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The Reaction of the Polish Opposition to Acts of Repression and Civil Rights Violations in Other Communist States in the Years 1987–1989

On December 13, 1981, the communist authorities of Poland introduced martial law, which made it impossible for the Independent Self-governing Labor Union “Solidarity” (NSZZ “Solidarność”¹) to continue its legal and open functioning. General Wojciech Jaruzelski, who was the First Secretary of the Polish United Workers’ Party, ordered the army and Militia to intern Solidarity’s most important activists and to pacify all workers’ strikes. Those Solidarity members who managed to avoid being interned began underground resistance. New local and supra-regional organizations were set up: in 1982, the Provisional Coordination Committee of the Independent Self-governing Labor Union “Solidarity” (Tymczasowa Komisja Koordynacyjna NSZZ “Solidarność”); in 1987, the National Executive Committee of the Independent Self-governing Labor Union “Solidarity” (Krajowa Komisja Wykonawcza NSZZ “Solidarność”), led by Lech Wałęsa.² Fighting Solidarity (Solidarność Walcząca) was another strong organization functioning throughout Poland (according to the Security Service of the Ministry of the Interior, it comprised 47 groups operating in 19 voivodeships). These organizations’ clandestine activity was mostly centered on printing banned publications and circulating independent press. There were other underground groups, including the Independent Students’ Association (Niezależne Zrzeszenie Studentów, NZS), the “Solidarni” Resistance Groups (Grupy Oporu “Solidarni”), and the Confederation of Independent Poland (Konfederacja Polski Niepodległej, KPN). Such forms of resistance carried the risk of spending several years in prison. In the mid-1980s, the opposition was mired in crisis.³ The authorities were too powerful to be defeated but on the other hand unable to completely crush the Solidarity movement. However, in the second half of the 1980s important changes began in the Soviet Union and in the entire Soviet Bloc. Symptoms of liberalization stemmed primarily from the reforms introduced by General Secretary of the Com-

1 The Independent Self-governing Labor Union (Niezależny Samorządny Związek Zawodowy) “Solidarity” was established under the Gdańsk Agreement of August 31, 1980, following a wave of strikes in Poland. It was the first labor union in the Eastern Bloc that was actually independent of the authorities. However, its form of functioning went far beyond the typical activities of a labor union. In the years 1980–1981, Solidarity attempted to fundamentally transform the existing socio-economic system using democratic principles. It was headed by a worker from Gdańsk, Lech Wałęsa.

2 The authors have decided not to add biographical notes about well-known people.

3 DUDEK, Antoni: *Reglamentowana rewolucja. Rozkład dyktatury komunistycznej w Polsce 1988–1990*. Arcana, Cracow 2004, pp. 65–67.

munist Party of the Soviet Union Mikhail Gorbachev. In July 1986, Polish authorities announced amnesty for political prisoners. It was an important turning point – after this date oppositionists would no longer be sentenced to prison. Instead, the most common forms of repression would be a brief (at most 48 hour) arrest, a fine, or confiscation of property used in anti-communist activity, e.g. a car in which illegal press was transported. Because these were not harsh repressions, people became more and more courageous and willing to act openly. On the other hand, a new generation of young activists came onto the scene, ones who had had no first-hand experience of the martial law period and its ruthless repressions. Being aware of the relatively light consequences of anti-regime activity, these youths were prepared to bear them. Little wonder, then, that it was predominantly the young who decided to openly confront the regime, unlike their older colleagues who preferred underground resistance. This was one of the main factors that contributed to the establishment and development of new pro-independence organizations, such as the Freedom and Peace Movement (*Ruch Wolność i Pokój*, WiP),⁴ the Polish Socialist Party (*Polska Partia Socjalistyczna*, PPS),⁵ or Polish-Czechoslovak Solidarity (*Solidarność Polsko-Czechosłowacka*, SPCz).⁶ The establishment of these organizations breathed new life into the Polish independence movement, which translated into new methods of opposing the regime, and an alternative to the mainstream represented by Solidarity.

The most active amongst the newly established organizations was the Freedom and Peace Movement, which was set up by former student activists in 1985. The Polish Socialist Party, formed in 1987, also brought together mostly young people. Both groups carried out a number of protest actions and demonstrations, mostly in defense of the repressed. WiP was particularly involved in supporting conscientious objectors who refused to be sworn in as soldiers. The members of the organizations were also sensitive to events occurring in other communist countries, as this study will describe in detail. Polish-Czechoslovak Solidarity, which was officially established in 1981, focused primarily on international cooperation and developing a network of contacts. In 1987, in response to various repressions against the dissident movement, especially in Czechoslovakia, it began larger-scale actions such as hunger strikes in Warsaw and Wrocław and demonstrations in front of the Czechoslovak Embassy in Warsaw.

People who rebelled against communist rule in other countries suffered more severe repressions. Especially in countries such as China or Romania, the authorities had no intention of allowing liberalization. The date of June 4, 1989 is a particu-

4 See more in SMÓŁKA-GNAUCK, Anna: *Między wolnością a pokojem. Zarys historii Ruchu „Wolność i Pokój”*. IPN, Warsaw 2012; LITWIŃSKA, Monika: *WiP Kontra PRL. Ruch Wolność i Pokój 1985–1989*. IPN, Cracow 2015; LITWIŃSKA, Monika – WALIGÓRA, Grzegorz: *Ruch Wolność i Pokój*. In: KAMIŃSKI, Łukasz – WALIGÓRA, Grzegorz (eds.): *NSZZ Solidarność 1980–1989*, Vol. 7. IPN, Warsaw 2010, pp. 299–331.

5 See more in SPAŁEK, Robert (ed.): *Polska Partia Socjalistyczna. Dlaczego się nie udało?* IPN, Warsaw 2010; DWORACZEK, Kamil: *Polska Partia Socjalistyczna 1987–1990*. In: KAMIŃSKI, Łukasz – WALIGÓRA, Grzegorz (eds.): *NSZZ Solidarność 1980–1989*, Vol. 7, pp. 429–461.

6 See more in KAMIŃSKI, Łukasz – BLAŹEK, Petr – MAJEWSKI, Grzegorz: *Ponad granicami. Historia Solidarności Polsko-Czechosłowackiej*. Oficyna Wydawnicza ATUT, Wrocław 2009, and the Czech edition of the book *Hranicím navzdory. Příběh Polsko-československé solidarity*. ÚSTR, Prague 2017.

larly telling example. When the first partially free election was held in Poland, the tanks of the Chinese People's Liberation Army were rolling into Tiananmen Square, with strong support of the governments of Czechoslovakia and East Germany.⁷ It illustrates a deep rift between the situation in Poland and in most of the other communist states. As the end of the decade drew nearer, the rift grew wider: the opposition in Poland had increasingly greater freedoms to act while all manifestations of disobedience in other countries were still brutally quelled. The greater the contrast, the more likely the Polish opposition was to stage actions expressing solidarity with the persecuted. Poles closely followed the international situation and the Polish independence movement was clearly sensitive to the plight of other nations. Moreover, oppositionists in Poland had first-hand experience of what communism was and believed that everybody was fighting the same enemy. It was accompanied by a conviction that opposition movements drive the internal evolution of communist states, and for this reason they should be supported.⁸ All of this made activists more determined to persevere in their solidarity actions. As a result, an exceptional situation emerged, in which dissidents living under dictatorship undertook vigorous actions to support oppositionists in other non-democratic states. It became possible solely owing to the aforementioned rift that appeared in the final years of the Soviet Bloc's existence. This study is an attempt to grasp the unique character of this phenomenon. It outlines the most important actions of the Polish opposition intended to defend civil rights in other communist states. Most of these initiatives focused on Czechoslovakia, Romania, and China, and, to a lesser extent, on other countries (this is the order of their presentation below). Apart from recreating the course of the most important actions, this paper also aims to point out who the main actors in these events were, determine the role of young people whose generation came of age in the late 1980s, and describe which forms of protest were used most frequently.

Czechoslovakia

The majority of the actions were intended to express solidarity with oppositionists in Czechoslovakia. This was due to several factors. First, the geographical proximity of both countries ought to be emphasized. It facilitated direct contact, which had intensified since the late 1970s.⁹ The fact that organized opposition movements had existed

7 BIELAWSKI, Piotr – LAZAROWICZ, Romuald: *Dziwny rok 1989. Kalendarium wydarzeń na świecie*. Agencja Wydawnicza Morex Jerzy Mostowski, Janki k. Warszawy 2000.

8 CZAPUTOWICZ, Jacek: *Wolność i pokój są niepodzielne*, Czas Przyszły, 1988. In: MASZKIEWICZ, Mariusz – ZALEWSKI, Dariusz (eds.): *Ruch Wolność i Pokój w relacjach międzynarodowych (1985–1990). Materiały z konferencji pt. „Bezpieczeństwo i tożsamość”* (Warszawa, 7–8 października 2011). Akademia Ponad Granicami, Warsaw 2012, p. 211.

9 See more in KELLER, Petr: *Odráž československo-polských vztahů v aktech Výboru na obranu nespravedlivě stíhaných (VONS)*. In: DĄBROWSKI, Dariusz (ed.): *Od rywalizacji do współpracy. Relacje polsko-czeskie w badaniach młodych historyków z Polski i Republiki Czeskiej*. Kolegium Europy Wschodniej, Wrocław 2003, pp. 219–251; KELLER, Petr: *Z Krkonoš do vězení. Odsouzení Jaroslava Šabaty v souvislosti se setkáním československých a polských disidentů na československo-polských hranicích v roce 1978*. In: PAŽOUT, Jaroslav (ed.): *Výbor na obranu nespravedlivě stíhaných. Politická perzekuce, opozice*

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in both countries since the mid-1970s was also important: in Czechoslovakia these organizations included the Charter 77¹⁰ and the Committee for the Defense of the Unjustly Prosecuted¹¹ (Výbor na obranu nespravedlivě stíhaných, VONS).¹² Thus, unlike in other states, in Czechoslovakia a dissident movement functioned whose members had suffered various forms of persecution, triggering protests also in Poland, which varied in intensity but generally gained momentum in the late 1980s. Another important factor was the existence of the aforementioned Polish-Czechoslovak Solidarity, one of the most active opposition forces in Poland at the time, which closely followed the situation behind Poland's southern border and initiated most of the solidarity actions.

One of the first major actions was performed as a gesture of solidarity with Petr Pospíchal,¹³ a famous Czech oppositionist and signatory of Charter 77. Pospíchal was arrested in January 1987 and charged with acting to the detriment of the state and attempting to cause social unrest, which carried a penalty of three to ten years' imprisonment. VONS called for the defense of the Czech dissident, highlighting the frequency of repressions against him. In response to the call, the Provisional Coordination Committee of Solidarity issued a statement. Apart from expressing solidarity with the accused, it put special emphasis on Pospíchal's involvement with Solidarity: *We have decided to make this statement in particular due to the fact that Petr Pospíchal was arrested on charges of circulating Solidarity publications and other materials about our movement. These actions, in the spirit of the noblest traditions of the struggle for our and your freedom, deserve the utmost respect and recognition.*¹⁴ A separate letter of protest was issued by the Freedom and Peace Movement on February 23. It was delivered to the Czechoslovak Embassy in Warsaw by Jacek Szymanderski, a member of the movement.¹⁵ Smaller

a nezávislé aktivity v Československu v letech 1978–1989, Part II. Libri, Prague 2008, pp. 7–32; KOBUS, Andrzej: *Niezależne kontakty polsko-czechosłowackie w szczyłkowej dekadzie porządku jaltańskiego*. Piotrków Trybunalski, Jelenia Góra 2008, pp. 36–52; MAJEWSKI, Grzegorz: *Karkonosze, miejsce spotkań i akcji opozycji polsko-czechosłowackiej (1978–1988)*. *Rocznik Jeleniogórski*, 2004, No. 36, pp. 25–36.

- 10 Charter 77 (Charta 77), the main opposition movement in Czechoslovakia, emerged from a group of intellectuals (non-communist party members, and also former communists) who protested against a lawsuit launched against the rock group The Plastic People of the Universe. The prime task of this group was to defend human rights, and force the communist regime to follow the UN Declaration of human rights, and the Helsinki Final Act.
- 11 The organization was established in 1978 to support dissidents and their families.
- 12 See more in SKILLING, Harold Gordon: *Charter 77 and Human Rights in Czechoslovakia*. Unwin Hyman, London – Boston – Sydney 1981; OTÁHAL, Milan: *Opozice, moc, společnost 1969–1989. Příspěvek k dějinám „normalizace“*. ÚSD AV ČR – Maxdorf, Prague 1994; PREČAN, Vilém (ed.): *Charta 77 (1977–1989). Od morální k demokratické revoluci. Dokumentace*. Čs. středisko nezávislé literatury – ÚSD ČSAV – Archa, Scheinfeld – Prague – Bratislava 1990; POSPÍCHAL, Petr: *Czechy. Wprowadzenie*. In: *Słownik dysydentów. Człowe postacie ruchów opozycyjnych w krajach komunistycznych w latach 1956–1989*, Vol. 1. Ośrodek Karta, Warsaw 2007, pp. 138–139.
- 13 Petr Pospíchal (born 1960), dissident, signatory of the Charter 77, and prisoner of conscience (sentenced three times in the communist era). General note: in many cases the authors were not able to find any information about dissidents mentioned and therefore decided to resign from adding their biographical notes.
- 14 Uwolnić Petra Pospichala. *Tygodnik Mazowsze*, No. 200, 25. 2. 1987, p. 1.
- 15 *Knihovna Libri Prohibiti* (Libri Prohibiti Library), Prague (hereafter referred to as LP), Fund (f.) Výbor na obranu nespravedlivě stíhaných (hereafter referred to as VONS), inv. č. (inventory No.) 260, sign. (mark) IV/9, Ivan Medek, Vídeň (Vienna) 28. 4. 1987, p. 20.

centers and organizations in Poland also joined the protest. For example, in March 1987, the Branch Committee of Social Resistance in Bielsko-Biała¹⁶ published an appeal to release Pospíchal in its periodical *Solidarni* and encouraged readers to sign a petition in his defense.¹⁷

Street demonstrations supporting Pospíchal took place in Warsaw and Wrocław. They culminated in picketing in Wrocław on April 16, 1987, which was initiated by people associated with Polish-Czechoslovak Solidarity. The protesters brought banners expressing solidarity and prepared special leaflets that were distributed to passers-by. Wrocław dwellers were encouraged to sign a petition defending Pospíchal, which was addressed to Gustáv Husák, the then president of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic (ČSSR). After a half an hour, militiamen arrived to arrest the demonstrators. Due to their passive resistance, it took a long time and much effort to lock them up in their cars. After spending the night in custody, all the demonstrators were released and only had to pay a fine administered by the Misdemeanor Court. The conclusion of the action was typical of the time – protesters often used passive resistance, based on non-violence strategies inspired by Martin Luther King and Mahatma Gandhi's ideas, which the young people tried to adapt to the local situation. The punishment was also characteristic of the reality of the late 1980s – no harsh repressions such as long imprisonment were administered. Information about actions in Poland in defense of Pospíchal reached not only Czechoslovakia. Czechoslovak political émigrés received it from Ivan Medek, a signatory of Charter 77 who emigrated to Vienna in the late 1970s and worked for the Voice of America broadcasting company. In the end, Pospíchal was released on May 18; however, it is difficult to judge whether the decision resulted from the actions initiated by Polish oppositionists. As it was emphasized in *Przegląd Wiadomości Agencyjnych*, an independent periodical published in Poland in the second half of the 1980s, Pospíchal's release was due to Europe-wide protests, although at the same time it was stressed that the greatest number of protest actions was organized by Poles.¹⁸

Among the various forms of protest used by oppositionists in Poland was the hunger strike. Let us cite as an example the hunger strike in Bydgoszcz initiated by the Freedom and Peace Movement in September 1987. 82 people took part as a gesture of solidarity with two Polish conscientious objectors who had been imprisoned. The strike also had an international context – petitions were sent to the embassies of Hungary and Czechoslovakia, urging authorities to refrain from repressions against conscientious objectors in these countries (Zsolt Keszthelyi and Petr Pospíchal). It is

16 A small underground group from Bielsko-Biała, active in the years 1984–1989.

17 OKRZESIK, Janusz: Solidarność Polsko-Czesko-Słowacka w Cieszyńcu i Bielsku-Białej. In: KAUTE, Małgorzata – OKRZESIK, Janusz (eds.): *Obywatele dyplomaci. Solidarność Polsko-Czesko-Słowacka w Cieszyńcu i Bielsku-Białej*. Wyższa Szkoła Bankowości i Finansów w Bielsku-Białej, Bielsko-Biała 2009, p. 41.

18 KAMIŃSKI, Łukasz – BŁAŻEK, Petr – MAJEWSKI, Grzegorz: *Ponad granicami*, pp. 191–192; *Archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej* (The Archive of the Institute of National Remembrance), Wrocław branch (hereafter referred to as AIPN Wr), 053/2522, Vol. 1, cryptogram, 16. 4. 1987, pp. 142–144; LP, f. VONS, inv. č. 260, sign. IV/9, Ivan Medek, Vídeň, 28. 4. 1987; *Wolność i Pokój. Tygodnik Mazowski*, 13. 5. 1987, No. 211, p. 4; *Przegląd Wiadomości Agencyjnych*, 27. 5. 1987, No. 21, p. 3.

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worth adding that Olga Dioszegi, Keszthelyi's fiancée, came to Bydgoszcz and joined the strike.¹⁹ Another important action of this nature took place in the flat of Magdalena and Jerzy Żurko, Freedom and Peace activists from Wrocław. On May 15, 1988, thirteen members of WiP and SPCz went on a week-long hunger strike in support of Polish conscientious objectors. Letters were sent to the Prime Minister of Czechoslovakia Lubomír Štrougal demanding the release of imprisoned dissidents, to the Hungarian government in defense of Zsolt Locsmándi, and to the Soviet government in defense of Oleg Balak, both of whom had been imprisoned because of their refusal to join up the army. The hunger strike finished on May 22, when a statement was issued announcing the release of some political prisoners. The strikers stressed the fact that there were still people who had had lost their liberty because of their views, and vowed to use all possible peaceful means of exerting pressure to change the situation.²⁰

The next action was connected with the arrest of Czechoslovak dissidents in the wake of a demonstration in Prague on October 28, 1988, organized on the 70th anniversary of the proclamation of the independence of Czechoslovakia. One month after the event, young oppositionists from SPCz, WiP, and the PPS organized a rally of solidarity in Wrocław. They brought a banner reading *No to Stalinism in Czechoslovakia* and Czechoslovak flags. Several organizers gave short speeches; one of them, Mirosław Jasiński, the leader of SPCz, described the situation of those arrested in Czechoslovakia in more detail. The gathered crowd lit candles whose flames symbolized solidarity and the memory of victims of conflicts between both countries in the 20th century. Candles and flags were also laid under the "Tree of Polish-Czechoslovak Friendship and Solidarity" in the market square. This time the militia did not intervene. To express solidarity with the protesters, a hunger strike was organized in Zuzanna Dąbrowska's flat in Warsaw December 25 and 31, 1988. This yet again illustrates the cooperation of activists from different milieus – among those who went on strike were members of the Polish Socialist Party, the Freedom and Peace Movement, and the Independent Students' Association. Two of the strikers, Edward Mizikowski and Piotr Ikonowicz, illegally climbed on top of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party edifice in central Warsaw using scaffolding that had been put up there. Ikonowicz remembered it in the following way: *Edek [Edward Mizikowski] told me that he knew how to get to the top of the building. We passed by some policemen who paid us no mind because a renovation was going on and we were wearing workers' jackets. We went up along the cornice, they negotiated with us for a quarter or so, and then we went back through one of the rooms. The photographer who took pictures later said that nobody wanted to believe him that they were authentic.*²¹ Ikonowicz and Mizikowski hung a banner de-

19 LITWIŃSKA, Monika – WALIGÓRA, Grzegorz: *Ruch Wolność i Pokój*, p. 311.

20 DWORACZEK, Kamil: *Polska Partia Socjalistyczna 1987–1990*, p. 321; KAMIŃSKI, Łukasz – BLAŻEK, Petr – MAJEWSKI, Grzegorz: *Ponad granicami*, p. 205; SMÓŁKA-GNAUCK, Anna: *Między wolnością a pokojem*, p. 123; W obronie więźniów sumienia. *Biuletyn Informacyjny* [SPCz], April-May 1988, No. 5–6, p. 11; Głodówka we Wrocławiu. *Dezserter*, 30. 5. 1988, No. 18, p. 2; *AIPN Wr*, 053/2523, Vol. 2, [Informacje dzienne dot. sytuacji w woj. wrocławskim w dniach 18–20 maja 1988] 18.–20. 5. 1988, pp. 321, 326, 328; *Ibid.*, *Szyfrogram*, 22. 5. 1988, p. 317.

21 *Kamil Dworaczek's archive*, Kamil Dworaczek's interview with Piotr Ikonowicz, 4. 12. 2009.

manding the release of political prisoners.²² This action was enthusiastically received by VONS activists, who issued a letter stressing that this manifestation of international solidarity was particularly important because it had taken place in a country where independent organizations faced similar problems and forms of repressions as those in Czechoslovakia.²³

In January 1989, a new wave of protests started in Czechoslovakia to commemorate the 20th anniversary of Jan Palach's self-immolation.²⁴ In response, the police arrested and imprisoned oppositionists, including Václav Havel.²⁵ Such brutal treatment of Czechoslovak citizens caused indignation among Polish oppositionists. The leaders of Solidarity published a brief statement demanding the release of all political prisoners by Czechoslovak authorities.²⁶ Statements were also issued by other organizations, including the Confederation of Independent Poland, which stressed that the police action in Czechoslovakia was directed not only against their fellow citizens, but also against the entire process of change sweeping throughout the continent.²⁷ Polish-Czechoslovak Solidarity expressed its protest and stressed that the manifestation was intended to pay tribute to the martyrdom of a fellow citizen.²⁸ On January 17, a joint letter of protest was published by a group of activists representing different Polish opposition movements. Its signatories included Leszek Moczulski, Jacek Kuroń, Józef Pinior, Jan Józef Lipski, and Wojciech Maziarski.²⁹ The Helsinki Committee in Poland sent a letter of solidarity to its Czechoslovak counterpart and offered to take steps to initiate a mechanism of international control of respecting human rights in Czechoslovakia, in accordance with the Helsinki Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe in Vienna. The Helsinki Committee in Czechoslovakia supported this proposal. As a result, the Polish branch of the Committee turned to the government of the Polish People's Republic (Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa, PRL) to follow the procedure prescribed in the Act and demand an

22 KAMIŃSKI, Łukasz – BLAŹEK, Petr – MAJEWSKI, Grzegorz: *Ponad granicami*, pp. 216–217; DWORACZEK, Kamil: *Polska Partia Socjalistyczna 1987–1990*, p. 450; Demonstracja we Wrocławiu. *Biuletyn Informacyjny* [SPCZ], 15. 12. 1988, No. 10–12, p. 8; AIPN, 1585/2301, Protest głodowy działaczy opozycyjnych w sprawie uwolnienia Jana Tomasiewicza. Załącznik do informacji dziennej, 4. 1. 1989, pp. 41–42; AIPN Wr, 053/2523, Vol. 4, Informacja dzienna dot. sytuacji w woj. wrocławskim w dniu 25 listopada 1988, 25. 11. 1988, pp. 163–164.

23 LP, f. VONS, inv. č. 6, sign. III/9, Prohlášení VONS, Prague 29. 12. 1988, p. 11–12.

24 The event occurred on January 16, 1969. Student Jan Palach left a letter calling for the abolition of censorship and a halt to the distribution of *Zprávy*, the official newspaper of the Soviet occupying forces. His death turned out to be another trigger that further radicalized the youth. A number of street demonstrations followed this anniversary, some of which led to fights with police forces.

25 BIELAWSKI, Piotr – LAZAROWICZ, Romuald: *Dziwny rok 1989*, pp. 37–51; KENNEY, Padraic: *A Carnival of Revolution. Central Europe 1989*. Princeton University Press, Princeton 2002, pp. 244–249.

26 Document No. 161, Announcement of the National Executive Committee of the Independent Self-governing Labor Union "Solidarity" on the situation in Czechoslovakia. In: OLASZEK, Jan (ed.): *Dokumenty władz NSZZ „Solidarność” 1981–1989*. IPN, Warsaw 2010, p. 337.

27 AIPN, 1585/2302, Reakcja opozycji na wydarzenia w Pradze. Załącznik do informacji dziennej, 19. 1. 1989, pp. 147–147v.

28 LP, f. VONS, inv. č. 6, sign. III/9, Prohlášení Polsko-čs. solidarity, Vratislav (Wrocław), 16. 1. 1989, p. 12.

29 Ibid., Prohlášení polské demokratické opozice, Varšava 17. 1. 1989, p. 12.

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explanation from Czechoslovak authorities concerning violations of human rights. It is doubtful, however, that it was positively received by Polish communists.³⁰ In order to defend Ladislav Lis, another oppositionist arrested at the same time, an initiative was taken up by the League of Human Rights in Poland. In a letter sent to Czechoslovak authorities, the League stressed that Lis was Deputy Chair of the International Federation for Human Rights based in Paris, which had a permanent status before the United Nations, and his arrest was tantamount to Czechoslovakia's violating the agreements included in the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights.³¹

The younger generation of oppositionists did not limit themselves to issuing statements. In January and February 1989, several actions were staged near the Czechoslovak Embassy in Warsaw. The Polish Socialist Party was particularly active – its members were involved in almost every protest at the time. For example, on January 23, three party activists, Piotr Ikonowicz, Cezary Miżejewski, and Ryszard Kochut appeared in front of the embassy with a banner reading *Jan Palach – symbol of freedom. No more repressions. PPS-RD*³² and chanted slogans of solidarity, such as *The Czechs are with us, we are with the Czechs. Repeal martial law*³³ in Prague. January 25, around 20 people came to the same place with a banner saying *Down with communist dictators. PPS-RD* and chanted *PPS-RD, NZS, MRKS*,³⁴ *Prague-Warsaw – common cause*. These actions lasted no more than 45 minutes; their participants were arrested by the militia or the security service, but soon afterwards they would be released.³⁵

Young Poles also staged a number of pickets and hunger strikes in cities such as Katowice, Warsaw, and Wrocław. Particularly noteworthy is a statement issued by those who went on a hunger strike in Katowice from May 20–26, 1989. They wrote that only the joint struggle of all Central and Eastern European nations against the communist dictatorship could stop the violation of human rights. They emphasized their readiness to use all available means to free prisoners of conscience in Czechoslovakia and other Soviet Bloc states. This document proves the existence of a clearly specified aim and the awareness that there was a single enemy – a communist dictatorship after the Soviet fashion, imposed on all the countries in the region. It is possible that the young Poles had a sense of mission and felt compelled to use the relative freedom in their country to remind others about the fate of political prisoners throughout the Soviet Bloc. During the hunger strike, several participants went to the Czechoslovak Consulate and waved a banner demanding the release of Václav

30 List do Czechosłowackiego Komitetu Helsińskiego, 25. 1. 1989. *Prawa Człowieka*, 1989, No. 1 (3), p. 36; Odpowiedź Czechosłowackiego Komitetu Helsińskiego, 1. 2. 1989. *Ibid.*, pp. 38–39; List do Premiera Rządu PRL, 1. 2. 1989. *Ibid.*, pp. 40–41.

31 *LP*, f. VONS, inv. č. 202, sign. IV/14, the League of Human Rights in Poland to the Ambassador of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic in Warsaw, Warsaw, 1. 2. 1988.

32 Polska Partia Socjalistyczna – Rewolucja Demokratyczna (Polish Socialist Party – Democratic Revolution).

33 Although martial law had not been officially introduced in Czechoslovakia, the scale of repressions reminded Poles of the situation in their country after December 13, 1981.

34 Inter-Enterprise Workers' Committee "Solidarity" (Międzyzakładowy Robotniczy Komitet "Solidarność").

35 *AIPN*, 1585/2303, Informacja dzienna nr 20/2630, 24. 1. 1989, p. 3v; *Ibid.*, Informacja dzienna nr 22/2632, 26. 1. 1989, pp. 46–47.

Havel; they were all arrested. However, it did not discourage the young oppositionists who returned to the same place on the following day, which again led to their arrest. One of the demonstrators, Rinaldo Betkiewicz, was later fined by the Misdemeanor Court. During the strike, the protesters resorted to one more form of expressing dissent – “ruszting,” named after the Polish word for scaffold. Three members of the PPS climbed a scaffold opposite the consulate, where they protested against the repressions in Czechoslovakia. It only took 10 minutes before they were knocked down from a height of about 2.5 meters. The statement published at the end of the hunger strike once again highlighted that the protest had stemmed from a belief in the shared destiny of Central and Eastern European nations; further protests were also announced.³⁶

As it turned out, these were not empty words. On March 27, PPS activists began another hunger strike in Katowice. In the statement issued on this occasion they announced that the protest was a continuation of the previous hunger strike, and its main aim was to free the political prisoners in Czechoslovakia. *The fate of Czechs, Slovaks, Romanians, and Russians is also our fate*,³⁷ they stated. The protest finished before mid-April. One day after the beginning of the strike in Katowice, on March 28, the PPS members from Warsaw initiated a solidarity hunger strike, which again took place in the flat of Zuzanna Dąbrowska, a WiP and PPS activist. The strikers, as had been the case in Katowice during the previous action, went to Czechoslovakia’s diplomatic post – the embassy in Warsaw. Six young oppositionists attempted to stage a picket in defense of the citizens of Czechoslovakia, especially Václav Havel, but soon afterwards were stopped by militiamen. Before the end of the month, similar pickets were organized in Katowice and Wrocław.³⁸ In mid-April, around one hundred members and supporters of Polish-Czechoslovak Solidarity staged a demonstration in Bielsko-Biała.³⁹

The beginning of 1989 was a period of particularly firm actions of support for the repressed dissidents in Czechoslovakia. Of course, it was prompted by the fact that this form of activity was becoming increasingly possible in Poland, which contrasted with the harsh punishment of Czechoslovak oppositionists, who were still being

- 36 KAMIŃSKI, Łukasz – BLAŹEK, Petr – MAJEWSKI, Grzegorz: *Ponad granicami*, p. 219; DWORACZEK, Kamil: *Polska Partia Socjalistyczna 1987–1990*, p. 450; Głodówka na rzecz uwolnienia więźniów politycznych w Czechosłowacji. *Nasz Przegląd*, 14. 4. 1989, No. 3, p. 3; *AIPN*, 0248/257, Vol. 4, Załącznik do informacji dziennej z 22. 3. 1989, dotyczący strajku głodowego działaczy PPS-RD i WiP w Katowicach, pp. 106–107; *Ibid.*, Vol. 4, Załącznik do informacji dziennej z 23. 3. 1989, p. 112; *Ibid.*, Załącznik do informacji dziennej dot. akcji protestacyjnych na rzecz uwolnienia W. Havela, undated, p. 117 (pdf); *AIPN*, 1585/2308, Załącznik do informacji dziennej, 24. 3. 1989, pp. 27–27v.
- 37 *AIPN*, 0248/257, Vol. 4, Załącznik do informacji dziennej dotyczący akcji protestacyjnych na rzecz uwolnienia W. Havela, undated, p. 118.
- 38 *Ibid.*, pp. 118–119; DWORACZEK, Kamil: *Polska Partia Socjalistyczna 1987–1990*, p. 450; *Wiadomości*. *Nasz Przegląd*, 14. 4. 1989, No. 3, p. 2; *Głodówka na rzecz uwolnienia więźniów politycznych w Czechosłowacji*, p. 3; *Głodówka w Katowicach i w Warszawie*. *Biuletyn Informacyjny* [SPCz], April 1989, No. 14, pp. 4–5, 20.
- 39 GRAJEWSKI, Andrzej: SPCzS na Podbeskidziu w okresie 1988–1990. Doświadczenia osobiste. In: KAUTE, Małgorzata – OKRZESIK, Janusz (eds.): *Obywatele dyplomaci*, p. 63.

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thrown in prison at the time. However, democratic changes would soon transform the political situation in both countries and turn former oppositionists into influential politicians and members of government. Václav Havel, for whom Polish strikers often spoke up, became the president of Czechoslovakia (December 29, 1989), which, naturally, meant the end of the protests described here. The crumbling of the communist dictatorships in Europe showed that Polish oppositionists were definitely right about one thing – the nations of the region did share a common fate.

Romania

In spite of increasingly dire living standards, Romanian society generally did not exhibit rebellious attitudes. This changed November 15, 1987, when truck factory workers in Braşov revolted. The direct cause of the rebellion was a significant reduction in wages. The workers first gathered in front of the factory and then marched towards the city center. Having forced their entry into the communist party headquarters, they were attacked by a riot squad, who brutally disbanded the demonstration. As a result, many protesters were later sentenced to prison with the duty to perform unpaid labor.⁴⁰

The workers' protest in Braşov directed the attention of Polish oppositionists to Romania. In the previous years there had been hardly any texts or documents referring to the situation in the country. Thus, the Braşov revolt acted as a catalyst for Poles' increased interest in Romanian affairs, which manifested itself very clearly after Charter 77's appeal of January 3, 1988 for providing international support to Romanian society. Charter 77 called for organizing protests in front of Romanian embassies in different countries, which would be staged on February 1 – the Day of Solidarity with the Romanian People.⁴¹ On this occasion, special statements were issued by the most important Polish opposition organizations, those which had existed since at least 1982, such as the Independent Self-governing Labor Union "Solidarity" and Fighting Solidarity. The National Executive Committee of Solidarity – the movement's Poland-wide authority – put out a very brief statement about the protest and the repressions suffered by its participants. The union expressed solidarity and declared material assistance.⁴² In a statement published by Fighting Solidarity, the organization supported Charter 77's appeal for international help to Romanian society and emphasized the significance of the recent protest, which was described

40 OLASZEK, Jan (ed.): *Dokumenty władz NSZZ „Solidarność” 1981–1989*, p. 284; Braşov '87. *Tygodnik Mazowsze*, 25. 11. 1987, No. 229, p. 1. More about the Braşov events cf. OPREA, Marius – OLARU, Stejrel: *The day we won't forget: 15 November 1987, Braşov*. Polirom, Iasi 2003.

41 KAMIŃSKI, Łukasz – BLAŻEK, Petr – MAJEWSKI, Grzegorz: *Ponad granicami*, p. 202; DWORACZEK, Kamil: *Polska Partia Socjalistyczna 1987–1990*, p. 439; TISMANEANU, Vladimir: *Stalinism for all Seasons. A Political History of Romanian Communism*. University of California Press, Berkeley – Los Angeles – London 2003, p. 22.

42 Document No. 129, Oświadczenie Krajowej Komisji Wykonawczej NSZZ „Solidarność” w sprawie represji wobec uczestników protestów w Rumunii, 7. 2. 1988. In: OLASZEK, Jan (ed.): *Dokumenty władz NSZZ „Solidarność” 1981–1989*, p. 284.

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as an expression of Romanians' determination to stand up for their rights. The text also specified that overthrowing Nicolae Ceaușescu's regime was one of the most important tasks facing oppositionists throughout the communist bloc. It also repeated the same thread that had appeared in statements concerning the situation in Czechoslovakia – that of joint struggle against communist dictatorship, irrespective of national borders.⁴³

Not only Solidarity and Fighting Solidarity issued statements about the events in Romania. Almost all opposition organizations published documents supporting Charter 77's appeal and expressed solidarity with the struggle of Romanian society for its rights.⁴⁴ In most cases, however, they were just empty declarations. The appeal of Charter 77 was taken up by mostly young people, much like those who arrived in front of the Romanian Embassy in Warsaw on February 1. The role of chief organizer was assumed by Józef Pinior of the PPS. The gathering triggered a sharp reaction from the militia and the security service. PPS leaders (including Pinior and Jan Józef Lipski) were arrested before the demonstration even began. Faced with large numbers of riot-control forces in front of the embassy, those who did reach the site faced a daunting task. They managed to unfurl previously prepared banners (reading *Human rights for the Romanian people, We support the Brașov workers*) for, literally, all of one minute. Several small groups (around 200 people in total, including activists of the PPS, SPCz, WiP, and the Inter-Enterprise Workers' Committee "Solidarity") chanted slogans.⁴⁵ According to a secret service report, the protesters were planning to submit a petition to the ambassador demanding the immediate end of the repressions. The demonstration was quickly disbanded, 43 people were arrested and then released after "explanatory" talks.⁴⁶

The experienced participants in the action were well aware of the possibility of being arrested for a short time. Radosław Gawlik from Wrocław remembered: *We had a double lunch with Ducin [Mieczysław Piotrowski] – just in case. We dropped by his family to leave the rucksacks, underground brochures, and other things we did not need at the time and which militiamen would be very happy to find. We took a bag with some leaflets informing about the picket, two banners, identity documents, toothbrushes, and something to read.*⁴⁷ This quotation illustrates an attitude that was common among the oppositionists – repressions no longer scared them, they became an inherent element of every action which had

43 Document No. 258, Oświadczenie Solidarności Walczącej wyrażające solidarność z narodem rumuńskim w walce z dyktaturą Nicolae Ceaușescu. In: DWORACZEK, Kamil – WALIGÓRA, Grzegorz: *Solidarność Walcząca w dokumentach. Materiały własne*, Vol. 2, Part 1. IPN, Warsaw 2016, p. 449.

44 KAMIŃSKI, Łukasz – BLAŻEK, Petr – MAJEWSKI, Grzegorz: *Ponad granicami*, p. 202; DWORACZEK, Kamil: *Polska Partia Socjalistyczna 1987–1990*, p. 439; AIPN, 1585/16087, Inicjatywy ugrupowań antysocjalistycznych w sprawie Rumunii, 2. 2. 1988, pp. 49–50.

45 KAMIŃSKI, Łukasz – BLAŻEK, Petr – MAJEWSKI, Grzegorz: *Ponad granicami*, pp. 203–204; DWORACZEK, Kamil: *Polska Partia Socjalistyczna 1987–1990*, p. 439; AIPN, 1585/16087, Załącznik do informacjiiennej: Próba zorganizowania przez „PPS” demonstracji przed ambasadą Rumunii w Warszawie, 2. 2. 1988, pp. 61–64.

46 AIPN, 1585/16087, Załącznik do informacjiiennej: Próba zorganizowania przez „PPS” demonstracji przed ambasadą Rumunii w Warszawie, 2. 2. 1988, pp. 61–64.

47 KAMIŃSKI, Łukasz – BLAŻEK, Petr – MAJEWSKI, Grzegorz: *Ponad granicami*, p. 203.

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to be taken into account. Because punishments such as an overnight arrest or a fine were relatively light, they failed to act as deterrents. It is worth adding that participants in actions did not attempt to run away – instead, they let the militia arrest them, which was another characteristic element of movements based on the principle of non-violence. The arrests would later be exposed in independent media in order to reveal the oppressive nature of the regime, which was undoubtedly another method of fighting it.

The next public manifestation of solidarity with the people of Romania was initiated by the participants in the International Human Rights Conference in Kraków-Mistrzejowice, who debated in August 1988. The meeting was an independent initiative organized jointly by different opposition groups. Among the guests at the conference was the German writer of Romanian descent Helmuth Frauendorfer, who proposed that November 15, (the anniversary of the Braşov revolt) be declared a day of protest against Ceauşescu's policies. The conference attendees supported the proposal and several hundred people signed the relevant declaration.⁴⁸ Consequently, on November 15, young activists of WiP and SPCz organized a picket in Wrocław. Several of them stood near an underground passage on Świdnicka Street with a banner reading *Day of Solidarity with Romania. Down with Ceauşescu!* They encouraged passers-by to sign a declaration urging the Polish government to discontinue trade with Romania. They managed to collect several hundred signatures before the action was stopped by the security service. When one of the picketers, Zofia Olszewska, was apprehended, an unusual situation occurred: the protesters began negotiations with the security service officers, which led to the release of Olszewska in return for the immediate termination of the action.⁴⁹ As Radosław Gawlik described it: *We agreed to it. We decided that we would not break the agreement, even though we had two more banners hidden under our jackets, and a few petitions left to be signed. We said goodbye to each other near the Monopol Hotel. It actually turned out pretty well. And Ceauşescu was still a dog!*⁵⁰

The Day of Solidarity with the Romanian People was again commemorated on February 1, 1989. PPS activists arrived in front of the Romanian Embassy in Warsaw with banners reading *Democracy throughout the Bloc, Ceauşescu must go, Solidarity with Romanians*. The action was stopped by the militia after less than an hour and around a dozen people were arrested.⁵¹

Another wave of solidarity manifested itself in December 1989, during the revolution in Romania. The increased interest was caused by the shocking news that force was being used against protesters there, resulting in a large number of casualties – the only time such a thing occurred during the Autumn of Nations. Secondly, the pro-

48 BRODA, Jarosław: O dwóch takich... *Biuletyn Informacyjny* [SPCz], 15. 12. 1988, No. 10–12, p. 9; Kamil Dworaczek's archive, Kamil Dworaczek's interview with Jarosław Broda, 2. 2. 2017.

49 GAWLIK, Radosław: Dzień Solidarności z Rumunią. *Biuletyn Informacyjny* [SPCz], 15. 12. 1988, No. 10–12, p. 10; *AIPN Wr*, 053/2523, Vol. 4, Informacja dzienna dot. sytuacji w województwie wrocławskim w dniu 15. 11. 1988, p. 14.

50 GAWLIK, Radosław: *Dzień Solidarności z Rumunią*, p. 10.

51 *AIPN*, 1585/2303, Informacja dzienna nr 28/2638, 2. 2. 1989, p. 173v; Serwis informacyjny. *Nasz Przegląd*, 14. 2. 1989, No. 1, p. 2.

cess of political transformation in Poland was well under way at the time – Tadeusz Mazowiecki, a representative of Solidarity, had already been appointed prime minister, which undoubtedly made it easier to express solidarity with those still repressed. Besides, political transformations were in progress in other countries where public manifestations of solidarity with Romanian society were also taking place. The events in Poland were again set in front of the Romanian Embassy in Warsaw. This time, however, neither the militia nor the Security service interfered. WiP activists had prepared and distributed leaflets in which Ceaușescu was compared to Hitler and Stalin. The authors put forward several demands addressed to the Polish authorities: break off diplomatic relations with Romania, provide medical help to the victims, and declare Ceaușescu guilty of genocide. The oppositionists hung several banners on nearby fences and shouted slogans such as *The Sun of the Carpathians* (Ceaușescu – authors' note) *must fall!* Some of those gathered threw stones or inkwells at the embassy building; others lit candles in memory of victims and arranged them in the form of a cross.⁵²

Another large demonstration in front of the embassy was held just before Christmas, on December 23, 1989. Although the date was inconvenient, it was attended by 1,000–1,500 people who chanted *Free Romania* and *Down with Ceaușescu*. Inside the building, talks were conducted between the ambassador and the Polish delegation formed by representatives of Solidarity: Zofia Kuratowska, Bronisław Geremek, Adam Michnik, and Andrzej Wielowieyski. The meeting was probably intended to ease the tension – a few days before stones and inkwells had again been thrown at the embassy, and there were also fears that the protesters might forcefully enter the building. The talks ended successfully – the ambassador went outside and showed the V sign, which was reciprocated by the crowd. Then Geremek took the floor and assured the demonstrators that the embassy personnel supported the revolution and the atmosphere in Romania was relatively peaceful. The demonstrators insisted on taking down the socialist emblem of Romania, which was done by one of the embassy staff, who later handed the emblem to the crowd. Shouts could be heard: *A Christmas present for Rakowski!*⁵³ This “trophy” satisfied the protesters, who slowly dispersed; a group of members of the Confederation of Independent Poland actually took the emblem to the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party, where former Prime Minister Mieczysław Rakowski resided.⁵⁴ The final note in the series of solidarity actions with Romanians was a march of mourning organized by WiP on December 26. The procession, carrying crosses and Romanian flags with black ribbons, went from the city center to the embassy.⁵⁵

52 (OS): Tragiczna droga do wolności. *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 21. 12. 1989, No. 163, p. 1; *AIPN*, 1585/14562, Informacja dot. aktualnej sytuacji w kraju według meldunków nadesłanych w dniu 26. 12. 1989 roku, 26. 12. 1989, pp. 34–35; *Centrum Historii Zajeżdźnia Archive*, collection of the Dementi Independent Photo Agency, FDEM-1678-1683, 5740-5742, 5764-5767.

53 SMOLEŃSKI, Paweł: Zerwać tę blachę. *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 28. 12. 1989, No. 166, p. 4.

54 *AIPN*, 1585/14562, Informacja dot. aktualnej sytuacji w kraju według meldunków nadesłanych w dniu 26. 12. 1989 roku, 26. 12. 1989, pp. 34–35

55 Pomagamy Rumunii. *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 27. 12. 1989, No. 165, p. 1.

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Independent of the protests, Poles also organized large-scale humanitarian aid in which food, clothes, medicine, and blood were collected. In a way, the initiative arose spontaneously – the participants in the protest of December 23, handed in money to its organizers, i.e. members of the Helsinki Committee, who later led the action and formalized it. To this end they even took control of several rooms in the embassy, which caused understandable consternation among personnel. The charity action coordinated by the Helsinki Committee was quickly joined by students of the Independent Students' Association and other institutions, such as the Polish Red Cross and the Independent Self-governing Labor Union "Solidarity." The aid later reached Romania through various channels.⁵⁶

It is possible to discern an evolutionary nature of Poland's interest in Romania. The attention of Polish oppositionists was undoubtedly captured by the Braşov revolt. Later, despite the absence of any equally pronounced anti-regime protests in Romania, it did not vanish completely, as evidenced by the picket in Wrocław on November 15, 1988 or the demonstration in front of the embassy in February 1989. Of course, it reached its pinnacle during the Romanian revolution of December 1989, when the eyes of the world turned to Bucharest. However, one could risk saying that the reaction in Poland would not have been so strong without the previous actions and publications which had acquainted opposition-minded Poles with Romania and its problems.

China

The wind of change blowing in Central and Eastern Europe also reached China (Chińska Republika Ludowa, ChRL). In April 1989, students began to occupy Tiananmen Square in Beijing, demanding the greater democratization of the country. Instead of negotiations, on the night of June 3–4, the army was sent in against the protesters. An undetermined number of people died as a result; it is usually estimated at several thousand. In the last decade of May, even before the massacre, a protest was held in front of the Chinese Embassy in Warsaw. Again, the younger oppositionists were most visible. On May 23, students of the Independent Students' Association appeared with a banner reading *Beijing-Warsaw, common cause*; the protest ended after an intervention of the militia. However, peace was not restored for long – the students were replaced by several PPS members with a banner and joined by some of those who had participated in the previous protest. When the militia again intervened, the protesters sat down on the sidewalk and engaged in passive resistance. All of the detained were released after a short interrogation.⁵⁷

The pacification of the student protest at Tiananmen Square was a turning point. The news of the massacre triggered a reaction from most Polish opposition groups.

56 *Solidarni z Rumunią, grudzień 1989–styczeń 1990/Solidari cu Romania, decembrie 1989–ianuarie 1990* (introduction by Konrad Bialecki, photographs by Jan Kołodziejewski). IPN, Warsaw – Poznań 2009, pp. 48–52; Aid for Romanians. *Human Rights*, 1990, No. 7–8, pp. 28–29.

57 *AIPN*, 1585/2313, Informacja dzienna nr 123/2733, 24. 5. 1989, p. 80v.

Usually it came down to issuing special statements criticizing the Chinese authorities, but the younger generation initiated a more noticeable form of protest. From June 5–10, activists of WiP, PPS and anarchists declared a hunger strike in a tent city in front of the embassy. Independently from this, many inhabitants of Warsaw gathered near the embassy in order to commemorate the fallen students. On June 10, at the end of the hunger strike, its participants led a silent march of around 3,000 people through the center of Warsaw. A car was driving at its front; the clanking of tank tracks alternating with gunshots could be heard from its speakers. It must have made a strong impression – the late evening, several thousand silent people with candles, and gunshots in the background. The march eventually reached the embassy: *The Chinese embassy is gleaming with hundreds of lights. The candle smoke creates an atmosphere resembling All Saints' Day. The marchers are overflowing the square, which they want to rename Heavenly Peace Square,*⁵⁸ wrote a journalist for *Gazeta Wyborcza*, a recently established daily. It is worth noting that the strikers in front of the embassy were visited by Joan Baez, a famous American singer of the 1960s student revolt. She was considered a legend by many, so her short performance hugely boosted the morale of the protesters.⁵⁹ Among them was Piotr Ikonowicz, who remembered that *the nicest moment was the concert by Joan Baez, who was in Warsaw at the time and decided to sing for us. When the hunger strike was over we went to my sister's [Magdalena Gessler] restaurant, which had just opened in Saski Park, not far from the embassy. We were starving after a week of fasting, unshaven, we looked like Chechens or some criminals, so no wonder that the guests quickly stood up and left. We had some Chinese food and fish, it tasted great after a week-long fasting.*⁶⁰

Similar protests were held simultaneously in other cities. On June 5, a demonstration organized by WiP in the center of Cracow attracted around 120 people, mostly students. The demonstrators brought banners with slogans supporting the Chinese struggle for freedom. After a short time they started walking towards the Jagiellonian University campus, where banners and black flags were unfurled. Finally, candles were lit in memory of the victims. Two days later, on June 7, a larger action was held. First, with the permission of the university authorities, a rally was organized on the campus. The speakers – students and teachers – expressed solidarity with the protesters in China. The protest culminated a few hours later, when WiP took the initiative and led several hundred people from the university to the market square, waving banners condemning the terror in China. Another rally took place in the market square, where around a thousand people gathered. The protesters read a resolution addressed to General Jaruzelski, chairman of the Council of State, which demanded that Poland officially condemn the use of force against students at Tiananmen. Indignation must have been growing and the atmosphere increasingly heated because another march was soon formed. It was headed towards the Consulate General of

58 KOCHAN, M.: Marsz Milczenia... *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 12. 6. 1989, No. 25, p. 2.

59 Ibid.; DWORACZEK, Kamil: *Polska Partia Socjalistyczna 1987–1990*, pp. 450–451; *AIPN*, 1585/2314, Reakcje środowisk opozycyjnych na wydarzenia w ChRL, 9. 6. 1989, p. 158; Ibid., Informacja dzienna nr 134/2744, 6. 6. 1989, p. 76; Ibid., Informacja dzienna nr 139/2749, 12. 6. 1989, p. 183v.

60 Kamil Dworaczek's archive, Kamil Dworaczek's interview with Piotr Ikonowicz, 4. 12. 2009.

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the USSR; the marchers chanted slogans demanding the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Poland, but the Chinese thread did not disappear. Fearing the further escalation of tensions, the authorities decided to prevent the demonstrators from reaching the consulate and the march was stopped by the militia. However, the event did not turn into riots – some participants went home while others sat down, transforming the rally into a sit-in. Less than two hours later, as a result of negotiations between Jan Maria Rokita of WiP and the head of the District Office of Internal Affairs,⁶¹ the demonstrators were allowed to walk back to the university premises. The leader of the action, Marek Kurzyniec of WiP, called for an overnight strike at the university as a continuation of the demonstration. Around 50 students joined him, the rest went home. The event in Cracow on June 7 was the biggest gesture of solidarity with China held outside Poland's capital at the time. It showed the ability of the Freedom and Peace Movement to mobilize large numbers of students and influence the course of action, especially once the rally moved outside the university premises.⁶²

On June 6, around 150 people, mostly youths, came to the Chinese Consulate in Gdańsk. They spread banners out on the fence which read: *Budapest 1956, Poland 1970, Beijing 1989 – what next?* Characteristically, the slogans suggested an awareness of the continuity of the fight against communism, irrespective of the time or geographical region. The young Poles inscribed the Tiananmen protest into this struggle.⁶³ Two days later, the area near the consulate became the stage for another protest, which resembled the event in front of the embassy in Warsaw. Several hundred people laid flowers, lit candles, and hung banners on the fence with inscriptions such as *The Chinese murder – the true face of communism* and *Beijing, Budapest, Prague, Poland*. Those gathered were also asked to sign a petition. The protest did not evolve into an occupation of the area – the crowd broke up after two hours.⁶⁴ In the following days, similar demonstrations were held in Łódź, Poznań, Szczecin, and Bełchatów. Each time, the Freedom and Peace Movement played a significant role in organizing them.⁶⁵

The demonstration in Wrocław assumed a different form. On June 9, probably following the example of their colleagues from Warsaw, the demonstrators set up a tent city in the city center, which they called the Camp of Live Protest. Banners were made and inscriptions written on the walls, which accused the Chinese authorities of the massacre at Tiananmen. An outline of a human body symbolizing the fallen victims was drawn on the sidewalk, where flowers were later laid and candles were lit. As was the case in other cities, the demonstrators in Wrocław collected signatures under a petition condemning the massacre in China. The protest climaxed on June 15, when a silent march was organized – the idea, too, was presumably inspired by

61 His name is unknown to the authors.

62 LITWIŃSKA, Monika: *WiP Kontra PRL*, p. 498; AIPN, 1585/2314, Informacja dzienna nr 134/2744, 6. 6. 1989, p. 76–76v; *Ibid.*, Informacja dzienna nr 136/2746, 8. 6. 1989, p. 113–114.

63 AIPN, 1585/2314, Informacja dzienna nr 135/2745, 7. 6. 1989, p. 93.

64 *Ibid.*, Informacja dzienna nr 137/2746, 9. 6. 1989, p. 130v.

65 LITWIŃSKA, Monika: *WiP Kontra PRL*, pp. 496–498; KOCHAN, M.: *Marsz Milczenia...*, p. 2; AIPN, 1585/2314, Informacja dzienna nr 138/2747, 10. 6. 1989, p. 163v; *Ibid.*, Informacja dzienna nr 139/2749, 12. 6. 1989, p. 184v.

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the events in Warsaw. Moreover, the inhabitants of the tent city put up a monument showing a bicycle crushed by a tank. However, it was destroyed by security service agents during the following night. It was later rebuilt in the same place in a slightly different version.⁶⁶

Although young Poles had expressed solidarity with Chinese students even before June 4, it was the Tiananmen massacre that started the wave of protests across the country. The venues for the demonstrations are noteworthy – if possible, they were held near Chinese diplomatic posts (the embassy in Warsaw, the consulate in Gdańsk). In other cities the venues were chosen more spontaneously, although they were always some central location, which ensured maximum visibility. Of course, the protests did not change the situation in China, where the use of force against its own citizens saved the crumbling regime.

East Germany and Other Countries

The first documented solidarity action with East Germany (GDR) took place in 1988. It was triggered by the arrest of five members of the Initiative for Peace and Human Rights (Initiative Frieden und Menschenrechte) by German authorities following a demonstration in the memory of Rosa Luxemburg organized in East Berlin. WiP issued a statement of solidarity, which was later published by the media in West Germany, among others. Another success was the international aspect of the action, as the document was signed by Polish, Czechoslovak, Hungarian, Yugoslav, and Russian peace activists. Among the 81 Polish signatories were some of the most prominent oppositionists (representing the Independent Self-governing Labor Union “Solidarity,” the Confederation of Independent Poland, WiP, PPS, Polish-Czechoslovak Solidarity), including Zbigniew Bujak, Leszek Moczulski, Jacek Kuroń, Jacek Czaputowicz, and Jan Józef Lipski.⁶⁷

The establishment of German-Polish Solidarity (Solidarność Polsko-Niemiecka, SPN), modeled after SPCz, was an interesting initiative. It was set up by Wojciech Pięciak and Paweł Chojnacki. Pięciak was actively in touch with German citizens, and even had a girlfriend in Jena.⁶⁸ Both men were aware that little was being done behind Poland’s western border to support German aspirations to independence, which was

66 KAMIŃSKI, Łukasz: NSZZ „Solidarność” Region Dolny Śląsk. In: KAMIŃSKI, Łukasz – WALIGÓRA, Grzegorz (eds.): *NSZZ Solidarność 1980–1989*, Vol. 6. IPN, Warsaw 2010, p. 461; *AIPN*, 1585/2314, Informacja dzienna nr 139/2749, 12. 6. 1989, p. 184v; *AIPN Wr*, 053/2524, Vol. 2, Szyfrogram, 15. 6. 1989, p. 8; *Centrum Historii Zajezdnia Archive*, collection of the Dementi Independent Photo Agency, FDEM-1554-1587.

67 ZARICZNY, Piotr: *Opozycja w NRD i w PRL – wzajemne relacje i oceny*. Europejskie Centrum Solidarności, Gdańsk 2013, pp. 151–152; KERSKI, Basil – RUCHLEWSKI, Przemysław (eds.): *Lekcja solidarności. Środkowoeuropejska, antykomunistyczna opozycja i jej dziedzictwo*. Europejskie Centrum Solidarności, Gdańsk 2017, p. 52; *LP*, f. VONS, inv. č. 3, sign. III/19, Společné prohlášení k represím v NDR (Joint declaration on repression in GDR), 4. 2. 1988, pp. 3–4.

68 Pięciak admitted that it was an important motive for his involvement in actions of support for the GDR. PIĘCIAK, Wojciech: *Deutsch-polnische Solidarität: eine Krakauer Demo im Oktober 1989*, unpaginated (typescript in the possession of Kamil Dworaczek).

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in stark contrast to the accelerating changes in Poland. The direct impulse to organize the action had been provided by a demonstration in Leipzig and the exodus of GDR citizens who were seeking asylum in West German embassies in different Central European states. One of SPN's first initiatives was an appeal to the Minister of Foreign Affairs Professor Krzysztof Skubiszewski to take a stance on the fact that Germans caught on the border were handed over to the Security service Stasi.⁶⁹

SPN's most spectacular action was carried out on the Market Square in Cracow on October 5, 1989.⁷⁰ It was a rally attended by several hundred people and held under the slogan *Destroy the Berlin wall – freedom for GDR*. The participants carried banners reading *Polish-German Solidarity, Solidarity with the New Forum*,⁷¹ and *Honecker+Stalin=great love*. The last-mentioned most probably referred to the famous photograph showing the fraternal kiss of Erich Honecker and Leonid Brezhnev. The demonstrators marched towards the Culture and Information Center of the German Democratic Republic; on their way they were joined by some passers-by. They chanted slogans demanding freedom for East Germany; some colorful slogans, such as *Honecker to the ZOO* or *GDR=III Reich* were also painted on the center's seat. A symbolic wall blocking the entrance was erected.⁷² One of the students, Paweł Chojnacki, took the floor on behalf of the organizers, and among those who spoke later was Jürgen,⁷³ a young German citizen from East Berlin. At first he only took photographs of the event, but, overcome by emotion, he gathered courage and publically thanked all those gathered in front of the Culture and Information Center for their involvement. Apart from this action, SPN organized training in print production for several Berliners at the beginning of 1990, but the initiative was overdue – the fall of the Berlin Wall and the subsequent democratic changes soon put an end to such cooperation.⁷⁴

Additionally, on October 5, 1989, the Wrocław branch of the Independent Students' Association and the Independent Union of School Students (Niezależna Unia Młodzieży Szkolnej, NUMS) organized a demonstration supporting the democratic aspirations of East German society. Around 200 youths marched from the Market Square to the GDR Consulate and hung a banner on the fence reading *We demand*

69 CHOJNACKI, Paweł: *Ur. '68. Notatki z ulic Krakowa 1988–1989*. IPN, Warsaw 2010, pp. 224–225; PIĘCIAK, Wojciech: *Deutsch-polnische Solidarität*, unpaginated; Kamil Dworaczek's telephone conversation with Wojciech Pięciak, 5. 1. 2018.

70 Leaflets announcing the demonstration were printed by Mieczysław Pyzio, who willfully signed them as a WiP initiative; for this reason, SPN is sometimes erroneously described as a WiP initiative.

71 An East German opposition group.

72 LITWIŃSKA, Monika: *WiP Kontra PRL*, pp. 510–511.

73 His last name is unknown to the authors.

74 LITWIŃSKA, Monika: *WiP Kontra PRL*, pp. 510–511 (the author provided an incorrect date, 12. 11. 1989, and erroneously credited WiP with the initiative); CHOJNACKI, Paweł: *Ur. '68*, pp. 227–229; ZARICZNY, Piotr: *Opozycja w NRD i w PRL – wzajemne relacje i oceny*, p. 152; RUCHNIEWICZ, Krzysztof: *Przekraczanie granic. Kontakty między opozycją polską a nenerdowską*. In: RUCHNIEWICZ, Krzysztof – WOJTASZYN, Dariusz (eds.): *RFN-NRD-PRL – Zbliżenia*. Wydawnictwo Gajt, Wrocław 2014, pp. 105–106; PIĘCIAK, Wojciech: *Deutsch-polnische Solidarität*, unpaginated; e-mails from Wojciech Pięciak to Kamil Dworaczek, 5., and 10. 1. 2018; Kamil Dworaczek's telephone conversation with Wojciech Pięciak, 5. 1. 2018; *Kamil Dworaczek's archive*, video recording of the demonstration, from the archive of Wojciech Pięciak.

democracy for GDR. After the rally, a statement was publically read which called for the end of physical violence and repressions of German oppositionists. The document was later sent to opposition groups in Leipzig.⁷⁵

Although Honecker's regime was in no way comparable to Husák's or Ceaușescu's dictatorships, there was a clear discrepancy between the small number of actions expressing solidarity with Germany and the scale of protests in defense of citizens of other countries. Apart from the example described above, no traces of similar actions have been found. It could be speculated that the reason for this was primarily the still widespread aversion to Germans. The memory of Nazi occupation was relatively fresh. The younger generation, who could not remember it personally, was indoctrinated by communist propaganda, clearly present in school curricula, for instance. It was feared that a united – and therefore stronger – Germany could pose a threat to Poland. Therefore, solidarity actions with Germany must have triggered certain doubts and controversies, which was not the case with events supporting the democratic tendencies in other countries. The aversion to Germans could be exemplified by the reaction of passers-by witnessing the distribution of leaflets with information about the demonstration in Cracow. In general, negative views were expressed; the elderly made references to Auschwitz or claimed that a unified Germany would question Poland's western border.⁷⁶ Moreover, in the GDR there were no acts of terror as openly brutal as those in China in June 1989 or in Romania in December 1989 which caused worldwide waves of protest. Finally, although democratic opposition did exist in East Germany, it was relatively weak. Establishing closer cooperation with East German oppositionists was difficult because many of them had found asylum in West Germany, even if they had not emigrated of their own accord; in some cases they had been freed from prison after West German authorities ransomed them, which was a profitable source of hard currency for Honecker's regime.⁷⁷ Although there was some contact between WiP and East German pacifists,⁷⁸ the mutual relationships were poisoned by aversion and lack of understanding resulting from media propaganda on both sides of the River Oder.⁷⁹ The lack of permanent and active cooperation between oppositionists in the two countries, like the one between Poland and Czechoslovakia, was bound to contribute to the small number of actions supporting the citizens of East Germany.

75 BIELAWSKI, Piotr – LAZAROWICZ, Romuald: *Dziwny rok 1989*, pp. 344–347; *AIPN Wr*, 053/2524, Vol. 4, Informacja dzienna nr 031/89 dot. sytuacji na terenie województwa wrocławskiego w dniu 5. 10. 1989, 5. 10. 1989, p. 352.

76 CHOJNACKI, Paweł: *Ur*, '68, p. 225; PIĘCIAK, Wojciech: *Deutsch-polnische Solidarität*, unpaginated.

77 CHOJNACKI, Paweł: *Ur*, '68, p. 224; Kamil Dworaczek's telephone conversation with Wojciech Pięciak, 5. 1. 2018.

78 See more ZARICZNY, Piotr: *Opozycja w NRD i w PRL – wzajemne relacje i oceny*; KERSKI, Basil – RUCHLEWSKI, Przemysław (eds.): *Lekcja solidarności* (in particular the transcript of discussions: Under the banner of Solidarity, Relationships between Polish and East German opposition movements and Dissidents. Together or separately?).

79 See more PIĘCIAK, Wojciech: *Jak obalano mur. Niemcy 1988–1996*. Oficyna Literacka, Cracow 1996, pp. 226–234.

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It is also worth mentioning WiP actions of solidarity with Zsolt Keszthelyi, who in April 1987 was sentenced to three years in prison for refusing to do military service. Even before his trial, WiP members displayed a banner in the center of Warsaw demanding his release. In April, they staged a picket in front of the Hungarian Embassy. The protest against Keszthelyi's imprisonment culminated during the aforementioned one-week hunger strike in Bydgoszcz (September 13–20, 1987), organized to show solidarity with conscientious objectors, including Keszthelyi.⁸⁰ It is difficult to find other documented references to actions connected with the situation in Hungary at the time, which could be explained by the fact that Hungarian oppositionists enjoyed a relative freedom to express their views, especially in comparison with the situation in neighboring countries. Although Polish-Hungarian Solidarity (Solidarność Polsko-Węgierska, SPW) was set up in February 1989, its first statement was not devoted to Hungarian affairs, but to repressions against Czechoslovak oppositionists. It is hardly surprising due to the fact that many of the founding members on the Polish side were simultaneously activists of SPCz. SPW carried out several actions of distributing leaflets, which were intended to stress the shared values and objectives of Polish and Hungarian oppositionists.⁸¹

Apart from the aforementioned examples we could list individual and incidental cases of defending victims of repressions from other countries. Most often they would be epistolary in character, e.g. the Helsinki Committee's letter standing up for Bulgarians, or WiP's letters of support for Russians, Kazakhs, Afghans, and Slovenians. In November 1988,⁸² Marek Niedziewicz and Paweł Raczyński, members of WiP from Wrocław, staged a two-man picket in front of the Vietnamese Embassy to direct attention to Lê Manh Tat and Phan Van Thuong's death sentence.⁸³ The idea of carrying out an action of solidarity with the Vietnamese shows that young Polish oppositionists were involved in the defense of opponents of the communist regime even in very remote and exotic countries.⁸⁴

Summary

Most of the attention in this paper has been devoted to the situation in countries with highly oppressive regimes: Czechoslovakia, Romania and, to a certain extent,

80 KENNEY, Padraic: *A Carnival of Revolution*, pp. 69–70, 119; DWORACZEK, Kamil – WALIGÓRA, Grzegorz: *Ruch „Wolność i Pokój” we Wrocławiu*. IPN – Ośrodek „Pamięć i Przyszłość”, Warsaw – Wrocław 2016, p. 14.

81 KOBUS, Andrzej: *My i oni. Opozycja polityczna w PRL wobec analogicznych ugrupowań demokratycznych w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej lat 80. XX wieku. Kontakty, współpraca, podobieństwa*. Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, Łódź 2012, pp. 240–241; Solidarność Polsko-Węgierska. *Biuletyn Informacyjny* [SPCz], April 1989, No. 14, p. 21.

82 The exact date is unknown to authors.

83 Lê Mạnh Thát and Phạm Văn Thương (his true name: Thích Tuệ Sỹ) were activists of the illegal Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam and for that reason they were sentenced. Finally, the death sentence was commuted to a prison term.

84 WIŚNIEWSKI, Maciej: *Ruch „Wolność i Pokój” w Szczecinie w latach 1985–1992*. Europejskie Centrum Solidarności, Gdańsk 2014, pp. 89–90; Bułgaria przygotowuje procesy polityczne. *Prawa Człowieka*, 1989, No. 6, pp. 69–73; [To the Government of the People's Republic of Poland and the Governments

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China. In the late 1980s, many actions were organized in Poland to express solidarity with repressed Czechoslovak dissidents, which was due to the close relationships between oppositionists from the two countries. It was important that some of the imprisoned Czechoslovak oppositionists, such as Petr Pospíchal or Václav Havel, had many Polish friends. The protests were often initiated by Polish-Czechoslovak Solidarity, an organization established to support international cooperation for the rule of law. This mode of functioning was copied by Polish-German Solidarity and Polish-Hungarian Solidarity, set up in 1989. An increased interest in Romanian affairs in Poland dates back to the 1987 Braşov workers' revolt. In the following years, Poles organized several demonstrations against the particularly oppressive Ceauşescu regime. The protests were additionally fuelled by the violent suppression of the social unrest in Romania in December 1989. Demonstrations of solidarity with Chinese citizens gained momentum after the bloodshed of June 1989, which also resulted in numerous protests and indignation all over the world. There were few actions of protest against repressions in other countries, which was caused by several factors. In the case of East Germany, it was due to weak contact with the local oppositionists and a general aversion to Germans; in Hungary, János Kádár's relatively liberal policies did not offer many reasons for international protest. With respect to other countries, e.g. Bulgaria, the decisive factors were similar – lack of contact with oppositionists or the absence of major events, such as the student massacre in Tiananmen Square.

What is worth noting here is that the driving force behind the actions described in this text was young people grouped in newly established organizations, such as the Freedom and Peace Movement. Other major youth organizations from that time, such as the Independent Students' Association or the Federation of Fighting Youth (Federacja Młodzieży Walczącej), were visibly less active, although their members may have participated in initiatives organized by other groups. As it turned out, in the second half of the 1980s, the older generation of oppositionists was unable to organize large-scale protests. They usually limited themselves to issuing statements, as exemplified by the Day of Solidarity with the Romanian People on February 1, 1988. Both the Independent Self-governing Labor Union "Solidarity" and Fighting Solidarity supported the initiative, but only the activists of WiP and the PPS actually turned up in front of the Romanian Embassy in Warsaw. The gestures of solidarity with other nations showed the immense potential of the generation who came of age in the late 1980s. It was also evident in other fields, e.g. the objection to the Round Table compromise⁸⁵ struck with the communists in 1989.

of others Countries-Signatories of the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe], 7. 10. 1989, *Prawa Człowieka*, 1989, No. 6, p. 74–75; *Przegląd Wiadomości Agencyjnych*, 1. 7. 1987, No. 26, p. 2; *Czas Przyszły*, Summer 1988, No. 2, p. 93; *Centrum Historii Zajeżdźnia Archive*, collection of the Dementi Independent Photo Agency, FDEM-1152-1154, 6442-6445; *Kamil Dworaczek's archive*, Kamil Dworaczek's interview with Paweł Raczyński, 18. 5. 2015.

85 The Round Table negotiations of representatives of the moderate opposition with representatives of the authorities were held from February to April 1989. One of the most important arrangements was to conduct partly free elections to the Sejm on June 4, 1989 and completely free elections to the Senate. Some opposition groups rejected the compromise, demanding that the communists be removed from power completely.

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Another noteworthy observation is the fact that Polish oppositionists probably shared the conviction that they were participating in a joint struggle with the same enemy – Soviet domination and the system imposed by it. This awareness manifested itself in statements and slogans such as *The fate of Czechs, Slovaks, Romanians, and Russians is also our fate* or *Democracy throughout the Bloc*. Some of the statements issued at the time seemed to express the conviction that a lack of changes in other countries could contribute to the failure of transformation in Poland as well. There existed the awareness that Poland was not an isolated island; that it depended on the events unfolding in the region, especially behind its eastern border. If Poland had been the only country that permitted greater liberalization, the process of democratization could have been threatened by hostile neighbors. Although external military intervention was highly unlikely, the oppositionists feared that the Polish communists could turn back from the road they had taken.

The repertoire of the means used by the oppositionists could be described as typical of new social movements. Peaceful forms of protest, certainly inspired by the tradition of non-violent resistance, were predominant: marches, pickets, petitions, and hunger strikes. The actions undertaken by the Freedom and Peace Movement or Polish-Czechoslovak Solidarity were attempts to adapt these methods to the Polish reality. Characteristically, these actions were carried out in the open, so that the greatest possible number of people could be informed about them. An important role was played by independent media – information about planned actions reached foreign radio stations, which could be heard in the Soviet Bloc. In this way, information was disseminated not only among Poles, but also – or perhaps, especially – among Romanians, Czechs, etc. When an action was held, participants would not try to fight with the militia or flee – they mounted passive resistance, knowing full well that the protest would end in a brief arrest. The actions were usually held near embassies or other diplomatic posts of governments targeted by the demonstrators. Besides Warsaw, many events took place in Katowice, Cracow, and Wrocław, where young oppositionists were most visible and where organizations such as the Freedom and Peace Movement, the Polish Socialist Party, and Polish-Czechoslovak Solidarity were most active.

Towards the end of the 1980s, the political system in Poland was undergoing gradual erosion and liberalization. The decreasing harshness of repressions prompted many people to join the oppositionists and act in the open. What is worth highlighting is the widening chasm between the situation in Poland and in some of the other communist countries, which created the unique space for solidarity actions. These events clearly showed that international friendship and solidarity within the Bloc did exist in reality – it was not just empty propaganda.