THE WAR FOR INFORMATION:  
THE POLISH RESPONSE TO MARTIAL LAW

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A decree declaring martial law in Poland was passed by the Council of State to go into effect at midnight Dec. 12, 1981. The announcement was made on Polish radio in the early hours of December 13, on behalf of the newly-created Military Council for National Salvation (acronym WRON in Polish). Martial law was lifted on July 22, 1983. During this period Poles lived under a "state of war," the literal meaning of the Polish term: stan wojenny. To ordinary Poles the intent was singular: Jaruzelski had declared war on the nation.

In the following paper, I place the war for information during this two and one half year period in the centre of the conflict between government and governed; on the one hand, in rejecting the state monopoly over information, society rejected the legitimacy of the military government. On the other hand, the free exchange of information became the institution around which people organized spontaneously and thus gained a measure of personal and political autonomy from the structures of party, military and state. The war for uncensored and unmanipulated information under martial law can be seen as the legacy of the independent, self-governing trade union Solidarnosc, for whom the free exchange of information had been its raison d'etre and its only defence (Tymowski, 1982: p. 30).

Three Polish riddles establish the context for the topic: 1. Where is the greatest freedom found? In England under Thatcher, in Germany under Kohl or in Poland under Jaruzelski? 2) How does the Polish constitution differ from the American? 3) What is the lowest rank in the Polish army? The answers: 1) in Poland, of course. In England, everything which is not forbidden is allowed. In Germany, all that is not allowed is forbidden, but in Poland, all that is forbidden is allowed. 2) The Polish constitution differs from the American in that citizens are guaranteed freedom of speech. Under the U.S. Constitution they are guaranteed freedom after speech. 3) The lowest army rank is that of television announcer.

The first riddle, paraphrased from a version dating back to the seventies, illustrates the peculiar tension characteristic of the attempts made by the democratic opposition after 1976 to live "in the truth", as-if free, by signing petitions with real names and addresses and by conducting open meetings. As theorized by Adam Michnik in his 1977

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essay "A New Evolutionism", the Polish self-limiting revolution set out to challenge the monopoly on public life established by the political authorities and dominated by the Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR). The project called for the recapture of civic space, whereby people could acknowledge the subjectivity of their destiny rather than react as objects to the policies imposed by political authorities. These social actions, however, had to stop short of demanding political power. The legalization of NSZZ Solidarnosc in 1980 was the practical result of just such a vision. It demonstrated a society organizing and defending itself against a hostile and manipulating state under the banner in which "all that is forbidden is allowed".

The second riddle, a product of Poland under martial law, points to the fundamental lie at the heart of the political system in Poland. Although guaranteed in theory by the Constitution, freedom of speech is in practice not an unalienable right, but a privilege granted by the Communist party in return for obedience. Timothy Garton Ash summarizes the challenge wrought by what Michnik called the "politics of truth" against a canvas of ideologically determined lies which hold the system together (Ash, 1986: 48). During martial law, the example of Michnik and hundreds of others refused to give up the gains in freedom of thought and expression made during the Solidarnosc period of 1980-81, even if it meant long periods of imprisonment. This was a moral victory for society.

The third riddle illustrates the central importance given by the Polish political authorities themselves to maintaining absolute control over information. Martial law was in part so successful in the short term, due to the total information blockade imposed on Poland both domestically and internationally. The decree on martial law was first broadcast over radio from temporary facilities in the Warsaw army barracks, known popularly as "Studio Bunker". The sight of television announcers in military uniform met with public derision. In associating the military with what was to become the most discredited institution under martial law—the television evening news—Jaruzelski lost all credibility in his efforts to justify military intervention as a necessary evil preferable to direct intervention by the Soviets.

Living the Lie

A totalitarian regime's oppressive control of all human activity is perhaps most acutely felt when it begins to crumble. The 1979 Report on the State of the Republic, by a leading think-tank of both party and non-party intellectuals, demonstrates this point:

All in all, it seems that this pillar of the system of political power suffers from the same ailments as all the others: inefficiency, ineffectiveness, inauthenticity, and the inability to correct itself ("Experience and the Future" Discussion Group, 1981: 54).
The primary goal of the state information monopoly prior to 1980, can be characterized as the maintenance of political power through social disintegration and atomization, the encouragement of factionalism and an anti-intellectual bias.

During this period the main avenues of control exercised by the party over the mass media included: 1) the issuing of directives regarding the main lines of propaganda policy (including the use of disinformation campaigns); 2) the appointment of politically trusted personnel to key positions; 3) censorship and the extended apparatus of restrictions on dissemination of information (ibid., : 53). Georges Mond described the workings of censorship (Mond 1982: 63) as the surveillance of all intellectual and creative work including the printed word, science, literature, art, painting, sculpture, music, drama and film. Władysław Bienkowski, (1969), former member of the central committee of the PUWP and former minister of national education under Gomulka adds in "Engines and Brakes of Socialism" that censorship had two aims. First, to paralyze social life so as to prevent the expression of critical judgment or questioning which could lead to uncontrolled social integration. Also, to seal off the outside world by breaking all circulation of information so as to exclude any scales of comparison which might challenge the "socialist" worldview.

Characteristically, the process of censorship is itself censored. Up to the mid-seventies, few editors even of the party press were aware of the extent to which regulations authorized interference by the censorship office. With the smuggling out of Poland in 1977 of a remarkable selection of documents by an employee from the censorship office in Krakow and their publication first in London by Aneks and the following year in Poland by the clandestine publishing house NOWA, a pervasive system of psychological terror and monitoring of ideas was demasked (Curry 1984: 5). Writers producing for the censored press often did not recognize they were censoring themselves until they began writing for the clandestine press. The first post-war Polish novel to be written without regard for the censor was Small Apocalypse, published by the independent literary periodical Zapis in 1979. Its author, Tadeusz Konwicki, acknowledged the struggle with himself to silence the inner censor by saying: "After writing for the official publishing houses for more than 25 years, I had internalized the process of censorship" (Sawyer 1980: p. 7).

The history of Poland's journalistic profession throughout the fifties, sixties and seventies can also be seen as a history of testing the limits of censorship. The variety and range of publications reached its peak under Gierek with over 56 daily newspapers, 595 magazines and periodicals. There were over 10,000 journalists working in Polish media in the 1970's, who were required to be highly-skilled professionals but not necessarily party members. It was from their ranks that the independent publishing movement would gather its first adherents, although for many this was a gradual process of abandonment of hope in reforming the system. Hanna Krall, a former journalist for Polityka, the party paper for intellectuals, reflected on the breaking point after which working within the censorship system became increasingly impossible:
Until 1976 all of us thought we were really decent just because we didn't actively co-operate with official power. It's rather shameful that, when the opposition started, many decent writers and artists hated them because their appearance made it clear that active and not just passive resistance was possible (Holland et al. 1982: p. 17).

A similar point was made by the sociologist J. Szczepanski before a committee of the Polish Sejm (Parliament):

The publication by a censor who defected to the West of our rules of censorship produced a shock in scholarly circles and a feeling of shame with regard to such a system of control over publications ("Experience and the Future" Discussion Group 1981: 160).

Feelings of abhorrence at the monumentality of State manipulation of information was further aggravated by the discrepancy between the Polish state of economic affairs portrayed by the mass media, Gierek's famous propaganda of success and the hastening deterioration of the actual situation. The same poll responses reflected the conclusive opinion that a rift had been created between the social order and the political system based on misinformation and the arbitrariness of the censor (ibid: p. 157).

Agnieszka Holland, Poland's leading female film director and member of Andrzej Wajda's "X" film unit, summed up the status of the information monopoly on the eve of Solidarnosc:

In the second half of the seventies the schizophrenia between reality and what the government broadcast grew ever wider. With our films we were trying to say what everybody knew: that all official propaganda is a lie (Short 1982: p. 17).

The regime became increasingly unsure of the very people, the writers, journalists and artists, on whom the information monopoly rested.

Bread and Truth

Writers and journalists were instrumental in creating the momentum for attacking the limits on expression. With the death of Stalin and Beirut, the intellectual community had already begun to test limits (Curry 1984: p. 15). Workers in 1956 marched behind banners which demanded "bread" but also "truth". One of the first acts of rioting workers was to smash the installations responsible for jamming foreign shortwave broadcasts. In September of 1956, censors who were also party officials voted to go on strike against censorship and declared the Main Office disbanded. Out of fear that no control would be seen as provocation, journalists responded by forming their own Board of Press Review. This period of reform also saw the founding of many liberal journals and the resumption of the Catholic press under editors independent of the regime.
The honeymoon was over by 1957. Critical journals were closed down, censorship renewed, and many writers blacklisted. But censorship under Gomulka was capricious, subject to intervention from party members and thus at times reversible. The pressure from the intellectual community was kept up as 35 intellectuals called for greater freedom of expression in April, 1964. Student demonstrations in 1968 arising out of the cancellation of the play Dziady (The Forefathers) at Warsaw University, again saw protests against the manipulation of censorship and anti-Jewish propaganda in particular. Students spread the slogan "the press lies" and undertook the widespread burning of newspapers. During the same period, the Polish Writers’ Union passed a resolution condemning the state’s cultural policy.

The generation of ‘68 began a new phase in post-war society’s rejection of Communist rule. Starski called it an organized challenge to the information monopoly:

A whole new wave of poets, graphic artists (especially poster makers...), novelists, critics, and photographers slowly emerged at the forefront of the new generation. Decisively divorced from all news media and from most of the possibilities of mass dissemination of their work, they nevertheless managed to build footholds by means of a network of student art and theatre festivals.... (Starski 1982: p. 35).

According to Starski, independent artists and writers came to be seen as the only legitimate representatives of public opinion. One might wonder how a totalitarian state with all of the country’s resources at its disposal, the threat of Soviet military might at its doorstep and the example of Hungary and Czechoslovakia behind it, could possibly fail to bring its citizens under control. The answer, according to Adam Michnik, lies in tradition. Polish aspirations for an independent society based on respect for individual freedoms hark back to the Polish Constitution of 1791 kept alive by the Polish Roman Catholic Church. He notes:

The Church provided a true barrier against totalitarian power. It was an institution that defended the nation’s identity, its rights and values. (Michnik 1986: p. 46).

Independent thought was nurtured by the Church via episcopal letters, church sermons, parish bulletins, and bulletins from the Polish Episcopate’s press office, together with the only officially sanctioned Catholic weekly Tygodnik Powszechny (The Universal Weekly), and the Catholic publishing house Znak (The Sign) both founded soon after the war.

Curry documents that though the Catholic press was subject to special censorship regulations administered by specially trained censors, Tygodnik Powszechny even during the most repressive periods provided readers and writers an opportunity to survive and to preserve fundamental values. In the decade following the repression of workers in 1970, Gierek’s "Newspeak", which promised everything in order to appease, actually strengthened and centralized censorship. This created the conditions
for a move by intellectuals into the democratic opposition because they lost hope in the goal of reform from within the party apparatus.

The birth of the movement for the social defence of truth dates from the founding of KOR (the Committee for Defence of Workers) in September, 1976 in the aftermath of workers’ repression in Radom. Soon after the clandestine monthlies Biuletyn Informacyjny (Information Bulletin) and Komunikat (the Communique) were first published. Within a year, some twenty publications working clandestinely and at first using simple techniques such as screen-printing appeared. They ranged from literary and critical journals, to discussions of strategy and dialogue between workers and a broader readership. All of them documented the authorities’ abuse of power. The revolution in social consciousness was furthered in May, 1977 with the founding of NOWA (acronym for New Publishing House), the first and largest of the independent publishing houses.

In hindsight, it is clear that the independent publishing movement born after 1976, was an ambitious education effort aimed at the taboos and gaps in the regime’s treatment of Polish history and culture. In addition, the democratic opposition began to identify the official media as a completely hollow and discredited institution, similar to the official trade unions and economic planners. In exposing the official media, the opposition was in fact condemning the very nature of the system of governing. Most importantly, perhaps the informal network of writers, editors, printers, distributors and readers which developed out of the need to distribute publications in thousands of copies, were the beginnings of an underground network which could pass on information quickly and reliably.

In short, independent publishing created a widening area of independent social initiative which can in retrospect be credited with breaking the back of the information monopoly. As one of NOWA’s key organizers and most jailed members, Miroslaw Chojecki notes:

...in a totalitarian state it is not the law that guarantees concessions but the balance of power. The extent of freedom of speech depends on social pressures (Bielinski and Chojecki 1981: p. 36).

KOR set an example for other independent initiatives, including groups furthering independent trade unionism, KPN, (Confederation for an Independent Poland), R-OPCiO (Movement in Defence of Civil and Human Rights), TKN (Flying University) (Bartoszewski, 1985) and other informal study groups, as well as public meetings of all kinds, conferences and discussion clubs. It is significant that those initiatives like DiP ("Experience and the Future" Discussion Group) which were addressed to the regime, with the aim of establishment of a dialogue, met with stony official silence. The regime was from then on set on a collision course with a society increasingly hungry for political honesty.
"The Socialization of Truth"

The rise of Solidarnosc provided a shift in the balance of power between society and the state by guaranteeing freedom of expression. In 1980-81 Andrzej Szczypiorski described Poland as in transition from a state-owned society to a socialised state. In communicational terms a state monopoly on truth was being transformed into a socialized participation in the creation of the truth. Such a transformation required new structures to accommodate the existent social pluralism. The goals as well as the internal functioning of Solidarnosc could accommodate this social pluralism, because it decentralized both the dissemination of information and direct social access to it. The great strike of August, 1980, tested the maturity of the Polish worker vis-a-vis the information monopoly. In it Polish journalists were evicted from the Gdansk shipyard on the fourth day of the strike as "collaborators" of the authorities. According to Starski:

The media are well orchestrated and their saving grace is their low-key strategy. But the media lagged behind the new awareness of the striking workers—the workers read the newspapers and listened to TV but did not pay attention to them. (Starski 1982: p. 64).

It is on the media front that Gierek's government lost the battle in August, 1980 (Fedorowicz 1985).

Immediately after August 31, 1980, bulletins, information sheets and newspapers began to be published in every place of work. In addition an extraordinary congress of SDP (Association of Polish Journalists) was held in October, 1980, which passed a resolution calling for a report on the state of social communication in Poland. Its leadership furthermore began to agitate for reforms in the profession, while its newly-elected president, Stefan Bratkowski, was to become one of the most outspoken voices of reform within the party. The period between August 1980 and December 1981 saw an explosion of debate and testing the limits in the official press and media.

The loosening of the fetters, however, did not allow Solidarnosc to forget that the fetters were still basically intact. While Polish TV offered its studios and producers, Solidarnosc insisted on social control of the media but was not able to produce its own newscasts. By January, 1981, negotiators for Solidarnosc were able to wrench permission from the government for the publication of a weekly, national newspaper with a circulation of 500,000. When compared to Tygodnik Powszechny, whose circulation during the Solidarnosc period doubled to 80,000, the quota granted by the government was unprecedented, while still below actual demand. Tygodnik Solidarnosc was particularly useful in drawing attention to and criticizing the periodic outbursts of invective in the official media against the giant trade union. The most alarming attack on Solidarnosc came in August, 1981, when the interruption of negotiations on the economy and access to the media was reported in the party-controlled media as being union initiated. In protest, printers across the country struck for two days on August
19-20 in an action named "Days without press" (Dni bez prasy). The printers’ strike, however, did not win any major concessions from the government.

The acute state of the crisis prompted the Polish Episcopate to urge that the "present users of mass media withdraw from exacerbating and provocative propaganda" in its statement on August 31, 1981 (Declaration 1981: p. 2). As a result of the continued distortion of the union's program, Polish television was barred from the September and October sessions of the first Congress of Delegates forcing it to buy footage from western networks.

During this congress three out of thirteen thematic groups dealt with some aspect of information and dissemination. One, considered information within the trade union and adopted the principle of pluralism over any form of prior censorship. Another dealt with negotiations and protests and propaganda issues. Interestingly, propaganda was considered to be of concern to union members and non-members alike and to aim toward a public debate with the government. In this way Solidarnosc intended to defend the public interest as well as the interests of union members. The most detailed treatment of information dissemination was carried out by the thirteenth thematic group, dealing with the mass media. The group defined the field as including all forms and aspects of "social communication". The evolving program defended the right of media access for all social groups proportionate to their representation in society. It called for the preparation of a new law on social communication, the abolition of the state administrative monopoly on radio and television and the formation of an administrative-executive body made up of representatives of all political and social groups to oversee programming.

The program further called for the creation of Solidarnosc editorial staff in the central and regional structures of Polish radio and television; the creation of Solidarnosc broadcasting stations for radio and television; the creation of Solidarnosc photo-information and film agencies, press, phonographic and video publications, typographical shops and a daily national newspaper. In addition it foresaw increasing the circulation of the weekly to 1 million copies. Finally, the program promised to protect those journalists working in all forms of social communication who would respect the principles of the Journalist’s Code of Ethics. In short, the program of the first Congress of Solidarnosc provided a far-reaching vision of the socialization of mass media within the existing structures and the development of new structures to be created by law, in accordance with the unrealized principles of the Polish Constitution.

Solidarnosc found common cause with its program for socializing communication in the journalists’ community (Taborski, 1982). Journalist Maciej Iowiecki presented a paper on the mass media at the interrupted Congress of Polish Culture held in Warsaw on December 11 and 12, 1981, in which he argued for placing the media under social control in order to end the government’s monopoly on information. The
Tertiary actions of the government throughout 1980-81 indicate that the regime was most frightened by the loss of control of the mass media demanded by Solidarnosc. Consequently the regime fought hardest to prevent this from occurring.

The War for Information: "Communication as Resistance"

The widespread social response to martial law from the point of view of communication was resistance and regrouping of independent information networks, often inspired by the experiences of the Polish underground during the Nazi occupation. Within hours, the first leaflets were circulating in Warsaw, within weeks the first information sheets on repression and resistance were being printed. A Krakow flyer captured the essence of the war for information:

...Information about the resistance is the most effective help you can give to those struggling, since support by force is impossible. The miners strike in Peczory or Kolymy mines is a hopeless cause, because those strikers can be shot, drowned or gassed and the world will find out about it in a hundred years. But the whole world knows about the struggle of the miners in Silesia and therefore the authorities hesitate to use force. Information was the reason. This obvious truth is wonderfully understood by the authorities, which have undertaken an information and communication blockade unseen in world history. In the struggle waged today by the workers, we cannot count on a military victory, but a moral one....Re-write this flyer and pass it on to your friends for re-copying (Krakow, December 19, 1981. Zwiszkowiec 1982: p. 1).

After an initial period of disorientation as new leaders in the publishing movement stepped in to replace those cut off by martial law or interned, old and totally new publishing groups went into action. Working on poor equipment, under threat of harsh punishment, curfew conditions and constant patrols, the independent press could nevertheless count on an army of volunteers. Despite an atmosphere of fear, many imaginative actions attest to a prevailing sense of social cohesiveness. When distribution of the underground press became difficult due to police checks of suspiciously large bags, Solidarnosc appealed to Warsaw dwellers to all carry large bags. The public responded. Print-runs varied from hundreds to thousands of issues. Tygodnik Mazowsze (Mazowsze Weekly) ran between 15,000 and 40,000 copies while Solidarnosc Malopolska issued between 15,000 and 25,000 weekly (Kalabinski 1984: p. 70). Innovation was continuous, as reflected in the title CDN (To Be Continued) which combined in its very name the concept of communication and resistance. Specialized publications included Godnosc (Dignity) for policemen in Warsaw and Reduta (Redoubt) for soldiers.

While most of Solidarnosc facilities were raided and confiscated, including paper supplies, presses, archives, audio-visual and photographic equipment, during the night of December 12-13, 1981, some publishers like NOWA were accustomed to clandestine conditions and were able to resume activities with some continuity after the initial
period of confusion. In other cases, new publishing groups were founded. About eighteen major and minor publishing houses were in operation during martial law with over 100 titles. Within six months of the clampdown, some 1,500 news sheets, bulletins or pamphlets were being published, on the shop-floor, by neighborhood groups, Solidarnosc structures and even high school students. This figure, which included about 100 factory publications, fell to below 1,000 by late summer of 1982 as co-ordination improved and publishing efforts amalgamated.

Protests against the crass and ineffective propaganda of the early days of martial law took interesting and poetic forms. There were the famous evening strolls in Swidnik and Lublin by thousands of citizens, during the time of the evening television news (Zlotkowski et al. 1983: p. 161-4). Television sets were even turned towards the windows to underscore the fact that nobody was watching. The retaliation of the authorities by turning off the electricity and water and by later imposing stricter limits on movement when even more people turned out into the streets for "strolls" underscores how effective society could be in demonstrating its independence from official mind-control. Zbigniew Bujak, regional chairman of Mazowsze, published an appeal taken up in other parts of the country to boycott the press: "Let the piles of unsold newspapers at the newsstands demonstrate our opposition to military rule". According to the estimates of Tygodnik Mazowsze, the appeal was by and large respected. Up to 80% of official party newspapers remained unsold in the kiosks.

The most spectacular form of resistance under martial law was the creation in new form of Radio Solidarnosc. The first broadcast on home radios in many districts of Warsaw on April 12, 1982, lasted eight minutes. The next on April 30 called for a "repossession" of May 1 celebrations. In spite of a massive mobilization of radio experts and listening devices, authorities continued to be foiled in their search for the transmitters. Radio Solidarnosc continued to broadcast in Warsaw until late June, when the action was discontinued for several months due to the loss of one of its transmitters and intensive interference. Broadcasts were then moved to other cities of which there were ten in all. They constituted an incalculable breakthrough both morally and psychologically in the war for information.

One of the longest and most impressive strikes under martial law was carried out by members of ZASP (Association of Polish Stage Artists), against Polish radio and television. The public joined in this action by literally hissing or applauding those artists off the stage who were known to have "broken" the strike by collaborating with the authorities and appearing on radio or television or in performing for the military. All manner of cultural expression with the sanction of the state was viewed as a betrayal, as the following appeal to painters published in the underground paper Obserwator Wielkopolski testified:

A l'heure où les droits de l'homme les plus élémentaires sont bafoués en Pologne et où la voix de l'individu et celle de la majorité de la nation sont
etouffées, l'art fonctionnant avec le consentement officiel deviendra une fausse façade. Ne créez pas cette façade... (Zlotkowski 1983: p. 182).

Father Jerzy Popieluszko's sermons on culture captured the spirit of an embattled country under martial law. In a sermon shortly before his kidnapping and murder by state security police in 1983, he articulated the intensity of the struggle noting:

The war started once again against Truth and freedom of expression, against freedom and the greatness of ideas spoken out loudly, influenced by awakened conscience. Every remark about Human Rights is now labelled a hostile activity (Short 1985: p. 12).

"The Struggle for Monopoly"

In response to the information blackout levelled on Poland on December 13, 1981, which paralyzed all communication and movement, managing editor William Thomas of the Los Angeles Times commented: "We've never seen such a complete clampdown on all avenues of information" (Castro 1981: p. 72). The international community too was reduced to dependence on official Polish sources until January 9, 1982. In Munich these were translated and distributed to western news agencies (Grotzky 1982). The preparation of the media black-out months before December 13 confirms the suggestion that the regime was biding its time throughout 1980 and 1981, stalling and humouring Solidarnosc, while retrenching and preparing the internal coup. Advance plans for martial law included detailed measures concerning the mass media, based on an existing plan for the mass media in the event of war (Lechowicz 1982: p. 41). In July, 1981, Zdzislaw Balicki, the head of the PUWP's Committee for Radio and Television Affairs was replaced by hardliner Wladyslaw Loranc. After July, Polish media conducted an escalating smear campaign against Solidarnosc. Special programs for the first week of martial law were prepared in advance. Loranc was relieved of his duties in December, 1982, suggesting he had only been used to carry through the media plan for the military coup.

Measures taken under the decree on martial law included a curfew, ban on travel and transport, limiting postal and telecommunication services, censoring of mail and telephone conversations, requisitioning of radio transmitters and two-way radio receivers, a ban on photo-taking of certain buildings and in certain areas, the suspension of all newspapers and journals with the exception of Trybuna Luda, the PUWP daily, and Zolnierz Wolnosci, the daily of the military. All regional radio and television broadcasts were suspended and only one national television channel was left in operation (Cave 1982: p. 3-5). In addition, anyone over 17 could be interned given "justified suspicions" of threat to state security. All organizations were suspended, all publication, printing and dissemination of information required permission from the authorities, no public meetings could be held without permission and badges and uniforms were banned.
The security apparatus devoted great energy to rooting out independent sources of information in an effort to regain control of the circulation of information. This sometimes involved such extremes as using children to spy on parents, as the underground press reported:

"Studio Bunker" for radio and television began operations on December 14 with 452 selected personnel including journalists and technicians. Mass media under martial law were partially militarized; failure to follow orders could result in charges being brought in a military court. An addendum to the decree on martial law authorized the closing of the second television channel and three out of four radio programs. A leave of absence was granted to all personnel leaving only 452 out of 6,000 before martial law. The government Press Office under Jerzy Urban was run by only 42 people. Many members of the Association of Polish Journalists, 75% of whom had been Solidarnosc members, were interned. In general, the propaganda apparatus could only mobilize small numbers of people with little credibility in the eyes of the public.

Propaganda utilized under martial law aimed to intimidate and discourage resistance. Solidarnosc was made to appear responsible for the crisis in attempting to seize power and in supposedly having drawn up secret hit-lists of party functionaries. At the same time, martial law was offered as the only solution to restore equilibrium and normalcy, with a version of the propaganda of success revived. The blatency and ubiquitoussness of the "big lie" led some people to observe that only obituaries were true. Harsh sentences for illegal information activities were handed down (Wasilewska 1982). Among them five years for publishing and possession of unauthorized literature and leaflets. Between one and three years for high school students. Five years prison and four years suspension of civil rights for posting of leaflets with "false information". Four years for writing poems, letters and songs containing "false information". It is telling that the number of people sentenced on charges of "false information" was greater than those on charges of organizing strikes and protests. Zdzislaw Najder, a literary critic, left Poland after the takeover to accept the directorship of the Polish section of Radio Free Europe. He was sentenced to death in absentia on charges of sedition.

The fact that the regime was forced to dissolve (i.e. ban) many of the hundreds of associations, societies, social and professional organizations suspended by the decree on martial law, was evidence of the failure of threats, jail sentences, and appeals to cooperate with the military. "Normalization" proved to be impossible. The Association of Polish Journalists (SDP) was one of the first organizations to be banned in March, 1982 with a new Association of Journalists of the Polish People's Republic founded
two days later with 97 members. Two years later, only one-third of former SDP's 8,000 members had joined, many of the 5,600 new members being in fact clerks, typists and advertising people. Other banned organizations to follow were ZASP (December, 1982), the Union of Polish Visual Artists (June, 1983) and the board of Polish PEN the same day. The Film-makers Union remained suspended for two years, at which time Andrzej Wajda resigned as chairman. In the case where new unions were set up, they remained unpopular, obedient but powerless.

The harshness of persecution against journalists was unequalled in any other group. Five of the top elected officers of SDP were on the internment lists; 56 journalists from provincial towns were interned. Over 2,000 journalists were sacked from their jobs, of which 1,200 were permanently blacklisted. For others, their publications simply folded. In all, 26 editors-in-chief were relieved of their responsibilities. In radio and television 513 were fired. Many others took advantage of early retirement, refusing to work under militarized conditions. Journalists turned to "honest work", as one journalist called it who advertised for such in the want ads, as taxi-drivers, beekeepers, store-clerks, cabinet-makers and night watchmen.

Verification procedures were carried out in all militarized enterprises, such as mines and especially among journalists. In the first days of martial law, approximately 3-400 conversations took place with promises of promotions, wage increases, consumer goods and apartments and even positions as foreign correspondents in exchange for a pledge of loyalty. Copies of a declaration for signing were provided. The Association of Polish Journalists estimated that only about 12 individuals agreed. The full-fledged verification campaign was conducted in the subsequent months before commissions of up to 12 people. A new purge in the summer of 1983 saw the dismissal of a further 230 journalists for "insufficient professional activity". Loyalty oaths were a means of subjugating internees as well. Actress Halina Mikolajfska poignantly summed up their usage by military authorities in a letter from Darlowek camp on April 13, 1982:

"From the very first day we have been under pressure to sign loyalty oaths, oaths of obedience towards 'the new laws'.... Perhaps someday someone will describe the methods used to force people to sign those 'documents'; it will be a fat book of psychological - sometimes even physical - terror, of destroying people and blackmailing them through their children, parents, work, illnesses, trials, - in a word, the story of a 'pneumatic drill' applied to minds and hearts (Mikolajfska 1983: p. 16)."

A catalogue of measures to restore control over the mass media would not be complete without mentioning the use of disinformation. A false issue of Tygodnik Mazowsze was published on July 28, 1982 with a supposed appeal from the underground Solidarnosc leadership (TKK) to suspend all protests for three months. Prominent figures were cited as approving of WRON and of internment (Zlotkowski et al., 1983: 42). Documents were manufactured in other circumstances as "proof" of Solidarnosc
intentions to kill the families of party members. In other cases, television news showed the closing of internment camps which had been especially "installed" for the filming (ibid. : p. 152).

Parallel with attacks on working professionals and on the underground, the military regime prepared for the lifting of martial law by enacting new and repressive legislation. Withdrawn were most of the freedoms won by Solidarnosc, as well as some dating before 1980. This legislation included a new law on state and official secrets (December 14, 1982); new amendments to the law on censorship and amendments to the Penal Code with penalties for "dissemination of false information" and passing of information to foreign centers (July 1983). A new law on the Polish Press Agency (PAP) in 1983; and a new Press law were promulgated in January, 1984. (Pszenicki 1983). While making it more difficult to live alongside the regime, these new acts of legislation strengthened the resolve of many among them "verified" individuals to support independent and clandestine activities.

Having passed through an initial phase of promising reforms while arguing the necessity of military intervention, the regime was rebuffed by spontaneous strikes and widespread resistance. Knowing full well it was the enemy, society regrouped to carry out massive street demonstrations and protests on appropriate anniversaries throughout 1982. These actions, while proving to the regime the extent of social hostility, drew the full force of repression as a reply. There was use of the riot police, arrests, high fines and loss of employment and housing. A new concept of "protracted struggle" gradually emerged, (Kalabinski 1984: p. 70) as society sought to reconstitute itself in the underground through publishing, education and cultural activities.

"Civic Society"

A key element of the continued self-organisation of civic society was the refusal to collaborate with any institution identified with WRON. Here the actors' boycott by ZASP (Union of Stage Artists) was of tremendous significance as an example to others. Many shared the attitude of Halina Mikolajska, a leading actress who refused to leave internment under special protection from a well-known theatre director. She wrote in explanation that, "Loyalty to lawlessness means a pact with the devil". Despite financial hardships, the artists' boycott of television was almost total and constituted the longest strike under martial law, lasting till the dissolution of the association. The sixty or seventy strike-breakers found themselves completely ostracized socially by colleagues and by the public.

The military authorities attempted to break the strike by offering higher wages or by accusing artists of destroying the national culture. In response, actors organized special performances in theatres and churches as an alternative to television, appealing to the public in the underground press to support the boycott:
Warsaw actors, members of Solidarity, appeal to workers of the capital: Do not go to the cinema to see the propaganda trash of [pro-regime] directors like Poreba and Petelski. Go to the good theatres! By filling the house you support the TV boycott launched by the actors. You vote against the junta (Hofman 1983: p. 21).

These performances were both a gesture of contempt for WRON and an affirmation of values represented by Solidarnosc. Society not only voted with its feet by attending these performances; but created an actors' fund to provide stipends for actors boycotting television which gathered 800,000 zlotys by May, 1982. The effect of the boycott was that new television production was reduced to one quarter of the planned volume. Many people ceased to pay the television license fee.

It is important to underscore the continuity of meaning between the actions of an artistic or intellectual elite and that of society at large. Boycotting actors or directors, as well as writers or journalists who resigned their positions or found themselves fired, did so in the context of many everyday acts of resistance or shows of independence by ordinary people. A writer deemed to have lost face by appearing on television woke up to find his novels piled up on his doorstep by hundreds of angered readers who responded to an underground appeal to return his works for "paper recycling". These actions were typical of a conscious society living out its subjectivity. Alternative forms of expression sprang up everywhere, with the creation of underground badges, postage stamps, fake money satirizing the military authorities and wall messages and graffiti. While theatre performances often moved into church premises and many masses began to incorporate dramatic elements and recitations, journalists found new homes for their professional work. Within a few months of martial law takeover, the most popular newspaper in Warsaw was the Blind Co-operator, where many former journalists from Polityka became employed. Other experts in economics and international politics were writing in publications like the Angler. Stefan Bratkowski, the president of the Association of Polish Journalists until its dissolution took up a new form of publishing by recording an hour-long report on sound cassette once a month for duplication by others. Bratkowski was also at the centre of a mutual aid programme for about 1,000 journalists fired from their jobs.

The war for information, however, did not cease with the lifting of martial law, as Bratkowski points out, with new fronts of conflict continuing to open up. Television and radio continue to maintain lists of directors and actors who are out of favour. Due to surveillance of public places, the sound and video cassette are taking on increasing importance as influential media.

Alternative sources of news continued to be the mainstay of the self-organizing publishing movement. Western short-wave radio came to be popularly called simply "the news" under martial law. Government spokesman Jerzy Urban acknowledged its importance: "If you would close Radio Free Europe, the underground would cease to exist" (Forbes Jr. 1986: p. A21). In addition two underground domestic news
agencies were created. *Informacja Solidarnosci* (Solidarity Information), provided a twice weekly bulletin with information on *Solidarnosc* activities, in which the Temporary Co-ordinating Committee documented instances of repression. *Niezalezna Agencja Informacyjna* (Independent News Agency) provided domestic and foreign news to sixty publications, especially provincial ones, as well as a broadcast monitoring service. Emigre publishing houses continued their close collaboration with the underground, both by sending in foreign materials and by publishing materials from Poland. Other areas of action were also extensions of earlier work begun or developed during the 1980-81 period, including educational networks for which the underground began to print textbooks. It is interesting to note that the first self-education classes under martial law began in the internment camps.

The regime's response after two years of failure to win over writers and actors was to give exclusive priority in publishing and performance to "ideologically committed" writers and artists. As a result, the situation in Poland has been further polarized between the unofficial and the official culture since the suspension of martial law. While official cultural policy has become more repressive since 1984, there is some indication that the regime is willing to tolerate a new form of "co-existence" provided that independent culture does not form a mass movement like *Solidarnosc*. Small, decentralized initiatives will be tolerated, with periodic "crack-downs", imposition of exorbitant fines and jail sentences which will be suspended once the "example" has been made, as long as opposition activities remain fragmented. The hope of the regime is that ordinary people will sink into apathy. As the opposition continues to build autonomous social and cultural institutions, however, there is little indication that the civic space increasingly taken up by society since martial law will diminish.

The list of initiatives of social self-organisation in Poland under martial law is impressive. Central to the motivation for risking personal security and livelihood is the perception that no middle ground between society and the state is possible after martial law. A return to the political situation existing prior to 1980 is as impossible as forgetting eighteen months of almost-freedom. The breaking of the information monopoly by the democratic opposition in the late seventies, the extension of the idea of the social defense of truth during the *Solidarnosc* period into a program for social communication and the creation of independent centres and networks of information dissemination have been a critical factor if not a precondition for the reconstitution of civil society since martial law.

Western visitors are drawn into making a choice between giving legitimacy to the regime or siding with society, a choice which put Leonard Cohen on the blacklist of Polish Radio for having lent moral support to hunger strikers. More recently, Canadian author Rick Salutin found himself unprepared for the political sophistication required of visitors by the polarization of state and society in Poland. In agreeing to appear at an official conference on culture, he realized too late that it was a "mistake".
In Canada, it seems to me, the relationship between people and government is based largely on bad faith and manipulation but it contains some kind of grudging limited trust.... Here [in Poland] the disjunction between people and regime is so deep, a staggering breakdown of communication. What communication? (Salutin 1986-7: p. 13).

Salutin's description of the present stand-off relationship confirms that Jaruzelski's government, in saving the state, has irrevocably lost the nation.

REFERENCES


In conclusion I would like to say, that I absolutely disagree with my own opinion.