# NOTE TO USERS

**At the Crossroads of Politics and Culture: Polish Dissident Art of the 1980s.**

A thesis submitted to McGill University in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Arts. May 11, 2005

Iwona Ganczak, Department of Art History and Communication Studies, McGill University, Montreal.

*Your file Votre référence*
*ISBN: 0-494-12722-8*
*Our file Notre référence*
*ISBN: 0-494-12722-8*

This thesis will examine the political and social significance of the new artistic language that emerged in Poland in the 1980s. The new artistic language pertains to symbols, imagery and themes that originated in the discourse of the opposition and can be defined as the amalgam of the traditional religious vocabulary and time-specific symbols of oppression under Communism. The most prominent in this category are the symbols of the cross, the flowers, the national red and white flag, exclusively contemporary symbols such as the "television-people" as well as an array of traditional religious vocabulary. This unusual relationship between symbolic language of art and the symbols of the Church and the Solidarity accounted for the inherently political nature of dissident art. This thesis will discuss dissident art in context of the contemporary discourses: the discourse of the Communist Party, the Church, John Paul II and Solidarity.

Cette thèse examinera l'importance politique et sociale du noveau langage artistique, apparu dans les années 80 en Pologne Ce nouveau langage artistique concernant des symboles, des images et des thèmes, qui trennent leurs origins dans le discours de l'opposition et peuvent être définis comme une fusion du vocabulaire religieux traditionnel et les symboles propre à l'oppresion du régime communiste. Les symboles les plus importants de cette catégorie sont ceux de la croix, les fleurs, le drapeau national rouge et blanc, surtout les symboles contemporains comme les "gens du télé," aussi bien qu'un étalage du vocabulaire religieux traditionnel. Cette relation unique entre le langage symbolique de l'art et les symboles de l'Église et du mouvement "Solidarité" explique la nature politique de l'art dissidant. Cette thèse discutera l'art dissidant dans le contexte des discours contemporains: le discours du parti communiste, de l'Église, du pope Jean Paul II et de Solidarité.

I would like to thank Dr. Ting Chang, Professor of Art History at McGill University, for her guidance, support and editorial assistance during the process of writing this thesis.

**Table of Contents**

**Introduction..... 1**

**Chapter I..... 12**
**Political and social background and the discourse of the Communist party in the late 1970s and the early 1980s**

**Chapter II..... 32**
**The Discourse of the Opposition: the Catholic Church, the figure of John Paul II, Solidarity and the underground/alternative culture.**

**Chapter III..... 56**
**The Dissident Arts of the 1980: The Influences of Discourses of Church and of the Solidarity.**

**Conclusion..... 72**

## List of Illustrations

**Fig. 1** Lukasz Korolkiewicz. *The Morning of the 13th of December 1981.* Oil on canvas, 1982.

**Fig. 2** Lukasz Korolkiewicz. *The Cross in the Winter.* Oil on canvas, 1983.

**Fig. 3** The cross of flowers near the Church of St. Anne in Warsaw. Black and white photograph, June, 1983.

**Fig. 4** Jerzy Kalina. *The Last Supper.* A photograph of an installation which was part of a group exhibition, "The Sign of the Cross," in the Church of the God's Mercy in Warsaw, 1983.

**Fig. 5** Jacek Waltos. *Two sides of the gate—the August Sunday 80.* Oil on canvas, 1981-2.

**Fig. 6** Zbigniew Gawrych. *Conversation 1*. Oil on canvas, 1987.

## *INTRODUCTION*

For the West, the decade of the 1980s in Poland has become synonymous with the Solidarity movement and the resulting social upheavals that led to the collapse of the Communist regime in Poland. However, the political changes would not have occurred if it were not for the clandestine Polish culture, empowered by the nationalist thought and philosophy of the Catholic Church. The Church protected and supported the oppositional activity of what they termed the "alternative culture" and of the Solidarity movement, which amalgamated in the early 1980s into a unified force of opposition, defined by Jan Kubik as the counter-hegemonic power to the official regime.[1] This work is concerned with one aspect of the underground culture—the artistic activity that developed in the 1980s in support of Solidarity and which survived throughout the decade. Specifically, I will consider the ways in which dissident works of art sustained and propagated nationalist and religious sentiments through their espousal of a new artistic language.[2]

This thesis will examine the political and social significance of the new artistic language that emerged in the 1980s in response to and in support of the Solidarity movement. The new artistic language pertains to symbols, imagery and themes that originated in the discourse of the opposition and can be defined as the amalgam of the traditional religious vocabulary and time-specific symbols of oppression under Communism. From an array of traditional religious vocabulary flavored by contemporary political connotations the most prominent are the symbols of the cross, the flowers, the national red and white flag, and an exclusively contemporary symbols such as the "television-people.". Many images were also drawn from the wealth of historical tradition of suffering of Polish nation and from the recent themes of solidarity and

---

[1] Kubik speaks of the Church and of the organized opposition as the counter-hegemonies to the Communist regime in Poland. Jan Kubik, *The Power of Symbols Against the Symbols of Power. The Rise of Solidarity and the Fall of State Socialism in Poland* (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania University Press, 1994).

[2] This language, by being rooted in the discourses of the Church and of Solidarity, participated in the discourse of the opposition. I am referring to oppositional discourse as an inter-disciplinary phenomenon that spanned across political, social, cultural and religious domains. This unique dynamic that developed between religion, oppositional politics and the underground culture in the 1980s fostered a unified structure of ideas.

oppression. All of the works of art that used this new language qualify under the general category of dissident art. Dissident art in Poland during the 1980s was a politically provoked artistic phenomenon caused by the accidental positioning of contemporary art amidst the activity of the opposition. Specifically, as a result of the decree of Martial Law that either suspended or disbanded official art organizations, the Church became the alternative art institution. The direct impact of this interaction was the noticeable connection between the symbolism, imagery and themes in the art and the symbolic language used by the opposition as represented by the Church and Solidarity. Specifically, the dissident works often feature traditional religious imagery such as crosses, symbols of the Eucharist (bread, wine), praying figures, images of the Virgin as well as images and symbols such as striking workers, representations of Communist reality or of the national red and white flag which pertained to contemporary political situation. This unusual correspondence accounted for the inherently political nature of dissident art as the new symbolism, inspired or borrowed from the discourse of the opposition, espoused also the political dimension of the symbols of the Church or Solidarity. Further, the powerful social presence of these symbols and their consequent imprint on public consciousness caused an emotional reaction to such language in the works of art.[3] The emotional response occurred as these symbols were able to appeal to the memories of contemporary viewers.[4]

---

[3] This statement is based on the conversations that I had with people who attended some of these unofficial exhibitions. Specifically, one woman recalled her emotional reaction to the unofficial exhibition, the first Easter following the brutal murder by the police of the priest Jerzy Popieluszko, known for his political activism and anti-Communist sentiments. The facts of his death were publicly known—his kidnapping by the police, transportation in the trunk of the car, torture and death by drowning. An exhibition which occurred during the Easter celebrations amalgamated the traditional symbols of Easter Sepulchers with the contemporary theme of the oppression by the Communist regime. The artists placed the figure of the baby Jesus in the trunk of the car, which directly alluded to the martyrdom of the murdered priest, and by extension, the martyrdom of Polish society. Also in the exhibition, a woman recalled, were dark pieces of material thrown on the adjacent trees, which denoted figures of murderers. The woman who saw this exhibition emphasized the vocal character of symbolism—the way it clearly communicated its message to the diversified audience who came to see it. The priest Jerzy Popieluszko became one of the contemporary symbols of suffering under Communist regime and the story of his martyrdom was emotionally received by the society.

[4] This qualification has been inspired by Robert-Darren Gobert's argument in his Master's thesis titled *Frame Confusion and the Manufacture of Emotion*. Gobert refers to Noel Carroll's thought theory and specifically to his idea that "it is the thought of certain acts that causes our emotional reactions. Carroll's theory ...stresses in dealing with the cognitive evaluation of which an

I will analyze the connection between the symbols of the opposition and the symbolic language of unofficial art in the example of the select works by contemporary dissident artists. Jerzy Kalina's *Last Supper*, Lukasz Korolkiewicz's *The Morning of December 13, 1981* and *The Cross in the Winter* and Jacek Waltos' *Two Sides of the Gate—the August Sunday 80* exemplify the tendency of many dissident artists to incorporate into their art emotionally-loaded symbolic language either inspired by or borrowed from the discourse of the opposition. Their works demonstrate a repeating pattern within the general category of dissident art as certain symbols (but also images and iconography) were frequently used by different artists.

The presence of the emotional factor in these works of art is crucial for what one may call the c*ommunicative* quality of the symbolic language. The unique relationship between the new artistic language and the contemporary political circumstances appealed to the feelings of the viewer who saw in the new artistic language a reverberation of his or her own emotions in face of contemporary events. This emotional response to the symbolic language (e.g. the cross of flowers, an image of the worker) caused by the viewer's recognition of the presence of these symbols in the political struggle was, in turn, a crucial factor in determining the art's participation in, as opposed to reflection on, the discourse of the opposition. The works of art that espoused such language became yet another means of reinforcing and perpetuating the messages of opposition. [5]

Further, in light of the acknowledged power of contemporary religious and political symbols, one may claim that art which employed emotionally charged vocabulary and thereby appealed to the viewer's emotions would have had a different effect on the contemporary viewer than art that merely commented on current state of affairs through political metaphor as seen, for example, in the works that Aleksander Wojciechowski classifies under the category of the political grotesque or absurd. Such art that incorporated symbolic language or created images that explicitly reinforced religious

---

emotional reaction is based, and it allows for a greater flexibility in dealing with emotions-inducing fictional representations." Robert Darren Gobert, *Frame Confusion and the Manufacture of Emotion* (Montreal: MA Thesis McGill University for Professor Mette Hjort, 1996) 48-9.

[5] It is, of course, impossible to determine the degree of contribution of art to the strength of the opposition. However, if one considers any means of the perpetuation of the oppositional ideology a contribution to the force that exploded in the last years of the 1980, artistic activity, no doubt, through its open support of Solidarity contributed to its overall success.

and nationalistic sentiments of the opposition should be distinguished from other forms of dissident art which included art of the absurd, political grotesque/caricature, pastiche or experimental art whose objective was not to create an emotional relationship with the viewer through an appeal to the viewer's emotions.

Finally, the context of art production during the 1980s makes it impossible to speak of the alternative underground art in purely aesthetic terms. In an environment that was highly politicized, artistic value assumed a secondary role to art's political mission, specifically the manner in which the symbolism conveyed contemporary political sentiments—in the case of the unofficial art, through the allegiance to the opposition. Consequently, the merit of dissident art as a movement was in the ability to coexist in political, religious and cultural domains and to communicate effectively with the contemporary viewer.

The concept of "discourse" is an essential part of the argument as it defines the position of the artwork in the channels of communication of the opposition. Michel Foucault's characterization of the term captures the complex dynamic that developed between the Roman Catholic Church, Solidarity and the underground cultural community that included artists and art critics.[6] The discourse of the opposition was therefore not a unified, systematic rhetoric; rather it was a collection of complementary statements, a community of ideas generated by the shared vision of the past, present and future. It pertained to the communication (and the relationship) between compatible actors who existed in and were sustained by the culture of the opposition. The new artistic language's participation in the discourse thus depended on the degree of its communicative quality—the way in which the ideology of the opposition, though translated by pictorial means, expressed its system of values and beliefs.

In considering the relationship of oppositional discourse to the official discourse of the Communist party, Richard Terdiman's definitions of the dominant or hegemonic

---

[6] "We shall call discourse a group of statements in so far as they belong to the same discursive formation; it does not form a rhetorical unity, endlessly repeatable, whose appearance or use in history might be indicated (and, if necessary, explained); it is made up of limited number of statements for which a group of conditions of existence can be defined....it is a unity and discontinuity in history itself, posing the problem of its own limits, its divisions, its transformations, the specific modes of its temporality..." In Michel Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge* (London: Routledge, 2001) 117.

discourse and of the counter-discourse is useful.[7] His theoretical characterization of the counter-discourse as an "alternative system" [8] to the dominant discourses can be applied to the Polish opposition, specifically the way in which the Church, Solidarity and the underground culture functioned to provide an alternative cultural, political and ideological construct. Given the complex network of the oppositional activities on various social levels,[9] the notion of discourse not only denotes a process of communication, but also a broader category of social interaction, specifically, the dynamic between the institutions of power, the institutions of opposition and society.

In order to understand the power and the nature of the counter-discourse as counter-hegemonic and as a disruptive social, political and cultural force and, by extension, the function of the artwork that used its powerful symbolism as an instigator and propagator of anti-Communist sentiments, it is necessary to relate the social, political and cultural character of Poland as formulated by the official practices of the Communist party. The first chapter will analyze the manner in which official structures and their discursive practices determined the nature of oppositional activity and oppositional formations. During the late 1970s and the early 1980s, specifically in the period of Martial Law, the inherent schism between the Communist state and society gave rise to the activities of the opposition and the mass support of their ideology. The analysis of the Communist rhetoric, symbolism and rituals will contextualize the subsequent discussion of two works of art by Lukasz Korolkiewicz, *The Morning of December 13, 1981* and *The Cross in the Winter* which exemplify the ability of art to voice anti-Communist sentiments through a symbolic language rooted in the surrounding political atmosphere. This chapter will also prepare for the discussion of the discourse of the opposition, whose language, symbolism and rituals directly competed with Communist modes of public communication.

---

[7] With reference to Poland, the notion of the "dominant discourse" is pertinent when it signifies that the communication [and social interactions] had been predetermined by the ruling regime. However, the dominant discourse in Poland differs from Terdiman's definition with respect to the characteristic of "ubiquitousness," "genesis amnesia" or "universalism". This qualification to the definition of the dominant discourse will be discussed in detail in Chapter I of this thesis. Richard Terdiman, *Discourse/Counter-Discourse. The Theory and Practice of Symbolic Resistance in Nineteenth- Century France* (London: Cornell University Press, 1985) 61-63, 138.

[8] Richard Terdiman, 13.

[9] Be it public, private, political, economic, religious, cultural etc.

The second part will address the discourse of the opposition, examining its language, symbolism and cultural practices. The position of the Polish Catholic Church and the figure of John Paul II stimulated not only the discourse of the opposition, but also the culture of the opposition which was more compatible with Polish identity than the Communist culture and its ideology. The awareness of the co-existence of the competing discourses and their corresponding "symbolic universes"[10] is a precondition for an understanding of both the political and religious character of the symbolic language created by the artists in the 1980s. This chapter will illustrate the unique parallel between the imagery, themes and symbols in the discourse of the Church and Solidarity and artistic vocabulary exemplified by Jerzy Kalina's installation *Last Supper* and Jacek Waltos' painting *Two Sides of the Gate—the August Sunday 80.* The simultaneous discussion of the discourse of the opposition and the symbols and iconographies in dissident art confirms that the latter was inspired by the symbols, rhetoric and ideology of John Paul II, the Church and Solidarity.

The third chapter of this thesis will elaborate on the connection between the artistic language that emerged in the 1980s and the discourse of the opposition. This chapter will explain the nature of a unique relationship that existed between dissident art and the Church and Solidarity and, specifically, the influence of Church and Solidarity on the character of artistic creativity. I will examine the emergence of time-specific artistic stances and, consequently, artistic language in the context of contemporary manifestos and statements by the artists that disclose their understanding of art's social, political and cultural function. Furthermore, this chapter will explain the communicative quality of the new symbolic language through the discussion of its imprint on the collective consciousness of contemporary Polish society. Also, in relation to the communicative quality of the new symbolic language, this chapter will address the factor of emotions and the phenomenon of a new audience that emerged in the 1980s as the result of Martial Law. Finally, the communicative quality of the symbolic language in dissident works of art will be shown in the works of Lukasz Korolkiewicz, Jerzy Kalina, Jacek Waltos and Zbigniew Gawrych. These works will highlight the political force of the dissident art in

---

[10] Aleksander Wojciechowski, *Czas Smutku, Czas Nadziei* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Artystyczne i Filmowe, 1992) 10.

general; they will exemplify the manner in which dissident art, in the context of the politics of the 1980s, was not defined by the individual stance of various artists but existed as collective force, a united voice of protest amidst the competing official and unofficial powers.

**A Note on the Literature: The Methodology**

My assertion of the political nature, and specifically, of the communicative quality of the works of art produced in response to the events of the 1980s shifts these works from the domain of art history into an interdisciplinary field of politics, religion and culture. Although the contemporary analyses of the art of the 1980s by Aleksander Wojciechowski and Jaroslaw Daszkiewicz[11] acknowledge the impact of the Church and of Solidarity culture on the art produced during that period, they do not define or explicitly recognize the communicative quality of these works of art. Even though Wojciechowski perceives symbols, signs and gestures as an obvious manifestation of the "easily recognizable language of communication [between the opposition and the society]"[12] these works, nonetheless, come across as being *reflections* of rather than as *participants* in the discourse of the opposition. He situates the discussion of the arts in the political framework created by two events that had become the milestones in contemporary Polish history: the announcement of Martial Law on December 14, 1981 and the establishment of the first democratic government since World War II on August 24, 1989. This manifests Wojciechowski's assumption of the reader's *a priori* knowledge of the competing discourses. Overall, however, Wojciechowski paints an intimate portrait of the alternative culture by using manifestos, excerpts from publications, interviews with organizers and participants of these events and the photographs that document various activities as well as offer glimpses of the public life from the reality of the 1980s. In this respect, his book is more a survey of the decade of the 1980s than a

[11] I have chosen the works by these two authors as examples since their work is the most recent and comprehensive literature on the topic. Also, Aleksander Wojciechowski was one of the main promoters of the underground art as he worked in the arts sector in the underground during the 1980s.

[12] My translation of Wojciechowski. All subsequent excerpts, quotations etc. from this author will also be my own translations. Wojciechowski, 10.

detailed study of the new alternative symbolic language. Specifically, Wojciechowski includes an extensive calendar of events that chronologically documents underground artistic activity, presenting a thorough portrait of the artists' involvement in the underground movement. His book is a valuable source of information as it describes thematic and stylistic diversity, allowing the reader to develop his or her own mode of categorization and interpretation.

Daszkiewicz, on the other hand, only briefly discusses this new milieu and the new artistic language that emerged in response to the events of the 1980s; he is more interested in artistic expressions outside of the Solidarity culture.[13] His book assesses new artistic tendencies in Polish contemporary art that emerged in the 1980s; these new movements are discussed in relation to the youngest generation of artists whose first public appearance occurred in the midst of the social, political and cultural upheavals. Daszkiewicz argues for the recognition of these young artists who were caught in a vacuum—on the one hand, not attracted to the ideologies of the Church and of the Solidarity movement, and on the other hand, separated from the new trends occurring in the Europe and in America—whose work nonetheless parallels, in form and style, the art of the West. Additionally, their work introduced styles and iconography unknown to Western and American art. Daszkiewicz defines these novel trends as mystical photorealism, existential neo-realism and romantic expression. He also includes a general category that he calls "individual mythology." Like Wojciechowski, he also highlights the importance of the Church as the patron and organizer of exhibitions; he evaluates art exhibited on the premises of the Church and differentiates between these works and the programs of the artists of the youngest generation. Despite the differences in the orientation of this paper and his analysis, his book is valuable for current discussion as it broadens the perspective on the artistic activity in the 1980s. Specifically, his book counters Wojciechowski's portrait of the Solidarity culture and art which is limited by his biased perspective on the underground movements. Most importantly, Daszkiewicz's

[13] Jaroslaw M. Daszkiewicz, *Malarstwo Mlodych 1980-1990* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Artystyczne i Filmowe, 1995).

analysis critically evaluates the impact of the Church and the Solidarity movement on the contemporary art, which was omitted from Wojciechowski's study.

Jan Kubik's study of the dynamic between politics and culture provides a contextual framework for the discussion of the alternative underground art of the 1980s.[14] Kubik, a political scientist, examines the decade of the 1980s by dissecting the cultural roots of dissidence that developed after the post-World War II period. Throughout that period, the government applied various strategies to modify Polish culture and to legitimize its existence. The author analyzes the foundations of the various unofficial discourses—which were incompatible with the official program—highlighting the complex mechanisms of cultural manipulation created first by the Church, and later by the organized opposition. Kubik defines the position of the Roman Catholic Church as a counter-hegemonic alternative. By looking at the Church's role in the formation of the oppositional identity, he highlights the various ways in which religion provided a framework for the emergence of dissident thinking. In the discussion of the conflict over power that emerged in the early 1980s with the establishment of Solidarity, Kubik focuses his attention on the discourses and the symbolic language utilized by the government, the Church and the organized opposition: the rituals, ceremonies, demonstrations, parades, as well as the language. In this way, he is able to evaluate the role of discourse and symbolism in the process of the legitimization of power, whether official or unofficial.

Moreover, Kubik looks at the relationship between politics and culture through an interdisciplinary approach of cultural studies, contemporary anthropological and sociological theories, and political science. In support of his argument, he utilizes a variety of sources such as the accounts of the public displays documented in the official and unofficial periodicals, interviews with people who participated in or observed the events, books on public ceremonies published in Poland, sociological studies on the system of values in Poland, the examination of the photographs that documented the events, and, finally, the direct experiences of the author himself as a participant in some

[14] Kubik, Jan, *The Power of Symbols Against the Symbols of Power* (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania University Press, 1994).

of the events in the 1980s. By using numerous sources, Kubik is able to create a comprehensive image of the roots and the evolution of oppositionist thinking in Poland. Kubik's comprehensive analyses of the competing discourses will enable me to establish the parallel between the symbolic language of art and the discourses of the Communist party, the Church and the organized opposition.

In my analyses of the alternative art of the 1980s, I will combine various disciplines and approaches that have been treated separately in contemporary studies on the topic. Both Wojciechowski and Daszkiewicz remain in the domain of art history despite their brief acknowledgement of the socio-political condition of Poland. Kubik speaks of culture in a general sense, acknowledging various forms of dissidence that constituted the underground culture and fueled the oppositionist attitudes, but he fails to provide an in-depth analysis of each. Consequently there has been a gap in the literature of a comprehensive and contextualized analysis of alterative Polish art of the 1980s. This thesis will expand on the analyses by Wojciechowski, Daszkiewicz and Kubik by establishing the connection between the artistic language that emerged in response to the political situation of the 1980s and the discourses of the Church and of the opposition in which this language originated. There are no earlier attempts to situate the study of the symbolic language of art in the context of competing discourses. Art historians who realize the imprint of the recent events in the collective memory of their society and write about the alternative art of the 1980s within a few years of the occurrences neglect the nuances of the social, political, cultural and economical debate. Further, the relevant scholarship on the arts of the 1980s, specifically, the analysis of the symbolic language rooted in the Solidarity culture, is unfortunately written mostly in Polish, inevitably restricting the popularity and the audience for the area and the subject.[15] There are, of course, extensive studies on the topic of the Solidarity movement in various languages, yet they concentrate on the social, political or economic aspects of the movement.[16] The

---

[15] For instance, Aleksander Wojciechowski, *Czas Smutku Czas Nadziei*; Jaroslaw M., Daszkiewicz, *Malarstwo Mlodych 1980-1990*; Jaroslaw Modzelewski, *My i Oni* (Lublin: BWA, 1983); Aleksander Wojciechowski, *Plastyka po 1981 Roku* (Warszawa: Muzeum Archidiecezji Warszawskiej, 1986); Wojciech Wlodarczyk, "Lata Osiemdziesiate—Sztuka Mlodych,"*Obieg* 11 (1990).

[16] Some of relevant sources are: Timothy Ash Garton, *The Polish Revolution: Solidarity* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1983); Maria Markus, "Overt and Covert Modes of Legitimation

precondition for understanding the communicative quality of the symbolic language of the dissident or underground art of the 1980s is an understanding of the nature of the discourses of the Communist party and of the Solidarity movement that manipulated connotations of popular symbols thereby actualizing their potential as a tool of cultural power. Thus, in both discourses, the power of symbolic language was used for the legitimization of political force, whether official or unofficial, in an appeal to the collective consciousness of the citizens of contemporary Poland.

---

in East European Societies," in T. H. Rigby and Ferenc Feher, eds., *Political Legitimation in Communist States* (Oxford: The Macmillian Press, 1982); Andres Aman, "Symbols and Rituals in the People's Democracies During the Cold War," in Arvidsson and Blomqvist, eds., *Symbols of Power: The Esthetics of Political Legitimation in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe* (Sweden, 1987); Jack Bielasiak, ed., *Poland Today: The State of the Republic* (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1981); Peter Raina, *Political Opposition in Poland, 1945-1977* (London: Poets and Painters, 1978); Peter Raina, *Poland 1981: Towards Social Renewal* (London: G. Allen and Unwin, 1985)

## Chapter I

## Political and social background and the discourse of the Communist party in the late 1970s and the early 1980s[1]

How important is the knowledge of social, economic and political backgrounds for the interpretation of Polish dissident art of the 1980s? What kind of information is required to decipher the meaning behind works such as Lukasz Korolkiewicz's *The Morning of the 13th of December 1981* (Fig.1) or *The Cross in the Winter* (Fig.2)? These questions have to be asked before turning to the works of art. The process of viewing this time-specific art divides the viewers into two categories: the viewer who was a part of the reality of the 1980s and thereby is capable of recognizing the degrees of meaning infused into symbols and iconography, and the viewer who is an outsider (later generation of Poles or foreigners), who will necessarily interpret these works using different frameworks of reference (i.e. personal experience). The knowledge of the nuances of the struggle between the state and the forces of opposition provides the guidelines for the viewer unfamiliar with the reality of the 1980s, enabling an access to the levels of meaning that surrounded production of these works of art. The realization of the profundity of certain dates and events in the collective consciousness of Polish society will necessarily shed a different light on interpretations of otherwise generic iconographies. For instance, the date in the title of Korolkiewicz's painting is a signpost to the political, social and cultural significance of this day in the collective memory of Poland. Yet can a viewer who is unaware of the emotionality surrounding this day understand the torment captured by the painting's subject matter? Even though anyone may recognize the face of Wojciech Jaruzelski on the television screen, only a well-informed viewer will be conscious of the symbolic power of this image in relation to the

---

[1] Because of the limited scope of this paper, it is impossible to discuss in detail all stages of Communism in Poland. However, to briefly summarize, the 53 years of its reign in Poland can be divided into five periods: 1) 1945-1948: establishment of Communism 2) 1949-1953: the apogee of Stalinism—period of terror 3) 1953-1960: "October" relaxation 4)1960-1980: stabilization of Communism and its simultaneous crisis (especially towards the end of this period) 5)1980-1981: the period of Solidarity 6) 1982-1989: the period of repression known as the "Martial Law", normalization and the end of Communism. Kazimierz Braun, *Teatr Polski 1939-1989. Obszary Wolnosci—Obszary Zniewolenia* (The Polish Theatre. The Areas of Freedom—The Areas of Repression) (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Semper, 1994) 7.

1980s. Further, in a similar way as one might be satisfied with a generic reading of *The Morning of the 13th of December 1981*, as it is possible to see the symbols represented by Korolkiewicz's *The Cross in the Winter* only through the reference to their universal status. The symbolism of the cross in Korkiewicz's painting invites an interpretation with reference to religious context; however, its meaning as a work of art created in a specific historical period is incomplete without consideration of the discourse of Solidarity and Polish Catholic Church closely linked to Polish messianic thought. If one recognizes dissident art of 1980s as connected to a political milieu and driven by a social mission, the knowledge of the following context is a precondition for its proper reading. Only then do these works emerge as espousing national, religious and contemporary symbols and as representative of uniquely time-specific iconographies. The following discussion will guide the viewer to the level of meaning afforded by those who experienced reality of the 1980s.

*The Communist Poland*

The "symbolic war" [2] between the Party-state, the Roman Catholic Church and the organized opposition developed out of a specific socio-economic background, and escalated in the 1970s. Indeed, the late 1970s and the early 1980s, the period of confrontation between state and opposition, evolved from the difficult social and economic conditions in Poland. The periods of oppression and economic hardship were followed by social protests, and these, in turn, incited government reaction, manifested by the establishment of the temporary police state, increased censorships in the public domain and repressions of individual freedom. The first protests against state censorship began already in 1968, when the students and intellectuals asked for democratic reforms; their efforts, however, were futile. Two years later, in 1970, when the workers went on strike in protest against price increases,[3] the military forces opened fire on the protesting workers and contained the situation. However, in 1976, when the workers went on strike, again over price increases, theirs was no longer an isolated stance; this time, they were

---

[2] Jan Kubik, 17.

[3] A drastic, overnight increases in various food groups, especially on the meats (on some types almost 100% increase), that significantly affected the working class.

supported and aided by the intellectuals of Poland—artists, lawyers and students.[4] Following these protests, the collaboration between the intellectuals and the families of workers arrested for their involvement in strikes[5] resulted in the organization of the first oppositional group in the Communist Poland, KOR (the Worker's Defense Committee). Thus, when in July of 1980, the government again modified the prices of food, the protests became too widespread and, further, strengthened by the political position of KOR, could not be contained. In August of 1980, the protesting workers formed MKS (The Interfactory Worker's Committee) led by Lech Walesa. In November of the same year, Solidarity—an independent, self-governing trade union—was registered by the Supreme Court.[6] In 1981, the chief of state Wojciech Jaruzelski[7] recognized Solidarity as a threat to the Communist structure. On December 13, 1981 he declared Martial Law. The leaders of Solidarity (including Lech Walesa) were arrested. The police and military monitored all public activity. The oppositionist movements were forced underground where they functioned throughout the 1980s.

The above chronology of the major events of the late 1970s and the early 1980s presents a macrocosmic portrait of the conflict inherent in the Communist structure of Poland since its establishment in 1945. Maria Markus considers this issue in her analysis of the relationship between power, politics and culture in Poland, arguing that the instability of the Communist system was caused by its illegitimate origins. Particularly, she refers to the coercive superimposition of the Communist model on the fully formed

---

[4] The increased involvement of the intellectuals in the oppositional activity followed the Helsinki Conference of 1975 concerned with Human rights. M. B. Biskupski, *The History of Poland* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2000) 155.

[5] I am referring here to the legal support offered by the lawyers supporting the oppositional activity.

[6] Jan Kubik, 281-282.

[7] Wojciech Jaruzelski was born on July 6, 1923 in Kurow, Poland. He was a chief of state from 1981 to 1989 and a president of Poland from 1989-1990. In 1943 he joined the Polish army formed in the Soviet Union and he fought against Germany. In 1947 he joined Poland's Communist party (later renamed the Polish United Worker's Party [PUWP]. In 1964 he was elected a member of the party's central committee. In 1968 he became the Minister of Defense. In 1971 he became a member of the Politburo. He was elected a premier on Feb. 11, 1981 and first secretary of the party on Oct.18, 1981 while retaining his post as a Minister of Defense. In an effort to crush Solidarity movement, he declared Martial Law on Dec.13, 1981, which was lifted only in July 1983.

and functioning society after WWII.[8] Even though the Communist party achieved political and social control through the totalitarian[9] government and the institutionalization of all social organs,[10] it failed to refashion Polish culture according to the Soviet model. The state's "institutional competitor"[11]—the Roman Catholic Church— was directly responsible for the identity and the cultural composition of Poland, preventing the total monopolization of the Polish identity by the Communist regime. The objective to infiltrate all aspects of social existence with the state's ideology attested to the state's recognition of the fragility of its structure and incompleteness of its power. The innate schism between, on the one hand, the Communist state and, on the other hand, the Polish culture that resisted Communist ideology was openly recognized as a threat to the stability of the Communist regime, especially during the late 1970s, when the society mobilized in protest against state policies.

The successful restructuring of Poland into the Soviet model—"single all-embracing structure" [12] of the Communist Party—depended on the control of a cultural scene closely linked to the Catholic identity that was resistant to the ideology of Marxism-Leninism. The government recognized the need to counter-balance the historical weight of Polish culture with its own rhetoric, symbolism and practices. It had to provide alternatives to Catholicism, founded on Communist ideology. Facing a society with deeply rooted traditions and a rich historical past, the government decided to restructure some of the old tradition and to create new ones reflective of its ideology. Although the regime utilized some of the old symbols, celebrations and rituals, its ultimate goal was a systematic and gradual replacement of the old traditions.

---

[8]Maria Markus, 91.

[9] The Communist party effectively eliminated all competition including the strongest opposition to the official rule the *Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe* (Polish Peasant Party or PSL).

[10] Following the Soviet model, the Communist government introduced new official political and social structures with an intention to consolidate the power of the state and to increase the control and the influence of the party.

[11] Maria Markus, 91.

[12] One of the points that T. H. Rigby argues is that "the Soviet type of socio-political order consists of a complex pattern of command structures (or 'bureaucracies') bound together into a single all embracing structure by the communist party machine: it is a mono-organizational society." T. H. Rigby, "Introduction: Political Legitimacy, Weber and Communist Mono-organisational Systems", in T. H. Rigby and Ferenc Feher, eds., *Political Legitimation in Communist States* (Oxford: The Macmillian Press, 1982) 10.

In order to eradicate the old cultural formation, slowly replacing this with one reflective of the ideology of the Communist party, the regime implemented the set of policies that controlled all aspects of social existence, including culture. It rigidly censored creative activity—be it acting, writing, painting—because of the potential danger to the official image of the state and its influence on the masses. Therefore, anything that departed from the desired cultural model even in a small degree was restricted from public dissemination.[13] An example of state policies implemented by the administration is the subsequent quote from the article "Culture and Its Consumers" that was not included in the original publication because of the author's critical remarks on the administration of culture in a Communist state. The censored part said:

> The establishment of a unified hierarchy of values may lead to the destruction of culture; a rigid personnel policy, to a lifeless Parnassus...Culture can develop only through the conflict of values and tendencies. We shouldn't think that the laws of dialectic, of progress through contradiction, do not apply to us. In directing cultural policy, we should not try to weaken such confrontations or round out the sharp corners of contradiction. We should only see to it that in those conflicts clean tactics are used, that art is not used for aims that have little to do with it...At this point we are getting into the problems of the administration of culture. And, as in the case of cultural policy, we are confronted here with the danger of an excessively mechanical and literal use of methods taken from fields of economics, whereby quantitative data are viewed as an indicator of development and their sums as an indication of real gain.[14]

The rules to protect the public image of the regime did not emerge from a category, but were detailed directions that delineated the boundaries of the public channels of communication. For instance, the state devised a "black list" of names of people from the press, radio, television and arts who were not allowed positive publicity. The restrictions imposed on them varied form person to person. Some were completely

---

[13] An analysis of all the various mechanisms of cultural control is beyond the scope of this paper. Suffice to say that these mechanisms were wide ranging and efficient to dictate the role of art in the official channels of dissemination.

[14] The omitted excerpt written by W. Glogowski was originally intended for the article "Culture and Its Consumers" for the magazine *Kierunki* 19. *Report on Material Censored* (May 1974): 1-15, quoted in Jane Leftwich Curry, trans. and ed., *The Black Book of Polish Censorships*, (New York: Random House), 374.

banned from the media and from the publications of a nonscholarly nature, while they could appear in scholarly publications. Considering the severity of the restrictions and the extent of the control exercised by the state, anything that did not conform to the established standards was confined to the small artistic community and shielded from the public domain.[15]

*The Martial Law: the official discourse of Communist party*

The Martial Law was announced on the morning of December 13, 1981 on public television. The decree was a reaction of the Communist government to social protests against its politics. The importance of Martial Law for the discussion of dissident art is in the way it determined cultural conditions in Poland and defined the modes of official and unofficial communication for all of the 1980s.[16] An examination of official and unofficial discourses after Martial Law reveals new rules of communication. By the manipulation of language, symbolism and national myths the rules aimed at the domination of the cultural domain of Poland.[17] Most importantly, in the face of censorship and restrictions, the Martial Law gave a new status to a symbolic language. Symbols (whether official or unofficial) acquired a communicative function in their ability to stand for current political situation and to reinforce historical ideas about culture and national identity.

An examination of the language and the symbolism of the Communist party reveals the regime's strategy to establish a connection with society on the basis of shared national values. Perceiving the cultural domain as the world of "symbolical forms," constructed of "language, art, science, history, religion and myth,"[18] the state's battle with a rebellious society was conducted through the symbolic language. They tried to

---

[15] Jane Leftwich Curry, trans. and ed., *The Black Book of Polish Censorships*, 34, 370-88.
[16] The policy of Martial Law disbanded or suspended unions and official associations causing frustration with regard to the power of official mechanisms of repression. In the arts, it was the time when the dichotomy official/dissident became most pronounced due to the suspension or dissolution of the artists' associations including the largest of them—The Union of Polish Artists Painters, comprised of approximately twelve thousand members. Aleksander Wojciechowski, 8.
[17] Of course, such practices occur throughout the entire Communist period. However, the tensions and control of the public space exemplify the power of this type of communication.
[18] Barabara Tornquist Plewa analyses Ernst Cassirer's notion of the "philosophy of symbolical forms". Barabara Tornquist Plewa, *The Wheel of Polish Fortune* (Sweden: Lund University, 1992), 12.

penetrate and modify the construction of the cultural model at the level of collective consciousness. The Communist government recognized the power of symbols in shaping national identity and in communicating with society. It used national symbolism as the means to legitimate and justify the coercive Martial Law. The rhetoric of the Communist party during the period of Martial Law aimed precisely at the remodeling of the cultural domain through refashioning the culturally ingrained symbolic repertoire and using it as means of disseminating official propaganda. However, in order to understand the power of historical national symbols as tools of the political and cultural control, it is necessary to discuss briefly traditional values of the Polish society.

*The official language*

The nature of the relationship between the official discourse, culture, and the Polish society is explored by Stanislaw Baranczak, who defines the official culture that manufactured the rhetoric as the "culture restraining the receiver." In Poland's totalitarian system, the connection between the state and the society was established through coercion, intimidation and manipulation. [19] Ironically, the concealed or implied messages of the official rhetoric turned the language of state propaganda into a self-destructive weapon.[20] The Marxist-Leninist rhetoric, instead of facilitating the merging of the ideology of the state with Polish culture, created a barrier between the party and the rest of the society because the latter neither used nor believed this language.[21] Although the Communists tried to utilize and manipulate various aspects of the traditionalist rhetoric, their language was nonetheless perceived as foreign to Polish culture. Particularly, the Communist rhetoric known as *newspeak* or *nowomowa*, was used exclusively by the state and for the state's purposes. According to the definition by Michal Glowinski, *newspeak* was *anti-communicative* language, centered on the idea of the one-way dissemination through exclusive control of the public channels of

---

[19] Stanisław Baranczak, *Czytelnik Ubezwłasnowolniony. Perswazja w Masowej Kulturze Literackiej PRL* [The Restrained Reader. Persuasion in the Mass Literary Culture of the PRL] (Paris: Libella, 1983) 28.

[20] Of course, this generalization can only be made upon retrospective evaluation of the official discourse.

[21] Michał Glowinski, *Nowomowa po Polsku* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo PEN, 1991) 38-9.

communication which only created an illusion of dialogue between state and society.[22] The state tried to establish surrogate grounds of connection; the Communist rhetoric built its discourse around the "figure of the enemy"[23] that created the illusion of a shared perspective between the party and the masses. The silent listener of a propagandist text was expected to identify with the party, since the language denoted the existence of "us" (the party and the people) in opposition to the enemy, "them." This division into "us" and "them" in propagandist texts was intended to simplify the value judgments into black-white oppositions, "ours", which were positive; and "theirs", which were negative.[24] The state manipulated and reversed the social understanding of the us/them dichotomy. This division into "us" and "them" originated from the contemporary consciousness of the Polish society which emotionally differentiated between the Polish nation, unified in oppression, and the figure of the oppressor embodied by the Communist regime.[25] These particular aspects of the official culture and its language—the lack of communication with the people and the false grounds of identification—differentiate the Communist discourse from the discourse of the opposition. These qualities of the official discourse are also the grounds that allowed for the emergence of oppositional activity.[26]

Even though from the earliest years of Communist rule in Poland, the government employed the aforementioned techniques of communication as a means to infiltrate and legitimize the Communist ideology,[27] the function of this discourse as a powerful weapon of social control revealed itself during the crucial years of Martial Law. After its imposition in 1981, Jaruzelski's rhetoric attempted to justify, legitimize and absolve the

---

[22] Michał Glowinski, 91. Jan Kubik defines the technique of domination of the public of communication as the "verbal noise...a stream of words and phrases whose meaning is irrelevant but which prevent people form communicating, and clearly articulating their won views, ideas, convictions, or beliefs." Jan Kubik, 48.

[23] Glowinski writes that "the figure of the enemy....is the foundation of the Communist propaganda...Without the figure of the enemy, there would be no Communist discourse." Michał Glowinski, *Peereliada. Komentarze do Slow 1976-1981* (Warszawa: Panstwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1993) 358.

[24] Stanislaw Baranczak, 34.

[25] A sociological study on the state of the consciousness of Polish society conducted in the 1970s by Stefan Nowak. Stefan Nowak, "System Wartosci Spolecznstwa Polskiego," *Studia Sociologiczne* 4 (1979), in Barabara Tornquist Plewa, 26.

[26] The nature of the discourse and the culture of the opposition will be discussed in the next chapter.

[27] Already in the 1950s and in the 1960s both the Bierut and Gomulka's regimes focused on reshaping of the existing social and cultural structures. Jan Kubik, 35-6.

state from responsibility for the current condition of Poland. In a cultural sense, Jaruzelski and the regime used the rhetoric of historical traditions (i.e. national mythology) and of the Christian values of the Polish identity to justify the Communist party strategy.

Jaruzelski's language enforced the false, black and white division between the party and the opposition, stressing the virtues and the legal foundations of all actions of the party, in contrast to the illegal, anti-state and anti-nationalistic nature of the opposition. During Martial Law, in line with the rhetorical device of the "figure of the enemy," the party portrayed itself as a liberator and as a savior of the Polish nation from the dangerous opposition that was blamed for disturbance and chaos. This image of the party as a protector of society prevailed especially after the establishment of WRON (Military Council of National Salvation).[28] In the first months of Martial Law, Jaruzelski often referred to WRON in connection with the historic patriotism of the Polish soldiers.

*The cultural heritage of the official discourse: the mythological background*

Remembering the weakness of the Communist system—namely its coercive self-imposition on a fully developed social model—the official rhetoric heavily relied on the wealth of the national mythology. In the first public address after the imposition of Martial Law,[29] Jaruzelski made the connection with history—"my generation had been fighting on many war fronts"—referring to the patriotic ideal of the Polish soldier who sacrificed his life for his homeland and situating himself and WRON in the linear chronology of Polish patriotic tradition. Interestingly, WRON contains the word "salvation" in its name, which further stressed the positive, patriotic connotation that the government wanted to emphasize. The unpatriotic opposition—Solidarity—on the other

---

[28] Military Council of National Salvation (WRON) was established between Dec.12 and 13, 1981 under the leadership of Gen. W. Jaruzelski. It was comprised of the military officers and it was established to direct and implement Martial Law.

[29] "The citizens of PRL (Polish People's Republic)! I am speaking to you today as a soldier and as a leader of Polish government.... concerning the future of Poland for which my generation had been fighting in many war fronts and for which they had gave the best years of their lives ....I announce that today WRON have been established.... Its only function is to provide the security and to return the stability and discipline [to the society]. This is the only path to save the country from collapse..." My translation of Wojciech Jaruzelski's speech for the radio and television on December 13, 1981. Wojciech Jaruzelski, *Przemowienia* [Speeches] (Warszawa: Ksiazka i Wiedza, 1983) 213-216.

hand, would bring about the downfall of the country. Also, according to the government, the soldiers and not the opposition had moral authority, earned through their historic heroism which legitimized their current actions.[30] The emphasis on patriotism, legacy, and security of the fatherland recalls the "insurrection myth" which Barbara Törnquist Plewa defined as the foundation of the Solidarity culture.[31] This particular myth has been engraved in the national consciousness for generations and revived in times of national crises (during the 18th century, for instance, when Poland ceased to exist geopolitically). Even though the insurrection usually referred to the rebellion (in most of the cases an armed struggle) against oppressive forces that tried to contain Polish identity, the state acknowledged the danger of the myth. On the emotional level the historic resistance was being revived by the atmosphere of Solidarity and shaped by its founding principles—freedom, fatherland, sacrifice and the legacy of forefathers. Not surprisingly, the rhetoric of the state also reversed these roles, placing Solidarity in the position of the oppressor who threatens security and freedom the country.[32]

The state propaganda searched in the Christian tradition of the Polish nation for legitimacy and the moral justification for unethical actions. The government adapted phrases from the Christian language, aware that at this point of Polish history, religious language was the language of the people and, consequently, one that the people would trust and understand. References to Christianity implied the union between the party and the Church, an important maneuver on the part of the party that hoped to borrow the emotional bond between the people and the Church. This tactic is exemplified by Jaruzelski's speech of December 13th announcing Martial Law in which he addressed the nation with the common Christian form of address, "Brothers and Sisters!"[33] On another occasion, he called for a collective "recounting

---

[30] Wojciech Jaruzelski's speech on January 25, 1982 during the meeting of the PRL government. Wojciech Jaruzelski, 226.

[31] She argues that "miracle" and "insurrection" myths are revived in the collective consciousness of Poland during Solidarity crisis. Barbara Törnquist Plewa, 11-19.

[32] The propaganda of the state in its attempt to legitimize Martial Law shifted the entire blame for the current condition of Poland on Solidarity. Thus, according to the party's message, the government does not want confrontation, acted always in accordance with the law, did not employ terror, did not abuse the trust of millions of people, etc.

[33] Wojciech Jaruzelski's speech for the radio and television on December 13, 1981. Wojciech Jaruzelski, 220.

of sins,"[34] and he also frequently referred to "the people of good will"[35]—which were all borrowed from the Christian phraseology. The connection that Jaruzelski created through references to Christianity implied mutual consent and more importantly, a cooperation between the party and the Church: "Cooperation between the state and the Roman Catholic Church is a constant factor [in the Polish constitution]...The dialogue continues."[36] Thus, by drawing on Catholic undertones, the regime tried to use the power of a "higher" moral authority, soliciting support and trust of a predominately Catholic society.

Nevertheless, a direct contradiction to the party's appropriation of Christian phrases and its claim of unity and brotherhood with the Church is illustrated by the official response to the public's creation of crosses.[37] Symbols of public protest and support of the Solidarity movement since the early 1980s, these crosses were repeatedly destroyed by police and the areas were surrounded by fence and declared construction sites. The state protested not only against expressions of people's solidarity with the Church, but also against any implications of the Church's identification with patriotism and its protest against state actions. Despite the pretence to an alliance between the Communist regime and Church, the aforementioned example confirmed the true relationship between the two powerful institutions—that the party wanted only to utilize the symbolic power of the Church, while completely rejecting the institution of the Church.

---

[34] Wojciech Jaruzelski, speech during the government meeting on January 25, 1982. Wojciech Jaruzelski,236.

[35] Wojciech Jaruzelski's speech for the May 1 celebrations delivered on May 1, 1982. Wojciech Jaruzelski, 360.

[36] My translation of Wojciech Jaruzelski's speech during the government meeting on January 25, 1982. Wojciech Jaruzelski, 249.

[37] In many cities of Poland, people were arranging crosses of flowers. One such instance is the creation of the flower cross in front of the Church of St. Anne in Warsaw (Fig. 3). Wojciechowski, 111-2. See also Jakub Karpinski, *Dziwna Wojna* [Strange War]( Paryz : Instytut Literacki, 1990) 55.

*The Communist Symbols*

In addition to the appeal of myths and traditions ingrained in the collective consciousness, an essential component of the state's discourse was symbolism. In order to present itself as a legitimate heir of Polish history and state, the regime had to develop a symbolic repertoire that would support such a claim. Kubik correctly identifies that the "symbols, the most subtle and powerful regulators of thought and action, cannot be imposed by force, law or administrative fiat."[38] Furthermore, Terdiman's assertion that in the periods of social instability there is a noticeable intensification of "semiotic behavior,"[39] manifested through "an increasingly acute consciousness of the coded nature of social life,"[40]confirms the power of symbolic language as an effective tool of manipulation. Indeed, the initial lack of a culturally ingrained symbolic language was the great weakness of the Communist rule. The party quickly recognized the potential of symbols as a means of dissemination and legitimization of its ideology, and transformed the emblems and signs of national and cultural significance into ones that retained the national tradition but which were rooted in Communist thought. For instance, the long time national emblem—the White Crowned Eagle—was stripped of its crown and refashioned in line with the Communist view of history as "progressive and revolutionary."[41] Similarly, the national Polish white and red flag was displayed together with the red Soviet flag attesting to the allegiance and to the brotherhood of the two countries. The state's decision to adopt the "deeply contextualized and socialized semiotics"[42] targeted national values that comprised historical identity of the Pole on the psychological level. The historical emblems and symbols existed on different levels of public consciousness, and the party tried to use to their advantage "the ideological and structural weight of already-constituted paradigms and patterns."[43]

---

[38] Jan Kubik, 50.
[39] Yuri M. Lotman and B. A. Uspensky , trans. George Mihaychuk, "On the Semiotic Mechanism of Culture," *The Literary History* 9: 211-212, quoted in Richard Terdiman, 97.
[40] Richard Terdiman, 97.
[41] The Crown was interpreted as denoting the class society of prewar Poland which was contrary to the Communist view of society. An explanation from the *Grand Popular Encyclopedia.* Jan Kubik, 50.
[42] Richard Terdiman, 38
[43] Richard Terdiman, 38.

Nonetheless, besides the remodeling of long established national emblems, the Communist regime created a symbolic language that originated from the Communist rhetoric and that paid tribute to contemporary history. The government, realizing the power of cultural mythology in the process of cultural legitimization, in the early years of Communism, focused its propaganda on recalling the "liberation from fascism by the glorious Soviet army."[44] The continuous reminiscing about the experiences of the war provided the best materials for the new regime to use in the construction of its own legitimacy. This is exemplified by the attempts to establish the image of the Soviet soldier as liberator and as the only guard of the country's freedom. In this phase, the government erected more than three hundred monuments commemorating the Soviet army throughout Poland.[45] Furthermore, entire cities that experienced rapid industrial growth such as Katowice became emblems of the new regime, representing the "prowess of socialism and its superiority over capitalism."[46]

The party's recognition of the power of symbols became apparent during Martial Law. The culturally recognized, respected and trusted symbols became weapons in the subjugation of society. [47] After the military takeover, the red and white Polish national flag (in the public consciousness synonymous with the Solidarity union) was displayed next to the party's flag over the party headquarters. [48] This patriotic gesture attempted to identify the party with the nation and persuade the society, on one hand, of the legitimate grounds for the government actions, and of the illegitimate activity of the opposition, on the other. Also, the establishment of WRON was reinforced visually within Polish society. When on December 13th, 1981, Jaruzelski announced on national television the imposition of Martial Law and the establishment of WRON, he wore his military uniform

---

[44]Andres Aman, "Symbols and Rituals in the People's Democracies During the Cold War," in Arvidsson and Blomqvist, eds., *Symbols of Power: The Esthetics of Political Legitimation in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe* (Sweden, 1987) 44.

[45] Andres Aman, 48.

[46] Jan Kubik, 52.

[47] Richard Terdiman writes that "the facts of domination, of control, are inscribed in the signs available use by all members of social formation." Richard Terdiman, 38.

[48] "It was a sign of times that on the morning after the military takeover, the red and white Polish national flag, which had become identified with the Solidarity union in the public mind, was flying next to the party's headquarters. It was regarded as an attempt, belated by some 36 years, to identify the party with the nation." "Army is in Control in Poland but Party is not Counted Out," *New York Times*, December 29, 1981.

and he sat next to the national symbols appropriated by the Communist Party –a shield depicting the Polish eagle (without the crown) and the red and white Polish flag.[49] Curiously, while the eagle and the flag were, in this instance, obvious symbols of the state's identity, the contemporary viewer was shocked by Jaruzelski's figure clothed in the military uniform. Despite Jaruzelski's intention to connect with the patriotic past through the image of the solider, in the contemporary context, it lost its sentimental and historical effect; his figure only confirmed that the head of the state is dressed in the military uniform and that the time of Marital Law is the time of a military regime.

The most effective use of rhetoric and symbols was during the mass events—public customs, rituals and ceremonies—that reinforced the Marxist-Leninist ideology. Kubik identifies the ritual as an intrinsic part of both official and alternative discourses, noting that the customs "acquired new methodological and theoretical foundations," through the way they "played an instrumental role in the process of class struggle for a change of existing social relationship."[50] In the attempt to modify old structures, the state both invented new rituals and values and tried to modify and infiltrate aspects of everyday life which were still free from the communist rhetoric.[51]

Despite the efforts of the regime, the majority of the population still practiced religion. They attended public ceremonies or practiced state rituals only because of their mandatory nature. [52] The influence of new customs and modifications to old structures were designed to have long term effect. However, for the time being, the state merely

---

[49] "New Army Council Bans Rallies and Sets Wide Grounds for Arrests," New *York Times,* December 14, 1981.

[50] Leonard J. Pelka, *Polski Rok Obrzedowy* [The Polish Ritual Year] (Warsaw, MAW, 1980) 26, quoted in Jan Kubik, 35.

[51] All mass events were perceived as an opportunity to plant the Communist ideology into the collective consciousness of the society. The government realized that "the *collective identity* of the society can be established, at least in principle, *only through the state* which is in the position of having exclusive control over all means of communication and socialization." Maria Markus, 86. One can see this theory put into practice through emergence of new rituals and celebration in the everyday lives of Polish citizens. Some of these were Mother's Day, Father's Day, Day of Education, Day of the book, Day of the Press etc. Other such as, ritual of name-giving, institution of honorary guardians, confirmation with personal identity card ritual, and confession with a conversation with a party official aimed at replacement of cultural traditions such as baptism, confirmation, or confession founded on the religious customs of the Roman Catholic Church. For the discussion of new national feasts and customs see a section in Jan Kubik titled "New Socialist Customs and Rites of Passage." Jan Kubik, 35-42.

[52] However, only two percent of the Polish population adopted these new cultural customs. Jan Kubik, 40.

desired these mass phenomena to acquire symbolic value, displaying, legitimizing and "consecrating" Communist rule and, by extension, imprinting their existence into the public consciousness.

Richard Terdiman, in his discussion of the definition of the dominant discourse, discusses the methods of enforcing the notions of "ubiquity," "genesis amnesia" or "universalism" with reference to official discourses.[53] He argues that one approach is control of the social dynamic.[54] In Poland the Communist party attempted to control the social dynamic through customs, state rhetoric and symbolism. These manipulations created the illusion of "social *effectiveness*," which Terdiman defines as the nature of the dominant discourse.[55] From the very beginning, the Communist language was the "necessary language,"[56] one of the techniques of social manipulation employed by the state with an intention to establish a relationship with the citizens of Poland.[57] Nevertheless, the ambition of the Communist party to control and to permeate both public and private structures was impossible due to the existence of the ideological alternative, the Roman Catholic Church. Even though the regime eliminated the potentially disrupting forces of competition, it was unable to neutralize the cultural field to such an extent that its ideology would have been absorbed unconsciously, concealing the mechanisms of manipulation. The authorities monopolized the mechanisms of propaganda but they could not eradicate all traditional forms of thinking. For this reasons, whereas in other

---

[53]Richard Terdiman claims that the innate quality of a dominant discourse is to "go without saying"—meaning that its existence is characterized by "*the social impossibility of its absence.*" The dominant discourse is the standard against which the competing discourses will be measured and will appear as deviations. Richard Terdiman, 61-63, 138.

[54]Richard Terdiman, 61.

[55] For Terdiman "social effectiveness" is a mark of dominant discourse. The "social effectiveness" stands for the visible manifestations or the evidence of working of the dominant discourse. "The dominant seems to *work*, and thereby cover the filed of socially functional." With the reference to the practices of the Communist government in Poland this definition refers to the implementation of the new traditions, customs, myths and symbols. Richard Terdiman, 78-9.

[56]In Richard Terdiman's terminology, the discourse of the Communist Poland—which was the official and, as such, a dominant discourse—would be termed as a "necessary language." Terdiman writes: "So dominant discourse is a *necessary language*, unreflectively present to itself but—what may be more significant—also present for any *other* discourse, even in denial or absence. It is thus a creator of problems for any other alternative representation of the world." Richard Terdiman, 62.

[57] Jank Kubik discusses the language of propaganda in the section titled "The Public Discourse of the Gierek Era." Jan Kubik, 42-50.

cases[58] the dominant discourse was able to dominate the cultural and social scene, constraining emergence of counter-discourses, in Poland it was neither able to suppress the power of the Polish Catholic Church nor to reform Polish identity from Catholic to Communist.

*The dissident works of art against the background of the Communist discourse*

A knowledge of the contemporary political structure and the official discourse enriches the reading of dissident works of art with an understanding of both their time-specific meaning and their cultural significance. In particular, with respect to official constructs and control of public space, the dissident artists were able to target the hypocrisy and mechanisms of manipulation of the Communist government by using symbols of state propaganda. The images of television screens featuring important political or public figures, Polish national symbols such as the red and white flag, the eagle, the soldier as well as Soviet symbols such as the star, the color red or the Soviet red flag, all belong to the repertoire of symbols of the Communist party and they made their appearance in many dissident works of art. Their repetitiveness points to their role as indicators of the specific political situation as well as signifies the presence of public sentiments that demanded commentary on these symbols and iconographies. Lukasz Korolkiewicz's works *The Morning of the 13th of December 1981*(Fig. 1) and *The Cross in the Winter* (Fig. 2) are representative of the new symbolic language and the new iconography that emerged in reaction to the official politics during the 1980s. These paintings are able to articulate on a visual level tensions, frustrations, despair and fear that permeated the collective consciousness under Martial Law. Even though both paintings have generic iconographies, when the weight of Communist experience is stripped away, in the context of contemporary politics, they become loaded with political and social messages of anti-Communist sentiments.

The title of Korolkiewicz's *The Morning of December 13, 1981* from the onset dictates the way of interpreting its subject. The viewer unfamiliar with the day-to-day events in Poland would not be able to recall public sentiments on that particular morning

[58] The Communist regime in Russia or in China.

when Jaruzelski, dressed in the military clothes and surrounded by the insignia of the Communist power—the red and white national flag and the crownless eagle— announced Martial Law on the national TV. Only the viewer who either experienced or learned about the shock of the news on that particular December morning would realize that the painting aimed at the reenactment of shock, fear or resignation associated with this event. The reference to a specific event as well as to emotions associated with it demanded the viewer to recognize emotions captured in the painting and to infuse his or her own feelings of that experience into the image.

In the painting Korolkiewicz used the symbol of the "television-people"[59] that originated from and epitomized the 1980s. After Marital Law, the state reinforced the notion of a critical political condition through public media. The society was bombarded by authoritative images of military or government officials and by presenters dressed in military clothes. Specifically, an imposition of these images into the private space of the citizens of Poland through television emissions reinforced the condition of extreme control under Martial Law. On the emotional level, these images reminded one of the helplessness of a society in face of the power of the government and, as such, evoked feelings of frustration and claustrophobia. The ideological power of this symbol becomes apparent when one interprets the painting separate from the political context and emotional weight attached to it. The story shifts from the television to the man standing in the left corner and to the landscape visible from the window. The man's face turned away and his figure hidden in the shadow solicit the personal memories and experiences of the viewer. The large window and the light that comes through it invite an escape from the room. They further distract from the television in the right corner. For the contemporary Polish viewer, the symbol of television overpowered all other aspects present in the painting. It reminded one of recent political events and forced one to interpret the nostalgia and pensive ambiance in association to Marital Law. The silence and the winter landscape suggest the silence caused by the Communist oppression and the winter season in which the oppression was imposed on the society.

---

[59] The term defines the image popular in contemporary dissident art. The images of military or television presenters dressed in military clothes became the symbol of protest against the system as it both mocked and criticized behavior of state officials during Martial Law. Wojciechowski refers to theses images as "televisions." Aleksander Wojciechowski, 10.

Another painting by Wojciechowski, *The Cross in the Winter*, portrays ideologically loaded symbols such as the cross of flowers and the polish national flag. In addition to their national and religious status, these too acquired contemporary significance in association with the 1980s.[60] To an uninformed audience, the picture is an ambiguous winter scene that invites multitudes of interpretations. Some might view scattered flowers in reference to the funeral, while others might see the cross of flowers in purely religious terms as a rendition of a traditional religious symbol. However, to the contemporary Polish viewer, interpretations of this scene were restricted by an awareness that these particular crosses of flowers referred to real occurrences; the spontaneous arrangements of flowers in the shape of the cross in public spaces became one of the landmarks of social protests during the 1980s (Fig. 3). The most famous ones were arranged on the steps of the Abby of Jasna Gora in Czestochowa, at the Victory Place in Warsaw and outside of the Church of St. Anne in Warsaw. Wojciechowski characterizes these occurrences as "an unusual phenomena bordering on religious cult and the cry of despair."[61] Indeed, the cross of flowers was simultaneously a reference to the suffering of Christ and to the contemporary Polish experience of suffering through oppression under Communism. In Korolkiewicz's painting, national and contemporary connotations are reinforced by a conspicuous display of the national colors in the foreground of the painting. Therefore, taking the contemporary factors into consideration, the winter scene—like the room with the television featuring Jaruzelski—aimed at evoking nostalgia, anger, frustration, helplessness and solidarity associated with the contemporary condition of Poland.

Despite the narrative element in both paintings, their focus is not on the narratives but on the symbols that provoked these narratives—the television screen depicting Jaruzelski and the prominent cross of flowers. These symbols had an autonomous status independent of their being part of the fictional reality of the painting as they existed in the memory of the viewer in connection to actual events. Their origin in the reality of the 1980s made the television and the cross of flowers signposts for the debate and the

---

[60] The crosses of flowers are part of Polish cultural tradition. They are conspicuous symbols of Christian faith, often seen at cemeteries or at village chapels. In the context of the 1980s, they reinforced the notion of the "true" Polish history and culture as opposed to the history and culture being propagated by the state.

[61] Aleksander Wojciechowski, 111.

emotions surrounding these images; these images recalled tensions between the state and the people, and thereby functioned as propagandistic tools spreading anti-Communist sentiments. Further, images such as "television people" exemplify how something designed to function as an imprint of the Communist rule had been turned against itself and used as an anti-Communist weapon. This paradoxical metamorphosis can be seen in the image of Jaruzelski in Korolkiewicz's painting. The objective of such images of officials in military uniforms on public television was to legitimize Martial Law through repetitive visual reinforcement. In Korolkiewicz's painting the black and white image of Jaruzelski—in the context of the pensive mood of the painting—is an image of oppression under Communism rather than affirmation of the power of the state. In the stillness of the painting the viewer is offered an opportunity to contemplate the image that surprised the nation on the morning of December 13, 1981. Through careful scrutiny it allowed one to understand the state's techniques of manipulation. In the end, when stripped of its shock value, the image of the head of state recalled Marital Law, but without the once-intimidating authority.[62]

Whereas the images of military officials or TV presenters in military clothes were borrowed from the symbolic repertoire of the state and refashioned with anti-state ideology, the crosses of flowers joined the anti-Communist vocabulary for a different reason. In the context of contemporary events and specifically with reference to the control exercised by the official forces, they became symbols of protest against Martial Law. The cross acquired anti-Communist connotations with reference to the dichotomy between "words and actions." The state which proclaimed brotherhood and connection between the state and the Church contradicted itself through the reaction to the crosses; once the crosses were discovered, they were immediately dismantled by the police and the site was secured. The official reaction to these crosses defined their political nature presenting them as symbols of political contestation. Furthermore, in connection with the presence of the Catholic Church within the Communist structure and the cross as the defining symbol of the Christian faith, this action even further reinforced society's disapproval of the Communist regime. Thus, keeping in mind contemporary associations

[62] This statement refers especially to other paintings by artist such as Anna Mizeracka in whose work state's technique of manipulation is disclosed in much more ironic and derisory style.

of this symbol, its focal presence in Korolkiewicz's painting recalled the sequence of events forcing the viewer to cross the boundary between the painting's fictional reality and the memory of actual occurrences. In consequence, even though Korolkiewicz is able to depict one moment in the creation of the cross, the viewer is capable to continue the story without the artist's help.

## Chapter II

### The Discourse of the Opposition: the Catholic Church[1], the figure of John Paul II, Solidarity and the underground/alternative culture.

The first chapter indicated that symbolic language was one of the tools used by the Communist party to legitimize the regime and that dissident artists readily appropriated some of state's symbols in reaction to Martial Law. In addition to symbols inspired by the discourse of the state, the artists borrowed many symbols from the discourse of the Polish Roman Catholic Church and Solidarity; however, in this instance, these symbols reflected the artists' support of oppositionist activity and of the Church. To understand the power of such vocabulary, it is necessary to create the framework for its discussion. The symbols used by the artists as well as the images and iconographies prevalent in their works of art were inspired by the symbols, language, and philosophy of John Paul II, the Church and Solidarity. Jerzy Kalina's installation *Last Supper* (Fig. 4) and the painting by Jacek Waltos's *Two sides of the gate—the August Sunday 80* (Fig. 5) exemplify the multifaceted quality of dissident art; the information infused into the painting range from time-specific religious and political messages to national, personal and universal connotations. The artists' ability to express controversial political issues attests to a correlation between the symbolic language in dissident art and contemporary unofficial discourses led by the Church and Solidarity. Further, this blurring of boundaries between art, politics and religion, unprecedented in contemporary Polish art, allows one to consider Polish dissident art as socially conscious and driven by political and social mission.

---

[1] Following, is the parallel chronology of the Roman Catholic Church under Communism to the chronology of the Communist regime delineated in the first chapter. Andrzej Micewski sees the history of the Roman Catholic Church during Communism (1945-1989) divided into five stages: 1)1945-1948—signifies the initial contact between the Church and Communism; 2) 1949-1956—is the time of the open conflict between the Church and the state; 3) 1957-1970—represents the time of conflicting visions of Władysław Gomułka (the head of the state) and Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński (the head of the Church); 1971-1980—resulted in the pragmatic agreement; and 1980-1989—the time when the Church acted as a mediator between the opposition and the regime. Andrzej Micewski, *Kościół-Państwo 1945-1989* [The Church—The State 1945-1989](Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Szkolne i Pedagogiczne, 1994).

The religious and political oppositionist activity which proved to be a catalyst and inspiration for the emergence of underground dissident art will be discussed below. An understanding of the nature of the social and cultural functions of the Polish Church and the influence of John Paul II on Polish society is a necessary context for the discussion of the alternative art of the 1980s. The national character of the discourse of John Paul II is instrumental in the construction of the discourse of the opposition and, by extension, directly influenced the character of the alternative art produced during the 1980s. With regard to the Church, its function and ideology during the 1980s provide the framework for the analysis of dissident art because the relative autonomy of the Church sheltered independent cultural activity and political dissident movements. The Church's contemporary function as the "patron" of the arts was crucial to the existence of the unique artistic language that emerged in the 1980s. Specifically, the unusual relationship between the Church and the arts resulted in the unique symbolic language and iconography inspired by the amalgam of the religious and political vocabulary of Solidarity.

*The Polish Roman Catholic Church*

To recognize the role of the Catholic Church not only as the spiritual and moral but also political authority during Martial Law, and to comprehend fully John Paul II's role in rejuvenating the Church, one has to consider its historical position in Polish society. Whereas in other national histories the Church was often a repressive force in society, in Poland, the Church has always identified with the people and their cause. Its allegiance with society was exemplified through its protective and supportive stances in times of national crises, when the culture, the tradition or the Polish language were endangered by internal and external forces.[2] The 19th century, a time of foreign occupation and the oppression of Polishness, highlights the role of the Catholic Church as the propagator of Polish nationalism. When Poland ceased to exist as an autonomous

---

[2] Peter Raina, ed., *Jan Pawel II Prymas i Episkopat Polski o Stanie Wojennym. Kazania, Listy, Przmowienia, Komunikaty* (John Paul II the Primate and the Episcopate of Poland about the Martial Law. Sermons, Letters, Speeches, Announcements) (London: Oficyna Poetow i Malarzy, 1982) 7.

nation[3], the institution of the Church nourished the nation's cultural values, creating the specific identity of the "Pole-and-Catholic" founded on the values of Polish nationalism and Catholicism.[4] The period of Communism was another such period, when a foreign party threatened the national identity, attempting to replace Polish culture founded on Christian philosophy with one built on secular ideology (i.e. Communist).

The objective to secularize or desacralize Polish society and culture proved, not surprisingly, unattainable, considering that more than 90 percent of the Polish population was of the Roman Catholic faith.[5] During the Communist period (and especially in the last years of the 1970s and throughout the 1980s), parish priests played a major role in the preservation of local values and education and acted as a primary source of non-official thought and action within the state. Many of them founded or participated in the unofficial oppositional movements, organizing protests on the premises of the Chruch.[6] In view of the predominately Catholic composition of Poland, one can just imagine the influence of the Church in determining public attitudes in times when the official regime repressed individual freedom and imposed its controlling mechanism into the private domain. Even though the Church was not openly political until the mid-1970s, the pastoral letters and the official statements read in churches all over Poland disseminated the Church's opinion on most important religious, social and political matters, influencing a large number of people. The Church, during that time, denoted truth and morality. These practices, established in the early years the role of the Church as "a creator, repository and propagator of national, civic, and ethical values to a degree rarely found in other national churches," according to Kubik.[7] The Church, through its public address, clearly defined its expectation of the ideal society and the ideal community that was founded on the balance between religion, democratic ideals (the religious understanding of human rights)

---

[3] Due to partitions of Poland (1772-1795) among Prussia, Russia and Austria.
[4] The definition of the "Pole-and-Catholic" is a common definition of the Polish identity from the perspective of the cultural studies. See for instance Barbara Tornquist Plewa, 19.
[5] Jane Leftwich Curry, transl. and ed., 279.
[6] *The Pope in Poland [Prepared by the Research and the Analysis Department of the Radio Free Europe Division of the Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty]* ([s.l.] : Radio Free Europe Research, 1979) 11, 17.
[7] Jan Kubik, 119.

and strong national identity.[8] Realizing the historical position of the Roman Catholic Church, the state attempted to restrict its influence by clearly delineating the boundaries of its activity—specifically concerning publications and rhetoric—making sure that neither the institution of the Church nor its philosophy seemed more important than the Communist party and its ideology.[9]

From the political and cultural perspectives, the mere presence of the institution of the Church within the Communist structure challenged the monopoly of the Communist regime. The Church from the very beginning of the establishment of Communism in Poland threatened the stability of the Party-state by providing an alternative system of beliefs that was closer to Polish identity than Marxism-Leninism.[10] During the late 1970s and specifically after the imposition of Marital Law in 1981, the discourse, practices and symbolic language of the Church—even though focused on moral and ethical models[11]--functioned as a competing discourse, turning the Church into a force that was politically counter-hegemonic and culturally monopolizing. The political nature of the Church during the 1980s has been greatly determined by John Paul II.[12] Beginning with his first visit in 1979, the figure of John Paul II became the driving force behind the public image of the Church and a determining factor in its role as the protector of national identity and the supporter of oppositionist activity during Martial Law. An examination of the public speeches, mass ceremonies and the impact of John Paul II during the first visit to Poland

---

[8] Kubik discusses these aspects of the Polish society in the section "The Model of Sociopolitical Reality Implied in the Catholic Discourse". Jan Kubik, 119-125.

[9] This meant keeping the information of the Church activity out of the public media. Jane Leftwich Curry, transl. and ed., 282-3.

[10] Maria Markus, 91, Jan Kubik, 119.

[11] Jane Leftwich Curry, transl. and ed., 281.

[12] Polish intellectual and nationalist, anti-Communist. The promoter and the enthusiast of the Polish national heritage. As a student at the Jagiellonian University in Krakow were he studied literature and philosophy, he was involved in experimental theater, poetry reading workshops and literary discussion groups. These interest ingrained into his personality from the yearly years explain the force of his support of Poland's history and traditions. In 1956, he was appointed for the Chair of Ethics at KUL (Catholic University of Lublin) and in 1958, he ascended to the position of the auxiliary bishop of Krakow. It is important to note that Pope was not only a Polish intellectual and a faithful servant of its Church. Karol Wojtyla was trained in diplomacy and he represented Poland on the Watican II. The Pope's political and diplomatic skills were crucially important during his dealings with the Communist government. For further information on the biography of John Paul II please see http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/1999/pope/bio/priesthood/index.html

reveals his profound influence on both the public perception of the Church and on the subsequent involvement of the Church in the construction and perpetuation of the oppositional discourse throughout the 1980s.

It is difficult to define the position of the Church with regards to its political activity during the Communist rule, especially during the early years.[13] On 14th of April 1950, the state and the Catholic Church signed an agreement that set boundaries for the Church's control in exchange for its independence.[14] This agreement, defined the nature of the Church's public activity until the 1970s; as a result, the Church diminished its political practices and avoided publicly disagreeing with state policies. From the perspective of the early underground activity, the Church stayed within the realm of religion, being concerned with the preservation of spirituality and culture (founded on Christian ethics) and, not surprisingly, it did not declare its allegiance to the dissident attitudes that emerged in the 1950s and the 1960s. Thus, even though the Church was sympathetic to dissident secular ideas, it retained its institutional autonomy and strictly religious orientation.[15] This stance is exemplified by the 1966 address by Cardinal Wyszynski[16] during the millennium celebration of the baptism of Poland.[17] Cardinal

---

[13] There are many interpretations on nature of the political activity of the Polish Catholic Church. For different scholarship on the matter please see Maryjane Osa, "Pastoral Mobilization and Contention: The Religious Foundations of the Solidarity Movement in Poland," in Christian Smith, ed., *Disruptive Religion: The Force of Faith in Social-Movement Activism*, (New York: Routledge, 1996); Tomasz Mianowicz, "Miedzy Zbawieniem a Polityka," *Zeszyty Historyczne* 107, (1994): 31-47; Jan Kubik, *The Power of Symbols against the Symbols of Power*; Andrzej Micewski, *Kościół-Państwo, 1945-1989* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Szkolne i Pedagogiczne, 1994); Andrzej Micewski *Katolicy w Potrzasku: Wspomnienia z Peryferii Polityki* (Warszawa: Polska Oficyna Wydawnicza "BGW", 1993).

[14] Already in the 1950, in the process of the elimination of the counter-hegemonic institutions, the state forced the Church into the apolitical position in exchange for the relative freedom from the mechanisms of control exercised by the party in all public domains. Jan Kubik, 106.

[15] *In The Pope in* Poland,17.

[16] "In the face of a totalitarian threat to the nation...in the face of an atheistic program supported by the PUWP, in the face of biological destruction [a reference to the government's liberal abortion policy]—a great supernatural current is needed, so that the nation can consciously draw from the Church the divine strength that will fortify its religious and national life. Nowhere else is the union of Church and nation so strong as in Poland, which is in absolute danger. Our "temporal theology" demands that we dedicate ourselves into the hands of the Holy Mother, so that we may live up to our task." Andrzej Micewski ,*Cardinal Wyszynski: A Biography,* William R. Brand and Katarzyna Mroczkowska-Brand, trans. (San Diego: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanowich, 1984) 266-7, quoted in Jan Kubik, 113. Kubik discusses this particular quote in the context of the Celebrations of the Great Novena of the Polish nation and the Great Millennium. However, I think that it is also indicative of the reserved attitude of the Church in its pre-1970 years.

Wyszynski publicly declared disapproval of the policies of the Communist party when the Marxist-Leninist ideology *conflicted* with and *threatened* the historically religious identity of Polish nation. However, even though his sermon was openly critical of some state policies, it nonetheless confirmed the nature of the Polish Church as being "emotional, traditional and nationalistic" [18] rather than activist or political. The situation only began to change in the 1970s, when the Church re-defined its stance in the face of the brutality of the state's actions. Yet, even though the Episcopal letter issued a few months after the bloody strikes of the 1970s announced the Church's support for suffering workers and proclaimed its disapproval with the inhumane behavior of the state, it was still careful not to align itself openly with the oppositionist thinking.[19]

*The rhetoric of the Polish Church*

The reserved stance of the Church was also reflected in its rhetoric. Even though the Church, in an attempt to retain Polish culture and to secure its own position, emphasized the historical affiliation between the Church and the nation, it failed to establish an emotional connection with the people—a critical factor in times when the society was presented with two competing institutions. The studies conducted on the reception of the Church's rhetoric revealed that many people found its language as rigid and as formalized as the language of the state propaganda.[20] This response is not surprising considering that Church employed rhetorical devices identical to those used by the Communist party. The Episcopal letters, sermons and announcements stressed the dichotomy of "us" and "them," only in this instance "us" denoted the union of the Church and the people of Poland. Similarly, the Church texts centered on the "figure of the

---

[17] In 966 Mieszko the First was baptized. This year stands for both the beginning of Polish statehood and Polish Christianity.
[18] *The Pope in* Poland, 9.
[19] "At this moment, our feelings lead us particularly in the direction of our Worker Brother, who suffered greatly.... There is also an admirable proximity between social morality, between the Gospel and the labor codex... But, we must...define the proportion of rights and obligations in the national community, which always arises from the good of the greatest numbers" Andrzej Micewski, *Cardinal Wyszynski: A Biography*, 313 quoted in Jan Kubik, 119-20.
[20] Jan Kubik, 125-126.

enemy," encouraging "two-valued" interpretation. An authoritarian style and tone of the Church's rhetoric only increased an emotional distance between the people and the institution of the Church.

*John Paul II*

It was not until the arrival of John Paul II that an emotional relationship developed between the Church and society. From a political perspective, the Church's discourse shifted its orientation into the realm of oppositional politics.[21] Only from the moment of the first visit of John Paul II to Poland in 1979 is it possible to view the discourse of the Church as a competing, counter-discursive and, consequently, a counter-hegemonic force.[22] The election of the Polish Cardinal as Pope was a determining factor in the character and the future of both the Church and the Communist regime in Poland, as he altered the dynamic between the people, the Church and the state. On the social level, the spontaneous mass enthusiasm sprang from the collective sense of pride in the recognition of Polish national virtues and the traditional values embodied by his person.[23] John Paul II, no doubt, recognized his crucial role as the catalyst for the social, political and cultural changes and seized the opportunity to rejuvenate Polish Christianity and to transform it into the emotional factor missing from the dynamic between the people and the Church; he united the Church and the people under the single cause—the battle for religion, for Polish culture and for human and civil rights. The Pope succeeded by situating the historical connection between religion and human right (and specifically

---

[21] Specifically, the Pope knew how to refine the mechanisms/foundations laid by the rhetoric of the Church. It was the Pope's persistent highlighting on the historical correlation between the Church and Polish nation that evoked public sentiment and redirected the people's perception of Polish identity. The emphasis on the Church's intrinsic connection with Polish culture would have been a futile attempt on its own as most of the issues addressed by the Pope in the sermons during his first visit were also the subject of many pastoral letters issued by the episcopate in the earlier years. It was the sole figure of the Pope, the respect that he earned as the Cardinal of Krakow strengthened by his newly acquired role as highest Catholic authority that both attained mass admiration for his person and infused indisputable authority into his words. Also, the fact that the Pope was willing to cross the boundaries treated with silence (i.e. European unification) by the state further added the qualities of trustworthiness and sincerity to his discourse.

[22] Even though the Church as an alternative institution (and by extension counter-hegemonic power) was present from the beginning of the Communism in Poland.

[23] *The Pope in Poland*, 10.

issues of labour[24]) in the context of the contemporary social and political struggle. In this way, he added immediacy to the theme of the historical role of the Church as the protector of national values. Further, the Pope from the very beginning set his loyalties with the people (and specifically with the workers), sympathizing with their suffering, supporting their dissident actions and encouraging them to fight for human and civil rights; his support for this dissident activity went back to the time when he was still a Cardinal.[25] Therefore, during his first visit when he called for the resistance to forces that "violate human dignity, corrupt the traditions of a morally sound society, constituting a danger to it and to the common wealth, and diminishing its contribution to the common heritage of mankind, of the Christian nations, and of the Church of Christ,"[26] his petition for support was legitimate as it reverberated with his earlier public stance. Through his personal experience of the complexity of the current socio-political dynamic, he was able to convey his understanding and sympathy for the people's condition, establishing a strong emotional bond founded on shared cultural experience, values and ideals.

The discourse of John Paul II, as reflected in his first visit to Poland, revealed the position of the Polish Church vis-à-vis the contemporary socio-political situation and specifically with regards to its disposition towards the people. Recognizing the degenerating influence of the Communist philosophy, the Pope's main concern was the reinforcement of the position of the Church as the protector of the people, the highest moral authority and the only legitimate cultural institution. He achieved his goal by situating the history of Poland in "Catholic mythology,"[27] setting the ideological parameters from the very beginning of his visit. One of the main themes that recurred during his first visit was more than 1000-year long union between Roman Catholic Church and the Polish nation—a bond, he stressed, which still defined the nature of the

---

[24] The book contains the sermon on human rights from Auschwitz-Birkenau from June 7, 1979 and the sermon on labor directed to the Workers of Upper Silesia, Czestochowa from June 7. *The Pope in Poland,* 66-67.
[25] *The Pope in Poland,* 17.
[26] Papal letter from 28 October, 1978 communicated by the Polish Episcopate. *The Pope in Poland,* 25.
[27] Jan Kubik, 142.

contemporary Polish Church.[28] Such a proclamation from the Pope—the highest religious authority— affirmed the position of the Church as the legitimate protector of Polish national and cultural identities. With respect to the restrictions imposed on the Church by the Communist party, John Paul II recalled the legal rights of the Church—that its rightful position in Poland's social model has been established in the "fundamental state and international documents including the Constitution of the People's Republic of Poland."[29] However, in his criticism of state policy, the Pope did not emphasize the Church's dominant role in the public domain; rather, he called for a balance between state power and the activity of the Church. In addition to the specifically Polish relationship with Christianity, the Pope further stressed the position of the Catholic Church in a broader, European context; he asserted that Christianity should be a founding factor of European unification.[30] Thus, in the discourse of John Paul II, the Church revived its historical identity.

*Rhetoric of John Paul II*

The language of John Paul II was the most powerful didactic instrument that contributed to the overall success of the discourse of the opposition. Its importance was in its specific nature, the ability of his language to create an emotional framework for the implementation of a symbolic imagery that was evoked by his rhetoric. He created an atmosphere of mutual understanding through his ability to speak in simple words and using vernacular language.[31] His discourse has been recognized for a simplicity of language[32] that contrasted both with liturgical language of the Church and political language of the party; his goal was to reach out to the crowd—thus, his language was the

---

[28] *The Pope in Poland,* 41. Also, his sermons and his language are analyzed by Jan Kubik, 140-152 and Kevin P. Doran, *A Synthesis of Personalism and Communism in the Thought of Karol Wojtyla/ Pope John Paul II,* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1996) 233-236.
[29] *The Pope in Poland,* 46.
[30] "Europe, which during its history has several times been divided, Europe, which toward the end of the first half of the present century was tragically divided by the horrible world war, Europe, with this present and continuing divisions of regimes, ideologies and economic and political systems, cannot cease to seek its fundamental unity; [it] must turn to Christianity." Please see the commentary to the Church-State relations by J.B de Weydenthal. *The Pope in Poland,* 46-49.
[31] Issued on 15 June 1979. *The Pope in Poland,* 87-88.
[32] Jan Kubik, 126.

language of the people and they, in turn, believed and responded to his words. In terms of the rhetorical devices, instead of manipulating through the opposition us/them which was used by the Communist party and the Church, he focused on establishing "we"—the collaboration between the Church, the state and the society. Further, with regards to the public presentation of this discourse, his public addresses strikingly contrasted with carefully orchestrated state celebrations and national events; his masses were often spontaneously interrupted by his interactions with the cheering crowd.[33] Thus, the success of his communication was in the contrast to official public addresses and ceremonies, as the connection that he established was not artificial nor founded on coercion or civic responsibility; it was his sincerity, simplicity and the relevance of his topics and ideas that, in conjunction with the emotional tone of his speeches, guaranteed him the support of the masses. In a retrospective evaluation, however, despite the approachable style of the address, the rhetoric of John Paul II nonetheless was also an effective propagandistic tool as it convincingly perpetuated the ideology and values of Catholicism, simultaneously strengthening the position of the Church.

*Myths and symbols in the discourse of John Paul II*

Both John Paul II's public addresses and encyclical writings on the contemporary situation in Poland and the Communist texts of the same period relied on and manipulated national myths and symbols ingrained in the collective consciousness. In contrast to the Communist discourse, limited to the secular symbols of Polish nationhood, the Pope was able to refer to the religious symbolism and mythology ingrained in the Polish-Catholic cultural identity. However, in the context of the socio-political circumstances, the original religious meaning of these symbols and myths acquired a political dimension. For instance, a religious celebration of the nine hundred anniversary of the martyrdom of St. Stanislaw coincided with the first planned visit of the Pope to Poland. In the contemporary political context St. Stanislaw carried a dangerous message, as his death

[33] In my own participation in the Pope's visit to Poland (the most recent was in Toronto in 2002), people would spontaneously cheer and demand communication. The Pope would interrupt the mass to answer the people, often in a joking and lighthearted manner. This form of the public address has become a tradition in the meetings between the Pope and the people.

symbolized an abuse of the secular (originally royal) power and implied that religious authority should balance secular rule.[34] In the context of Polish history and specifically the position of the Catholic Church, the myth of St. Stanislaw incriminated the state. Thus, even though the Church refuted official accusations of propagandistic intentions with regard to the pope's visit, [35] in the letter prior to his visit, the Pope himself acknowledged the powerful connotations of the Saint's figure in the context of the current socio-political situation. He wrote, "we see in Saint Stanislaw an advocate of the most essential human rights, on which man's dignity, his morality, and his true freedom depend."[36] Not surprisingly, as the state objected to his visit's concurrence with the martyr's anniversary, the date of his arrival was changed, and the plan of the visit carefully outlined and monitored by the officials of the state who tried to minimize all potential influences of his visit. [37]

Other symbols prominent in the discourse of John Paul II were the figures of the Black Madonna and Christ. The cult of the Black Madonna in Poland's cultural mythology symbolizes the divine and mystical connection between God and the Polish nation, and her icon represents the belief in divine intervention and support in times of national crisis. The Virgin's role is that of intermediary between God and the people. She was declared the Queen ("Regina") and the protectress ("Patrona") of Poland by the decree of April 1, 1965 in the belief that her intervention—the foundation of the "miracle myth"—is responsible for the miracle at the Monastery of Jasna Gora.[38] The Pope, a

---

[34] Jan Kubik, 134.

[35] Peter Raina, *Wizyty Apostolskie Jana Pawla II w Polsce. Rozmowy Przygotowawcze Watykan—PRL—Episkopat* [The Apostolic Visits of John Paul II to Poland. The preparatory conversations Vatican—PRL—Episcopate] (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo "Ksiazka Polska," 1997) 9-10.

[36] This message arrived in the December letter from the pope sent to his former archdiocese of Kracow. *The Pope in Poland,* 25. For the sermon "On the meaning of St. Stanislaw's Martyrdom" please see the address to the international dignitaries in Kracow on 9 June, 1979 on pages 80-81.

[37] Peter Raina compiled, edited and commented on the preparatory negotiation regarding the visits of John Paul II in Poland. Peter Raina, *Wizyty Apostolskie Jana Pawla II w Polsce. Rozmowy Przygotowawcze Watykan—PRL—Episkopat.* Also in relations to the topic please see *Tajne Doumenty Panstwo—Kosciol 1980-1989* [The Secret Documents The State—The Church 1980-1981] London: Polityka, 1993)

[38] This miracle is believed to have occurred during the Polish –Swedish war in 1655-1660 in history known as the "Swedish deluge." The Monastery of Jasna Gora (The Light Mountain) in Czestochowa was the only place in Poland that resisted the offence of Swedish forces. The

theologian of the Marian cult, has been devoted to the cult of the Holy Virgin.[39] In his sermon at a pontifical mass at Czestochowa, a city that is a shrine to the icon of the Black Madonna, he emphasized that "the last decades have confirmed and intensified the unity between the Polish nation and the Queen."[40] His reference to the relationship between the Virgin Mary and Poland reinforced the conviction that the Polish nation is privileged in blessings and that it can expect further protection from the Holy Virgin. In the context of the contemporary political situation, the analogy to the "miracle myth" connoted that the people will survive difficult socio-political situations through faith in the power of God and of the Virgin.

The figure of Christ is the most evocative of the symbols in the discourse of John Paul II. His speeches stressed that "*It is impossible to understand the history or the Polish nation* [original emphasis]—this large, thousand-year-old community, which has formed me and every one of us so thoroughly— *without Christ*...It is impossible to understand this Nation, whose past was so magnificent, yet also tragic—without Christ."[41] Through the figure of Christ, he recalled that the connection between the Christianity and Polish nation was historical, innate and that it would define the identity of the Polish nation in the future. By extension, the Church naturally appeared as an embodiment of the Christian foundations in the present time as well as the affirmation of and the link to the historical Christianity of Polish nation. Further, in the context of the contemporary distress and abuse of the human rights by the political powers, the figure of the Christ also became the symbol of suffering and martyrdom of the Polish nation in the Messianic tradition—the Polish nation as the chosen people who sacrifice themselves for salvation of other nations.

Therefore, even though upon his arrival, John Paul II stressed that his "visit is dictated by a strictly religious motive,"[42] his discourse—the themes, the symbolic language and also the unique form of his address—originally of religious nature, in the

---

miracle happened because the monastery was the shrine of the icon of the Virgin Mary—already at this time renowned for its divine faculties. Barbara Tornquist Plewa, 31-37.

[39] *The Pope in Poland,* 98-9.

[40] An excerpt from the address at a pontifical mass in Czestochowa 4 June, 1979. In *The Pope in Poland,* 73.

[41] John Paul II quoted by Kubik. Jan Kubik, 142.

[42] An excerpt from the arrival address at Warsaw Airport, 2 June 1979. *The Pope in Poland,* 64.

framework of the current socio-political condition of Poland, acquired the character of the oppositionist propaganda. Just as the state turned to the arsenal of the old and established myths and symbols of national identity—the soldier, the patriot, the eagle, the red and white flag—for help, the sermons of John Paul II and the subsequent letters of the Polish Episcopate relied on the national and religious myths to support (and sustain) the spirit of protest that gathered momentum, exploding in the Gdansk Shipyard.

The state understood the power of the symbolic challenge presented by John Paul II and legitimately perceived both his figure and his discourse as formidable forces questioning the monopoly of the state over the public domain.[43] Most threatening to the stability of the Communist ideology, however, was the Pope's advocacy of the national heritage that contradicted the doctrine of Marxist-Leninism and reinforced dissident thinking. Specifically, John Paul II's influence on social attitudes through the changing of the collective perception of contemporary reality,[44] and his indirect presentation of the Church as a readily available cultural alternative was crucial in mobilizing of the working class against the repressive polices of the state.

*The phenomenon of Solidarity*

An understanding of the nature of the activities of the Church[45] and, specifically, of the rhetoric of John Paul II, is a prerequisite for the comprehension of the phenomena of Solidarity and the alternative culture[46] that developed to support it. In a retrospective evaluation, the visit of John Paul II predetermined the character of the social strikes. The Solidarity Union established in August of 1980 by the workers protesting against a

---

[43] *The Pope in Poland,* 11.

[44] In his speeches he reinforced the character of Poland that was being altered by the practices of the state.

[45] It is difficult to determine the exact role of the Church in the formation of Solidarity and the opposition. The topic has been an issue of discussion and debate among scholars. See, for instance, Jan Kubik, "Who Done It: Workers, Intellectuals, or Someone Else? Controversy over Solidarity's Origins and Social Composition," *Theory and Society* 23: 441-446.

[46] Solidarity culture was not a unified or coherent structure. Different movements co-existed and cooperated with each other. Jacek Kuron and Jacek Zakowski describe different independent/dissident/oppositional movements and practices in *PRL dla Poczatkujacych.* Jacek Kuron and Jacek Zakowski, *PRL dla Poczatkujacych* [The PRL for Beginners], (Wroclaw: Wydawnictwo Dolnoslaskie, 1996).

difficult economic situation quickly changed from an industrial protest into a movement of social and national importance, espousing the nationalist thought and Christian philosophy advocated by John Paul II as the basis for an industrial struggle.[47] Specifically, the notions of the dignity of labor equated by John Paul II in his sermons with the dignity of human life and connected, in turn, to the tradition of the suffering of Christ[48] became the ideological foundation of the Solidarity movement and culture. In the context of Solidarity, the identity of the Catholic became intertwined with the identity of the worker (as well as of the supporter indirectly participating in the strike). The religious component of the strike is confirmed by the opinions of the strikers, by the onlookers and by the scholarly writings on the topic. For instance, Jan Kubik[49] and Barabara Plewa view the activities behind the gates of the Gdansk Shipyard more as a religious ceremony than as industrial protest; Kubik writes: "what was unfolding in the shipyard was not just another huge industrial walkout, but a gigantic pageant of images and symbolic performances" of religious nature.[50]

Even before entering the Shipyard, the gate leading to the area of the strike already attested to the unusual nature of the event. The onlookers—the families and the supporters of the striking workers—in their religious zeal, adorned the steel gates of the shipyard with flowers, photographs of the Virgin Mary and the Pope. The next religious image was the wooden cross set up in the middle of the shipyard to mark the murder of the workers protesting in the 1970. The cross, like the gate, was decorated with flowers and messages of religious and patriotic content.[51] The atmosphere of religious ceremony also permeated the administrative aspect of the strike as the negotiations between the Union representatives and the government were conducted alongside religious ceremonies, songs, and prayer. For instance, the first official day of the Solidarity strike

---

[47] The religious foundations of the opposition are confirmed by the 1987 pronouncement of The Polish Socialist Party that the party has "more affinity with the social teachings of the Church...than with Marxism." Jan Kubik, 103.

[48] "Christ will never approve that man be considered, or that man consider himself, merely as a means of production...for that reason he had himself put on the cross, as if on the great threshold of man's spiritual history, to oppose any for m degradation of men." A sermon to the workers of Upper Silesia, Czestochowa, 6 June 1979. In *The Pope in Poland*, 67.

[49] Jan Kubik was present during some of the worker's strikes and his book is enriched by his personal experiences of the events.

[50] Jan Kubik, 1

[51] Jan Kubik, 1.

(Sunday, August 17, 1980) opened with a mass at 9:00 A.M, attended by approximately seven thousand people. The powerful impact of these masses resulted in the decision to have them conducted daily.[52] Indeed, the masses attended by thousands of people became the defining characteristic of the strike in the Gdansk Shipyard.

*The myths and symbols of Solidarity and the Shipyard strike*

In addition to religious undertones, the strike also evoked the feeling of shared national identity. The traditions of patriotism and of Polish romanticism[53] were key elements of the unique ideological foundations of the Solidarity culture. The patriotic and romantic spirits were revived by artists who performed plays by Romantic dramatists and recited Polish Romantic Poetry. The workers determined the national tone of the strike, expressing preference for Romantic poetry, specifically the work of Adam Mickiewicz, the leading figure of Polish Romanticism. [54] The verses resounded with a voice and wisdom from the time when Poland was partitioned between Russia, Prussia and Austria. They established a historical parallel between the contemporary cause, translating the feeling of despair over the lost homeland as well as the sense of a Poland founded on values and ideals other that those of the Communist party. The relevant subject matter of these verses appealed to a collective national memory, evoking the Messianic conviction of the uniqueness of the destiny of the Polish nation and, most importantly, instilling historical legacy into the current struggle.[55] Further, Barbara Törnquist Plewa situates the traditions of patriotism and romanticism revived by Solidarity culture within a larger conceptual paradigm which she defines as the "insurrection myth." Even though "the insurrection myth" specifically relates to the struggle for national independence from foreign forces, in her opinion Solidarity's implicit motive was precisely freedom from

---

[52] Jan Kubik, 186-8.
[53] Jan Kubik sees patriotism and romanticism as the defining myths of the Solidarity culture. Please see, the section "Workers' Patriotism and the Romantic Roots of the Shipyard culture." Jan Kubik, 190-4.
[54] "The arms of the cross span Europe with their length/From three dried-up nations....And Mother Freedom kneeling weeps the while/...My nation's innocent blood in crimson rills." An excerpt from Adam Mickiewicz's most famous poem, *The Forefather's Eve* written in 1832. Jan Kubik, 193.
[55] Jan Kubik, 192-4.

Soviet influences, unexpressed for strategic reasons.[56] Indeed, if we consider the national character of the Solidarity uprising, the echo of past insurrections without a doubt resonated in the collective memory of the workers and onlookers. The feeling of national rebellion was further reinforced during the celebrations by the Solidarity associations of all major national holidays such "Warsaw Rising" and "Battle of Warsaw."[57]

The aforementioned religious and national emotions perpetuated in the atmosphere of the strike were influenced by the Pope's speeches. His revival of the historical identity of the Polish-Catholic had a subsequent impact on the collective perception of Polishness and was directly responsible for the heightened religious and national consciousness expressed through symbolic language. The photographs of the Pope and of the Black Madonna spontaneously displayed are perhaps the most conspicuous manifestations of the people's admiration for the Pope and the rejuvenated cult of the Holy Virgin. Specifically, the representation of the Black Madonna was affixed along with the image of Jesus Christ on the top of the Shipyard building, symbolically presiding over and consecrating the strikers and their demands. On political and cultural levels, the image of the Virgin affirmed (for the strikers and for the people) and declared (to the Communist party) the nature of their national identity.[58] Thus, in the context of the contemporary socio-political struggle, the images of originally religious or national context amalgamated into the unique vocabulary of the Solidarity culture. The cross, for instance, denoting the sacrifice of Christ for all humanity, acquired a unique social dimension that translated and symbolized both the immediate struggle of the striking workers and the suffering of Polish society under Communism in general.

There were many symbols that retained their old meaning and took on contemporary connotations. Kubik correctly points out that "the cross was one of the most conspicuous symbols of the strike, and...a permanent element of Solidarity's decor". Firmly planted in the middle of the shipyard, in the centre of the oppositionist activity, it became the "principal symbol"—"the sign of defiance" of the political rule, "a

---

[56]Barbara Tornquist Plewa, 185.
[57] For the discussion of the Solidarity and the "Insurrection myth" Barbara Tornquist Plewa, 185-224.
[58] Jan Kubik, 194.

metaphor of the national martyrdom" and "the symbol of Poland as messiah of nations."[59] The crowned eagle, the oldest national emblem denoting the independence of Poland, on the one hand, attested to the spirit of the revived patriotic and romantic traditions in the context of the "resurrection myth."[60] On the other, however, with regards to socio-political circumstances, it was a direct response to the propaganda of the Communist party that appropriated the crownless eagle as an emblem of Communist rule. Further, the flowers became an unusual symbol of the strike, connoting the "peaceful and non-confrontational character of the protest."[61] The presence of the flowers can also be compared to the religious tradition of adorning the altars of Holy figures and images. Indeed, looking at the gates of the shipyard decorated with the large images of the Pope, Holy Virgin and the flowers, one is immediately reminded of the devotional altars in the Churches.[62]

The meaning of the symbolic language of the Solidarity culture—the cross, the Virgin, Black Madonna, the flowers—needs to be interpreted in the context of the mass/national phenomenon that the movement represented. Jan Kubik argues for the complexity of the coded messages exemplified by the various ways in which one could read the symbols (e.g. the cross).[63] However, considering the widespread nature of the oppositionist movement and its diversified composition (from the worker to the intellectual), it is possible to posit that for the majority of society, the reception of the symbol was emotional rather than intellectual. The idea of the efficacy of a coded language as the tool of propaganda is in the assumption that it will be interpreted by a number of people in a similar way. The simplicity of symbols such as the cross and Christ—and specifically their direct meaning—proved successful in the instance of the rhetoric of John Paul II. His speeches appealed to the collective consciousness precisely because they established an emotional connection before an intellectual one. When Jan Gajda defined his perception of the cross—"the supernatural power which emanated from

---

[59] Jan Kubik, 189.
[60] Barbara Tornquist Plewa, 183.
[61] Jan Kubik, 195.
[62] The religious character of flowers was especially pronounced during the years of Martial law when spontaneously arranged crosses of flowers in public places became the symbols of the religious character of the nation as well as signs of protest against the oppressiveness of Communist regime.

the simple wooden cross"—he confirmed above all the emotional impact of the symbolism of Solidarity. On the collective level, the cross became the means for the "(unconscious) identification with Christ" empowering the strikers with the strength to "take the cross upon their own shoulders"[64] Thus, even though the symbols of Solidarity reinforced specific political and religious notions such as the historic patriotic or romantic and Messianic traditions, it was above all the emotional character of the movement that mobilized collective force through generating and sustaining oppositionist attitudes.

Considering the emotional force and the national nature of the symbolic language of Solidarity in the broader context of the discourse of the opposition, the symbols had a crucial input into dissemination, and propagation, and, most importantly, into the legitimization of the ideology of the opposition. Applying Terdiman's view of the power of the symbol as the means of "penetration ....into social consciousness"[65] to the function of the Solidarity symbols, their role as powerful political weapons and their function as the means of the communication of the ideology of the opposition is confirmed. With regards to the state's accusations of the illegitimate origin of the Solidarity movement (and by extension the underground independent culture), the symbolic language was crucial in both the creation and legitimization of an alternative cultural, political and ideological model. Therefore, as the images of the Black Madonna, the Pope, the Virgin Mary, the cross and the flowers created and confirmed the identity of Solidarity participants and supporters, these symbols also entered a political discourse through their ability to challenge emblems and symbols of the Communist rule.

The communicative and political function of all the symbols truly emerged during the period of Martial Law. As the police silenced all social activism, forcing Solidarity associations and related movements underground, the symbols of Solidarity acquired the voice that transcended regulations and oppressiveness of the regime, uniting people in their understanding of the coded messages. In the instance of Martial Law, when the

---

[63] "Jan Kubik, 189.

[64] An excerpt from the diary of the participant in the strike, Jan Gajda. Jan Gajda, "August 1980 as I Saw It," in *Sisyphus: Sociological Studies* 3: 238-39, quoted in Kubik,189.

[65] Terdiman writes that "Critics were mounted against the penetration of sign into social consciousness ...Of course it may seem quixotic to have thought that one may dispense and abolish with the sign. But in the moment when an emerging culture becomes conscious, creates a

oppressive mechanisms of social control expanded into the private domain, it is possible to assert an increased awareness of the coded meaning of the symbol or sign in line with Terdiman's claim of an intensification of "semiotic behavior" [66] in the time of social and economic crisis. Indeed, the symbolic language and supportive voice of John Paul II reverberating in the collective memory and the hopeful tone of social protest represented a reminder and affirmation that the society is united in oppression, in faith and in a hope for Poland independent of Communist control.

In a retrospective evaluation, the first official visit of John Paul II[67] to Poland is recognized as a catalyst for change in a socio-political dynamic of the country. [68] The mass support for the arrival of the Pope resulted in the development of what Kubik calls the *"communitas"*[69] or, an alternative social and cultural formation.[70] The emotions generated by the visit of the Pope fueled the subsequent Solidarity strikes and persisted in collective memory during the era of Martial Law. It is because of this emotional dimension that the discourse of John Paul II disturbed what functioned as a carefully constructed "totalizing" image of the absolute hegemony of the Party-state. From the time of the first visit of the Pope, the dissident movements whose initial nature was more

---

model, of itself, the distinctive elements of the model become the critical area for any contestation of the new configuration of the world." Richard Terdiman, 98.

[66] Yuri M. Lotman and B. A. Uspensky, transl, George Mihaychuk, "On the Semiotic Mechanism of Culture, in *The Literary History 9*: 211-212, quoted in Richard Terdiman, 97.

[67] It is important to make the distinction between the first, long anticipated visit in 1979, and the subsequent visits in 1983 and in 1987. The first visit began the process of the formation of the different perception of the regime. The later visits intended to strengthen the Catholic-oppositionist spirit repressed by the authorities. For the detailed chronology of these three visits please see Peter Raina, *Wizyty Apostolskie Jana Pawla II w Polsce. Rozmowy Przygotowawcze Watykan—PRL—Episkopat* [The Apostolic Visits of John Paul II to Poland. The Preparatory Conversations Vatican—PRL—Episcopate]

[68] Jan Kubik is among many historians who recognize the influence of the Church on the creation of Solidarity. For example, George Weigel maintains that Pope John Paul II's visit to Poland in 1979 was an essential catalyst for Solidarity. George Weigel, *The Final Revolution: The Resistance Church and the Collapse of Communism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); Also, Martin McCauley, "Poland and Papal Power," *Contemporary Review* 243, no. 1412 (1983): 128-132 and Jonathan Luxmoore and Jolanta Babiuch, *The Vatican and the Red Flag: The Struggle for the Soul of Eastern Europe* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1999).

[69] Jan Kubik, 191. Even though he uses this terms to describe the phenomenon of strikes—the "enclave" inside the gates of the shipyard—this term can be expanded to define the mass behavior during the visit of the Pope. In a similar way in which during the strike the rules of the outside did not apply to the striking workers, new code of behavior emerged uniting different social classes under the singular identity of the Polish Catholic

[70] Jan Kubik, 147.

of the "fragmented mapping of the counter-discursive realm" [71] than the unified opposition's framework developed a coherent ideological program.

*Unofficial symbols and myths in dissident works of art*

Considering the emotional ambience of the visits of John Paul II and Solidarity, it is hardly surprising that dissident art appropriated symbolic language and the underlying philosophy of the opposition. An installation by Jerzy Kalina titled *Last Supper* (Fig. 4) and Jacek Waltos' painting *At the both sides of the gate—the August Sunday 80* (Fig. 5) exemplify an infusion of oppositionist ideology and sentiments into works of art through a new symbolic language that reflected the current political condition of Poland.

Jerzy Kalina's *The Last Supper* is representative of the iconography and the symbolic language popular during the 1980s. It illustrates way in which traditional imagery acquired new meaning through the relationship with contemporary discourses. This work was part of a group exhibition that brought together a variety of art forms under the common theme of "The Sign of the Cross," which, in turn, was a part of the two week series "Meetings with Art" prepared by the cultural underground.[72] Even before turning to the actual work of art, the religious framework of the exhibition on the theme of the cross attests to the general tendency in the dissident art—namely the veiling of the political in the guise of traditional religious iconography and symbolism. One of the organizers of the exhibition recognized the influence of the political situation on the artists' perception of the cross, yet nonetheless insisted that the concept of the cross pertained to its "universal, timeless presence..., and not to [its] contemporary and political understanding."[73] However, many works of art exhibited during this exhibition were reflections of sentiments of immediate political events rather than translations of historical and universal meanings of the cross. The traditional religious imagery and symbolism—the cross, the tables and chairs, respectively the symbols of the Christ' suffering and the Last Supper—refer to the universal and timeless dimension of Christian

---

[71] Richard Terdiman, 79.
[72] The series took place in Warszawa on June 14, 1983. Documented and discussed in *Czas Smutku, Czas Nadziei.* Aleksander Wojciechowski, 116-9.
[73] An interview with Janusz Bogucki. Aleksander Wojciechowski, 118-119.

art and theology, but their original meaning is surpassed by powerful contemporary connotations. The artist consciously balanced between the old and the new in the way he obscured the readings of traditional religious symbolism in favour of the signs of the contemporary political struggle. Kalina placed paintings of the cross on the side wall of the composition (in the upper left corner of the photograph), problematizing their reading in the way the black lines that form the arms of the cross also form dividing panels of the window. In the latter case it is a decoration of the setting as opposed a religious symbol. Furthermore, the large cross that could have been an altarpiece in a traditional religious installation is ambiguously situated on the side of the composition, while its form is masked by the construction materials—wood panels, a ladder that leads to the small window on the side and small tables situated on the platform on either side of the central pillar. Yet, when all these additional elements are disregarded, the center pillar becomes the strong body of the cross and the platform, its arms. Also, the chairs and the table symbolizing the Last Supper positioned in the center are partially covered by the debris of stone. Their presence is further diminished by the proportions of the tables and the chairs to the surrounding architecture.

In the context of the presentation of religious imagery, the red and white flag is the centerpiece of the composition, dominating the scene both physically and iconographically. Kalina positioned the flag in the place where one would imagine the cross in traditional altarpieces. It descends from above the huge windows, paralleling the direction of light that enters the composition. Thus, while stylistically the flag balances the composition dividing it into two approximately equal parts, the meaning of its presence in the composition, once realized by the viewer, interrupts the possibility of interpreting the iconography of the painting exclusively within the framework of religion. On the most general level, even before making a connection to contemporary discourses, the flag and the crosses impose themselves on the memory of the viewer who, without doubt, instinctively recognizes them as the insignia of Solidarity strikes. These symbols were present in the collective memory of the society as the visual codes of these events, and in this work of art they add historical immediacy to the otherwise traditional iconography, allowing an interpretation in the contemporary context. Christ's crucifixion stands for the suffering of the Polish nation under the Communist regime.

Further, in connection to the contemporary discourses of John Paul II and Solidarity, the crosses and the national flag become shortcuts that refer the viewer to contemporary politics. These discourses elaborate on the images and symbols within the composition such as the rather unusual relationship between the light and the flag which is not explained by the conventional representation of the subject of the Last Supper. These symbols, however, make sense in the framework of opposition in which the flag, the light and the symbolism of the Last Supper represent the historical suffering of the Polish nation in the traditions of the suffering of Christ, divine protection and of God's support of the Polish cause. In his rendition of the parallel between divine suffering and the suffering of Polish society, Kalina borrows from cultural mythology, and specifically, from Polish Messianic thought which were revived by John Paul II.

Jacek Waltos also refers the viewer to the contemporary political context for the explanation of the iconography and symbolism of his painting. *At the both Sides of the Gate—the August Sunday 80* in a similar way to Korolkiewicz's *The Morning of the December 13, 1981* (Fig. 1) refers to an actual event—the protests and negotiations in the Gdansk shipyard. Once again, the viewer is pressured with expectations to be able to make a connection to the current political events and, furthermore, to situate these events in a context of contemporary assertions of John Paul II and Solidarity.

The artist makes an appeal to the viewer's memory with his rendition of an image familiar to all contemporary Polish viewers. The vertical lines cutting the canvas recall the famous gates of Gdansk shipyard, while the figures shown in the position of kneeling are intended to evoke striking workers praying. In his interpretation, Waltos is faithful to the original version and includes in his composition flowing national red and white flags. Wojciechowski writes that the rays of light that descend upon the praying figures, "were used to emphasize the shapes of the objects, but it functioned as a light positioned above operating table [a metaphor pertaining to a degree of scrutiny inherent to Martial Law]: it brightened the drama, disclosing the wounds. The side parts are in darkness, being merely a neutral background for the central action."[74] Furthermore, the memory of the image of the Virgin affixed above the entrance gates to the shipyard allows interpreting the source of light also in a religious context. One could argue, that in the painting, the

[74]Aleksander Wojciechowski, 65.

Virgin symbolized by the light, is looking over the kneeling figures. This reading is reinforced by the illusion of halo-like darker form encircling the light, the kneeling figures and the crosses emerging from intersection of vertical and horizontal lines. The light is also curiously positioned in the upper center directly above the figures, recalling the tradition of religious paintings.

Despite the conspicuous title intended to trigger the memory of recent events and emotions of the contemporary viewer, the painting has more symbolic representative value as a depiction of the Gdansk shipyard. The style, the composition as well as the elements of the painting stress symbolic as opposed to narrative qualities; Waltos reduced the events at the shipyard to a fragment of the gate, three figures, the source of light that could also be perceived as symbolizing the Virgin, shapes of crosses and flags reflective of the national character of the event. In comparison to Korolkiewicz's determination to create a photographic illusion of the real occurrence, Waltos' rendition looks like an old, yellowed and stained photograph that retained the contours of the image yet is no longer able to provide any details. The blurriness of the image infuses a transcendental quality into the time-specific iconography, reinforcing the symbolic power of its elements. Like in Kalina's installation, the religious and political notions stressed by John Paul II and the rhetoric of Solidarity create historical continuity through timeless emblems of suffering, divine protection and the destiny of Polish nation. The national flag is both the symbol of Solidarity and the banner of Polish patriotism; the crosses both evoke the cross firmly planted in the middle of the shipyard and represent the historical suffering of the Polish nation stressed by John Paul II; the kneeling figures are more than just the striking workers in a specific time and a specific place—they represent the Polish nation once again humbled by political circumstances and on its knees before the divine power.

Kalina's installation and Waltos' painting are only two examples out of many dissident works of art that attest to a connection between the symbolic vocabularies used by the artists and the symbols used or evoked by the opposition. Just as the discourses of the opposition brought together religion, contemporary politics and Polish historical traditions, so in these works more or less conspicuous religious symbols[75] amalgamate

[75] Such as the cross, the Virgin, the symbols of the Eucharist, light etc.

with contemporary political[76] and historical[77] symbolic languages. In a similar manner that oppositional discourses appealed to the recent memories of political events and the specific Roman Catholic national identity, the paintings aimed at a connection with the viewer based on the viewer's ability to recognize the symbols, their ideological connotations and the context that produced them. The emotional ambience surrounding the emergence of this new symbolic vocabulary explains the intensity infused into and projected by the symbolic language and the time-specific iconographies in dissident works of art. The following chapter will continue the discussion of the symbolic language in works of art by setting it the framework of the Church as the physical shelter for the underground artistic movement. This relationship will explain the "communicative quality" of the symbolic language and the political nature of all dissident art.

[76] Some examples feature national flags, words "Solidarity," color red, images of Communist reality.

[77] For example soldier, nobleman, jester, allegories of imprisonment and suffering.

## Chapter III

### The Dissident Arts of the 1980: The Influences of the Discourses of Church and of the Solidarity.

The defining feature of Polish dissident or the non-conformist arts of the 1980s is their relationship with contemporary discourses.[1] The discourses of the Communist party and of the opposition directly influenced the character of arts. A specific atmosphere encouraged dissident artistic attitudes and facilitated the production of non-conformist works of art. Specifically, contemporary socio-political circumstances compelled artists to define their social/public attitudes by choosing between the official or unofficial artistic milieu. Thus, depending on their artistic (and, in the contemporary context, ethical) position, the artists who identified themselves with either alternative (underground) or official cultures, were presented in both instances with readily available artistic programs; their inspiration either originated from the oppositionist discourse or complied with the official ideology. Further, in the context of the specific socio-political conditions, the Church acquired the function of the "patron" of alternative culture—unprecedented in contemporary Polish history. When Martial Law closed all public artistic institutions, the Church exercised its autonomous position and sheltered dissident cultural activity. Therefore, considering the influences of Church first on the emergence of dissident thinking and of Solidarity, and, secondly, on the creation of the alternative culture, the religious and political characteristics of the new iconography of the 1980s were not surprising. More unusual, however, was the *communicative* quality—an ability of the familiar symbols to generate an emotional response in its viewers—that resulted from the artists' borrowing both the symbolic vocabulary of the opposition and the emotional reaction to this vocabulary. It is because of the emotional factor stimulated by the symbols and iconography of dissident art that we can truly speak of their political

---

[1] Aleksander Wojciechowski defines these arts as "independent" and the entire cultural movement of the underground as the "independent culture." However, these definitions mislead in the understanding of the nature of the movement. Whereas the qualifying adjective "independent" accurately connotes the 1980s arts and culture as separate from the official control, it does not

*function*; the reaction of the viewer to the symbolism and iconography generated sincere anti-Communist sentiments, shifting the function of these works from aesthetic to political.

These symbols had an emotional presence under Martial Law in the way they reinforced the notion of the existence of an undefeatable historical Polish identity founded on ideals other than those of the Communist party. An artwork that used the symbolic language that appealed to a collective memory of the emotional events during the time of Martial Law not merely *expressed* but *protested* against contemporary conditions. This dimension of political activism animated the symbols in the works of art, allowing them to *participate in* as opposed to merely *reflect* the political discourse.

*Solidarity and art*

The contemporary condition of Poland, and specifically the activities of the Solidarity, were responsible for drawing artists into the realm of political dissidence. The magnitude of the events of the 1980s becomes apparent when artistic activity is placed in the framework the entire Communist period. Before the 1980s, no coherent non-conformist artistic movement existed that responded to the stimuli of external social or political circumstances.[2] In the years before the 1980 painters, in comparison to writers or actors, enjoyed a relative freedom of expression due to the minimal danger of the art exhibitions in shaping or influencing public opinion and altering the official image of Communist Poland.[3] Therefore, artists had no pressing reason to be either socially conscious or political.[4] The political involvement of the artists and the social orientation of art began to change, however, with the beginning of Solidarity. As the movement

---

translate their political nature. Terms such as unofficial or dissident more accurately reflect the political nature of the culture and of the arts that were exhibited in the underground milieu.

[2] There were, of course, individual dissident stances throughout the entire Communist period. This paper, however, is interested in the dissident art movement as a collective force.

[3]This is exemplified by the restrictions in the *Black Book of Censorship* that refer only to the arts that affected the society at large (ex. literature). The majority of Poland was not a gallery/museum audience, thus the influence of the paintings would have not been instrumental in influencing of the public opinion.

involved more and more people from different social backgrounds, the Solidarity Committee appealed to the artists' associations for support. On October 5, 1981, the director of the Union of the Polish Artists Painters signed an agreement of cooperation with Solidarity. The agreement had strong national connotations, and ranged from strictly economic demands to calls for the protection of the national cultural heritage and individual artistic freedom.[5] Further, the political involvement of Polish artists had been proclaimed in November of the same year that the Union of Polish Artist Painters in conjunction with Solidarity held the competition for the official Solidarity poster. This public pronouncement of the involvement of the Artists Union in the political struggle and, in particular, their allegiance to Solidarity, affected the Union a month later when the decree of Martial Law suspended the Union of the Artists Painters in December1981.[6] Thus, by January 1982, the nature of Polish art was dissident in orientation—this status confirmed an establishment of the arts section in the underground culture.[7] However, the political dimension of the unofficial art was consolidated by the decision of the Ministry of the Internal Affairs to disband the Union on June 20, 1983. The officials accused the artists of "political activity" that "aimed at the fundamental interests of the socialist Poland."[8]

Already in April of 1982, no doubt inspired by the Solidarity, many artists protested against Martial Law which deprived them of public presence. The artists published an unofficial manifesto titled "The Voice which is Silence" that criticized the Communist system and proclaimed the artists' allegiance to a Polish culture founded on anti-Communist ideals. The manifesto stated:

---

[4] Kazimierz Baraun, for instance, describes the development of the alternative theater next to the repertoire dictated by the demands of the socialist realism. Kazimierz Braun. *Teatr Polski 1939-1989. Obszary Wolnosci—Obszary Zniewolenia.*

[5] Signed by Jerzy Puciata, the President of the Union of the Polish Artists Painters and Jerzy Buzek, the Representative of the NSZZ Solidarity. This information is quoted in the *Calendar of the most Important Cultural Events of the Independent Culture* (pages 101-192) complied in a chronological order by Aleskander Wojciechowski . Aleksander Wojciechowski, 101.

[6]Aleksander Wojciechowski, 102-3.

[7]In http://www.iyp.org/Archives/polska/0105/msg00040.html

[8] The decision of the Ministry quoted in Wojciechowski. Warsaw, August 20, 1983. Aleksander Wojciechowski, 119-220.

> The boycott of the official exhibitions and artistic activity, is a spontaneous reaction to the announcement of Martial Law and to the social repression...In Polish culture and the arts, the notions of freedom and independence have a special place...solidarity with the national resistance against the oppressions, interrogations, imprisonment of the sons of our nation...let our silence be the act of sacrifice...[9]

The manifesto also criticized the "apolitical" stances of some of the artists and demanded political activism instead:

> The events of the 13 December pertain to the entire society and no one can pretend that nothing happened...The Division "US and THEY" had been categorically delineated as never before...Instead, we have to begin to create unofficial art through exhibitions in private apartments, underground discussions groups and symposia on the topic of Polish culture.[10]

With regard to the political nature of artistic activity during and after Martial Law, this manifesto was a determinant factor that shifted artists from the cultural and mostly apolitical realm into the heart of politics; it unified them into a force that, for the first time, reverberated with clearly articulated anti-Communist and pro-oppositionist sentiments.

*The influence of the Church and religion on dissident art*

While the manifesto drew artists into the discourse of Solidarity, defining the nature of the dissident art as officially anti-Communist, an unprecedented position of the Church as the "patron" of the underground culture during the 1980s further consolidated their political orientation. The religious iconography that prevails in these works of art has to be interpreted through the prism of contemporary politics. Considering the relationship of the Church to politics, and especially its threatening position as the

---

[9] Aleksander Wojciechowski, 108.

[10] The manifesto was printed by the clandestine press. It was reproduced from an undated leaflet by Aleksander Wojciechowski in the Calendar of Events. Warszawa, April, 1982. Aleksander Wojciechowski, 106-108.

counter-hegemony to the Communist structure during the time of socio-political crisis such as Martial Law, even the most traditional religious iconography had political connotations. Specifically, John Paul II redefined the nature of religion in Poland, transforming symbols of Christian faith into symbols of political contestation. The critics of contemporary art correctly perceived religious iconography and symbolism as a direct outcome of the relationship between the Church and underground culture.[11] Indeed, the revival of traditional religious iconography can be traced back to the Pope's emphasis on Polishness as a historical amalgam of Christian values and national traditions, and, most importantly, to his vision of the Church as protector of Polish historical heritage.

Artists, just like the rest of the society, responded to the stimuli of religious discourse with heightened sensitivity. Some of them consciously recognized their need for a spiritual guidance as the basis of their attraction to religious subject matter. In an interview Tadeusz Bogucki, an artist and one of the organizers of the unofficial series "Meetings with Art: The Sign of the Cross" which included Jerzy Kalina's *Last Supper*, defined the nature of contemporary art interestingly as a union between politics, religion and creativity.[12] He said: "the exhibition (and the art workshops) resulted from the collision in time and space of... spiritual and... political concepts...the former manifested itself in the meetings and the group activities of the artists interested in the rejuvenation of the inner self in relation to the union between artistic creativity and faith."[13] Also, an art critic R. Rytarski [14] wrote on the influence of religion (and of the Church) on artists and their work: "[the exhibitions in the studios of these artists] were not a conventional element of the artistic life...they resulted from the genuine need of displaying [in the sense of sharing] what had been created."[15] The artists' emotional connection to religious symbolic language and their understanding of its contemporary connotations are linked to the expressiveness of such language in their art and to the profound impact that these works had on their audience. The artists' own experience of Marital Law made them

---

[11] For instance, Wlodarczyk and Daszkiewicz.
[12] The two week long artistic series beginning fourteenth of June 1983 in the Church of Milosierdzia Bozego in Warsaw. Aleksander Wojciechowski, 116-8.
[13] An interview with Tadeusz Bogucki. Aleksander Wojciechowski, 118.
[14] He made this comment in relation to the "pilgrimage" of the art critics through Poland in order to observe the dissident artists at work.
[15] Aleksander Wojciechowski, 122.

insiders, intimately aware of the nature of such symbols and, consequently, able to use them to appeal to collective sensibilities. It is through the implication of mutual understanding, the notion of living the same Communist experience that the artists were able to provoke emotional responses and to communicate effectively both the pathos of contemporary circumstances and anti-Communist sentiments.

A union of religion and culture is also directly responsible for the artists' perception of their art as the tool of cultural and political education of the masses and for the vision of themselves within the structure of the underground culture as the cultural leaders of the nation. These notions of art as the tool of propagation of dissident ideology and artists as the teachers of the nation were, interestingly, delineated by the Church's discourse. The artists' place within the culture of opposition and the potential function of art was predicted before the events of the 1980s. Cardinal Wyszynski, an advocate of the anti-Communist cause, in his 1977 sermon, called for the artists' involvement in the channels of the communication of the opposition. He said "...know that this is your place. There is enough place here for you [the artists] and for the priests who are the servants of the Polish nation...In the God's house, there is enough place for religion and for your art that enriches the life of the nation."[16] The response and the realization of the implications of his message, however, came in the 1980s, precisely in the heightened awareness of the dynamics of the political sphere. Stefan Bratkowki, in a commentary to the group exhibition in Sopot wrote, "people now go to the churches, searching there not only for God. They search for Poland, for the truth, for their identity....coming to the Churches—like to this one today—they meet art. We [the artists] have never witnessed so many people coming for the art. And many people see art today for the first time."[17] Thus, it is the new perception by artists of their social and cultural functions that all underground dissident art is reflective of the contemporary Polish condition that led artists to express their feelings about the state of affairs in Poland in their work.[18]

---

[16] Aleksander Wojciechowski, 138.
[17] Sopot, August 25, 1985. Aleksander Wojciechowski, 159.
[18] Wojciechowski, 210.

*The symbolic universes and their imprint on collective consciousness*

The pronounced public presence of the symbolic language of the opposition as well as the imprint of the themes evoked by John Paul II and Solidarity on the collective consciousness account for the communicative quality of new symbols and iconographies in the dissident works of art. The sociologists Krzysztof Nowak and Grzegorz Bakuniak stress the function of the symbol as the means of communicating competing ideologies. They wrote:

> In Poland we see a competition between the symbolic universes. On the one hand, there is the symbolic universe that originates from the tradition of the Polish nation linked to the western Christian culture strengthened by the specific position of the Roman Catholic Church in Poland. On the other hand, there is a symbolic universe propagated by the Communist state...The visit of the Pope to Poland had brought significant changes—along with his public appearances and the mass participation in his sermons, there emerged the alternative symbolic universe...that included the new symbols of identification....Because of this factor, the state and the society were separated by the new cultural opposition. And from that time on, they existed in a conflict.[19]

On this plane, one has to agree with Wojciechowski that the signs and symbols became eloquent means of expression, and specifically "the language of separation" in the process of confrontation between state and society.[20]

*The factor of emotions*

This hypothesis of communication through emotions comes from the examination of the processes of communication of John Paul II and Solidarity. The previous chapter argued that the Pope's presence in Poland during the 1980s was defined by the success of

---

[19] Stefan Nowak, ed., *Spoleczenstwo Polskie Czasu Kryzysu* [The Polish Society of the Time of Crisis] (Warszawa: Instytut Sociologii UW, 1984) 88, 90 quoted in Aleksander Wojciechowski, 10.

[20] Wojciechowski, 10.

his speeches and the mass enthusiasm for his person. He was able to establish an emotional connection with society that was absent from the relationship between society and the Church. His rhetorical success came from his ability to communicate in a simple manner, which, in turn, suggested the sincerity of his intentions. He generated the feeling of mutual understanding. The emotions surrounding his discourse, nonetheless, created a framework for the implementation of dissident ideology into the collective perception of Polishness and of the contemporary condition of the Polish nation. In a similar way to the Pope, the rhetoric and practices of Solidarity induced the emotional factor that invited and facilitated the identification with its ideology and symbolic language. Thus, for both the Pope and the Solidarity, the emotional connection with people was a precondition for the successful production of the oppositionist spirit and the subsequent implementation of the dissident ideology.

A very similar process of communication and emotional connection can be seen in the works of art. Wojciechowski writes that "after 1981 symbols, signs and gestures became a commonly understood language of communication."[21] On the basis of such statements it is possible to propose that the more familiar the symbolic language, the simpler and thereby more accessible the language of expression, the easier the emotional connection and, finally, the more effective the message of the symbolic language. This hypothesis of an emotional potential of the symbol is supported by theorists on the subject of emotions who argue for the possibility of sincere connection with a fictional reality on the basis of the ability of fiction to bring out genuine emotional response.[22] If one applies this theory to dissident art, one realizes that the symbols within art disclose a potential to bring forth a sincere emotional reaction from the viewer. This reaction would have been caused by the symbols' ability to evoke the memory of the original presence of these symbols and, consequently, to revive the feelings associated with these symbols in original circumstances.

---

[21] Aleksander Wojciechowski, 10.
[22] Robert Darren Gobert, 48.

*The new type of audience*

A new type of audience emerged during the 1980s. Wojciechowski and Daszkiewicz recognize this phenomenon of a new audience comprised of the working class as one of defining characteristics of the unofficial art. The appearance of the new audience was a direct outcome of the temporary function of the Church as the patron of the arts. As the churches opened their door to artists, providing space for art exhibitions, art suddenly became accessible to different social groups that before were not typical museum/gallery goers. The Church's position as an alternative art institution under Martial Law proved to be less intimidating than the traditional art establishments. The accessibility and familiarity of its space accounted for the sudden popularity of the dissident art displayed on its premises. This increased audience was a crucial factor in the political force of this art. The more people recognized and responded to the anti-Communist sentiments in the symbols, the greater their political power.

Wojciechowski, recognizes the presence of more diversified viewers in the underground galleries, but he does not question the origin of their attraction to art. To explain the phenomenon of the new audience, one has to look back to the discourses of John Paul II and Solidarity. The Pope and the events of Solidarity attracted the working class masses and adjusted their language accordingly. In a parallel fashion, the simplicity and, by extension, approachability of the new artistic language attracted people to the Church's galleries. The factors responsible for the communicative quality of the symbolic language and its appeal to the new audience were collective memory and shared perceptions of recent events. The presence of the time-specific symbolic vocabulary in the collective consciousness was directly responsible for the mass interest in these works of art. The possibility of identification with the subject matter and the symbols allowed the viewers to project their own memories and feelings on to the fictional reality. Even though the statistics on the audience's reaction to the dissident art are unavailable, it is possible to draw on certain available documentation of the public behavior toward similar symbolic language during the Papal masses and the Solidarity strikes. On the basis of the similarity between the symbolic language of the opposition and the symbolic language in

dissident art, the public's response to the images and symbols in art that in any way recalled Papal masses or the shipyard would have solicited emotions similar to those incited by this symbolic language in the original circumstances. A work of art accomplished its political mission if it solicited an emotional response from the viewers, allowing them either to identify with the depicted subject matter, or to remember a highly emotional event from the recent past.

*The style of communication*

The people's experiences of the 1980s became the criteria for the definition of communicativeness of the symbolic language in dissident art. The aforementioned imprint of competing symbolic universes into a collective consciousness provided the artists with a readily available symbolic repertoire. The artists' own experiences of the 1980s made them sensitive to the tastes of the new public. Thus in addition to Janusz Bogucki's claim that the artists' inspiration came from their spiritual needs, they were also able to recognize which type of imagery and symbols would provoke a response from the public. Accordingly they created art that either intuitively or consciously used such symbols and imagery. Critics of the underground exhibition "Sign 8" confirmed the noticeable preference for works that displayed recognizable symbolism and imagery. During the exhibition, viewers focused their attention on "the photographs that portrayed the crosses from the period of the workers' strikes, the crosses—monuments in Gdansk and in Poznan, crosses from the flowers arranged on the streets during the period of Martial Law."[23] The symbols such as crosses, national flags, flowers easily established a connection with the viewer. Thus, in most of the works the artists used a familiar symbolic vocabulary to translate or to express their thoughts on contemporary oppression, suffering or the connection between religion and politics, confident that if presented through recognizable means the message would be understood and received by the viewer.

---

[23] This is a remark by Tadeusz Rolke who refers to this impression in the interview with Janusz Bogucki. Aleksander Wojciechowski, 118-9.

The viewers' interest in realistic portrayals of contemporary situations and their documented responsiveness to the symbols of opposition are responsible for the iconography and the form and style of expression of dissident art. An examination of works that oscillate between nineteenth-century traditions of historical painting and contemporary political caricatures reveals a directness of expression through the choice of symbolic language and the style of presentation. The works by Kalina, Korolkiewicz and Waltos discussed in detail in previous chapters exemplify this general tendency in dissident art.

The clarity of the symbolic language in Kalina's (Fig. 3) installation did not allow for misinterpretation of its message. The symbols of the national flag, the crosses, the light coming though the windows, the chairs and the table referring to the Last Supper of Christ and the debris of stone all combine to form a well articulated metaphor of oppression under Communism in the context of historical suffering of the Polish nation. The non-figurative nature of Kalina's work demonstrates the process of interpretation of similar works in which symbolic language was the link to the surrounding contemporary and historical discourses. In such works the elements that make the composition as a whole also have an independent symbolic value. Specifically, whereas in the context of the composition the red and white national flag and the cross were part of the theme of national suffering, by themselves both the flag and the cross evoked a distinct memory of recent religious and political events. The images of Solidarity would have been recalled precisely by the presence of the national flag, creating a political framework for the understanding of the iconography of the Last Supper.

In relation to the expressive potential of symbolism, the process of recognition of the symbol as a reference to specific political events and as derived from the discourse of the opposition was also the process that determined the power of the symbol. In the case of Kalina's exhibition, the efficacy of the symbolic language was generated by the connection to Pope John II. His second visit to Poland coincided with the cultural events organized by the underground, including this exhibition on the theme of the cross.[24] The imagery in the installation, in the context of the Pope's visit, would appear as a visual counterpart to his speech and specifically to the aforementioned themes of historicity,

religiosity and the national identity. The Pope's words would have animated the symbolic language in Kalina's installation. The strong response of the Polish people to the pope would have carried over to the reception of Kalina's work. Thus, by the proximity of the Pope's visit, and exclusively in relation to recent circumstances, the installation acquired an emotional appeal. The cross, and, most of all, the national red and white flag stood out from the installation, loudly protesting the oppressiveness of the political circumstances.

In contrast to Kalina's installation, in which the contemporary political message was realized through religious metaphor, many other artists like Lukasz Korolkiewicz (Fig. 1 & 2) or Jerzy Waltos (Fig. 4) opted for even more direct appeal to the viewer's memory and emotions and a different style of communication with the viewer. The inspiration for their art came from the contemporary reality replete with new symbols of political contestation. Wojciechowski writes that "the symbolism in the works of Korolkiewicz is deeply rooted in the surrounding reality. His inspiration comes from everyday things duplicated with almost naturalistic meticulousness."[25] Yet, even though for Korolkiewicz the everyday and the familiar had larger symbolic connotations, the connection with the viewer was formed not on the basis of grand political meaning, but on the most fundamental emotional level. The communication was established through the appeal to the viewer's own experiences of the 1980s brought back effortlessly and almost unconsciously by the photographic illusion of the real occurrence created by the type of iconography and the style of representation.

*The Morning of December 13, 1981* (Fig. 1) through realistic portrayal, inspired by the real-life occurrence, allowed contemporary viewers not merely to identify the scene, but to see in the painting a reflection of themselves on that particular December morning. Although there is a male character in the image, the painting is not about him and nor is he the focus of the narrative. Despite his presence in the painting, Korolkiewicz minimalized his importance, placing his figure in the shadow, with his face turned away from the viewer. His figure, however, is an excuse for the painting's iconography as it creates a false narrative, luring the viewer into the painting's reality.

---

[24] Wojciechowski, 118.
[25] My translation. Wojciechowski, 58.

Korolkiewicz deliberately organized the perspective within the painting so that the gaze of the viewer standing in front of the painting would follow the line of the windowsill until it reached the focus of the composition—the image of Jaruzelski on television. Further, the perspective of the painting projects into the space of the viewer, creating an illusion that the room continues into the space of the viewer. Thus, the viewer became part of the paintings' narrative—a person who just entered the room and hears the news on TV along with the man who reflects on the news while looking into the gloomy landscape outside the window.

A similar technique of engaging the viewer through contemporary iconography and realistic depiction is demonstrated in another painting by Korolkiewicz, *The Cross in the Winter* (Fig. 2). This work also uses a familiar image and a symbol from the reality of the 1980s—the cross of flowers—that would have been immediately recognized by the contemporary viewer. In this painting, the perspective expands into the realm of the viewer, again blurring the boundary between reality of the image and the reality of the viewer. While viewing the painting one does not just stand in front of the painting but is drawn into it, amidst the abundance of flowers. The illusion of participation in the narrative is again reinforced by the painting's realistic style. The meticulousness of the depiction generates a tactile quality of objects, creating an illusion that by extending of the hand one could rearrange the white and red pieces of material tossed by the winter wind, made close to the viewer by the painting's perspective.

Finally, Jacek Waltos' painting *Two Sides of the Gate—the August Sunday 80* (Fig. 4) is an approach to communication that lies between Kalina's political metaphor and nearly hyperrealist [26] art by Wojciechowski. Interestingly, like Korolkiewicz, Waltos chose to depict a scene that reverberated in the memory of the contemporary viewer—namely the memorable image of kneeling workers from the 1980 Solidarity strike. In contrast to Korolkiewicz, who aimed at the intermingling of art and reality and established a link with the viewer, Waltos, like Kalina, stays in the realm of memory. Even though the perspective of the painting projects into the realm of the viewer and the kneeling workers again invite the viewer's identification, the style of the painting is the barrier between the reality of the image and the fiction of the painting. Despite the

familiarity of subject matter, the image of praying workers is more the symbol of oppression under Communism than a recounting of the specific event. The reference to the specific event, however, allowed the contemporary viewer to channel many different emotions through the memory of one particular event—that of the shipyard strike of the 1980s.

It is noticeable that some of the works were more successful than others in engaging the contemporary viewer with their symbols and iconographies and, consequently, more effective in communicating of anti-Communist sentiments. The works by Kalina, Korolkiewicz and Waltos represent three different modes of communication of dissident thought. In the examples of their works it is possible to delineate the criteria of successful connection between art and the contemporary viewer. The aforementioned phenomenon of the new audience of the predominately working class demanded an "approachable" art—namely an art that engaged rather than intimidated its viewers. Art that would qualify as "approachable" was rooted in the surrounding atmosphere and used a familiar symbolic language. Considering the simplicity and the straightforwardness of the symbols of the opposition and the society's almost instinctive ability to decipher its messages, the tactic of establishing the successful communication in art had to follow an already established pattern: the simpler the language of expression, the better the connection with the viewers. Many artists like Kalina, Wojciechowski and Waltos recognized that factors of simplicity of style and familiarity and readability of iconography were directly responsible for the success of the work of art to establish an emotional connection with the viewer.[27] Thus, despite differences in the style of expression by individual artists, it is noticeable that their art was created with respect to the boundaries set by recent political and religious events, the feelings of society towards these events and the abilities of the new audience as art connoisseurs.

---

[26] Aleksander Wojciechowski, 58.

[27] The artists Leszek Sobocki, Zbylut Grzywacz, Maria Anto or Marian Kepinski among many others chose to express their feelings on the contemporary situation in Poland in a language similar to that of Korolkiewicz, Kalina or Waltos.

*Political force of symbolic language in dissident art*

The ability of art to establish a connection with the viewer based on the emotional reaction to its symbolism or iconography is, in turn, linked to the political potential of dissident art. The communicativeness of the symbolic language (the ability of the symbols to evoke anti-Communist sentiments in the way they recalled certain emotions associated with images or symbols related to the discourse of the opposition) was a determining factor in qualifying art as yet another means to propagate dissident thought and, consequently, positioning dissident art in the channels of communication of the opposition. The potential of the work of art as the carrier of a political message is realized when art that used symbolic language originating within the discourse of the opposition is compared to art of similar style and iconography that does not use politically charged symbols. Zbigniew Gawrych, a member of the youngest generation of the artists who debuted during the difficult period of the 1980s, opted for the apolitical art promoted by the artists of his generation. His work titled *The Conversation I* (Fig. 6) is an interesting contrast to the painting by Korolkiewicz. Gawrych's painting despite similarity in iconography and style to Korolkiewicz's *The Morning of December 13, 1981* generates a different response from the viewer. As in Korolkiewicz's work, time has stopped and the composition is again a photographic rendition of a real occurrence.[28] The perspective in the painting, again, imposes itself into the realm of the viewer and the realistic style of representation creates an illusion of the viewer's reality. The viewer is presented with familiar objects—the flowers on the windowsill could be the flowers growing at one's home, the clothing that the woman wears reminds one of the dress that one might own or has seen on someone else. Further, the man and the woman, just as the man in Korolkiewicz's painting, do not engage with the viewer: the man's head is turned away and the woman's head is obscured by the frame of the painting. Yet despite the similarities between the paintings, the reaction of the contemporary viewer to this painting would have been different than the reaction to the painting by Korolkiewicz. Whereas in the first painting the symbolic power of the television featuring Jaruzelski predetermined the reaction of the viewer forcing him or her into the framework of the

recent events, the realism of this work, even though it renders the iconography, and consequently, the fictional reality accessible for the viewer, imposes no expectations on the viewer's reaction; neither the scene nor the conversation between the two figures in the painting implies a relation to the contemporary political events.

However, if, hypothetically, either the national flag, the cross or the icon of Virgin Mary is placed on the windowsill, then the entire composition not only changes its meaning, but also the effect it potentially has on the contemporary viewer. These types of symbols become references to the experiences of recent events and impose a mode of interpretation of the narrative with the reference to these events. Thus, a previously unidentified subject of conversation could possibly be political as the viewer could easily imagine a similar scenario where he or she discusses political issues. Furthermore, whereas in the original scenario the participation of the viewer in the fictional narrative of the painting seems unwarranted, a small religious or national symbol would have created the means for the identification, and, above all, communication within the framework of shared experiences of the 1980s.

The contrast between two similar iconographies and styles of depiction highlights a unique ability of the symbolic vocabulary to transform art into yet another form of anti-Communist political weapon saturated with the oppositionist ideology. An emotional response to the fictional reality and to the symbolism originating from the oppositionist discourse would have been able to shatter the silence imposed by the decree of Martial Law. It is, therefore, the process of viewing, and, specifically, the recognition of symbols by the viewer that were responsible for a time-specific social presence of dissident art. This art reverberated with voices of protests in the way the culturally recognized presence of these symbols transformed these works into visual testimonies to the suffering of a nation and to the oppressiveness of the system. Most importantly, however, the popular character of this iconography "became one more element of establishing inter-human connections"[29] and by visually disseminating the messages of opposition, it strengthened its ideological force and as such participated in and contributed to the political struggle.

---

[28] Jaroslaw M. Daszkiewicz, 30.
[29] Aleksander Wojciechowski, 122.

## *Conclusion*

The new iconography that emerged in the 1980s has indisputable political origins, considering the artists' immersion in the culture of the opposition and their perception of the function of their art. The roots of the new artistic language are explained by the discourses of the opposition—the rhetoric of the John Paul II, the Church and Solidarity—that functioned as the ideological framework for the underground cultural activity. Indeed, an examination of the new symbolic language in the dissident art in parallel with the discourses of the opposition, revealed similarities between the language used by the artists and symbols, and the themes in the oppositionist discourses; the latter being the source and the inspiration behind the artists' creativity. The most prominent symbols of the opposition such as the cross, the image of the Virgin, the red and white flag, as well as other symbols of religious and national meaning exemplified in works by Lukasz Korolkiewicz, Jerzy Kalina and Jacek Waltos also appear in many other dissident works of art. The preference for themes such as the historical union between religion and nation, the patriotic past of Poland linked to the insurrection myth, the allegedly privileged relationship between God and Polish society, as well as themes of oppression and hardship under Communist reality, freedom and solidarity reflect the influence of the speeches by John Paul II and the ideology behind Solidarity strikes. Thus, as an art historical tendency, dissident art signifies a revival of the traditional religious imagery and symbolism flavored by the contemporary political circumstances as well as an emergence of a completely new, time-specific iconography that originated in the reality of Communist Poland and pertained exclusively to contemporary social and political circumstances.

Despite the unique circumstances of its production, dissident art of the1980s has not been fully appreciated by critics. Furthermore, the impact of the Church and of the activities of Solidarity on the course of contemporary art has been questioned. On the one hand, Aleksander Wojciechowski and Wojciech Skrodzki perceive the influence of the Church and its doctrine as a positive factor, crucial to the development and to the unique

character of the dissident arts in the history of the contemporary Polish art. [30] On the other hand, Jaroslaw M. Daszkiewicz and Wojciech Wlodarczyk[31] interpret the same influence of the Church as both stylistically and iconographically limiting due to the Liturgy Constitution that predetermined the boundaries of the relationship between art and the Church. Specifically, the Church only minimally approved of deformation or abstraction in paintings and religious art and it disapproved of absurd, pastiche or irony in conjunction with the religious iconography and symbolism. Daszkiewicz argues that this restriction interfered with the artists' creativity imposing on them expectations that should have been reserved for art of either explicitly religious subject matter or intended for the permanent decoration of the Church. Therefore, in the scenario where the Church functioned as a surrogate institution—a physical space for the exhibition of the arts—the law of Liturgy should not have been applied. [32] In the light of Daszkiewicz's argument the relationship between the Church and the artists was ill timed, with the Church neither being able to accommodate artistic diversity nor to encourage artistic experimentation. From this point, one may proceed to a rather significant accusation that the Church had inhibited the development of the contemporary art during the 1980s, sheltering non-conformist art within inflexible boundaries of the religious doctrine. This argument, however, will only be valid with reference to the artists who involved themselves in the underground artistic milieu and who espoused the symbolic languages of the Church and of Solidarity. Others, like the artists of the youngest generations, who separated themselves from external ideologies practicing art for art's sake, although free from the impact of religion, where nonetheless limited by the nature of the political system that effectively separated them from artistic currents in Western Europe and in United States. [33]

---

[30] Wojciech Skrodzki is an art critic, an editor of many literary journals and an author of the articles and books on the subject of Polish religious art between 1900 and 1945. During the 1980s he was a member of the Confederation of the Independent Poland. His view on the unofficial art of the 1980s can be found in the interview "Zaprzepaszczona Szansa Kultury Polskiej." In http://www.iyp.org/Archives/polska/0105/msg00040.html

[31] Wojciech Wlodarczyk, "Lata Osiemdziesiate—Sztuka Mlodych." *Obieg* 1990 (11): 12, quoted in Jaroslaw M. Daszkiewicz, 9.

[32] Jaroslaw M. Daszkiewicz, 9.

[33] Even though Jaroslaw M. Daszkiewicz argues that in the case of the youngest generation led to the development of the unique (and internationally unprecedented) movements.

The criticism of the Church's intervention into the form of artistic expression is directly linked to the negative perception of dissident art on a purely artistic level. Wlodarczyk criticizes the new language and specifically the manner in which it was an amalgam of "the simplified rhetoric of "Solidarity," the images of Polish martyrdom and the dramatic vision of the present times."[34] What aggravated the contemporary critics the most was the use by the artists of the readily available artistic vocabulary. For instance, Anda Rottenberg[35] during the promotion of the book by Aleksander Wojciechowski *Czas Smutku, Czas Nadziei* labeled the trend of the dissident art of the 1980s as "the bottom of populism."[36] This accusation holds in the way many of the artists seized the opportunity to gain public recognition through easily accessible means of exhibiting on the premises of the Church, and whose use of the new symbolic language was clearly motivated by the objective to gain publicity through soliciting the interest of the audience. Consequently, many works of art produced at this time had indeed low artistic merit as the galleries of the underground were less discriminating and consequently more accessible for the artists than the traditional forms of public display. Many dissident artworks that otherwise would have been rejected by the competitive criteria set by the museums/galleries, in the context of the contemporary political events and especially due to the novel structure of the exhibiting, were exposed to the public.

However, notwithstanding the motif behind the use of this language by the individual artists, its presence in the contemporary art was also a direct response for the demand for an easily understandable language that generated an emotional connection between the artwork and the viewer. The accusation of sometimes low artistic quality is valid only with reference to the formal and aesthetic evaluation of some of these works while the criticism is simultaneously irrelevant to their communicative character and political function. Since the meaning of these works was determined by the context of the events of the 1980s and specifically by Martial Law that restricted dissident communication to expressiveness of the symbol, the criticism of the public appeal of

---

[34] Jaroslaw M. Daszkiewicz, 8.
[35] A prominent art critic.
[36] Anna Rottenberg quoted in http://www.iyp.org/Archives/polska/0105/msg00040.html

dissident art with respect to iconography and symbolic language disregards the fact that these are the crucial factors responsible for the function of these works as the carriers of the ideology of the opposition; the easily understood meaning of the symbols in the works of art created the means of the communication with the audience and, through these channels, propagated the ideology of the opposition. The communicativeness of the work of art and, by extension, its political force, depended precisely on the artists acknowledging the needs of contemporary society and producing art that spoke their language. This thesis through the discussion of dissident art in the context of political and religious discourses, only reinforced the unique character of dissident art as a time-specific phenomenon, and it is in connection to the context of the 1980s that one may appreciate the levels of meaning infused into that art and realize the power it had as a tool of dissemination of dissident thought.

## Bibliography

"Army is in Control in Poland but Party is not Counted out." *New York Times* (December 29, 1981): A4.

"New army Council Bans Rallies and Sets Wide Grounds for Arrests." *New York Times* (December 14, 1981): A16.

Aman, Andres. "Symbols and Rituals in the People's Democracies During the Cold War." *Symbols of Power: The Esthetics of Political Legitimation in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe*, Arvidsson and Blomqvist, eds. Sweden: Stockholm, 1987.

Baranczak, Stanisław. *Czytelnik Ubezwłasnowolniony. Perswazja w Masowej Kulturze Literackiej PRL* [The Restrained Reader. Persuasion in the Mass Literary Culture of the PRL]. Paris: Libella, 1983.

Bielasiak, Jack, ed. *Poland Today: The State of the Republic.* New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1981.

Braun, Kazimierz. *Teatr Polski 1939-1989. Obszary Wolnosci—Obszary Zniewolenia* [The Polish Theatre. The Areas of Freedom—The Areas of Repression]. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Semper, 1994.

Curry, Leftwich Jane, trans. and ed. *The Black Book of Polish Censorship.* New York: Vintage Books, 1984.

Darren, Gobert, R. *Frame Confusion and the Manufacture of Emotion.* Montreal: McGill University for Professor Mette Hjort, 1996.

Daszkiewicz, Jaroslaw M. *Malarstwo Mlodych 1980-1990.* Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Artystyczne i Filmowe, 1995.

Doran, Kevin P. *A Synthesis of Personalism and Communism in the Thought of Karol Wojtyla/ Pope John Paul II.* New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1996.

Foucault, Michel. *The Archeology of Knowledge.* London: Routledge, 2001.

Gajda, Jan. "August 1980 as I Saw It." *Sisyphus: Sociological Studies* 3: 238-39.

Garton, Timothy Ash. *The Polish Revolution: Solidarity.* New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1983.

Glowinski, Michał. *Nowomowa po Polsku* [Newspeak]. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo PEN, 1991.

Glowinski, Michał. *Peereliada. Komentarze do Slow 1976-1981.* Warszawa: Panstwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1993.

Jaruzelski, Wojciech. *Przemowienia* [Speeches]. Warszawa: Ksiazka i Wiedza, 1983.

Karpinski, Jakub. *Dziwna Wojna* [Strange War]. Paryz : Instytut Literacki, 1990.

Kubik, Jan. "Who Done It: Workers, Intellectuals, or Someone Else? Controversy over Solidarity's Origins and Social Composition." *Theory and Society* 23 (1994): 441-446.

Kubik, Jan. *The Power of Symbols Against the Symbols of Power. The Rise of Solidarity and the Fall of State Socialism in Poland.* Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania University Press, 1944.

Kuron, Jacek and Jacek Zakowski. *PRL dla Poczatkujacych* [The PRL for Beginners]. Wroclaw: Wydawnictwo Dolnoslaskie, 1996.

Lotman, Yuri M. and B. A. Uspensky. "On the Semiotic Mechanism of Culture," trans. George Mihaychuk. *The Literary History* 9 (Winter 1978): 211-212 quoted in Terdiman 1876, 97.

Luxmoore, Jonathan and Jolanta Babiuch. *The Vatican and the Red Flag: The Struggle for the Soul of Eastern Europe.* London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1999.

Markus, Maria. "Overt and Covert Modes of Legitimation in East European Societies." *Political Legitimation in Communist States,* T.H. Rigby and Ferenc Feher, eds. Oxford: The Macmillian Press, 1982.

McCauley, Martin. "Poland and Papal Power." *Contemporary Review* 243 (1983): 128-132.

Mianowicz, Tomasz. "Miedzy Zbawieniem a Polityka [Between Salvation and Politics]." *Zeszyty Historyczne* 107 (1994): 31-47.

Mianowicz, Tomasz. *Katolicy w Potrzasku: Wspomnienia z Periferii Polityki.* Warszawa: Polska Oficyna Wydawnicza "BGW", 1993.

Micewski, Andrzej. *Cardinal Wyszynski: A Biography.* San Diego: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanowich, 1984.

Micewski, Andrzej. *Kosciol-Panstwo 1945-1989* (The Church—The State 1945-1989.) Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Szkolne i Pedagogiczne, 1994.

Modzelewski, Jaroslaw. *My i Oni* [Us and Them]. Lublin: BWA, 1983.

Osa, Maryjane. "Pastoral Mobilization and Contention: The Religious Foundations of the Solidarity Movement in Poland." *Disruptive Religion: The Force of Faith in Social-Movement Activism*, Christian Smith, ed. New York: Rutledge, 1996.

Raina, Peter ed., *Jan Pawel II Prymas i Episkopat Polski o Stanie Wojennym. Kazania, Listy, Przmowienia, Komunikaty* [John Paul II the Primate and the Episcopate of Poland about the Martial Law. Sermons, Letters, Speeches, Announcements]. London: Oficyna Poetow i Malarzy, 1982.

Raina, Peter. *Wizyty Apostolskie Jana Pawla II w Polsce. Rozmowy Przygotowawcze Watykan—PRL—Episkopat* [The Apostolic Visits of John Paul II to Poland. The preparatory conversations Vatican—PRL—Episcopate]. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo "Ksiazka Polska," 1997.

Raina, Peter. *Poland 1981: Towards Social Renewal.* London: G. Allen and Unwin, 1985.

Raina, Peter. *Political Opposition in Poland, 1945-1977.* London: Poets and Painters, 1978.

Rigby, T. H. "Introduction: Political Legitimacy, Weber and Communist Mono-organisational Systems." *Political Legitimation in Communist States,* T.H. Rigby and Ferenc Feher, eds. Oxford: The Macmillian Press, 1982.

*Tajne Doumenty Panstwo—Kosciol 1980-1989* (The Secret Documents The State—The Church 1980-1981.) London: Polityka, 1993.

Terdiman, Richard. *Discourse/Counter-Discourse. The Theory and Practice of Symbolic Resistance in Nineteenth- Century France.* London: Cornell University Press, 1985.

*The Pope in Poland [Prepared by the Research and the Analysis Department of the Radio Free Europe Division of the Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty].* [s.l.] : Radio Free Europe Research, 1979)

Törnquist Plewa, Barbara. *The Wheel of Polish Fortune.* Sweden: Lund University , 1992.

Wedel, Janina.. *The Private Poland.* New York: Facts on File Publication, 1986.

Weigel, George. *The Final Revolution: The Resistance Church and the Collapse of Communism* New York: Oxford University Press, 1992.

Wojciech Jaruzelski, *Przemowienia* [Speeches] (Warszawa: Ksiazka i Wiedza, 1983) 213-216.

Wojciechowski, Aleksander. *Plastyka po 1981 Roku* [Art after 1981]. Warszawa: Muzeum Archidiecezji Warszawskiej, 1986.

Wojciechowski, Aleksander. *Czas Smutku, Czas Nadziei* [The Time of Sadness, The Time of Hope]. Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Artystyczne i Filmowe, 1992.

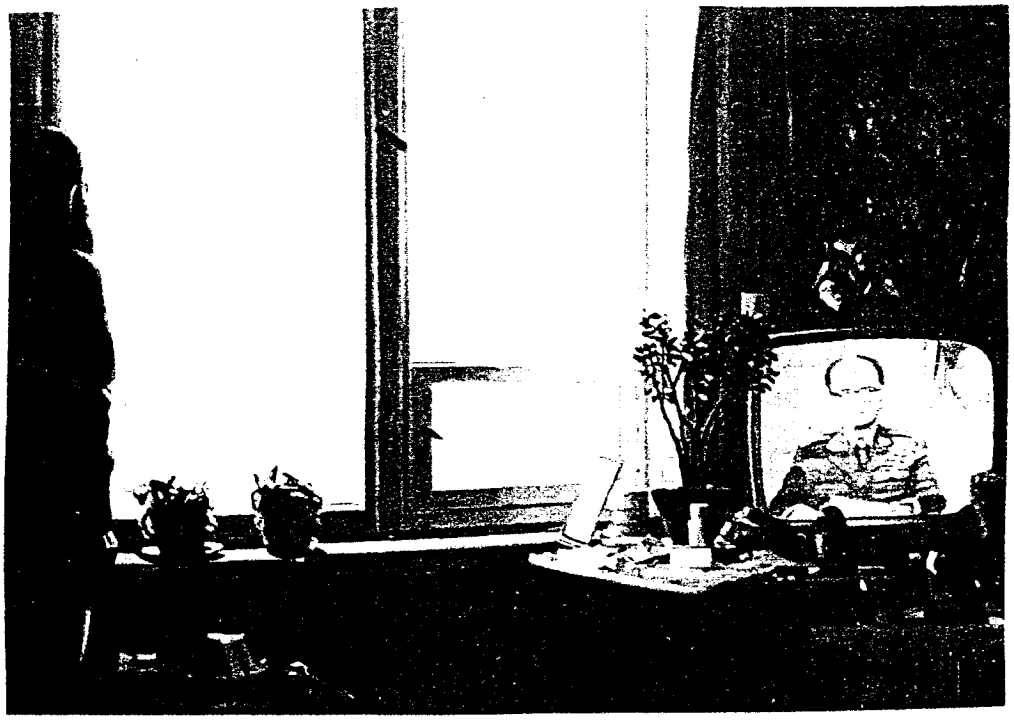

Fig. 1 Lukasz Korolkiewicz. *The Morning of the 13th of December 1981.* Oil on canvas, 1982.

Fig. 2 Lukasz Korolkiewicz. *The Cross in the Winter.* Oil on canvas, 1983.

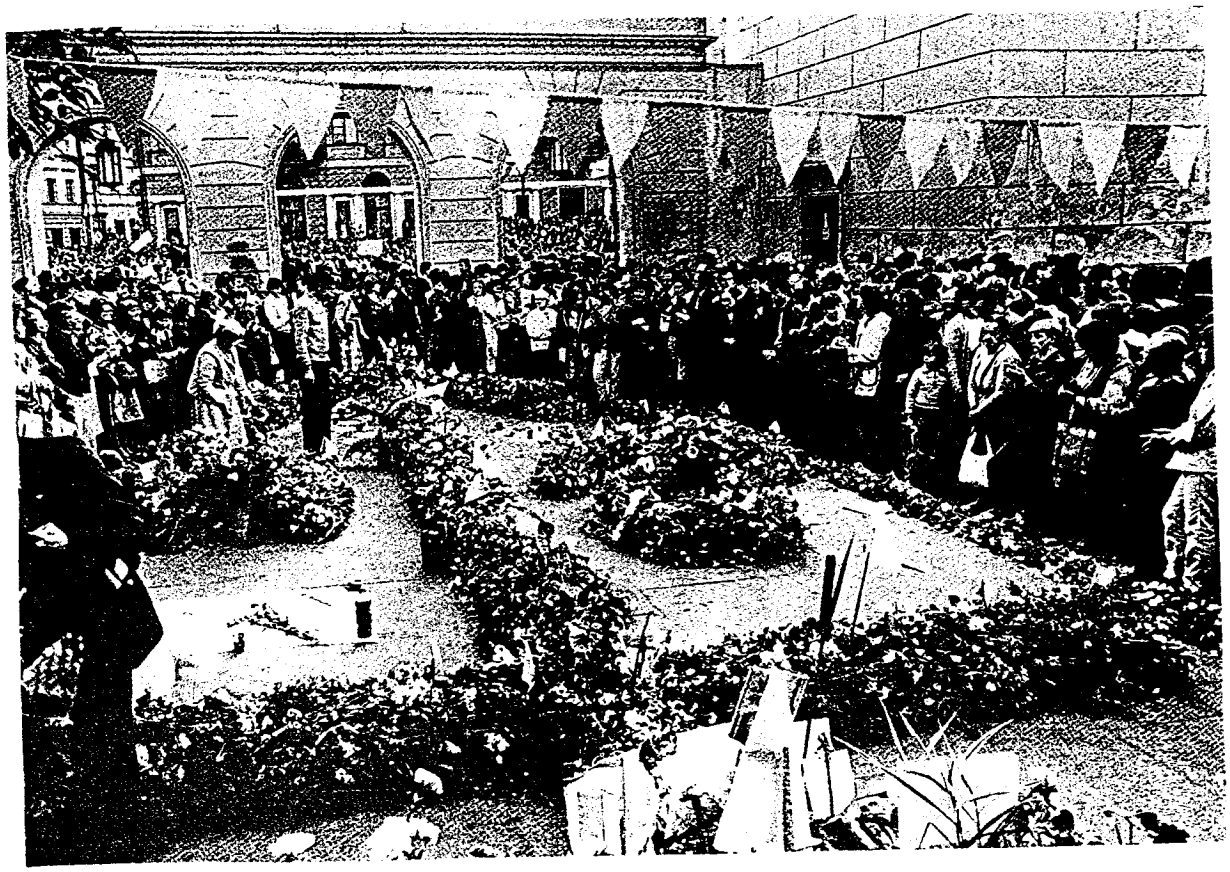

Fig. 3 The cross of flowers near the Church of St. Anne in Warsaw. Black and white photograph, June, 1983.

Fig. 4 Jerzy Kalina. *The Last Supper.* A photograph of an installation which was part of a group exhibition, "The Sign of the Cross," in the Church of the God's Mercy in Warsaw, 1983.

Fig. 5 Jacek Waltos. *Two sides of the gate—the August Sunday 80.* Oil on canvas, 1981-2.

Fig. 6 Zbigniew Gawrych. *Conversation 1* . Oil on canvas, 1987.