resistance movements since the first decade after the war and the pacification of the anti-communist underground organisations such as: Workers' Protection Committee (KOR, created in September 1976), the Movement for Defence of Human and Civil Rights (ROPCiO, March 1976), Young Poland Movement (RMP, 1979), and Confederation of Independent Poland (KPN, 1979). In consequence, Polish opposition was reactivated, illegally of course and, important to mention, mercilessly combatted by the total State as it was attracting a significant part of the Polish society, both formally and at heart. Through the means of opposition, people could finally reach independent, free of propaganda sources of information. It was the opposition that opened people's eyes on the true meaning of terms such as 'democracy' or 'independence' which, after the World War II, were moulded to fit socialist agenda and departing far from the original meaning. The opposition was articulating what most could only dream to think and it led to first, more courageous, no-social demands such as freedom and truth about the Katyń massacre as well as criticising the general atheisation, elections and political processes, highlighting the exploitation by the Soviets or openly formulating thesis of Soviet occupation of the state.

Electing a Polish cardinal, Karol Wojtyła as the head of the Catholic Church on 16 October 1978 had a significant impact on the Polish attitude towards communism and it should not be underestimated. The homeland of John Paul II suddenly ceased to be simply an area of Soviet influence far from civilisation but it rather found itself in the forefront of public attention, which in turn changed Moscow's and local governors' policies on how to approach it. The Pope's visit in June, 1979 released an unprecedented, in the ennui of socialism, wave of enthusiasm and the power of unity. It also encouraged Polish people to persevere in doing what is right and uncovered enormous, deep-hidden hopes for a real chance to change their reality, in that moment also politically. Subsequently, the attempt on the life of the Pope on 13 May 1981 led to a surge of mass prayers which created the air of solemn mysticism of freedom.

However, as previously mentioned, the erosion of the system had its origins in the economy and in Poland, the step towards the brink of disaster was a policy of 'the great leap forward' implemented in 1970s, of which the most notable premise was the increased, superfluous industrialisation. Since the mid-1970s, the economic difficulties gradually intensified which manifested through a shortage of goods and gross disproportions between the standard of living of a man in the street and the caste supporting the functioning of the system, meaning the Communist Party officials and enforcement officers. In general, the notorious flaws of the economy at that time were: poor synchronisation of particular economy sectors, overall economical inefficiency, wastefulness, corruption, inadequate industrial production for agriculture as well as the expansion of

public administration, goods shortages and exorbitant earnings for the most privileged and at the same time the least numerous caste. It dawned on people how much of a burden it is for the state treasury to support these Party structures which, apart from 3 million members and candidates, also employed more than 20 000 employees whose sole responsibility was to set in motion this gargantuan bureaucratic machine of an annual budget estimated at 100 million dollars in the 1980s<sup>3</sup>.

Meanwhile, the only reaction of the authorities to the worsening conditions of the economy at that time could have been regulating pricing policies. In simple words – raises which subsequently led to society's protests which were less or more substantial depending on a case, yet always visible nonetheless.

### 'Solidarity Carnival'

A direct cause of a public outburst in 1980 was, as per usual, raising prices. This time, it was an increase of meat prices introduced on 1st of July. Nonetheless, the authorities assumed that the start of the vacation season would be a mitigating factor for the intensity of the protests. However, there were organised forms of protests in a few different locations in the country, and the biggest one of them all was in the Lubelski province. Even though the strike was not coordinated, it managed to involve 50 000 employees in 150 workplaces who made 1200 demands and requests, in total.

At the end of July, as the wave of strikes in the Lubelski province began to wane, the society was ready for what was about to unravel on the Coast and in the whole country<sup>4</sup>. On the day of 14 August 1980, a strike in the Gdańsk Shipyard began with a demand to reinstate a crane worker – Anna Walentynowicz and an electrician – Lech Wałęsa, previously removed for having been involved in unions independent from the regime. Soon enough, other workplaces in the Tricity joined the protests and formed an Inter-Enterprise Strike Committee led by Lech Wałęsa. On 17<sup>th</sup> August, the committee formulated the famous 21 demands, the fulfilment of which was of paramount importance to end the protests. In parallel, other workplaces in the country protested. These were the foundations for a remarkably powerful social movement which for political reasons was hiding behind a workers' union, independent from the regime named 'Solidarność' (Eng. solidarity).

From the very beginning Moscow declared workers' strikes as an act of counter-revolution pressuring the Communist Party in Poland to promptly deal with the 'Polish virus' which aimed to harm the basis for existence of the Soviet system. PZPR established a special crisis centre, the goal of which was to suppress social unrest. Nonetheless, the authorities did not opt for using force and decided to resolve the conflict politically. There was a fear that a social mobilisation might lead to escalation and such an open confrontation could subsequently start an uncontrollable chain of events. In consequence, the authorities had to yield to the workers. Agreements in Szczecin were signed on 30<sup>th</sup> of August and the most famous Gdańsk Agreement was signed on 31<sup>st</sup> of August.

<sup>3</sup> D. Stola, *Finanse PZPR w jej ostatnich latach*, „Więź”, 3/397, 2000, pp. 132-149.

<sup>4</sup> M. Dąbrowski, *Lipcowe strajki 1980 roku w północno-wschodniej Lubelszczyźnie. Radzyński Oddział NSZZ „Solidarność” na tle funkcjonowania Regionu Środkowo-Wschodniego w latach 1980-1981*, in Dariusz Magier, ed. *Wobec komunizmu*, Radzyń Podlaski 2006, pp. 257-267.

For communists it was a necessary tactical move concealing somewhat a certain 'play for time' preparation before a forceful confrontation being pressured by the Soviet Union. Simultaneously, there was a special team appointed in Moscow concerning Polish affairs whose members were: Yuri Andropov, Mikhail Suslov, Andrei Gromyko and Dmitry Ustinov<sup>5</sup>. In autumn of 1980, Wojciech Jaruzelski who at that time was the Minister of Defence ordered to prepare a scenario of martial law, the goal of which would be making 'Solidarność' illegal, removing their leaders as well as limiting possibilities of traveling around the country, suspending certain civil rights and introducing special courts. The task of working on the logistics behind this operation was assigned to the Country Defence Committee (Komitet Obrony Kraju) and the General Staff of the Polish People's Army. These preparations also included draft plans of interning selected opposition members, the designs for detention centres and prisons as well as anticipated roadblocks and necessary legal acts. In parallel, the Communist Party initiated actions to ideologically strengthen its membership structure combined with a self-purge from their weakest elements.

Summer of 1980 embedded deeply into the psyche of Polish society. People assumed that the authorities, considered inviolable until that time, cannot resist to the organised protests of the society. During these days there was a momentous atmosphere which was additionally intensified by religious spirits of rapture proving that the Catholic Church was a key element leading to failure of communism in Poland. Moreover, it is important to consider a certain folklore element of strikes that showed in manifesting of the national flags, writings on styrofoam on which the protesters were sleeping and on the walls as well as ballads created by the workers. No political means could have stopped the counter-revolution that had begun, especially since the authorities seemed to have backed down. The Independent and Self-Governing Trade Union 'Solidarność' was founded, important to mention at the grassroots level, on 17 September 1980. The National Conciliation Commission led by Lech Wałęsa was its main governing body. Seven days later, a motion to register the union was filed in the provincial court in Warsaw. Even then, the ranks of 'Solidarność' could claim three and a half million members, including some from the Communist Party. What followed was a massive exodus of people from PZPR which was additionally escalated by the apparent lack of guidance and values of many of the Party's members as well as not implementing the agreements signed with workers and resulting strikes. On 24 October 1980, 'Solidarność' was officially registered and workplaces committees began to form in order to prepare for a national congress.

Even at that time 'Solidarność' was clearly something more than a workers' union and it began emerging as a rival to the communists who feared that the union might be contending for power against them in the nearest future. Even more so when 'Solidarność' reached nine and a half million members in July, 1981. Enrolments were additionally boosted by members of the Committee for Social Self-Defence (KOR) and reasons such as an increase in activity by KPN as well as new structures arising in the academic circles such as Independent Students' Association. What is more, in rural areas equivalents of independent workers' unions began to form which would later become the Independent Farmers' Self-governing Trade Union 'Solidarność'.

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<sup>5</sup> A. Albert, *Najnowsza Historia Polski 1914-1993*, Warszawa 1995, p. 792.

The first round of Solidarity Congress started on 5 September 1981. When 'Message to working people of Eastern Europe' was adopted it proved that the atmosphere was remarkably enthusiastic and at that time aspirations were gradually growing higher within the union's delegates. Nonetheless, it was a signal to the communists that it is no longer only about economic difficulties but also the existence of their artificially supported system. On 16 September 1981, the Political Bureau of PZPR's Central Committee released a statement criticising the radicalisation of the trade union which was followed by a reorganisation in PZPR's leadership in October, the same year. According to Moscow, the most promising and trusted candidate to bring back order in Poland was considered to be Wojciech Jaruzelski who went on becoming the first secretary of PZPR's Central Committee. He allegedly reported the following to Leonid Brezhnev on a phone call after being chosen for the Party leader: "Of course we will not change our attitude fighting for the healthy forces of the nation who lost their ways and joined 'Solidarność'. We will drag them to our side while at the same time attacking the enemy, naturally, to the point of achieving the expected outcome"<sup>6</sup>.

### The reaction of authorities

From autumn 1980, Moscow – fully aware that this would instil the biggest fear – devised a particular strategy towards Poland that was largely based on an idea of a potential invasion which constituted the most effective incentive for the communists. Faced with a massive solidarity movement, the only leverage in the hands of the communists, apart from the possible repressions which could well be within their reach at any moment, was propaganda. In 1980, they attempted to obscure these inconvenient events by shifting the focus of the society to topics such as Moscow Olympics, the harvest and flooding. However when it was no longer possible to conceal information about the strikes, the narrative, in both papers and television, indicated that delays were inducing difficulties for citizens and the concerns mentioned were 'salary demands', 'certain system imperfections' and 'fossilised forms of socialist democracy'. The next step was designed to blatantly revealing the enemy<sup>7</sup>. Communists had an entire propaganda machine at the disposal in order to achieve that goal. It consisted not only from the mass media but also from all visual forms such as slogans, posters, leaflets or even a traditional 'word of mouth'. It was a combat fought with both professional posters and satirical comics which were directed not only at 'Solidarność' itself but the entire opposition at that time. From the creation of 'Solidarność', the authorities attempted to discourage Polish people from getting actively involved in a trade union. Naturally, the more active people became, the more the anti-Solidarity propaganda intensified.

The system of functioning for the PRL propaganda was based on key instances of the Communist Party. The main assumptions for the propaganda policy was drafted during the meetings of both Secretary's Office and the Political Bureau of the PZPR Central Committee. Stefan Olszowski and a team specially assigned in 1981 were in charge of the propaganda actions during the period of 'Solidarity Carnival' with Olszowski

<sup>6</sup> W. Bukowski, *Moskiewski proces. Dysydent w archiwach Kremla*, Warszawa 1999, p. 565.

<sup>7</sup> G. Joniec, *Obraz NSZZ 'Solidarność' w prasie partyjnej KW PZPR w Lublinie. Kreowanie wizerunku wroga*, in Dariusz Magier, ed, *13 XII 1981. Wiedza historyczna i świadomość społeczna po 25 latach od wprowadzenia stanu wojennego*, Radzyń Podlaski 2006, pp. 29-30.

being personally responsible. The guidelines for the propaganda policies were then sent to the Educational and Ideological Work departments of the PZPR's Central Committee that would later be morphed into an Ideology Department. Recommendations and materials regarding anti-Solidarity propaganda were subsequently forwarded to propaganda departments and provincial ideology committees. They were then sent to lower instances of the Party structures which in turn would involve their subordinate smaller Party organisations. Moreover, the communists attempted to take advantage of all their available means such as local structures of the state administration, regional and satellite parties such as United People's Party or Democratic Party. It involved not only political but also social organisations controlled by the communists such as PAX, Patriotic Movement of National Re-birth or the Polish Scouting and Guiding Association.

Being faced with the State monopoly on papers, radio and television, Polish people had a well-established negative opinion and awareness that the information conveyed by the communists is distorted. Hence, the rise in importance of satire whose main characteristics is to exaggerate traits and express the author's criticism for certain events, individuals, groups of people or representatives of particular ideas. This method of drawing also known as caricature deals with a complete overemphasis as well as ridiculously oversimplifying or exaggerating certain traits of an individual. It is no surprise that politics as a subject dominated this genre. However, its creations should be considered and examined as being tools of propaganda rather than for their artistic values although, admittedly, the level of artistry, ways of presenting allusions and how much it relates to the reality could amplify the desired message. The rules were simple, the more successfully the political adversary is ridiculed in the eyes of the audience, the bigger the impact on the viewer. The said impact was in turn needed until eventually the pre-designed expected behaviours and opinions conveyed through satire replaced an individual's, and possibly wrong, interpretation of intentions of certain people or events. During the times of PRL, satirical drawings were conveying propaganda in such a way that allowed the masses to easily grasp tedious and monotonous agenda dictated by the Party. On the other hand it also helped people, just for a brief moment, to divert their attention from this grim reality as well as to mentally survive the period of communist reign. Satirical drawings in PRL were an art of allusion and in a significant part, a field of rivalry with the omnipotent censorship<sup>8</sup>. It was however a very advantageous instrument to which communists eagerly resorted, especially in times of crisis.

During Stalinist years, a certain convention was formed that was dictated by the communists to satirical artists<sup>9</sup>. It was a specific set of signs and symbols that were used practically until the end of PRL era. A caricature was supposed to be an ideological weapon, to be used to react to the opponent's moves. In parallel, it should expose the enemy's true intentions which means that, in fact, it should not inspire laughter but anger and hate towards the enemy<sup>10</sup>. Naturally, it was also used between 1980 and 1981.

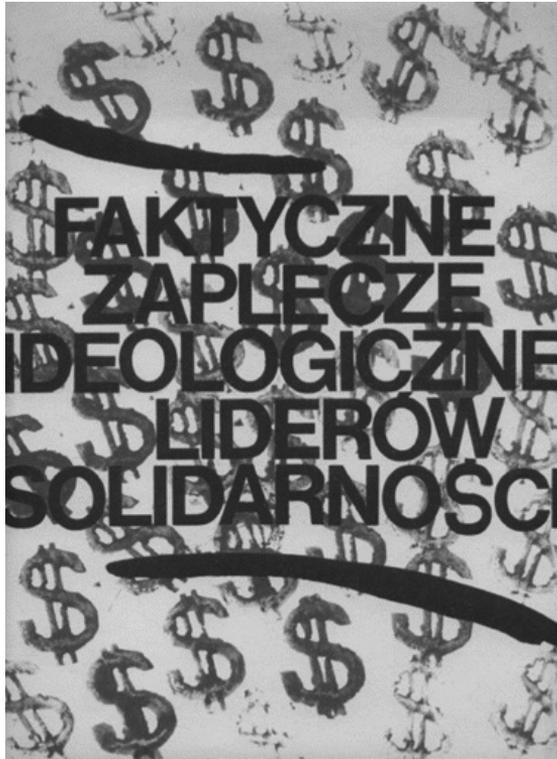
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<sup>8</sup> P. Machcewicz, *Walonki o antyradzieckim ostrzu*, „Mówią Wieki”, nr 1, 1999, pp. 24-26.

<sup>9</sup> J. Ślęzak, *Karykatura polityczna w okresie stalinizmu: sztuka, propaganda, źródło historyczne – na przykładzie wybranych rysunków satyrycznych opublikowanych w „Trybunie Ludu” w latach 1949-1955*, in: Dariusz Magier, ed, *Partia komunistyczna w Polsce – struktury, ludzie, dokumentacja*, Lublin – Radzyń Podlaski 2012, pp. 481-503.

<sup>10</sup> T. Borowski, *O postępowych i wstecznych tradycjach karykatury politycznej*, „Przegląd Artystyczny”, nr 7/9, 1950, pp. 45-47; I. Witz, *Z problemów karykatury polskiej (the margin of Wystawa Karykatu-*

The characters on the anti-Solidarity drawings have very archetypal artistic features that allow for an undisputed interpretation of their meaning.



Poster distributed by communist authorities in Poland between 1980 and 1981. The slogan reads 'Actual ideological base of Solidarność'. Source: State Archives in Lublin - branch in Radzyń Podlaski, collection of posters and leaflets of PZPR's Provincial Committee in Biała Podlaska, catalogue number 8, p. 129.

Therefore, we will find here a typical example of a working class representative – a man in a peaked cap, wearing working clothes holding tools in his hand. Another such archetype will be an extremist considered a subversive element drawn as a person dressed in a suit or a pullover, usually with a beard that was suggestive of a fashion preferred by the opposition at that time. We can find here also this person's power base – western countries led by the United States and agencies of enemy propaganda such as the Voice of America, Radio Free Europe or the BBC. Solidarity activists were usually drawn as suited trade union men sitting behind their desks or over-healthy-looking workers wearing mismatching working clothes.

TO NIC , ALE MAMY ZA TO  
SOLIDARNOŚĆ !



Propaganda satirical drawing distributed by communist authorities between 1980 and 1981. The sign reads 'it's nothing, important thing is we have Solidarity'. Source: State Archives in Lublin - branch in Radzyń Podlaski, collection of posters and leaflets of PZPR's Provincial Committee in Biała Podlaska, catalogue number 8, p. 102.



Poster distributed by communist authorities in Poland between 1980 and 1981. The slogan reads 'There is no consent to idleness'. Source: State Archives in Lublin- branch in Radzyń Podlaski, collection of posters and leaflets of PZPR's Provincial Committee in Biała Podlaska, catalogue number 8, p. 127.

### Martial Law

On 13 December 1981, Wojciech Jaruzelski, leader of the Communist Party, finally fulfilled his promise to Moscow. The authoritative power was transferred to the Military Council of National Salvation (WRON) presided by Jaruzelski as the Minister of Defence. By its order, the State Council adopted a resolution introducing martial law across the country<sup>11</sup>. The Sejm of Polish People's Republic agreed to those actions by issuing a special decree from 25 January 1982<sup>12</sup> in which the official reasons for introducing martial law were indicated: "The powers of anarchy and destruction opposing socialism harmed our policies and primary institutions (...), undermined socialist alliances, paralysed national economy and public life. Appeals for social peace, appeals to reason and civic duties as well as firm orders mandated by Sejm through decrees did not result in success. Various possibilities such as a civil war, an internationalisation of a Polish crisis or even challenging Polish sovereignty became more real"<sup>13</sup>.

On the night between 12 and 13 December 1981, groups of Citizen's Militia (MO) and Security Service of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (SB) proceeded to occupy Solidarity's provincial offices and detaining its activists. The nation learnt of the introduction of martial law from an address made by Wojciech Jaruzelski through radio and television. Most non-government organisations and all trade unions were suspended. Apart from the PZPR's Central Committee's "People's Tribune", LWP's "The Freedom soldier" and a few other local journals - all papers were shut. The majority of Solidarity leaders along with Lech Wałęsa were among the interned on 13 December 1981. Armed with a few thousands tanks, armoured personnel carriers and armoured fighting vehicles, 70 000 soldiers and 30 000 militants headed to the streets. Some of them participated in the pacification of several dozen workplaces in which sit-in strikes occurred, including the most dramatic one in the 'Wujek' coalmine in Katowice where 9 miners died.

Additionally, civil rights were suspended, a censorship of correspondence was introduced as well as summary proceedings in court. The telephone lines were disrupted, in the biggest agglomerations even until January, 1982. In the times of PRL, the main upper hand over society, apart from coercive measures, was propaganda. After the introduction of martial law, all propaganda actions were intensified and by shutting inconvenient papers, the authorities gained total monopoly on mass media. There was a purge among journalists of radio and television. Additionally, the anchors of the Television Journal were made to dress in military uniforms. There was only one radio and television programme, mainly focusing on military or patriotic topics<sup>14</sup>.

Introducing martial law was also used to improve on the situation inside the Communist Party itself, as it was quite difficult. Not only did the creation of 'Solidarność' upset the hegemony of the PZPR but it also forced the Party to reshape its governance policies. In addition, the Party was dealing with an internal crisis - a mass outflow of members combined with the affiliation of their prominent activ-

<sup>11</sup> State Council decree concerning introducing Martial Law for reasons of state security from 12 December 1981. *Journal of laws* 1981: 29, item 155.

<sup>12</sup> Decree from 25 January 1982. *Official Gazette of the Republic of Poland* 1982: 5, item 20.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> K. Pokorna-Ignatowicz, *Telewizja w systemie politycznym i medialnym PRL. Między polityką a widzem*, Kraków 2003, pp. 185-208. It is vital to remember that in PRL 'patriotism' had a rather peculiar meaning since the authorities used it to push their own agenda.

ists with Solidarity and low ideological consciousness<sup>15</sup>. The unstable fundamentals of PZPR were especially visible in local structures where the current affairs such as personnel issues or tasks concerning relations and establishing contact with workplaces were the most acute. Martial law found the PZPR local structures in a state of self-conflict, lack of discipline or ideological zeal, so all in all, it became an opportunity for improvement and consolidation. The main instrument from then on was supposed to be 'directive leadership' which meant complete compliance with the orders given by higher instances. Moreover, the plan included a list of further solutions which aimed at restoring discipline in the Party. Soon, changes in the functioning of the Party were visible. This transformation mostly concerned 'purging' the Party structures where almost 10% of members who were dismissed, expelled or left out of their own accord for various reasons. It was the biggest personnel verification of the times, and in major part it dealt with leadership positions such as replacing five provincial governors, six mayors, 89 superintendents of cities and districts as well as 265 people on management positions employed in different parts of the economy. Subsequently, in the education sector, 1249 people including headmasters and curators were deemed 'unfit to serve as leaders'. The complete verification of personnel, including but not limited to leaders, focused on three professional circles – teachers, university employees and journalists. With over a thousand journalists being ousted, it represented the highest individual percentage of dismissed professionals among the groups targeted by the communists. In total, 1329 academic teachers were dismissed and a similar number of academic researchers were demoted to lower positions such as librarians, technicians or lecturers. Moreover, several dozens of vice-chancellors, deans and institute directors were removed<sup>16</sup>. In a matter of weeks, the face of PZPR changed completely.

As a response to actions of authorities, demonstrations took place in cities such as Warsaw, Cracow, Gdansk, Łódź and some other areas. Some of the detainees, especially strike leaders, were sentenced in summary proceedings. The sentences varied between a few months up to 10 years in prison. Manifestations were the main form of resistance against the communists and they were repeated regularly over the course of martial law with their most considerable intensity on a first anniversary of signing the Gdańsk agreements in August, 1982. The examples of punishment for participating in demonstrations were arrests, bringing someone before a collegium for violations or even trials.

Social resistance was visible through protesting also via leaflets, writings on the walls and battles through symbols. In these activities, there was a clear tie to methods of 'small sabotage' known from the times of the Nazi occupation<sup>17</sup>.

In order to pacify opposition during the time of PRL, each forte available was engaged, both secret and traditional militia as well as the military and propaganda. Special tasks were given to Communist Party's structures which were designed to incentivise members and restore morale. One of a representative examples of that was

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<sup>15</sup> T. Ruzikowski, *Przewodnia siła w stanie wojennym*, „Biuletyn Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej”, nr 5, 2002, p. 56.

<sup>16</sup> D. Magier, *Jak się białskopodlaska partia komunistyczna w stanie wojennym reformowała*, „Podlaski Kwartalnik Kulturalny”, nr 1, 2018, p. 58.

<sup>17</sup> A. Paczkowski, *Wojna polsko-jaruzelska*, Warszawa 2007, pp. 180-182.

the creation of self-defence groups, members of which were armed with prevention measures and ready for repression scenarios, also including use of firearms<sup>18</sup>.

Introducing martial law resonated greatly in the world's news. The harshest criticism came from the President of the United States, Ronald Reagan who embarked upon active politics aiming at initiating solidarity gestures towards the Polish People such as regular contacts with the Pope - John Paul II, broadcasting a Christmas address 'about the situation in Poland' to the entire country of USA as well as condemning martial law by the Atlantic Council, imposing economic sanctions against the Soviet Union and finally urging NATO countries to impose severe economic sanctions on PRL<sup>19</sup>.

On 8 October 1982, the Sejm of PRL adopted a new act on trade unions which in fact dissolved NSZZ 'Solidarność' completely<sup>20</sup>. The response to calls for strike was not great and the authorities weakened them even more by arranging meetings of Wojciech Jaruzelski and the head of Catholic Church in Poland - Cardinal Józef Glemp as well as through the announcement of the second visit of the Pope John Paul II to his homeland in 1983. The pacification of opposition activists who were not detained was yet still happening, also by involving the military. In autumn 1982, during the times when in theory the regime was becoming seemingly mild, individuals suspected of inspiring or organising strikes and manifestations from workplaces of bigger sizes and at risk of opposition activity were selected and then drafted to the military. Due to this strategy, there were about 7000 oppositionists in camps for reservists and compulsory military services units across the country<sup>21</sup>. The conditions in these camps were dreadful and the detainees were forced to fulfil tasks meant to exhaust, demean or simply break them, such as digging in the ground and then filling the same, previously dug holes back in<sup>22</sup>.

Deteriorating economic situation of the country as well as first signs of the Soviet Imperium crisis and the pressure of the international public opinion led to group releases of oppositionist interned during the first phase. Officially, the Communist Party gave permission to ease the regime. On 19<sup>th</sup> December, the National Council decided to suspend the martial law throughout the country as from 31 December 1982. At that time, one and a half thousand internees were released even though there still many people sentenced for actions related to opposition during the martial law and 11 key Solidarity and KSS KOR activists. The next step was the eventual lift of the martial law on 22 July 1983<sup>23</sup>.

### Conclusion

Despite the political changes, the communist authorities still had a lot of latitude to violate civil rights. Most non-government organisations were still suspended, local

<sup>18</sup> S. Piątkowski, *W obliczu zagrożenia... . Pułk Samoobrony przy Komitecie Wojewódzkim PZPR w Radomiu (1981-1989)*, in Dariusz Magier, ed, *13 XII 1981. Wiedza historyczna i świadomość społeczna po 25 latach od wprowadzenia stanu wojennego*, Radzyń Podlaski 2006, pp. 71-81.

<sup>19</sup> W. Roszkowski, *Najnowsza historia Polski 1980-2002*, Warszawa 2006, pp. 60-61.

<sup>20</sup> *Journal of Laws* 1982: 54, item 277.

<sup>21</sup> P. Kobalczyk, *PRL-owscy generałowie przed sądem*, „Gazeta Polska”, nr 21, 2012, Online Referencing, <https://www.gazetapolska.pl/18710-prl-owscy-generalowie-przed-sadem> (2012, accessed 22 March 2019).

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> Decree of the National Council from 20th July, 1983 concerning the lift of the martial law, *Journal of Laws*, 1983, number 39, point 178.

administration's scope was limited and there were rigorous punishments for striking. In time, some new organisations were formed or some of the previous ones were reactivated. They were however, completely dominated by the authorities. The most obvious consequence of martial law were dozens of casualties, nonetheless the aftermath was much more serious than that and it should not be underestimated. On the one hand, let us consider destroying the resources of social enthusiasm, the willingness to sacrifice for the good of the nation as well as the feelings of unity and social solidarity. On the other hand building up a general feeling of frustration, demoralisation as well as despair and depriving local communities of authentic leadership by eliminating many people from their active social roles by ruining their careers, health or forcing them to emigrate. These actions resulted in stifling people's desires to organise themselves socially or politically which was in turn replaced with top-down mandatory preparations for a political transformation<sup>24</sup>.

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<sup>24</sup> A. Dudek, *Reglamentowana rewolucja. Rozkład dyktatury komunistycznej w Polsce 1988-1990*, Kraków 2004.

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