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HERITAGE OF ANTI-COMMUNIST CIVIL RESISTANCE IN THE POLISH PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC IN 1968–1989. INTRODUCTION TO A CLASSIFICATION OF COLLECTIONS

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Abstract: The year 2018 marks the hundredth anniversary of Poland regaining independence after years of partitions. Special celebrations are held across the country and many events will be continued to 2021 in accordance with, i.a. the *Niepodległa 2017–2021* program of the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage. The article presents the results of research on the resources of the material legacy of the historic formation of 1968–1989, which, although not easily defined, can be generally and broadly described as the anti-communist opposition in the People's Republic of Poland. Actions undertaken by the opposition go back to the so-called March 1968 events and the establishment of the "Ruch" Organisation followed by the Workers' Defence Committee, the Committee for Social Self-Defence "KOR", the Movement for Defence of Human and Civic Rights, the Confederation of Independent Poland, the Movement of Young Poland, and subsequently the Independent Self-governing Labour Union "Solidarity", the Independent Students' Association, and many smaller organisations or parties, up to the time of the so-called Round Table negotiations. The opposition contributed to

regaining full sovereignty, restoring market economy, and ending censorship, which restricted freedom of speech. The immense number of preserved so-called second circulation publications and objects from this period includes: books, periodicals, leaflets, photos, posters, stamps, badges, cassette tapes, as well as printing and duplicating machines, broadcasting equipment, and other material testimonies. At present, they are collected by Polish museums, some of which are still being organised, belong to associations and foundations as well as private owners, and often comprise remarkable collections, e.g. Krzysztof Bronowski's Museum of Free Speech containing over 700 000 items of interest to foreign museums. The opposition legacy includes information about members, events, underground publications, and organisations published on the Internet, i.a. the above-mentioned Museum of Free Speech, the *Niezależni dla Kultury 1976–1989* dictionary published by the Association of Free Speech, or the "Karta" Centre collections. The article attempts to classify these collections after interviewing representatives of relevant institutions and organisations or private owners.

Keywords: anti-communist civil opposition in the People's Republic of Poland, Polish underground press, censorship, notations, second circulation, collections.

The year 2018 marks the 100th anniversary of the regaining of independence by Poland after years of partitions. Celebration ceremonies are held across the entire country and numerous events will go on until 2021 in accordance with, i.a. the *Niepodległa 2017–2021* (Independent 2017–2021) programme launched by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage. Consequently, material heritage resources of the hard to define historical formation of the 1968–1989 period, which could be broadly and generally described as the anti-communist opposition in the People's Republic of Poland, should be examined. Opposition activity started with the so-called March events of 1968 and the establishment of the "Ruch" Organisation,¹ followed by the Workers' Defense Committee² and the Committee for Social Self-Defense "KOR",³ the Movement for Defense of Human and Civic Rights,⁴ the Confederation of Independent Poland,⁵ the Young Poland Movement⁶, the Independent Self-governing Trade Union "Solidarity",⁷ the Independent Students' Association⁸ and a multitude of smaller organisations or parties up to the time of the so-called Round Table debates.⁹ This widely comprehended opposition¹⁰ contributed to the recovery of total sovereignty, the restoration of the market economy, and the elimination of censorship,¹¹ which restricted freedom of speech. The period in question left behind a great number of so-called second circulation publications¹² in the form of books, periodicals, leaflets and brochures, together with photographs, posters, badges, stamps or tapes, but also printing machines, mimeographs, pins, broadcasting equipment or other material evidence. Today, they are accumulated in already existing or emerging museums, are the property of diverse associations or foundations as well as private owners, and often comprise significant collections. Other forms of legacy include information about persons, events, publications or opposition formations described and published on the Internet together with audiovisual records and recordings, interviews and recorded accounts. The author attempted to assess the number of the collections and to classify them upon the basis of, i.a. interviews with representatives of some of the institutions and organisations, or private owners in possession of such collections or else engaged in amassing them. For the needs of this article he addressed similar questions to a single foundation, association, private person, and stationary institution. Thanks to previous contacts with the earlier-mentioned institutions he was informed about the collections, their history and plans for development – knowledge that proved decisive for the selection of precisely those subjects for the purpose of analyses necessary for this article.

While describing the legacy of the anti-communist opposition in the People's Republic of Poland in 1968–1989, exemplified by collections of selected institutions, the author was compelled to decide whether to divide those resources into categories, and if so then what kind should they be, or whether to let representatives of the institutions speak and subsequently, thanks to their statements, to present assorted collections as the object of their interests,

accumulation, descriptions, and access for a wide group of recipients. The author opted for the second method and – benefitting from knowledge obtained from the sources of such popularisation – in the second part of the text he intended to bring the reader closer to the accomplishments and history of institutions sharing a striving toward widest possible access to their collections: the stationary European Solidarity Centre (ECS)^{13,14} in Gdańsk, the Association of Free Speech,^{15,16} the "Karta" Center Foundation^{17,18} and the private Museum of the Free Word.¹⁹

European Solidarity Centre

*Apart from pursuing its activity the European Solidarity Centre focuses on two aspects of the heritage of a great social movement, i.e. the Independent Self-governing Trade Union "Solidarity and the anti-communist opposition in Poland. The first such aspect is its material dimension expressed in mementos accumulated at the Centre or in archival, photographic, and museum collections. The purpose of this feature of the Centre's activity is the commemoration, protection and, primarily, popularisation of the vast Solidarity legacy for contemporary and future generations. The second aspect of the work conducted by the Centre is concentration on the dimension of the idea and spirit of Solidarity detached from its political and historical connotations and referring to the universal values contained therein. This is the reason why the Centre embarks upon a number of educational and special undertakings aimed at the popularisation of the ideas of liberty, human rights, co-operation, interpersonal solidarity, and tolerance for others in every aspect of this concept.*²⁰ Following the Centre website, we may notice that educational ventures include, i.a. guided curator tours, conferences, lectures and workshops, concerts, exhibitions, and meetings with authors. Combining those activities with collections would call for additional research and is not the topic of this article.

All collections at the European Solidarity Centre are dedicated to the history of the Solidarity social movement. Some are displayed at the Permanent Exhibition held at the Centre, with successive showrooms (A-F) presenting the history of the activity of the anti-communist opposition in the People's Republic of Poland, predominantly the origin, creation, and victory of Solidarity. The last showroom (G) is dedicated to the idea of freedom and human rights as well as their great twentieth-century propagators.

The Centre collections are divided according to their character into: archival, photographic, physical mementos, and art and film collections. The fact that temporal, ideological, etc., criteria are not applied offers total arbitrariness for those making use of the vast Solidarity legacy. Owing to the capacity of the gathered material, and for the purpose of easier orientation in the collections, we may distinguish within particular collections sub-collections associated with the most important periods in the history of the opposition in People's Poland. This division functions



1. Pinback buttons associated with the "Solidarity" Trade Union



2. T-shirt belonging to Ewa Sułkowska-Bierezin from the time of her internment in Sieradz, Olszynka Grochowska, and Goldap

most lucidly in the case of the photographic collection. A parallel system of classifying the collections is arranging them according to incoming donations and purchases (and in the case of photographic collections also according to the authors of photographs).

Collections of the European Solidarity Centre encompass the events of 1970–1989, with slight exceptions crossing this range. The scope, therefore, includes such events from the history of the anti-communist opposition as the December 1970 events along the coast, the martial law period, the significance of the Church and Pope John Paul II for democratic transformations in Poland, systemic transformations, whose crowning were the June events of 1989, and a widely comprehended theme associated both with the terrain of the undertakings of the Centre and the history of Solidarity – the activity of the Lenin Shipyard in Gdańsk.²¹

Several years ago, the author took part in a survey conducted for the Centre and concerning mementos of the post-communist opposition in Łódź and its environs. Already in the course of preparing a catalogue of the findings, and prior to forwarding the completed set of information to Gdańsk, it was necessary to classify each exhibit as belonging to one of the categories corresponding more or less to the above-mentioned showrooms. We sought not only mementos linked with the opposition but also items painting a picture of daily life in Poland under Gomułka, Gierek, and Jaruzelski, works of art or the aesthetics of communism. Ultimately, the ECS informs on its website: www.ecs.gda.pl that library resources total 20 000 publications, of which there are 5000 books – second circulation and those printed by Polish émigré publishers, more than 600 multimedia (films, music, and educational material), and 512 titles of periodicals – traditional-form periodicals, including 325 second circulation and émigré periodicals. The library also contains 1101 audiovisual records with a total of 1500 hours of recordings, eight films and film projects produced or co-realised by the Centre, documentary films and archival film material dedicated to the idea and legacy of "Solidarity" and the democratic

opposition, 152 linear meters of documents, serial and non-serial prints, postage stamps, envelopes, special-occasion cards, posters, stamps, flyers, drawings, and photographs.

On 31 December 2017 photographic collections amounted to 65 000 items in the form of digital files, as well as positive copies and negatives. There are 35 227 digitalised photographs (secured in the Digital Repository) and ca. 15 000 digitalised and prepared for inventorisation and scientific elaboration. Photographs that have been recorded and scientifically elaborated are available in an on-line Catalogue. On 31 December 2017 the Catalogue included 1073 leafs pertaining to photographs. Furthermore, regardless of the state of the elaboration of the contents, collections of photographs are available on-hand thanks to a system of commissioning surveys to be conducted by the staff of the Archive and Exhibition Organisation Department or by means of a personal survey carried out on the spot (in the Archive Reading Room), depending on the client's choice.²²

Collections of the European Solidarity Centre originate predominantly from donations or were purchased – in the case of photographs such purchases entail the necessity of regulating questions of copyright in accordance with the law in force in Poland. Nonetheless, the overwhelming majority of the collections, particularly archival, were presented to the Centre as donations, bequeaths, and deposits. The donors are, as a rule, witnesses of historical events or their heirs, and in the case of photographs – professional photographers, press photographers, art photographers, and private persons-amateurs documenting the history of Solidarity in the 1980s.²³

The "Karta" Centre Foundation

From the very onset of its activity the objective of the activity of the "Karta" Center Foundation involved:

1. collecting scattered social documentation and recording the recollections of witnesses (little-known and, as a rule, politically misused) connected with selected events from our part of Europe during the twentieth century;



3. Several issues of the “Karta” quarterly



4. Collections of second circulation publications in the People’s Republic of Poland in the possession of the Association of Free Speech



5. Premises of the Association of Free Speech in Warsaw, where collections are stored

2. documenting and popularising the past of persons who suffered as a result of totalitarian systems and whose fate is unknown to their contemporaries;

3. documenting and popularising non-conformist stands in conditions of totalitarianisms that dominated in our region during the twentieth century;

4. mobilising the social energy of assorted milieus and generations (including secondary school students) in Poland and abroad for the sake of activity documenting the history of the nearest environment;

5. promoting an attractive formula of writing about modern history – the sort that allows past experiences not to be treated as secondary vis à vis contemporaneity.

The Document Archive is divided into the Eastern Archive and the Opposition Archive, with the latter dealing with the

1956–1990 period. It is composed of 5353 second circulation books and brochures, 3450 titles of second circulation periodicals and newsheets (over 30 000 individual copies), 600 tape recordings, 73 personal collections, 2474 personal files, 119 sets concerning particular milieus, 147 thematic sets, more than 300 official and second circulation posters, over 1000 special-occasion second circulation cards, about 2100 postage stamps, more than 400 museum exhibits (badges, resistors, patriotic jewelry, banners, strikers’ armbands, mementos from internment camps and prisons, printing equipment), more than 5000 photographs of persons, events, and places connected with opposition activity (stored in a separate collection of photographs), and more than 1200 reminiscences, diaries, and accounts concerning Poland in 1944–1990. Collections pertaining to the activity of the opposition in the People’s

Republic of Poland are accumulated according to a time criterion – the 1976–1990 period, and then divided within the resources according to a thematic criterion (e.g. March 1968), a milieu criterion (e.g. the Workers' Defence Committee) or in accordance with the person of the donor (e.g. the Jacek Kuroń collection).²⁴ Since the interests of the "Karta" Centre Foundation transcend the sphere of the anti-communist opposition and encompass the entire twentieth century – or even an earlier period in the case of donated collections containing older exhibits – the Foundation resources are, for all practical purposes, much larger. Pertinent information may be found on the Internet: www.karta.org.pl. This website also enables contact with persons providing precise information. The overwhelming majority of the collections come from donations of private persons, who for years gathered family material as well as mementos kept in their private/family archives and concerning their activity and the current situation in Poland. In addition, sections of the Documentation Archive comprise deposits of the archives of other social organisations/NGOs: Polish Humanitarian Action, Society of Solidarity Archives, Siberian Society, and the Federation of Fighting Youth, which found themselves in the Foundation Archive upon the basis of signed agreements.²⁵ The "Karta" Centre Foundation issues the "Karta" quarterly containing accounts by witnesses of historical events, documents, photographs, and sometimes an enclosed CD.

Association of Free Speech

The "museum" achievements of the Association of Free Speech can be divided into two groups:

- collections of all second circulation material printed in the People's Republic of Poland,
- biographic notes on activists of the anti-communist opposition and representatives of independent culture in the People's Republic of Poland as well as audiovisual notations with selected persons.

In the case of the first group the establishment of the Association collection was inspired by a wish to preserve for the next generations the accomplishments of the second circulation movement and to feature forbidden topics, but also by sentimental reasons connected with the participation of the collectors or their friends in underground activity. After all, elements of the collection emerged already in the 1980s in the shape of archives of particular structures. The actual collection originated in 2006, when the Association was granted office space in Marszałkowska Street in Warsaw. It contains only "material" collections, while its fragments – already digitalised – serve more as material informing about gaps in the resources, although sometimes (and for different reasons) they could comprise an element of the collection. Up to now it has been possible to digitalise about 10–15% of the collections. At present, only the covers or first pages of second circulation publications from the Association collections are digitalised, although plans foresee total digitalisation followed by catalogues, editing, and access. Currently, everyone can use the material free of charge, and the sole condition obligates the author of the eventual publication in which the material will be used to inform that it comes from the Association of Free Speech collection. Collections are accessible on the net in digital

form, e.g. for the needs of publishing houses or exhibitions, but also in a material form (e.g. in the European Parliament) or at the "From the Freedom of Speech to Freedom" exhibition featured at the Palace of Culture and Science in Warsaw.

Collections are classified according to assorted criteria. First, they are divided into three sets connected with the main time stages:

- publications to August 1980;
- publications from the time of the so-called "Solidarity" carnival;
- prints from 13 December 1981 to 1990.

Separate collections also consist of documents and prints connected with the Polish Socialist Party and the Fighting Solidarity press. Another division takes into consideration the character of the artifacts and includes posters, non-serial publications, photographs, documents, etc. The entire collection comes from donations presented by private persons.²⁶

The second group is dominated by the *Niezależni dla kultury 1976–1989* dictionary. Work began in 2000, and the dictionary was envisaged as an independent initiative at the time of the appearance of an idea of presenting independent culture in People's Poland. A team under Jan Strękowski and with the significant participation of Krzysztof Markuszewski (deceased), Mirosław Chojecki, the then Chairman of the Association, and Tomasz Komura, a computer science expert, undertook the preparation of the dictionary. The objective of this publication was to portray people connected with independent culture – brief biographical notes described their achievements, years of activity, as well as the milieu and place from which they came. Biographical notes concern activists of the uncensored publishing circuit, independent culture, science and education: underground publishers, editors, printers, distributors, organisers of the publishing movement, supporters of independent publishing initiatives, i.a. participating in transport or in the construction and repair of printing equipment, making available their homes for broadcasting independent radio programmes, as well



6. Website of the Association of Free Speech – Dictionary *Niezależni dla kultury 1976–1989*, home page – screenshot, <http://www.slownik-niezalezni-dla-kultury.pl>



7. Krzysztof Bronowski with his collection



8. Website of the Museum of Free Speech, non-serial publications – screenshot, http://www.icipit.home.pl/bibula/_index.html



9. Showcase displaying a fragment of the “Bugs in the hotel, shadow in the street” exhibition on show at the Museum of Cursed Soldiers and Political Prisoners of the People’s Republic of Poland

as representatives of culture – men of letters, translators, publicists, journalists publishing in independent periodicals and publications, artists organising, and taking part in, exhibitions, actors performing in independent spectacles and theatre directors, etc. The outcome of the research made it obvious that the listed persons were active in various regions of Poland.

It is impossible to define unambiguously what percentage of the dictionary will be composed of biographical notes about members of the pre-August opposition and what – about members of the post-August opposition. Since the original Association plans foresaw a paper publication, the website: www.sws.org.pl features no iconographical material apart from several covers of periodicals. The present day shape of the dictionary is not final. Work on successive biographical notes is being continued and the moment it is completed they will be included in the

publication. It is planned to expand the dictionary in the form of a smartphone or tablet mobile application. Since the main addressee will be the contemporary and modern recipient the accepted form will be attractive, lucid, and intuitive both in the case of a telephone, a computer, and a tablet. The dictionary emerged gradually (2001–2001) in co-operation with the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage and the “Karta” Centre. From 2003 it is created and financed as part of the activity of the Association of Free Speech and with the considerable support of the National Centre for Film Culture and the City of Łódź Office. The Toruń and Bydgoszcz dictionaries, also in the form of books, were published thanks to additional financial assistance provided by the Marshal Office of the Kuyavian-Pomeranian Voivodeship. From its very onset the Association of Free Speech accumulated more than 700 records, of which 30 concern persons connected with independent culture. In



10. Contemporary arrangement of the prison cell – interrogation room of the Stalinist era at the Museum of Pro-Independence Traditions in Łódź

(Photo. 1, 2 – A. Michalski, as part of the query for ECS; 3-5, 7, 9, 10 – A. Michalski)

the future it will present them on the Internet in the form of 180-second long trailers; the complete material is available for use after reporting to the Centre and agreeing on the conditions.²⁷

Museum of Free Speech

The Museum of Free Speech is an auteur and totally private undertaking of Krzysztof Bronowski, who has been creating his collection since 1980, i.e. the moment when the signing of the August agreements was followed by an enormous “inundation” of publications not requiring the approval of censorship. They included non-serial publications, leaflets, special-occasion prints, posters, periodical publications – periodicals and newsheets, as well as other prints, which the publisher in principle did not present to censors for sanction although this was the statutory obligation. The Museum of Free Speech functioned already later, i.e. after the Round Table negotiations, and appeared on the Internet at the onset of the twenty first century. It has been uninterruptedly using the same name, which is not reserved in any way and is based on: www.incipit.home.pl, unchanged for years – the word *incipit*, i.e. *the beginning of a text*, brings to mind the owner of the collection, going back to the time of running a firm involving, i.a. antiquarian activity.

More or less ten years ago second circulation collections belonging to Krzysztof Bronowski occupied ca. 50 linear

metres of bookshelves. Taking into consideration the thickness of the paper this amounts to a million pages. Adding the rest of the library, in other words, the thematic library connected with the topic of the opposition in People’s Poland and assorted “side” themes, the collector estimates the present-day size of the whole resource at ca. 150 linear metres of shelves. K. Bronowski is of the opinion that the question what comprises, or not, underground publications is a matter of definition. 24 years ago the National Library issued a large bibliography of non-serial publications – a description matching many library collections all over Poland. The list included about 6 500 titles. Krzysztof Bronowski is in the possession of approx. 9600 non-serial publications recorded in catalogues according to the definition accepted by the National Library. He calculates that their total number will reach about 10 500 and that according to his criteria, which could differ from those of other libraries, his collections contain 57% of the total, i.e. some 5600 items. Estimating the number of periodicals poses a greater problem in view of the fact that periodicals are defined in various ways; this is the reason why the collector counts the numbers of issues (a total of 25 000) while the total number of newsheets and periodicals issued underground amounts to 35 000–40 000. Catalogues of leaflets, posters, and so-called publishing haberdashery create an even greater dilemma since, as a rule, small issues were not widely distributed. Social life prints are almost never described.

The Museum of Free Speech includes a separate “hatred library”. Generally speaking, these are purely anti-Semitic, anti-Masonic, and national-communist books since up to 1989 milieus bordering on fascism were also the source of such printed matter, both underground and official. Today too titles of this sort appear and expand this highly original collection.

Krzysztof Bronowski does not do much scanning. For all practical purposes, he applies this technique only in the case of some of the covers if they differ and it is difficult to describe them without using illustrations. It is impossible to include more than 10 000 covers on a website. Nonetheless, he has been describing and showing his bibliography for almost 30 years.²⁸

The legacy of the anti-communist opposition in the People’s Republic of Poland stirs the considerable and ever-growing interest of private persons, NGOs, and self-government or state institutions. The Warsaw Museum of Cursed Soldiers and Political Prisoners of the People’s Republic of Poland, established on 29 February 2016 (its seat is the former Remand Prison in 37 Rakowiecka Street in the Mokotów district of Warsaw), also collects mementos of that period without concentrating only on the first post-World War II years. A fragment of the exposition will deal with the political opposition at the time of the communist dictatorship. Here the visitor will learn about important events in Polish history of the second half of the twentieth century. The last part of the exhibition will feature the history of the Security apparatus (the Ministry of Public Security, the Security Service, Army Intelligence) from the era of the totalitarian communist state. The museumgoer will find out about

the functioning of the Security system in People's Poland and become familiar with the operative, surveillance, and investigation techniques of the period.²⁹ Łódź is the site of the Museum of Pro-Independence Traditions³⁰ also located in a former prison. This institution presents collections dating from the First Republic and national insurrections as well as mementos of the twentieth century, including the People's Republic of Poland. Up to the 1950s women were incarcerated in the Museum building for political and pro-independence activity – the visitor can tour their cells,

a solitary confinement cell, a stylised interrogation room, and a number of lesser exhibits.

Collections just as important as the ones described above exist and are being established both at home and abroad, e.g. the Foundation of the Independence Deed Documentation Centre shown at the Jagiellonian Library in Cracow or resources at the University of Bremen; at the same time, small, profiled collections created by, and belonging to assorted founders remain of great significance for the history of Poland. They too deserve to be supported and remembered.

Przypisy

- ¹ [https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ruch\(organizacja\)](https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ruch(organizacja)) [accessed on: 12 April 2018]; pertinent literature is vast and thus the author cited exemplary or representative titles. The majority of books about the anti-communist opposition in the People's Republic of Poland mentioned in footnotes deal with topics associated with numerous branches and organisations; in order to restrict space dedicated to footnotes the author did not list them more than once. On the other hand, for the sake of a more in-depth examination it is worth reaching for cross-section publications or those dedicated to a narrower fragment of knowledge regardless of the organisation mentioned in the title. Numerous relatively less-known information, accounts or studies may be found in the "Bibula" periodical issued since 2003 by the Association of Free Speech; *Działania Służby Bezpieczeństwa wobec Organizacji „Ruch”* (prep. P. Byszewski), IPN, Warszawa 2008; *Opozycja w PRL. Słownik biograficzny 1956-89*, vol. 1-3, J. Skórzyński (ed.), Ośrodek KARTA, Warszawa, vol. 1/2000, vol. 2/2002, vol. 3/2006; J. Wegner, *Zamach na Lenina. Krótka historia „Ruchu”*, Wydawnictwo Słowa i Myśli, Lublin 2013 (e-book 2017); *Bohaterowie trudnych czasów*, coll. 2, "Biblioteka Kroniki Miasta Łodzi", vol. 4/2007; *Bohaterowie trudnych czasów*, coll. 6, "Biblioteka Kroniki Miasta Łodzi", vol. 8/2011.
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