

<https://doi.org/10.56583/frp.2977>

Sylwia Galij-Skarbińska*

Uniwersytet Mikołaja Kopernika w Toruniu

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1799-4243>

Wojciech Polak**

Uniwersytet Mikołaja Kopernika w Toruniu

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6069-2876>

TOWARDS THE TRANSITION. POLITICAL AND SOCIAL CHANGES IN THE LAST YEARS OF THE POLISH PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC

Abstract

The activity of the Solidarity underground, which had been ongoing since the very beginning of martial law in Poland, slowed down in the mid-1980s. Although publishing, leafleting and self-education activities continued to flourish, street demon-

* Sylwia Galij-Skarbińska – PhD, professor at the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, works at the university's Center for the Study of the History of "Solidarity" and Social Resistance in the Polish People's Republic. In her research, she deals with the history of Poland in the 20th century, with particular emphasis on the period after 1945 until the breakthrough in 1989. Author of, among others, the monographs *University towards surveillance: political attitudes of the academic community of the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń in the years 1970-1980 in the light of the files of the Security Service*, Toruń 2011 and *Model of change of civilian secret services in Poland in the years 1989-1990: the establishment of the Office for State Protection*, Toruń 2019. On July 31, 2023, she was awarded the Silver Medal "Meritorious for Polish Science Sapientia et Veritas".

** Wojciech Polak – prof. dr hab. born in 1962 in Olsztyn. Historian, researcher at Nicolaus Copernicus University (UMK) in Toruń. He obtained the title of professor in 2008. Since 2021, he has been the director of the Center for the Study of the History of "Solidarity" and Social Resistance in the Polish People's Republic at UMK. Currently, he conducts research mainly on the history of the Polish People's Republic (martial law in Poland, the activities of the Security Service, state-Church relations, the history of the democratic opposition and "Solidarity"). Their result is over 30 books on this subject, as well as many articles,

strations attracted few people. Fatigue with the economic crisis and a lack of faith in the possibility of any political change led to social apathy, but the deepening economic crisis also left the authorities in a stalemate. Those in power began to understand that without fundamental political solutions, it would be impossible to emerge from the crisis, especially as liberalisation began in the Soviet Union with Mikhail Gorbachev's rise to power. In the face of a growing economic and social crisis, a deep political crisis was looming. In this situation, the authorities used various methods, including the security apparatus, to closely observe and analyse public sentiment. In 1988, preparations were also made for a state of emergency, but these plans never came into effect. Ultimately, in the face of deepening chaos and the decomposition of the ruling camp, talks were held with representatives of the opposition, which led to the 'round table' and the first partially free parliamentary elections since World War II.

Keywords: *Solidarity, communist authorities, Polish People's Republic, opposition, security apparatus, transformation*

W STRONĘ TRANSFORMACJI. PRZEMIANY POLITYCZNE I SPOŁECZNE U SCHYŁKU PRL

Streszczenie

Aktywność podziemia „solidarnościowego”, jaka miała miejsce od pierwszych chwil wprowadzenia stanu wojennego w Polsce, spowolniła w połowie lat osiemdziesiątych. Wprawdzie działalność wydawnicza, ulotkowa, samokształceniowa kwitła nadal, ale demonstracje uliczne gromadziły już niewiele osób. Zmęczenie kryzysem gospodarczym i brak wiary w możliwość jakiegokolwiek zmiany politycznej rodziły społeczną apatię, jednak pogłębiający się kryzys gospodarczy sprawił, że aparat władzy także znalazł się w sytuacji patowej. Rządzący zaczęli rozumieć, że bez zasadniczych rozwiązań politycznych nie da się wyjść z kryzysu, zwłaszcza że w Związku Sowieckim zaczęła się liberalizacja związana z objęciem władzy przez Michaiła Gorbaczowa. W sytuacji narastającego kryzysu gospodarczego i społecznego rysował się głęboki kryzys polityczny. W tej sytuacji władza różnymi metodami, wykorzystując do tego aparat bezpieczeństwa wnikliwie obserwowała i analizowała nastroje społeczne. W 1988 roku czyniono także przygotowania do stanu wyjątkowego, którego jednak plany nigdy nie weszły w życie. Ostatecznie w obliczu pogłębiającego się chaosu i dekompozycji obozu władzy, podjęto rozmowy z przedstawicielami opozycji, które doprowadziły do

source publications and collective works under his editorship. Editor-in-chief of the scientific yearbook “Copernicus. Czasy Nowożytne i Współczesne”. Since 2016, he has been a member of the IPN College. In 2018-2021 and currently, he serves as the chairman of this body. In 2020, he was awarded the Commander's Cross of the Order of Polonia Restituta by the President of the Republic of Poland, Andrzej Duda, for outstanding achievements in scientific research, teaching and journalistic work, for disseminating knowledge about the most recent history of Poland.

„okrągłego stołu” i pierwszych pod II wojnie światowej częściowo wolnych wyborów do parlamentu.

Słowa kluczowe: „Solidarność”, władza komunistyczna, PRL, opozycja, aparat bezpieczeństwa, transformacja

~ . ~

The pace of a great mobilisation of the “Solidarity” underground, which took place immediately after the martial law was introduced in Poland, slowed in the middle of the 1980s. Although publishing, leaflet distribution, and self-learning activities continued to flourish, only street demonstrations gathered only small numbers of people. Weariness with economic downturn and a lack of faith that any political change is possible resulted in social apathy. However, with the deepening economic downturn, the authorities also faced the stalemate. The rulers begun to understand that only fundamental political solutions would help them come out of the crisis, especially as liberalisation related to Mikhail Gorbachev coming to power started in the Soviet Union. Wojciech Jaruzelski was pleased to see Mikhail Gorbachev’s rise to power, as emphasised, Poland was to become the “perestroika laboratory”, a place where the process of conducted economic reforms and progressing democratisation would not undermine the unity of the Eastern bloc. And this was the statement repeated by Mikhail Gorbachev during his meetings with Jaruzelski.

In October 1985, elections to the PRL Parliament, delayed for over a year, were held, and according to the official results the turnout was 78.86%. This success was guaranteed by actions repressive and preventive action against the opposition, conducted by the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

The authorities were pleased with the election turnout, although it seemed low when compared to previous elections. Considering the circumstances at that time, with deteriorating social mood which could, according to analyses submitted to the Party leadership, progress to the open conflict, this was perceived as a success. PZPR leadership started to feel rather confident. General Wojciech Jaruzelski, as the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers’ Party (KC PZPR), appointed Zbigniew Messner as the Prime Minister, and thus entrusted him with implementation of the 2nd stage of the economic reform. He himself became the Chairmen of the Council of State.

Great hopes were also placed in the 10th PZPR Congress at the turn of June 1986, at which Mikhail Gorbachev was also present. That Congress was a kind of manifestation of the Party apparatus stability. This image was supported, among others, by Jaruzelski’s speech, who proclaimed that the political opposition in

Poland was finished, and called the agents of the West all those undertaking activities directed against the system¹. During his conversation with Mikhail Gorbachev, he said: "In general, the Party controls the situation. The threat is not associated with some minor negative events. I once told people from the West that we rather had ten small conflicts every day than a single big one every ten years. In the nearest future, one of our most important tasks is the structural reorganization of our economy and moving to the second stage of the economic reform. The constant scientific and technical progress, together with deepening of socialist economic integration represent another important direction"².

However, analyses and special reports submitted to the top Party leadership, and prepared by the Operations and Staff Group at the Secretariat of the Head of the Security Service of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, showed that the social mood was deteriorating, and a "decline in optimism" and social trust in political institutions. The special analysis in April 1987 informed: "Concluding this section, we need to answer the question - does the political opponent poses a real threat to the state and the system? In the current circumstances, definitely no. However, they should not be disregarded. Any deterioration in the internal situation, especially related to the economy, could offer them a chance to rise their heads. This is the opportunity they long for. However, for a long time now the initiative has belonged to the Party and the authorities. For this reason, today our opponent can only wait for our mistake"³.

The Operations and Staff Group mentioned above was established in 1985. It was headed by Jerzy Łazarz Information Department of KC PZPR, with Major Wojciech Garstka as his deputy. The Team signed its reports as 'Zespół Analiz MSW'. It should be emphasised that state power ministries (of Internal Affairs and of National Defence) provided an important analytical and operational support for General Jaruzelski concerning implementation of political decisions made by him. Many of them were consulted with Ministers Czesław Kiszczak and Florian Siwicki.

¹ As Aleksander Łuczak wrote: "In consequence, the Congress turned out to be the body passing many important resolutions which were of no real importance; they lived their own life within the Party circles, without making any impression on the society. All innovative ideas were buried under newspeak used for years", see A. Łuczak, *Dekada polskich przemian. Studium władzy i opozycji*, Warszawa 2012, p. 447.

² [Document] No. 11, 21 April 1987, Moscow, The record of the conversation between the General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachev and the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party, General Wojciech Jaruzelski, in: *Zmierzch dyktatury. Polska lat 1986-1989 w świetle dokumentów*, t. 1 (lipiec 1986 - maj 1989), ed. A. Dudek, Warszawa 2009, p. 116.

³ [Document] No. 10, 15 April 1987, Warsaw, The study of the Analysis Team of the Ministry of Internal Affairs on the political situation, prepared for Wojciech Jaruzelski's visit to Moscow, classified, in: *ibid.* p. 110.

Already in 1986 another amnesty was announced in Poland, in consequence of which all political prisoners were released⁴. Associated with it was “decriminalization”, i.e. transferring the handling of political crimes from the courts to petty offense boards (which ultimately meant sentencing to a fine rather than imprisonment).

The undertaken steps resulted from an analysis of the social and political situation developed by the Social and Legal Department of KC PZPR (drawn up with a significant contribution from the Ministry of Internal Affairs). Jaruzelski wanted to use that decision for propaganda purposes, in relation to the planned visit of John Paul II. He also hoped to soften the PRL image in the eyes of the West. Furthermore, he assumed that the release of all political prisoners will result in disintegration of the opposition circles, “he observed with hope increasingly evident tensions, disputes, and personal animosities related to different opinions on tactics and methods of operation”⁵.

At the same time, in September 1986, SB conducted about 3 thousand talks with opposition activists, trying to convince them to discontinue their activities. This operation did not brought any important results. The analysis of October 1986, developed by the Analysis Team at the Ministry of Internal Affairs, states that: “Responding to the decisions of the authorities of 11 September 1986, following several days of discussions and consultations in the opposition circles, on 29 September, eleven people, i.e. Lech Wałęsa, Zbigniew Bujak, Jacek Kuroń, Władysław Frasyniuk, Andrzej Celiński, Bogdan Borusewicz, Tadeusz Jędynak, Bogdan Lis, Janusz Pałubicki, Andrzej Słowik and Piotr Konopka, established in Gdańsk the so-called Temporary Council of NSZZ »Solidarność«. Its members were: Borusewicz, Bujak, Frasyniuk, Jędynak, Lis, Pałubicki and Pinior. The instigators of establishing the Temporary Council declared that its basic objective is to reactivate Solidarity and thus to sanction trade union pluralism. Pursuing these objectives, the activists of the f[ormer] NSZZ »Solidarność«, as well as people previously engaged in conspiracy activities, attempted to copy that initiative on a local scale⁶. [...] Furthermore, attempts to organise structures under the name of f[ormer] Solidarity at five employment facilities, i.e. the Municipal Public Transport Company in Łódź, the Port Gdańsk Authority, the Chemical Plant

⁴ The decision about the amnesty (already announced at the 10th PZPR Congress) was made by the Political Bureau of the PZPR Central Committee on 9 July 1986.

⁵ A. Garlicki, *Karuzela. Rzecz o okrągłym stole*, Warszawa 2003, p. 34.

⁶ One day after the Temporary Council was established, the Regional Executive Commission of NSZZ “Solidarity” Mazowsze started to operate openly. On 5 October 1986, “Solidarity” Councils were established in Lublin and Jelenia Góra, followed by Silesia-Dąbrowa Region on 7 October. In Łódź, the Praesidium of the Management of the Łódź Region restarted its open operations on 7 October 1986. In October 1986, openly operating regional bodies were also established in Świętokrzyski, Radomski, Opolski, Piłski, Gorzowski, and Wielkopolski regions.

“Organika-Zachem” in Bydgoszcz, the FSC Lublin Automotive Factory, and the Mechanical Plant »Zamech« in Elbląg. To this date, we have been able to effectively block any actual activities to be undertaken by the mentioned structures”⁷.

New structures of the union operated simultaneously with the secret ones, including the Temporary Coordinating Commission (managing activities of the underground “Solidarity”). On 23 November 1986, the Temporary National Council of Farmers “Solidarity” was also established, which was soon headed by Józef Ślisz. On the wave of liberalisation, openly operating “Solidarity” structures started to be established also at large employment facilities. They file applications with a court for their registration at the plant level. Although those applications were rejected by courts of successive instances, yet those structures did not acknowledge that fact and continued to operate.

It should be noted that establishing of the Temporary Council of NSZZ “Solidarity” and its structures itself did not raise concerns of the ministry. Only “moving the operations to the plant level should raise the utmost concern, as a number of local conditions can offer a convenient pretext for hostile, inciting and destructive actions”⁸.

In the recommendations for action it was emphasised that previous repressions should be discontinued (as they would waste all propaganda and political advantages resulting from the amnesty):

“As a general conclusion resulting from the above analysis, the following rules concerning tactics for preventing initiatives undertaken by the political opponent:

1. As long as possible, and at least until the end of this year, in no case we should be pushed towards repressions or such activities that would offer an easy pretext for accusations of repressions (e.g. detentions, arrests, and similar). Therefore, execution of “stricter variants” of countermeasures should be suspended, especially the concept of detaining for 48 hours of most active instigators of reactivating structures of f[ormer] Solidarity. However, there are no contraindications to imposing high and repeatable fines – especially following the planned amendment of the misdemeanour law.
2. Make trade unions and PRON units the subject in the ongoing political struggle to the extent even greater than before.
3. Finalise as soon as possible the maximum number of announced political and organisational initiatives, in the form of the Consultation Council and similar councils at a lower level, or commissioners for human rights, etc. Apart from

⁷ [Document] No. 2, 20 October 1986, Warsaw, The study of the Analysis Team of the Ministry of Internal Affairs on attempts to legalise opposition activities, classified, in: *Zmierzch dyktatury*, pp. 53-54.

⁸ Ibid., p. 55.

their main objectives, actions of this type can become a kind of a political and propaganda shield, if penal repressions become necessary”⁹.

Similar conclusions were drawn by Stanisław Ciosek, General Władysław Pożoga and Jerzy Urban. The so-called “group of three” conducted talks in the strictest secrecy (in one of the Ministry villas in Magdalenka near Warsaw), and the records of them were provided to the top Party leadership¹⁰. In December 1986, General Jaruzelski received an analysis entitled “Certain proposed actions for 1987”, in which it was emphasised that the release of political prisoners had outcomes advantageous for the authorities, including a significant weakening of opponents and internal conflicts¹¹. In one of the chapters of the document entitled “The strike against the opposition”, the following actions were recommended: high fines, penal work, taxation of authors writing for the underground press, as well as imposing of high taxes, or even confiscation of flats or villas found to be a location of opposition activities. Furthermore, actions mocking and discrediting anti-system activists on TV were proposed¹².

The Social Consultation Council, mentioned in the recommendations of the Analysis Team at the Ministry of Internal Affairs, was to be a counterpart to the Temporary Council established by Lech Wałęsa and his closest circles. It was to be a platform for sharing recommendations and proposals for normalisation of the social and political life. This was an implementation of General Jaruzelski’s concept, who at a meeting of the KC PZPR Political Bureau in December said that: “In our system, in our regime, any opposition is unacceptable. Because the opposition - as understood by the opponent - is in fact a destructive, anti-systemic force. Whereas we have to incorporate into our system various elements of the opposition within the Party itself [...], we have to incorporate such oppositional, but from our point, from our systemic point, activities that control us, that continue to drive a pin into our bottoms”¹³.

⁹ Ibid. p. 61.

¹⁰ Mirosław Szumiło wrote: “In 1986–1989, an important conceptual and programme role was played by the group of Jaruzelski’s closest advisers, consisting of the KC Secretary Stanisław Ciosek, First Deputy Minister of Interior Affairs General Władysław Pożoga, and the government spokesman Jerzy Urban. This so-called “group of three” drafted successive confidential memorials, in which it suggested proposals for various, frequently bold solutions”, Idem, *Kierownictwo Polskiej Zjednoczonej Partii Robotniczej w latach 1986–1990. Szkic do portretu*, „Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość” 2011, No. 10/2 (18), p. 140.

¹¹ A. Garlicki, *Karuzela*, p. 39.

¹² Ibid. pp. 40–41.

¹³ [Document] No. 3, 2 December 1986, Speeches of Secretary of KC PZPR Tadeusz Porębski and First Secretary of KC PZPR General Wojciech Jaruzelski at the meeting of the KC PZPR Political Bureau (fragments concerning the union movement), 2 December 1986, Warsaw, in: *Zmierzch dyktatury*, p. 66.

In a note of the Analysis Team at the Ministry of Internal Affairs concerning the Consultation Council, it was written that participation in the said Council of well-known and respected people from scientific, art, and cultural circles should ensure “a high level of presented opinions, as well as comprehensive approach both to emerging problems and to methods for overcoming them”¹⁴. The social perception of the Council was very negative, because it was perceived as another sham institution, created to keep up the pretence of democratisation of the country¹⁵.

The authorities tried to engage the Church as an intermediary in negotiations with the opposition, and Lech Wałęsa in particular, concerning their joining the Council. However, the Episcopate did not get involved in these activities, considering them rather risky. If Lech Wałęsa was convinced to join the Council, this would mean deepening of the crisis in the opposition and effective blocking of the union leader's activities, transforming him into a political puppet.

In 1986, the Party apparatus did not accept any possible understanding with “Solidarity”. Jaruzelski used the method of “attracting and winning over”, as he was of the opinion that the system could be democratised without undermining its fundamental principles, and creating appearances of normalisation, i.e. by marginalising the existing opposition, while cautiously presenting it with a proposal for co-optation, within a strictly established institutional framework¹⁶.

The situation was changed by deteriorating economic circumstances, the referendum of November 1987 lost by the authorities, in which they wanted to get social acceptance for further belt-tightening to perform alleged reforms, and actions liberalising the internal policy. Transformations in Poland were significantly accelerated by the visit of Pope John Paul II in June 1987. This time again the Holy Father was welcomed by huge “Solidarity” banners, and after masses marchers of the Union supporters were held, brutally suppressed by the Motorized Reserves of the Citizens' Militia (ZOMO). The 5th Pilgrimage of Working People to Jasna Góra on 10 September 1987 was a mass manifestation of support for still illegal “Solidarity”. It was attended by about 50 thousand people¹⁷.

Social moods provided an impulse for mobilisation within the “Solidarity” structures at the national level. On 25 October 1987, the Temporary Coordinating

¹⁴ [Document] No. 4, 10 December 1986, Warsaw, The Note of the Analysis Team of the Ministry of Internal Affairs on the opinion about the Consultation Council at the Chairman of the PRL Council of State, classified, in: *ibid.* p. 68.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* p. 68.

¹⁶ A. Garlicki, *Karuzela*, p. 65.

¹⁷ M. Lasota, *Polski Kościół od 13 grudnia do Magdalenki*, in: *Droga do niepodległości. „Solidarność” 1980–2005*, ed. A. Borowski, Warszawa 2005, pp. 293–294; H. Głębocki, *Wojna z narodem*, in: W. Polak, S. Galij-Skarbińska, H. Głębocki, J. Kłosiński, *„Solidarność”. Od komunizmu do Unii Europejskiej*, ed. A. Borowski, M. Łątkowska, Warszawa 2015, pp. 165–167.

Commission and the Temporary Council of NSZZ "Solidarity" were dissolved, and replaced with a uniform Union leadership – the National Executive Commission (KKW) NSZZ "Solidarity". It was headed by Lech Wałęsa, and its members were Zbigniew Bujak, Władysław Frasyniuk, Jerzy Dłużniewski, Stefan Jurczak, Bogdan Lis, Andrzej Milczanowski, Janusz Pałubicki, and Stanisław Węglarz. A group of activists protested against establishing of this Commission, as they were of the opinion that it was the National Commission from before 13 December 1981 who should play the main role in reactivating the Union. Those activists (including Andrzej Słowik, Jerzy Kropiwnicki, Andrzej Gwiazda, Seweryn Jaworski, and Marian Jurczyk) established the Working Group of the National Commission, which, however, did not gain a wider support¹⁸.

In its statement of 5 December 1987, KKW notified its readiness to negotiate and conclude the "anti-crisis pact". In return, it expected, for example, restoring of legal operation of "Solidarity" and "legalisation of civil society". It should be noted here that in second half of the 1980s, Adam Michnik and Jacek Kuroń presented the concept according to which the Union should support reform forces in PZPR. This concept definitely influenced successive conciliatory actions of "Solidarity".

The actions undertaken by the opposition were monitored by the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Analyses and special reports submitted to the top Party leadership, and prepared by the Operations and Staff Group at the Secretariat of the Head of the Security Service of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, presented the moods in the society with high accuracy. It was also foreseen that the opposition circles will emphasise in the referendum a need for open activities, and this could mean that following stabilising of the economic situation, a certain part of the opposition could "become a permanent feature of the political establishment in [...] the socialist conditions"¹⁹.

Andrzej Paczkowski noted that in autumn of 1987 conflicts concerning solutions for further operation were very pronounced, within the opposition and the authorities alike. In the former case, the moderate majority, supported by the Church, wanted to initiate negotiations with the authorities, while the radical majority opted for intensifying forms of protest. In the authority circles, "die-hard" communists had a clear majority in the Party apparatus; however, in the top ruling group and its expert backup, supporters of reforms were getting stronger²⁰.

¹⁸ H. Głębocki, *Wojna z narodem*, pp.159-165; W. Polak, *Czas ludzi niepokornych. Niezależny Samorządny Związek Zawodowy „Solidarność” i inne ugrupowania niezależne w Toruniu i Regionie Toruńskim (13 XII 1981-4 VI 1989)*, Toruń 2003, pp. 477-478.

¹⁹ Quoted after, A. Dudek, *Reglamentowana rewolucja. Rozkład dyktatury komunistycznej 1988-1990*, Warszawa 2004, p. 120.

²⁰ A. Paczkowski, *Stan wojenny i „powojenny”: od grudnia 1981 do stycznia 1989*, in: *Polski wiek XX*, t. IV, ed. K. Persak, P. Machciewicz, Warszawa 2011, p. 226.

In November 1987, the study drafted by the Analysis Team at the Ministry of Internal Affairs contained the following recommendations:

- “– in the current situation of the threat expected multiple losses associated with allowed legalisation of opposition parties exceed the expected benefits that could result from it;
- therefore, as of today, legalisation of any new political parties should not be accepted;
- however, the process of democratisation, if it is to bring any benefits for us in the future, cannot be voluntarily inhibited once and for good, and continuously restricted, without taking into account the changing circumstance – in any case, no impassable absolute barriers should be placed for it *a priori*;
- therefore, we should periodically return to the issue of legalisation of new political parties to be reviewed anew – we should come back to it immediately in particular when any new circumstances, not considered in this study, emerge, which may change the presented “balance” to the positive;
- elements of political pluralism within the framework of socialist democracy should be maintained for the time being, and gradually, consistently develop at a reasonable rate and in safe forms, adopted to the increasing level of the society’s political responsibility;
- in particular, chains of political discussion clubs should be developed as an experiment – closely monitoring their operations and their usefulness for development of democracy and valuable social attitudes, and of political awareness of their members;
- the following aspects must become a very important initial component of potential gradual implementation of political pluralism:
 - further increase of the importance of the parliament and representative authorities at lower levels, by initiating within them the discussion and sharing of political ideas;
 - improvement in the activities and development of ideological self-awareness, internal restructuring of cadres and the apparatus, and further democratisation within the Polish United Workers’ Party itself”²¹.

A more powerful call for decisive actions (even before the referendum failure) was proposed by the “group of three”:

“We need to anticipate events before they start, gain momentum, we should not wait until we only have at our disposal, as the experience of previous crises shows, final, ineffective emergency activities.” Urban, Ciosek and Pożoga thought that Jaruzelski should lead the social discontent, they wanted him to „harshly

²¹ [Document] No. 14, 12 December 1987, Warsaw, The study of the Analysis Team of the Ministry of Internal Affairs on potential establishing of new political parties, classified, in: *Zmierzch dyktatury*, pp. 148-149.

rebuke the »bad, sluggish and inconsistent previous implementation of the policy established by the Party«. He should, just like on 13 December 1981, give a televised speech to the nation, announcing radical changes, including the reform of the Centre. The group of three strongly emphasised that all changes should be implemented at the same time, as otherwise, the social mood would not be changed. »The society needs to be convinced that a revolutionary breakthrough is taking place»²².

Jaruzelski considered several options for ending the impasse. The scenarios included those concerning using force, as well as those of adopting a conciliatory strategy. As Antoni Dudek wrote: »Until the end of December 1987, General Jaruzelski did not decide to give a clear answer [...], especially, as this would require a painful recognition of a failure of the policy of maintaining the system with tanks, initiated six years earlier. Therefore, a desire to make such changes that would improve the efficiency of the economy, stimulate social activity, and made possible obtaining economic assistance from the West on one hand, while on the other would not undermine two foundations of PRL system: the leading role of PZPR and maintaining Poland under Soviet domination, can be clearly seen in his actions»²³.

The main breakthrough took place in 1988. In consequence of the »price-income operation», i.e. simply price rises, on 1 February 1988, the increase in prices amounted to 40 % on average in the case food, alcohol, and cigarettes, and to 60% in the case of fuel. This also resulted in the increase in prices of railway and bus tickets. Rents in council flats also rose. In April, strikes started in the largest employment facilities.

On 25 April 1988, employees of the public transport in Bydgoszcz went on strike. On 26 April, the strike started at the Vladimir Lenin Steelworks in Kraków. The Strike Committee was headed by Andrzej Szewczuwaniec. Although initially, steel workers demanded payment compensations, soon they added to their demands a request to reinstating of workers dismissed for their activities in »Solidarity» and to legalise the Union again. Similar demands were made by workers of Stalowa Wola Steelworks, who had been on strike since 29 April, but they left the plant on 30 April, when it was blocked by ZOMO. On 2 May the Gdańsk Shipyard joined the strike. The Strike Committee was headed by Alojzy Szablewski. After a few days, shipyard workers were joined by Lech Wałęsa²⁴.

The wave of protests and strikes rolled through Poland. Meanwhile, General Jaruzelski gave his consent to starting negotiations with Lech Wałęsa. According

²² A. Garlicki, *Karuzela*, p. 64.

²³ A. Dudek, *Reglamentowana rewolucja*, p. 120.

²⁴ W. Polak, S. Galij-Skarbińska, *Przemiany w polskim aparacie bezpieczeństwa w latach 1989–1990*, „Fides, Ratio Et Patria. Studia Toruńskie” 2015, No 3, p. 298–329.

to his plan, they were to take place in one of the Ministry of Internal Affairs villas near Warsaw, and the government was to be represented by the Deputy Minister. A precondition for starting negotiations required the strikes to be discontinued. On 3 May 1988, Andrzej Wielowieyski, the adviser of KKW NSZZ "Solidarity" met with Józef Czyrek and Stanisław Ciosek, who informed him about Jaruzelski's initial consent. However, before any consultations with Wałęsa took place on that issue, on the night of 4 May 1988 the strike at the Vladimir Lenin Steelworks was very brutally broken up by anti-terrorist squads and ZOMO²⁵. In consequence, no negotiations took place due to that brutal action.

The strike at the Gdańsk Shipyard ended on 10 May 1988 when the workers left the plant. Despite the post-strike repressions (dismissals from work, fines), the barrier of fear was broken. In the increasing number of employment facilities, plant commissions started to operate openly, disregarding legal prohibitions. In the analyses and reports on internal affairs, the spring wave of strikes was perceived as a failure. The note of the Analysis Team of the Ministry of Internal Affairs stated:

„1. The course of strikes showed that both underground and open Solidarity does not have declared social influence. However, we should be prepared for possible actions of the similar nature in the future. The opponent still counts on playing a significant political role in social conditions favourable for them. These conditions have not disappeared automatically. The premises for them still exist. This is mainly a result of extremely strong social frustration and a gradual decline in the authority of the government”²⁶.

“The synthetic assessment of the strike situation in the country between 25 April and 10 May 1988” drafted by the Analysis Team of the Ministry of Internal Affairs contained the following conclusions:

„1. The political opponent, using the strike situation, aimed at political destabilisation, tried to participate in reforming of the economy, and intended to disrupt the election campaign. These actions aimed at undermining systemic foundations of the state. The opponent did not achieve those objectives. In consequence of the firm actions, peace, law and order were restored in the country, together with national stability and security. The main task for the Ministry of Internal Affairs remains further identification and prevention of threats associated with accelerated implementation of political and economic reforms.

2. Actions of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and mainly of the Security Service, aiming at isolating and separating opposition leaders from the striking

²⁵ A. Dudek, *Reglamentowana rewolucja*, p. 142.

²⁶ [Document] No. 22, 12 May 1988, Warsaw, The note of the Analysis Team of the Ministry of Internal Affairs on activities of the opposition during strikes between 25 April and 10 May 1988, in: *Zmierzch dyktatury*, p. 240.

workers, striking against illegal structures of the opponent in the voivodships, industrial plants, and universities at the greatest risk, proved to be effective. Significant results were achieved in liquidation of the opponent's printing and propaganda resources.

3. Particular attention will be paid to operative protection of key industrial plants, universities, and youth. The existing system for securing large industrial facilities needs to be analysed and improved, especially in conditions of implementing the second stage of the economic reform.

4. Actions aiming at further limiting of activities of the opposition leaders, conspiratorial structures, illegal printing, and support for the political opponent from abroad, as well as limiting negative effects of the influence that a part of the Church hierarchy and workers and youth chaplains have on the society.[...]"²⁷.

At the same time, the reports emphasised that the risk of another escalation of social unrests is high and possible. A certain part of young generation, not burdened by experiences of 1980–1981, was dangerous for the authorities, because "for them recollections of those years are not a circumstance stopping them from striking"²⁸.

General Jaruzelski, still stuck at an impasse, instructed General Kiszczak to prepare operations in the event of imposing a state of emergency. On 29 April, the Minister of Internal Affairs issued a strictly classified "Decision on tasks to be executed by the Ministry of Internal Affairs in the event of imposing a state of emergency due to the internal threat to the country security"²⁹ The decision obliged heads of organisational units at the Ministry of Internal Affairs (listed in the time schedule attached to the "Decision") to establish rules for developing plans at supervised units and controlled organisational units of the Voivodship Internal Affairs Offices.

The time schedule of activities, supervised by General Zbigniew Pudysz, provided for, among others, immediate drafting of plans for internment of the opposition activists, as well as for drafting of plans for conducting warning talks. Other assumptions included tactical blockades of cities and institutions, limiting communication, as well as establishing special units of the Citizens' Militia at the cities considered particularly hazardous. Similar recommendations concerned the

²⁷ [Document] No. 23, 12 May 1988, Warsaw, Assessment of the strike situation in the country between 25 April and 10 May 1988, drafted by the Analysis Team of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, classified, in: *ibid.*, pp. 248-249.

²⁸ [Document] No. 22, 12 May 1988, Warsaw, The note of the Analysis Team of the Ministry of Internal Affairs on activities of the opposition during strikes between 25 April and 10 May 1988, in: *ibid.*, p. 240.

²⁹ [Document] No. 18, 29 April 1988, The decision on tasks to be executed by the Ministry of Internal Affairs in the event of imposing a state of emergency due to the internal threat to the country security, in: *ibid.* pp. 190-191.

Volunteer Reserve of the Citizens' Militia (ORMO), which was to be equipped with means of direct coercion in the event of the state of emergency³⁰.

New strikes broke out in August 1988. The protesting black coal mines established the Inter-Enterprise Strike Committee in Jastrzębie. On 17 August, Szczecin Shipyard went on strike, followed by the North Port in Gdańsk on 20 August, Lenin Shipyard on 22 August, and other shipyards in the Tricity, Lenin Steelworks in Kraków, Hipolit Cegielski Works in Poznań and the Industrial Plants in Ursus on 24 August. Strikes in the Tricity were coordinated by the Inter-Enterprise Strike Committee headed by Jacek Merkel. It should be emphasised that some strikes at smaller plants were quickly broken up by ZOMO.

The August wave of strikes shocked the Party apparatus, as it turned out that analyses and reports provided to the top leadership were too optimistic. Although the new wave of strikes was forecast, but it was not foreseen that it would take place so soon. General Jaruzelski instructed General Kiszczak to appear on television and announce severe restrictions for the strikers. Simultaneously, a scenario for imposing the state of emergency was initiated. A decision to mobilise Volunteer Reserve of the Citizens' Militia was issued. Wojciech Jaruzelski, as the chairman of the State Defence Committee, ordered voivodes to initiate preparations for militarisation of selected plants and organise military exercises, to conscript into the army "people considered dangerous".

However, imposing of the state of emergency was just an alternative, in the case of a failure of other political activities aiming at defusing the crisis³¹. At a special meeting of the KC PZPR Political Bureau General Jaruzelski gave his consent to initiate negotiations with Wałęsa. Even earlier, sounding talks between Andrzej Stelmachowski, Lech Wałęsa's representative, and Józef Czyrek, KC PZPR Secretary, took place³².

On 23 August, Lech Wałęsa issued a statement to the authorities, written by Bronisław Geremek, Adam Michnik, Andrzej Stelmachowski, and Tadeusz Mazowiecki. It proposed three areas of interest which were to become a subject for

³⁰ A. Dudek, *Reglamentowana rewolucja*, p. 131.

³¹ Ibid. p. 166.

³² On 24 August, Kazimierz Barcikowski and Stanisław Ciosek meet with Rev. Alojzy Orszulik, auxiliary secretary of the Polish Episcopal Conference. Ciosek, maintaining the negative position of the authorities on legalisation of "Solidarity", proposed the Church to support a concept of establishing an association to replace the union. Rev. Orszulik immediately rejected that idea. However, the proposal for political reforms presented by Ciosek was accepted: "We would have a president at the top, with the Senate below (with the following allocation of power: 1/3 – ruling coalition, 1/3 – Church representatives, 1/3 – independent members), at the lowest tier the parliament, in which the ruling coalition would hold 60%, and the opposition and >>our independent friends<< 40%", see A. Friszke, *Droga do Okrągłego Stołu*, „Więź” 2000, No. 5, http://wiez.pl/laboratorium/teksty.php?droga_do_okraglego_stolu&p=7 [last accessed on: 23 August 2019].

negotiations between the government and the opposition: union pluralism, social and political pluralism, and the anti-crisis pact. The need to legalise "Solidarity" was considered a priority. The KC PZPR Political Bureau gave its consent to initiate negotiations, and authorised General Czesław Kiszczak to represent the government. This was on the clear request of Jaruzelski, who by appointing his trusted Minister of the Interior Affairs, achieved an advantage in negotiations. Kiszczak himself said in his televised speech: "I was authorised, as a chairman of the Cabinet Committee for Observance of Law, Public Order and Social Discipline, to hold as soon as possible a meeting with representatives of various social and worker circles. It could have a form of a »round table«"³³.

The meeting took place on 31 August 1988. During the talks, Kiszczak made the initiation of the round table negotiations conditional on ending the strikes. He emphasised that "»Solidarity« people will be invited to negotiations, but without »Solidarity«, and only those who do not question the existing legal order". The General rejected the option of deviating from the rule "one union in one employment facility". Wałęsa undertook to end the strike, but he emphasised: "Issues of »the round table« are important, but the issue of »Solidarity« is important, followed by pluralism"³⁴.

Following the talks with Kiszczak, Wałęsa called for strikes to be suspended, and this was done very reluctantly³⁵. However, successive talks between General Kiszczak and Lech Wałęsa still did not bring the "round table" negotiations any closer³⁶. As Andrzej Friszke wrote, there was a significant resistance on the side

³³ Quoted after: Ibid.

³⁴ „Okrągły Stół”, compiled by K. Dubiński, Warsaw 1999, p. 15.

³⁵ As Andrzej Friszke wrote: "The principles of moral intransigence, a clear attitude, formed a strong core of traditions of the Solidarity people thinking, and the 1980s, which brought them so much injustice and humiliation, strengthen those principles even further. Some of the activists perceived »acceptance of a compromise with the Reds« as a betrayal of ideals or, at best, a consequence of no resistance to temptations shown by the authorities. It was not easy at all to convince members of »Solidarity« that it was necessary to sit at the same table and search for a compromise together with the authors of martial law. In a mini-survey of moods of the »Solidarity« members, published in »Tygodnik Mazowsze«, scepticism, reserve, or very moderate optimism predominated", see A. Friszke, *Droga do Okrągłego Stołu*, „Więź” 2000, No. 5, http://wiesz.pl/laboratorium/teksty.php?droga_do_okraglego_stolu&p=7 [last accessed on: 23 August 2019].

³⁶ There was a significant resistance on the side of the authorities apparatus concerning the union pluralism and legalisation of "Solidarity", and it intensified at the beginning of October. Nevertheless, it was decided that the "round table" talks will start on 17 October and will last until 11 November. During the talks between A. Stelmachowski and J. Czyrek, the number of people and working committees, and the allocation of issues were decided. B. Geremek, T. Mazowiecki, A. Stelmachowski and H. Wujec started to prepare lists of participants, which were finally verified and approved by Lech Wałęsa. It was actually questioned by S. Ciosek, who struck out from it, e.g. J. Kuroń and A. Michnik. L. Wałęsa strongly opposed the fact that the authorities did not accept all people included in the list. In consequence

of the authority's apparatus concerning the union pluralism and legalisation of "Solidarity", and it intensified at the beginning of October. Nevertheless, it was decided that the "round table" talks will start on 17 October and will last until 11 November. During the talks between A. Stelmachowski and J. Czyrek, the number of people and working committees, and the allocation of issues were decided. B. Geremek, T. Mazowiecki, A. Stelmachowski and H. Wujec started to prepare lists of participants, which were finally verified and approved by Lech Wałęsa. It was actually questioned by S. Ciosek, who struck out from it, e.g. J. Kuroń and A. Michnik. L. Wałęsa strongly opposed the fact that the authorities did not accept all people included in the list. In consequence of a visible stalemate in talks, the date for initiating the "round table" talks was postponed to 28 October, but then they also did not take place³⁷. Initiation of these talks was effectively blocked by actions of Mieczysław Rakowski's cabinet.

A temporary failure to initiate talks with the opposition was sealed by Rakowski's decision, who on 31 October 1988 decided to put into liquidation the Lenin Shipyard (using economic grounds as an explanation), and the opposition perceived this as a provocation.

In this situation, a very worried Church hierarchy tried to initiate anew a dialogue between the government and the opposition. The relevant statement was issued on 12 November 1988 by the Secretary of the Polish Episcopate, Archbishop Bronisław Dąbrowski; and in fact, a few days later a meeting took place, in which General Kiszczak and Lech Wałęsa participated. Archbishop Gocłowski recalls this meeting as follows: "I remember it was a new house [in Wilanów - S.G.S's note], not finished yet, the windows were covered with bedsheets, because there were no curtains... Lech Wałęsa and Tadeusz Mazowiecki, and General Czesław Kiszczak with Stanisław Ciosek arrived. Archbishop Dąbrowski left after welcoming the guests, and Rev. Alojzy Orszulik and I stayed. It should be explained here that Church representatives were witnesses, and not participants in talks in Wilanów, and later in Magdalenka. Primate Glemp decided that the bishop of Gdańsk should participate in them, hence my presence there. Everything took place with the Holy Father's knowledge and encouragement. At the beginning of November, I was in Vatican together with Archbishop Bronisław Dąbrowski. John Paul II, who was concerned about fate of Poland, thought that talks should be initiated, that the compromise should be sought. On Sunday, after our return, the Polish Episcopate appeal to the society and the government to undertake talks was read in all churches. And those negotiations were undertaken"³⁸.

of a visible stalemate in talks, the date for initiating the "round table" talks was postponed to 28 October, but then they also did not take place.

³⁷ See: Ibidem.

³⁸ *Abp Tadeusz Gocłowski: W Magdalenie naradzaliśmy się z Wałęsą w lesie* [an interview with

However, the course of this meeting confirmed that preparations for the “round table” talks ground to a halt, as at that time the authorities strongly opposed not only legalisation of “Solidarity”, but also including the Union name in the official communication from the talks. Archbishop Gocłowski described the end of these talks as follows: “It was the second day of talks already, we all were a bit tired and irritated, because a joint communication from the meeting could not be agreed upon. The general pushed his chair rapidly, then Mr Ciosek got up, we all got up... And then, as the general described it later in his memoirs:| »Bishop Gocłowski delivered the homily«. Being also slightly angry, I said: »Gentlemen, Poland belongs neither to us nor to you, but to us all. It makes no sense to take offence, let’s sit down and try to reach an understanding for its good«. They sat down and eventually wrote that communication; it was so general that it was practically of no importance, but the most important thing was that it was written. It was the signal that the talks were not discontinued³⁹.”

The deadlock was broken quite unexpectedly. On 30 November 1988, a TV “duel” between Lech Wałęsa and Alfred Miodowicz, chairman of the pro-regime OPZZ took place. It should be added that it was Alfred Miodowicz who came up with an idea for this meeting, and at the meeting of the Political Bureau he explained that it was a very good way to bring Lech Wałęsa down, by publicly discrediting him. The majority of the Political Bureau members were against that solution. General Jaruzelski was of the similar opinion (although earlier the idea for a public debate between Miodowicz and Wałęsa was included in solutions recommended by the “group of three”. Eventually, Jaruzelski accepted Miodowicz’s proposal.

Wałęsa was excellently prepared for this debate and clearly won it. During the meeting of the Political Staff at KC PZPR Jerzy Urban, presenting mortifying results of the CBOS survey (64% of the respondents thought that the debate was won by Wałęsa, with 1% being of the opinion it was won by Miodowicz. Legalisation of “Solidarity” was supported by 73%, and objected by 3% of the respondents. Legalisation of “Solidarity” was perceived as advantageous by 60%, and as a loss by 6% of the respondents), called to initiate the talks soon⁴⁰.

On 18 December 1988, during the meeting of activists of “Solidarity” and opposition, and intellectuals in Warsaw, the Citizens Committee at the chairman of NSZZ “Solidarity” was established. It consisted of 135 members and was to act as a partner of the government during the “round table” talks. The way to this event was opened by the 10th Plenum of KC PZPR, held in two rounds: on 20–21

Archbishop Tadeusz Gocłowski conducted by Barbara Szczepuła, <https://dziennikbaltycki.pl/abp-tadeusz-goclawski-w-magdalence-naradzalismy-sie-z-walesa-w-lesie-rozmowa/ar/3331841> [last accessed on 25 August 2019].

³⁹ See: Ibidem.

⁴⁰ A. Friszke, *Droga do Okrągłego Stołu*, „Więź” 2000, No. 5, http://wiesz.pl/laboratorium/teksty.php?droga_do_okraglego_stolu&p=7 [last accessed on: 23 August 2019].

December 1988 and 16–17 January 1989. At that Plenum, 187 Theses of the KC Political Bureau were presented, divided into three parts: “The Polish journey to Socialism – today”, “The Party in Transformation”, and “Transformations in the Party”. They oscillated around abandoning vestiges of Stalinism, acceptance of the inner pluralism, and a dialogue with other forces in the society. The 10th Plenum also brought important personal changes, as six members of the Political Bureau and four KC secretaries – the most ardent opponents of political reforms, resigned their positions. Nine new people joined the Political Bureau, with four of them joining the top leadership. During the Plenum, Rakowski in his speech justified the need to imitate talks both with Wałęsa and with “Solidarity”.

Despite the dominance of the reformatory movement, which emerged after resignation of opponents to changes, during the second stage of the 10th Plenum (16–17 January 1989) some members violently attacked planned systemic changes, especially the principle of union pluralism. Then Jaruzelski even demanded a vote of confidence for him, Rakowski, Barcikowski, and Czyrek, and Generals Kiszczak and Siwicki. However, in that situations the hands of the Plenum members were tied, because voting against the top leadership, including heads of the two state power ministries, could result in a great political crisis and outcomes that were impossible to estimate.

One of cryptograms sent by the Ministry of Internal Affairs to all Polish diplomatic posts, stated:

“Heads of all embassies, senior representations, missions and consulates. For your information:

1. Contacts with the opposition continue. After the meeting of Kiszczak and Wałęsa, a »round table« is planned, which should start at the beginning of February. It should be expected that the most difficult issue will be the time schedule for legalisation of “S” and determining its place in the political life.
2. The decisions of the 10th Plenum were received with relief, both by the party [and] by the opposition. They offer an option for both parties for breaking up the deadlock, although they are associated with certain risks for the government. In worker circles, the fact of personal and political involvement in the issue of »S[olidarity]« legalisation is emphasised⁴¹.

The “round table” talks took place between 6 February and 5 April 1989⁴². About 450 people participated in them, but less than 60 actually sat at the “round

⁴¹ The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Archives of Polish Diplomacy, online resources [hereinafter: MSZ APD online] Cryptogram No. 882, of 27 January 1989, https://www.msz.gov.pl/pl/ministerstwo/historia/wydarzenia/wybory_1989 [last accessed on: 30 October 2019].

⁴² More information on ‘the round table’, see: A. Dudek, *Reglamentowana rewolucja*; A. Garlicki, *Karuzela*; P. Codogni, *Okrągły stół czyli Polski Rubikon*, Warszawa 2009; J. Skórzyński, *Rewolucja Okrągłego Stołu*, Kraków 2009; K. Trembicka, *Okrągły stół w Polsce: studium o porozumieniu politycznym*, Lublin 2003.

table” in the Palace of Namestnik. The plenary sessions were held only two times, at the beginning and at the end. They were broadcast live on the television and the radio. Actually, negotiations were conducted in three working groups – for political reforms, for economy and social policy, and for union pluralism – which in turn were divided into numerous subgroups, e.g. for agriculture, justice reform, youth, health, and mining. Some meetings were held in Magdalenka near Warsaw, or in the Cabinet Office building.

The ‘round table’ talks resulted in acceptance of all demands of the opposition by the authorities. The concluded contract provided for parliamentary elections, in which parties and formations associated with the government side (PZPR, ZSL, SD, PAX Association, Polish Catholic-Social Association, and Christian Social Union) had 65% of seats guaranteed. The remaining 35 % of seats were to be allocated in free elections. A plan for a deep systemic reform was adopted, including establishing of the upper house of the parliament - Senate, elections to which were to be completely free; restoring of the office of the president with extensive competencies; and adopting of a new democratic constitution and the electoral law. The “round table” resolutions concerned introduction of union pluralism, including legalisation of “Solidarity” (which actually meant the beginning of political pluralism as well). These resolutions were approved by the parliament on 7 April 1989.⁴³ On 17 April 1989, “Solidarity” was legalised again, followed by “Solidarity” of Individual Farmers on 20 April 1989. The elections were held on 4 June 1989 (with the second round on 18 June 1989). In them, candidates from Citizens’ Committees established by “Solidarity” won all seats from the 35 percent pool in the Sejm, and 99 out of 100 seats in the Senate. The parliamentary representation of “Solidarity” was called Citizens’ Parliamentary Club (Obywatelski Klub Parlamentarny - OKP). The election results were mortifying for PZPR candidates. In the first round of the elections the national list, including representatives of the highest state and party authorities, associated with the Communist party and its satellite formations and controlled social organisations, lost completely. Only two people gained support exceeding fifty percent - these were Professors Mikołaj Kozakiewicz from ZSL and Adam Zieliński from PZPR. Candidates of the ruling side suffered the same defeat in electoral districts. In general, after the first election round, they had still to allocate 294 MP seats and none in the Senate, while the opposition on 4 June 1989 won 160 out of guaranteed 161 seats and introduced 92 senators to the parliament. It should be emphasised that no solution was foreseen for the case when no candidate from the national list was elected. Eventually, the Solidarity opposition did not oppose a change to the electoral law, which transferred those seats to electoral districts.

⁴³ Then the Sejm adopted the acts, including: the act amending the constitution, the electoral law, and the act on associations.

On 12 June 1989, the Council of State issued a decree amending the electoral law and a resolution establishing 33 new seats in electoral districts⁴⁴.

The “round table” project was meticulously directed by the Communist government. Definitely, the Communists, being aware that the changes in Poland were unavoidable, wanted to maintain their political influence through the adopted compromise. As Andrzej Friszke wrote, they aimed at creating a quasi-*pluralist* system, in which PZPR would still exercise decisive power⁴⁵. Talks with the opposition and giving some power to it became necessary not only because of the deepening economic and social crisis, but also due to the international situation. On one hand, this meant activities of the United States. Henry Kissinger came to USSR with a special diplomatic mission, to assure Gorbachev that the United States did not intend to expand their influence in that part of Europe. On the other hand, the Soviet Union, worn by the war in Afghanistan and the deepening economic and political crisis, could not afford an armed intervention in Poland. Furthermore, the success of Polish economic reforms (treated in USSR as “necessary evil”), was advantageous for Gorbachev’s *perestroika* and policy⁴⁶; however, everything depended on General Jaruzelski’s full control over the political situation in Poland, and that, as it turned out, was already impossible.

According to the original communist assumptions, the opposition was to share the power by co-opting, and in consequence, be held partly responsible for the deep economic downturn that affected Poland. This is how Józef Czyrek presented this issue at his meeting with the diplomatic corps on 12 April 1989:

„1. The »R[ound] T[able]« agreements will initiate development of a new soc[ial] and pol[itical] system, but do not mean the change of the system. They are sufficient to implement on a long-term basis a principle of shared participation and responsibility for the fate of the country. A system of socialist parliamentary democracy will be established, based on principles of pluralism, and the special role of the president [...]. By giving up its total parliamentary majority, PZPR moves to the full-blooded system of coalition governing. Rules for sharing the government structures will be a subject of coalition agreements, similar to those in the West [...]”⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Journal of Laws of 1989 No. 36, item 198, Decree of 12 June 1989 amending the Act - the Electoral Law for the Sejm of the Polish People’s Republic of the 10th term for 1989–1993; Journal of Laws of 1989 No. 36, item 199, Resolution of the Council of State of 12 June 1989 on repeated voting concerning vacant seats from the national list.

⁴⁵ A. Friszke, *Droga do Okrągłego Stołu*, „Więź” 2000, No. 5, http://wiesz.pl/laboratorium/teksty.php?droga_do_okraglego_stolu&p=7 [last accessed on: 23 August 2019].

⁴⁶ A. Paczkowski, *Rok 1989, czyli drugi cud nad Wisłą*, in: *Polski wiek XX, PRL od grudnia 70 do czerwca 89*, ed. K. Persak, P. Machciewicz, Warsaw 2011, p. 236.

⁴⁷ MSZ APD online, Cryptogram No. 3222, 12 April, DPI MS Director Z Stefan Staniszewski about Józef Czyrek’s (a member of BP KC PZPR) with representatives of the diplomatic corpse https://www.msz.gov.pl/pl/ministerstwo/historia/wydarzenia/wybory_1989 [last accessed on: 30 October 2019].

His image was completed by problems with the election of General Jaruzelski as president. Finally, on July 19, 1989, he was elected in a vote of the National Assembly, his candidacy passed thanks to a one-vote majority. Mikołaj Kozakiewicz, then Marshal of the Sejm, recalled: "Jaruzelski really got through thanks to the deputies and senators of OKP and it is not true that it was the opposition that »mowed him down«. It was people from their own party who mowed him down, who either succumbed to the persuasions of some people from »Solidarity« because they were elected, to some extent, thanks to »Solidarity«, or were now quickly looking for an opportunity to gain credibility, to cut themselves off from the past"⁴⁸. The lack of unequivocal support for this candidate, even among the party elites, was a reflection of the complete decomposition of the ruling camp.

References

Bibliografia

Documents

- Journal of Laws of 1989 No. 36, item 198, Decree of 12 June 1989 amending the Act - the Electoral Law for the Sejm of the Polish People's Republic of the 10th term for 1989–1993;
Journal of Laws of 1989 No. 36, item 199, Resolution of the Council of State of 12 June 1989 on repeated voting concerning vacant seats from the national list.

Studies

- Codogni P., *Okrągły stół czyli Polski Rubikon*, Warszawa 2009.
Dudek A., *Reglamentowana rewolucja. Rozkład dyktatury komunistycznej 1988-1990*, Warszawa 2004.
Garlicki A., *Karuzela. Rzecz o okrągłym stole*, Warszawa 2003.
Głębocki H., *Wojna z narodem*, in: W. Polak, S. Galij-Skarbińska, H. Głębocki, J. Kłosiński, „Solidarność”. *Od komunizmu do Unii Europejskiej*, ed. A. Borowski, M. Łatkowska, Warszawa 2015.
Lasota M., *Polski Kościół od 13 grudnia do Magdaleny*, w: *Droga do niepodległości. „Solidarność” 1980–2005*, red. A. Borowski, Warszawa 2005.
Łuczak A., *Dekada polskich przemian. Studium władzy i opozycji*, Warszawa 2012.
Okrągły Stół z perspektywy dwudziestolecia: studia i analizy, ed. M. Golińczak, R. Kessler, W. Suleja, Wałbrzych 2010.
„Okrągły Stół”, compiled by K. Dubiński, Warszawa 1999.
Paczkowski A., *Rok 1989, czyli drugi cud nad Wisłą*, in: *Polski wiek XX, PRL od grudnia 70 do czerwca 89*, ed. K. Persak, P. Machciewicz, Warszawa 2011.
Paczkowski A., *Stan wojenny i „powojenny”: od grudnia 1981 do stycznia 1989*, in: *Polski wiek XX, t. IV*, ed. K. Persak i P. Machciewicz, Warszawa 2011.

⁴⁸ Quoted after: M. Tychmanowicz, *Gen. Wojciech Jaruzelski for president. He won by a single vote*, <https://wiadomosci.wp.pl/gen-wojciech-jaruzelski-prezydentem-wygral-dzieki-przewadze-jednego-glosu-6031558006994049a> [access: 1 April 2025].

- Polak W., *Czas ludzi niepokornych. Niezależny Samorządny Związek Zawodowy „Solidarność” i inne ugrupowania niezależne w Toruniu i Regionie Toruńskim (13 XII 1981-4 VI 1989)*, Toruń 2003.
- Polak W., Galij-Skarbińska S., *Polskość to normalność, wolność i solidarność. Szkice z historii najnowszej*, Toruń 2024.
- Polak W., Galij-Skarbińska S., *Przemiany w polskim aparacie bezpieczeństwa w latach 1989-1990*, „Fides, Ratio Et Patria. Studia Toruńskie” 2015, No 3.
- Skórzyński J., *Rewolucja Okrągłego Stołu*, Kraków 2009.
- Szumilo M., *Kierownictwo Polskiej Zjednoczonej Partii Robotniczej w latach 1986-1990. Szkic do portretu*, „Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość” 2011, No. 10/2 (18).
- Trembicka K., *Okrągły stół w Polsce: studium o porozumieniu politycznym*, Lublin 2003.
- Zmierzch dyktatury. Polska lat 1986-1989 w świetle dokumentów*, t. 1 (lipiec 1986 – maj 1989), ed. A. Dudek, Warszawa 2009.
- Zmierzch dyktatury. Polska lat 1986-1989 w świetle dokumentów*, t. 2 (czerwiec-grudzień 1989), ed. A. Dudek, Warszawa 2010.

Internet

- Abp Tadeusz Gocłowski: W Magdalence naradzaliśmy się z Wałęsą w lesie* [an interview with Archbishop Tadeusz Gocłowski conducted by Barbara Szczepuła, <https://dziennikbaltycki.pl/abp-tadeusz-gocłowski-w-magdalence-naradzalismy-sie-z-walesa-w-lesie-rozmowa/ar/3331841> [last accessed on 25 August 2018].
- Frisk A., *Droga do Okrągłego Stołu*, „Więź” 2000, No. 5, http://wiesz.pl/laboratorium/teksty.php?droga_do_okraglego_stolu&p=7 [last accessed on: 23 August 2019].
- MSZ APD online, Cryptogram No. 3222, 12 April, DPI MS Director Z Stefan Staniszewski about Józef Czyrek's (a member of BP KC PZPR) with representatives of the diplomatic corpse https://www.msz.gov.pl/pl/ministerstwo/historia/wydarzenia/wybory_1989 [last accessed on: 30 October 2019].
- Tychmanowicz M., *Gen. Wojciech Jaruzelski for president. He won by a single vote*, <https://wiadomosci.wp.pl/gen-wojciech-jaruzelski-prezydentem-wygral-dzieki-przewadze-jednego-glosu-6031558006994049a> [last accessed on: 1 April 2025].