



CONFRONTATION AND COOPERATION

1000 YEARS OF POLISH–GERMAN–RUSSIAN RELATIONS

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Sounds of the opposition – music and politics in Poland 1970–1989

Key words: People's Republic of Poland, "Solidarity", rock music, pop culture

Songs concerning political issues or having political background are important part of pop culture history during People's Republic of Poland (PRL)¹. In this article only selected songs that were written as protest-songs or were considered as protest-songs will be analyzed. A song of each music genre/subgenre was chosen (patriotic ballad/hymn, pop rock, rock, punk rock, heavy metal). Due to limited volume of the article some songs are only listed. It is quite difficult to evaluate the PRL period – it is a historical era on one hand and a personal story for majority of adults on the other. Some people idealize their youth, others want to underline their contribution during the transition. Hence, myths are created and mixed with facts. In this article analysis of social phenomenon of the music and its impact on daily life is limited. Majority of analysis concerns textual context of songs or their reception by society from the political point of view².

1. Patriotic ballads

Ballad of Janek Wiśniewski [*Ballada o Janku Wiśniewskim*] written by Krzysztof Dowgiałło³ (lyrics)⁴ presents events that took place during the winter of 1970 in Poland:

Ballad of Janek Wiśniewski

Boys from Grabówek, boys from Chylonia
Today the police used guns
We stood so bravely hitting the targets
Janek Wiśniewski fell
His body carried on a door panel
Against the cops and the tanks
[...]
Children and women were falling, too
[...]

¹ The Polish People's Republic [Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa, PRL for short].

² Translations of all the lyrics from Polish into English in this article are done by Anna Garczewska.

³ An architect, engineer in Gdańsk Shipyard, politician, recipient of the Order of Polonia Restituta, born in 1938, s.f.: http://www.encyklopedia-solidarnosci.pl/wiki/index.php?title=Krzysztof_Dowgiałło%C5%82%C5%82o, [11.07.2014].

⁴ The song was anonymous was many years, the first person who wrote music to it and recorded it was Mieczysław Cholewa and until 2007 was considered an author. S.f.: P. Brzeziński, *Ballada o Janku Wiśniewskim*, Biuletyn IPN No. 12/2010, p. 75–80.

Some were wounded, others killed
 Blood was spilled by Słupsk bandits
 The party shot at workers
 [...]
 The world had learnt, but kept his silence
 [...]
 Don't cry mothers, it's not in vain
 The shipyard has a black bow
 For bread, freedom, and new Poland
 Janek Wiśniewski fell

Ballada o Janku Wiśniewskim

Chłopcy z Grabówka, chłopcy z Chyloni
 Dzisiaj milicja użyła broni
 Dzielnieśmy stali, celnie rzucali
 Janek Wiśniewski padł
 Na drzwiach ponieśli go Świętojańską
 Naprzeciw glinom, naprzeciw tankom
 [...]
 Padają dzieci, starcy, kobiety
 [...]
 Jeden zraniony, drugi zabity
 Krwi się zachciało słupskim bandytom
 To partia strzela do robotników
 [...]
 Świat się dowiedział, nic nie powiedział
 [...]
 Nie płaczcie matki, to nie na darmo
 Nad stoczną sztandar z czarną kokardą
 Za chleb i wolność, i nową Polskę
 Janek Wiśniewski padł

From the song we learn that during the protests in Gdynia ("Grabówek" and "Chylonia" are parts of city of Gdynia) people got wounded or killed ("Some were wounded, others killed") in their protests for better economic conditions ("for bread") and for freedom of speech ("[for] freedom").

In 1970 economic conditions in Polish People's Republic were difficult. Wages were low, shops were empty, even most basic products were hard to find and demanded hours of waiting in queues. In December 1970 the government announced large price increase of food and some of the everyday items (e.g.: the price of meat was raised by 17%, jam by 33%, coffee by 92%). Demonstrations against the price rises broke out in Gdańsk, and then in other cities – Gdynia, Elbląg, Słupsk, Szczecin, Białystok, Kraków, Wałbrzych. The workers didn't want political changes, only economic and social ones. They mostly demanded wage raises due to prices gain. Strike committee in the coast was swiftly arrested by the special forces, so there was no time or possibility to form any political demands. The

protests evolved, anti-government, anti-party slogans were raised by the crowds and situation was spinning out of control. Heavily armed soldiers and police forces (Civic Militia - *Milicja Obywatelska*, MO⁵) were sent to secure the demonstrations, tanks and armed vehicles appeared on the streets, the protests escalated, 45 people were killed (including women and children), more than a thousand were wounded and couple of thousands got arrested⁶.

Janek Wiśniewski described in the song is a fictional name of a real person who was shot dead during the protests in Gdynia. His body was carried on the door panel down the main street by the protesting workers. This victim was Zbigniew Godlewski, an 18-year-old shipyard worker. The songwriter didn't know, at that time, the real name of the man, so he chose the most popular typically Polish name. Due to that universality the song immortalized the victim and made him a symbol of the protests of the 1970.

The ballad about Janek Wiśniewski was used in two Polish films: *Man of iron*⁷ and *Black Thursday*⁸. In the *Man of iron*⁹ the lyrics were modified – there is "blood was spilled on winter's dawn" ["krew się połała grudniowym świtem"] instead of "the blood was spilled by Słupsk bandits" ["krwi się zachciało słupskim bandytom"], "people in power shot at workers" ["władza strzela do robotników"] instead of the "party" ["partia"], and "red" ["czerwona"] instead of "black" ["czarna"] bow was over shipyard and the fifth verse was omitted. The alterations make the song less direct. The ballad pointed out that the communist party made the calls and gave orders to shoot to unarmed civilians. The party (*partia*, *PZPR*) was ruling the country *ergo* the whole government, the state was responsible. The communist regime was to

⁵ The police forces during communist regime in Poland were called Civic Militia [*Milicja Obywatelska*, MO]. Civil Militia was created in 1944 under decree of PKWN of 7 October 1944 on Civic Militia, J.L. of 1944, No. 7, item 33 (dekret PKWN z dnia 7 października 1944 r. o Milicji Obywatelskiej, Dz.U. KRN z 1944 r., Nr 7, poz. 33), and transformed into the Police [*Policja*] in 1990 under an Act of 6 April 1990 on Police, uniform text of 2011, no. 287, item 1687 as amended (Ustawa z dnia 6 kwietnia 1990 roku o Policji, t.j. Dz. U. z 2011 r. Nr 287, poz. 1687 z późn.zm.).

⁶ S.f.: IPN, *Rewolta grudniowa* 1970, <http://grudzien70.ipn.gov.pl>, [11.09.2014].

⁷ *Man of iron* [*Człowiek z żelaza*], dir. A. Wajda (1981).

⁸ *Black Thursday. Janek Wiśniewski died* [*Czarny Czwartek. Janek Wiśniewski padł*], dir. A. Krauze (2011).

⁹ The song with music by Andrzej Korzyński was performed by: Krystyna Janda, Jacek Kaczmarski, Przemysław Gintrowski, and Zbigniew Łapiński.

blame. If you change the “party” into general “people in power” (“władza”) it’s not exactly the same. It could even be diminished to individual decision of the people in charge of a certain manifestation, as if the simple soldier or police officer was responsible for executing orders. Omitting information and rephrasing the words were probably the necessary sacrifice demanded by the censorship for the film to be released¹⁰. In *Black Thursday* movie¹¹ there are also small modifications e.g. the third verse was skipped.

Tragic events of December 1970 in the Polish northern Baltic coastal cities are called *Polish 1970 protests* [*Grudzień’70*] and the most tragic day in Gdynia (17.12.1970) is called *Black Thursday* [*Czarny Czwartek*]. Those crushed riots inspired political activity of Polish society and led to the political changes in the next decade.

The song *For Poland to be Poland* [*Żeby Polska była Polską*] was written in 1976 by Jan Pietrzak (lyrics)¹² and Włodzimierz Korcz (music)¹³. It won the first-prize at the National Festival of Polish Song in Opole in 1981. The song and the support of the anti-communist opposition by J. Pietrzak were the reasons for his arrest after the introduction of the martial law in Poland in 1981¹⁴. The text is mostly about Polish historical events and patriotism:

For Poland to be Poland

From the depths of history, dark lands [...]
 Our genesis, our beginning [...]
 A student knocked down portrait of the czar,
 [...]
 Norwid wrote poems filled with pride
 And anyone able to hold a sword
 Formed a legion, an army [...]
 Mothers, wives in murky chambers
 Embroidered the banners
 Slogan: „Honor and Fatherland”
 And the faith set forth into the fields

¹⁰ S.f. <http://www.wajda.pl/pl/filmy/film24.html> [11.08.2014].

¹¹ The song with music by Andrzej Korzyński was performed by Kazik Staszewski.

¹² Polish singer, songwriter, cabaret artist (the founder of “Pod Egidą” – a subversive literary cabaret during the communist regime), and actor born in 1937.

¹³ Polish composer, pianist, and music producer born in 1943.

¹⁴ *Prawda w żartach zawarta. Z Janem Pietrzakiem rozmawia Patrycja Gruszyńska-Ruman*, Biuletyn Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej nr 7/2008, <http://pamiec.pl/pa/biblioteka-cyfrowa/biuletyn-instytutu-pam/10155,nr-72008.html>, [11.06.2014].

From Chicago to Tobolsk.
For Poland, for Poland!
For Poland to be Poland!

Żeby Polska była Polską

Z głębi dziejów, z krain mrocznych [...]
 Nasz rodowód, nasz początek [...]
 Zrzucał uczeń portret cara,
 [...]
 Dumne wiersze pisał Norwid.
 I kto szablę mógł utrzymać
 Ten formował legion, wojsko. [...]
 Matki, żony w mrocznych izbach
 Wyszywały na sztandarach
 Hasło: „Honor i Ojczyzna”
 I ruszała wiara w pole.
 Od Chicago do Tobolska.
 Żeby Polska, żeby Polska!
 Żeby Polska była Polską!

The text does not refer directly to communism, but it stresses fighting for independence, need of freedom, and is deeply patriotic hence it can be read as a call for action, and supporting opposition. The communist authorities tried to repress the song, unsuccessfully. The song gained popularity despite not having official recording – people were copying it on tape recorders at home. The song was widely popular among the members of *Solidarity* (*NSZZ Solidarność*) and became an informal anthem of the *Solidarity* period in the People’s Republic of Poland.

One of the most important songs was *Walls* [*Mury*]¹⁵ by Jacek Kaczmarski¹⁶.

Walls

Young and inspired he was,
And they were numerous
He strengthen them with the hymn,
Singing that the dawn is near.
[...]
 He sang it’s time for the wall to fall...
They sang along with him:
Rip off bars from the walls!
Tear off the shackles, break the scourge!
And the walls will fall down, down, down
And will bury the old world!
[...]

¹⁵ The song was placed on the album *Walls* [*Mury*] (1981). S.f.: *Pieśni Niepokornych*, „Polskie Radio”, <http://piesnieniepokornych.polskieradio.pl/>, [11.07.2014].

¹⁶ Jacek Kaczmarski (1957–2004) Polish poet, singer, and songwriter, s.f.: <http://www.kaczmarski.art.pl>.

Mury

On natchniony i młody był,
 ich nie policzyłby nikt
 On im dodawał pieśnią sił,
 Śpiewał, że blisko już świt.
 [...]
 Śpiewał, że czas by runął mur...
 Oni śpiewali wraz z nim:
 Wyrwij murom zęby krat!
 Zerwij kajdany, połam bat!
 A mury runą, runą, runą
 I pogrzebią stary świat!
 [...]

It is a song about a poem that is used against intentions of the author and this is also what happened with this one. The lyrics present a poet who wants people to search for freedom and to be more kind to one another, but his words are misunderstood by the masses, the song is used for personal gain, that leads to repetition of mistakes by society. People feel entitled to the song and change its primary meaning by using it for different purposes than it was written for. *Walls* was not a song about protest against power or government, but it was received as such by the society at that time. The song is grim, gives no hope, optimism, or solutions. But it was read as a call for action and hymn of victory. This is why the final words ("The walls rose up and chains were swinging around the ankles" – "A mury rośły, łańcuch kołysał się u nóg") were often changed into "The walls will fall down, down, down and will bury the old world" ["A mury runą, runą, runą, i pogrzebią stary świat"] or into "There are no walls, no walls, no walls" ["A murów nie ma, nie ma, nie ma..."] or were omitted when sung at rallies, meetings, protests, and strikes in Poland. The song gained huge popularity among the protesting workers in August 1980 and became the unionist's anthem¹⁷. In the following years the song was sung among the arrested during the martial law.

The words of *Walls* were written by J. Kaczmarek to the music of *L'estaca* by Lluís Llach. Llach's song was widely known in Catalonia, it was an anthem of anti-Franco opposition, forbidden to be performed publicly. As it was forbidden to sing the song the Spaniards would hum the melody during the protests¹⁸. Both

songs became symbols of opposition against governing power and unwanted regime.

In 2005 in the Gdańsk Shipyard there was a celebration of the 25th anniversary of *Solidarity*. It was combined with the concert *Space of Freedom* [*Przestrzeń Wolności*] during which *Walls* was performed by Jean-Michel Jarre together with Baltic Philharmonic Orchestra and Gdansk University Choir.

2. Rock songs of the 1980s

a) political situation in the 1980s

The 1980s are often called the *Solidarity era*. In August 1980 in the Gdańsk Shipyard the workers started a protest that evolved from a demand of worker's rights into cross-national union's movement. At the Shipyard under the leadership of Lech Wałęsa an Independent Self-governing Trade Union „*Solidarity*” [Niezależny Samorządny Związek Zawodowy „Solidarność”, NSZZ *Solidarność*] emerged. It was the first independent Polish trade union federation, and the first independent union behind the Iron Curtain. *Solidarity* became one of the most important cores of opposition against communism in the following years.

The Polish *Solidarity* movement inspired the Irish rock band U2 to write a song *New Year's Day*¹⁹ with words: "[...] A world in white gets underway [...] Under a blood-red sky, a crowd has gathered in black and white [...] Newspapers say, it says it's true. And we can break through [...]".

Economic crisis, social unrest, lack of control over *Solidarity*, and fear of loss of power by the communist party induced martial law in 1981. Martial law in Poland was introduced by General of the Army Wojciech Jaruzelski and the Military Council of National Salvation [Wojskowa Rada Ocalenia Narodowego, WRON] on 13.12.1981. It was aimed to crush political opposition and it caused *inter alia* multiple arrests of members of the *Solidarity* movement, causalities, economic crisis, as well as numerous restrictions of everyday life.

Due to censorship²⁰ in communist state any

¹⁷ That is an Independent Self-governing Trade Union „Solidarity” [Niezależny Samorządny Związek Zawodowy „Solidarność”].

¹⁸ F. Łobodziński, *Rosną czy runą*, „Newsweek” no. 34, 2005, p. 87–88. S.f.: *Pieśni Niepokornych*, „Polskie Radio”, <http://piesnieniepokornych.polskieradio.pl/>, [11.07.2014].

¹⁹ From the album *War* (1983).

²⁰ Main Office for the Control of the Press, Publications and Public Spectacles (in 1981 transformed into the Main Office for the Control of the Publications and Public Spectacles) was established in 1946 under the decree of 5 July 1946 – J.L. No.34, item 210 (dekret z 5 lipca 1946 r. o utworzeniu Głównego Urzędu Kontroli Prasy, Publikacji

controversial information in the music had to be hidden, otherwise authorities wouldn't allow the song to be recorded and put on the album²¹. Cryptic lyrics didn't stop the audience to catch the meaning and metaphors and uncover them during concerts. For example during concerts of Perfect²² the words "we want to be ourselves" ["chcemy być sobą"]²³ were often changed into "we want to fight with ZOMO"²⁴ ["chcemy bić ZOMO"] and instead of "don't be afraid of it all" ["nie bój się tego wszystkiego"]²⁵ the audience would sing "don't be afraid of Jaruzelski"²⁶ ["nie bój się Jaruzelskiego"]. Sometimes musicians even directly hinted at the presence of censorship in their songs, and possible consequences, for example: Perfect in *It's merry around here* [*Ale w koło jest wesoło*]²⁷ sings: „(...) whom should I write about, whom should I skip, who will be punished for Hołdys²⁸ (...) who will diminish our band for singing this song (...) [“(...) o kim milczeć, o kim pisać, kogo skarcić za Hołdysa (...) kto za utwór zaś niniejszy zespół nasz uczyni mniejszym (...)]”.

b) rock music and politics

Autobiography [*Autobiografia*] by Perfect²⁹, from the album *UNU* (1982) is one of the most known songs of the 1980s. It became the anthem of teenagers living in the communist Poland. It touched many aspects of everyday life, and was mostly about dreams and hopes

i Widowisk, Dz. U. Nr 34, poz. 210). It was the core agenda of censorship, controlling all kinds of publications within the whole state. The Office was liquidated in 1990.

²¹ For example: *Poland* [*Polska*] by KULT or *Experience it yourself* [*Przeżyj to sam*] by Lombard.

²² Perfect is one of the most popular rock groups in Poland, formed in 1978, <http://www.perfect.art.pl/> [11.09.2014].

²³ In the song *We want to be ourselves* [*Chcemy być sobą*] from the album *UNU* (1982).

²⁴ ZOMO [Zmotoryzowane Odwoły Milicji Obywatelskiej – Motorized Reserves of the Citizens' Militia] – paramilitary riot police formations in the communist Poland (active in years 1956–1989), known for their brutal appeasements of civilian protests against government.

²⁵ The song *Don't be afraid of it all* [*Nie bój się tego wszystkiego*] from the album *Perfect* (1981).

²⁶ Wojciech Jaruzelski (1923–2014) was the political and military leader of the Polish People's Republic.

²⁷ *Perfect* (1981).

²⁸ Zbigniew Hołdys is a musician, a songwriter, and was co-founder and member of the Perfect from 1977 till 1991.

²⁹ Polish rock band founded in 1977, one of the most popular rock groups in Poland, s.f.: www.perfect.art.pl.

of a young man, but it also alluded to political reality. In the beginning we can hear:

Autobiography

[...]

The wind of change blew (uncle Joey died)

They pardoned the rest of the offenders

We were allowed to laugh again [...]

Autobiografia

[...]

Wiatr odnowy wiał (wujek Józek zmarł)

Darowano reszty kar

Znow się można było śmiać [...]

Official censored version recorded in 1982 is with words "the wind of change blew" ["wiatr odnowy wiał"], the first version³⁰, though, was "uncle Joey died" ["wujek Józek zmarł"]. The reference to Josef Stalin, who died in 1953, and to subsequent events caused intervention of censorship, so the group had to change the lyrics. After Stalin's death an amnesty of political offenders was granted³¹ ("They pardoned the rest") and the temporary liberalization of life in Poland took place, so called *Polish thaw* [okres odwilży] ("We were allowed to laugh again"). Those facts had an impact on a young man growing up in communist Poland. It was a common experience therefore the song was easily associated to by many.

In the vinyl album's cover one can see political comment, as well. The front cover is an animated muscle arm with the name of the LP, *UNU*, "carved" on it. It can be seen as representing "perfect strength" in fighting the system, a call for being strong during this difficult time. The back cover includes pictures of all musicians of the band made in a mug shot style. The album was recorded during martial law in Poland and pictures of such manner were taken by the police (milicja, MO) after the arrests. Album's title – *UNU* – is taken from the car plates of the military vehicles

³⁰ Lyrics of *Autobiography* with words "uncle Josef died" ["wujek Józek zmarł"] were published in "Youth's World" ["Świat Młodych"] in 15.01.1983 (no. 6) – it was original uncensored version of the song.

³¹ Based on the Act on amnesty of 1956, J.L. no. 11, item 57 (ustawa z dnia 27 kwietnia 1956 r. o amnestii, Dz. U. nr 11, poz. 57) political offenders sentenced to death penalty or life imprisonment had their penalties changed into 15 years of deprivation of liberty and those with sentences up to 5 years of imprisonment were pardoned and released.

present on Polish streets during martial law 1981–1983. Perfect, therefore, tried to support political opposition on the artistic level, not only through their songs but also on the visual level.

c) new wave

One of the most controversial bands of the 1980s in communist Poland was *Brygada Kryzys*³². The name of the group – Crisis Brigade – as well as the music caused many disputes with authorities and finally resulted in a concert ban leading to dissolving the band³³. They were not only hinting at the reality in their songs, they were in direct opposition with the system through many of the lyrics. As a punk rock band they were not only musicians criticizing the government, they were an alternative to the culture promoted by the communist state. Popularity of the group seems to prove that it was a desirable alternative for the youth. Communist regime was a lethal system, but nonetheless, it was also full of absurd and irony³⁴. How else could you call the fact that during the martial law *Brygada Kryzys*, one of the most troublesome bands, recorded an album in Tonpress – a recording studio controlled by the state? And an album with songs against government such as *There's nothing there* [*Nie ma nic*], *Fallen is Babylon* [*Babylon upadł*], *What you feel, what you know* [*To co czujesz, to co wiesz*], and even with the direct reference to the *Solidarity* that can be found in *Headquarters* [*Centrala*]³⁵:

Headquarters

[...]
We're waiting for the signal
from the headquarters! [...]
All of us on the same wavelength
Headquarters will rescue us [...]

Centrala

[...]
Czekamy na sygnał
Z centrali! [...]
Wszyscy na jednej fali!
Centrala nas ocali [...]

Headquarters are the reference to Gdańsk Shipyard – the center of *Solidarity*. Events of August 1980 had massive consequences for the rest of the country, it was like a wave – it started there and moved south. It was also in Gdańsk where majority of key decisions were made.

The record cover of *Brygada Kryzys live* (1983) – the vinyl record with concert versions of the previous LP – is also an interesting statement. One can see the photo of the Palace of Culture and Science in Warsaw with its red copies printed on it under different angles, so it looks as if the building was falling down. The Palace in propaganda was called a gift from the Soviet people to the Polish nation. It was completed in 1955, and is still often treated as a symbol of communism. The album cover can be therefore seen as a falling of communism in Poland. When you add it to the fact that one of the songs on the album was called *Fallen is Babylon* [*Babylon upadł*] it is very hard not to see the connection.

Hey, don't you know [*Hej, czy nie Wiecie*]³⁶ by KULT³⁷ refers directly to the communist party:

Hey, don't you know

[...]
I saw them threaten each other with rifles
I saw them shook hands with smiles [...]
I saw them run over one another with tanks [...]
Hey, don't you know, you have no power in the world [...]

Hej, czy nie wiecie

[...]
Widziałem, grozili sobie karabinami
Widziałem, podawali sobie z uśmiechem dłonie [...]
Widziałem, jeździli po sobie czołgami [...]
Hej, czy nie wiecie, nie macie władzy na świecie [...]

It's a protest-song against regimes, terror, and also against hypocrisy – the lyrics present government as those who kill people one day and act like nothing happened on

³² Polish punk rock band founded in 1981, s.f.: <http://www.brygada-kryzys.art.pl/>.

³³ S.f.: <http://www.brygada-kryzys.art.pl/> [11.08.2014].

³⁴ Many absurd situations of PRL reality were pointed out in films by Stanisław Bareja (1929–1987), e.g.: *Man - Woman Wanted* [*Poszukiwany, poszukiwana*] (1972), *A Jungle Book of Regulations* [*Nie ma róży bez ognia*] (1974), *Brunet Will Call* [*Brunet wieczorową porą*] (1976), *Teddy Bear* [*Miś*] (1980), *Alternatywy 4* [*4 Alternative Street*] (1983).

³⁵ Album *Brygada Kryzys* (1982), commonly called *Black Brigade*. S.f.: D. Subbotko, *Wszystkie Kryzysy Brylewskiego*, „Gazeta Wyborcza” 26.06.2012, http://wyborcza.pl/1,76842,12011174,Wszystkie_Kryzysy_Brylewskiego.html, [22.06.2014].

³⁶ From the album *Listen, it's for you* [*Posłuchaj to do ciebie*] (1987).

³⁷ Polish rock band founded in 1982, s.f.: <http://kult.art.pl/>.

the other. It was written in 1987 and can be related to the communist power. The communists considered themselves to have legitimate authority, but musicians didn't see it that way. Lyrics seem to undermine basis for the communist party to govern and to stress the lack of social support for the government.

d) heavy metal

Turbo³⁸ composed the song *Adult children* [*Dorośle dzieci*]³⁹ during the martial law in Poland.

Adult children

[...]
They've told us what we can and cannot do
Showed us what's wrong and what's good [...]
Adult children express resentment
For the poor recipe of this world [...]
For stealing so much of our lives [...]
So we'll learn against all odds [...]
We'll see how thick is the wall [...]
We'll choose the time and the place
And when the rules of the game change
Maybe we'll learn how to live

Dorośle dzieci

[...]
Powtarzali, co nam wolno, co nie
Przekonali, co jest dobre, co złe
[...]
Dorośle dzieci mają żal
Za kiepski przepis na ten świat [...]
Że ktoś im tyle życia skradł [...]
Nauczymy się więc sami na złość [...]
Przekonamy się, czy twardy ten mur [...]
Wyznamy sobie miejsce i czas
A gdy zmienia się reguły tej gry
Może w końcu odkryjemy, jak żyć

On the surface the song can be seen as regret lyrics towards parents. But if you take a bigger picture you can see a story of people deprived of liberty by the system, pushed around, held in the dark, treated like children. It was very hard to get a passport and almost impossible to go abroad during the People's Republic of Poland. The whole state could feel like a prison. Even if lack of liberty does not mean being incarcerated it feels like that when the choices are limited to those approved

by the government. The state, the party controlled everyday life. The words have distinct references to freedom, stressing that the reality motivates to fight for better future, and need for different reality ("when the rules of the game change").

The lyrics were not the only way of rebellion by Turbo. The censorship must have missed the fact that the cover of *Adult children* was filled with the forbidden symbol "V"⁴⁰. On the front cover one can see musicians in weird poses, each one of them making the sing "V" but instead of the fingers, they used drum sticks, arms, and their bodies. That probably misled the Office for the Control of the Publications and Public Spectacles and the cover was approved to be printed. And a political statement was made on a heavy metal album cover.

TSA⁴¹ in *Partnership* [*Spółka*]⁴² refers to freedom, the „V” sign, and by that *Solidarity*, as well as the other rock group – Perfect – by signing: "Supposedly everybody is free and can do what they want [...] supposedly Hołdys fought for it for you [...] supposedly everybody wants to be joined by the "V" sign"⁴³, although it sounds ironic.

e) pop-rock

In *Experience it yourself* [*Przeżyj to sam*] Lombard⁴⁴ encouraged to stand up against communism and propaganda:

Experience it yourself

[...]
Yesterday you saw in the news again
Angry crowds of tired people
But one detail caught your eye
Immense sea of human heads
An announcer drawled out harsh words
Which caused anger rising up
And wrath began to build up inside you
And you thought: Break the silence!
[...]

⁴⁰ The „V” symbol became the symbol of resistance as it meant victory over the communism, usually was made with the fingers and was connected with *Solidarity* movement.

⁴¹ Polish hard rock and heavy metal band founded in 1979, s.f.: www.tsa.com.pl.

⁴² From the concert record *TSA LIVE* (1982).

⁴³ „Podobno każdy wolny jest i może robić to co chce [...] Podobno Hołdys walczył też, byś o wolności nie musiał śnić [...] Podobno wszyscy tego chcą, by łączył ich victorii znak”.

⁴⁴ Polish pop-rock band founded in 1981, s.f.: <http://www.lombard.pl/>.

³⁸ Polish heavy metal group founded in 1980, s.f.: <http://turbo.art.pl/>.

³⁹ From the album *Adult children* [*Dorośle dzieci*] (1982).

Przeżyj to sam

[...]
 Widziałeś wczoraj znów w dzienniku
 Zmęczonych ludzi wzbudzony tłum
 I jeden szczególnie wzrok Twój przykuł
 Ogromne morze ludzkich głów
 A spiker cedził ostre słowa
 Od których nagle wzbierała złość
 I począł w Tobie gniew kielkować
 I pomyślałeś: milczenia dość!
 [...]

The song is about someone who is politically inactive and emotionally uninvolved in the world around him. But hearing that the government criticizes people protesting for freedom makes him think and feel what other people feel – exasperation, wrath, and disappointment. Enough is enough – he does not want to be silent anymore. The aim of the song seems to be showing people that you shouldn't let someone live your life, or make the choices for you. You should try to make an effort, deal with whatever comes next, let yourself to feel, even if it's anger, even if it's not what you wish it to be. It points that you can make it happen, you have the power to make the change, if you just speak up.

The song was played on the radio for two weeks and then it was banned by the censorship, it was also forbidden by the authorities to be recorded on the first session album of the group *Death to disco!* [*Śmierć dyskotece!*] (1983), and was only on the concert record *Live* (1983). The first album version of this song was released after the collapse of the communism on the CD *81–91* (1991)⁴⁵. Title of the Lombard's album *Death to disco!* [*Śmierć dyskotece!*] is not connected to the disco music, it is a reference to Polish police cars. In Poland a disco [dyskотека] was a common name of a police wagon for transportation of larger groups of officers, especially often used during the martial law in the 1980s⁴⁶. Hence, one can say that the title of the album can be read as e.g.: “Death to Civic Militia”, “End martial law!”, “Stop the violence!” or more general opposition to the regime.

⁴⁵ S.f.: <http://www.lombard.pl/> [11.07.2014].

⁴⁶ Nysa and Star were commonly used by police forces, and the fall out and tactical models (200 WT, 244 WT) of those cars were called “a disco” or “a doghouse”. These huge cars were used to disperse anti-communist rallies by using loud signals/sirens and lights atop of the car, so they looked like a street disco house, therefore nicknames of the car – “a disco”.

f) other examples

There are many more songs concerning political situation in Poland such as: *White Flag* [*Biała Flaga*]⁴⁷ and *Morning news* [*Poranna wiadomość*] by Republika⁴⁸, [*Do not ask about Poland*] *Nie pytaj o Polskę*⁴⁹ by Obywatel G.C., *Poster* [*Plakat*]⁵⁰, *Ask a policeman* [*Spytaj Milicjanta*]⁵¹, *What do they give us* [*Co oni nam dają*]⁵² by Dezerter⁵³, *Night Patrol* [*Nocny patrol*] and *I'm a woman* [*Jestem kobietą*]⁵⁴ by Maanam, *The last wall has fallen* [*Runął już ostatni mur*]⁵⁵, *I'm telling you that...* [*Mówię ci, że*]⁵⁶ by Tilt⁵⁷, *Operational readiness* [*Stan gotowości*]⁵⁸ by Lombard, *Why freedom?* [*Po co wolność*]⁵⁹ by KULT, *The Tower of Joy, the Tower of Loneliness* [*Wieża radości, wieża samotności*]⁶⁰ and *Meeting with...*

⁴⁷ The song was composed in 1982, played on the radio, released on the album ‘82–‘85 (1994). The words: „Where are they? All my friends [...] they hide away in mirk institutions [...] what a parade, what a marching style, arm in arm [...] with their working positions, taxes and white flags – Gdzie oni są? Ci wszyscy moi przyjaciele [...] schowali się po różnych mrocznych instytucjach [...] co za pochod co za piękny krok, maszerują ramię w ramię wprost [...] z posadami, podatkami i z białymi chorągiewkami” can be read as a criticism of opportunism, giving in, and yielding to the regime.

⁴⁸ Lyrics of those songs were written by Grzegorz Ciechowski (1957–2001), who was part of the rock band Republika (active 1981–2001) and pursued a solo career as Obywatel G.C. (active 1986–1992)

⁴⁹ From the album *Yes! Yes! [Tak! Tak!]* (1988).

⁵⁰ From the album *Underground Out of Poland* (1987) with lyrics: „[...] Somewhere far away people are afraid to go out on the streets to say “no!” – [...] Gdzieś daleko stąd ludzie boją się wychodzić na ulicę, by powiedzieć, nie! (...)”.

⁵¹ The album *World Class Punk* by different artists (1984).

⁵² From the album *Dezerter* (1988).

⁵³ Lyrics of those songs were written by Grzegorz Ciechowski (1957–2001), who was part of the rock band Republika (active 1981–2001) and pursued a solo career as Obywatel G.C. (active 1986–1992), s.f.: www.ciechowski.art.pl/.

⁵⁴ From the album *Night Patrol [Nocny patrol]* (1984).

⁵⁵ Released as a single in 1985.

⁵⁶ Released as a single in 1986.

⁵⁷ Polish rock band founded in 1979.

⁵⁸ From the album *Grey ointment [Szara maść]* (1984).

⁵⁹ From the album *The Cassette [Kaseta]* (1989).

⁶⁰ From the album *Europe and Asia [Europa i Azja]* (1987) with words: „[...] I live in the tall tower, it protects me, I'm not fighting anymore, not with anyone, not for anything, they burn my ideals at the stake, tomorrow I'll be big, today I'm small [...] – [...] Mieszkam w wysokiej wieży, ona mnie obroni, nie walczę już z nikim, nie walczę już o nic, palą się na stosie moje ideały, jutro będę duży, dzisiaj jestem

[*Spotkanie z...*]⁶¹ by Szytywny Pal Azji⁶². Also majority of songs from the album *Klaus Mitffoch* (1985) by Klaus Mitffoch⁶³ refer to totalitarian system, and the need of resistance.

There are two types of Polish music concerning politics that can be found after 1989. One is the music created during the PRL era but stopped from being recorded or released by the censorship. For example the song *Poland [Polska]* by KULT was written in 1987, but was not accepted by the Office for the Control of the Publications and Public Spectacles and had to wait till 1992 to be put on the album *Listen, it's for you [Posłuchaj to do ciebie]*. And the other is the music created in post-communist Poland concerning communist period as well as present Poland in relation to the political past, e.g.: *It's gonna be beautiful yet [Jeszcze będzie przepięknie]*⁶⁴ by Tilt, *I love freedom [Kocham wolność]*⁶⁵ by Chłopczy z Placu Broni⁶⁶, or *Four rooms [Cztery pokoje]*⁶⁷ by Kazik⁶⁸.

mały [...]”. One of the most powerful songs on the 1980s and considered as one of the most important of that period.

⁶¹ From the album *Europe and Asia [Europa i Azja]* (1987).

⁶² Polish rock band founded in 1986.

⁶³ Polish alternative rock group founded in 1979, active in 1979–1989.

⁶⁴ From the album *Badass Commando Tilt [Czad Kommando Tilt]* (1990) with words: “I saw houses with millions of windows, with pain crawling in each one [...] It hurt, it was still like that [...] Fear did not allow to talk about it out loud, fear did not allow to love and to laugh, fear made us look away, fear made us to be afraid [...] It is gonna be beautiful, yet, It is gonna be normal, yet [...] – Widziałem domy o milionach okien, a w każdym oknie czaił się ból [...] Ciągle bolało, że ciągle jest tak [...] Strach nie pozwalał głośno o tym mówić, strach nie pozwalał kochać się i śmiać, strach nakazywał opuścić w dół oczy, strach nakazywał cały czas się bać [...] Jeszcze będzie przepięknie, jeszcze będzie normalnie [...]”.

⁶⁵ From the albums *O! Ela* (1990), and *The Best – Kocham wolność* (2004) with words: “[...] I haven't seen much, I will not see much [...] Freedom – I love it and understand it, Freedom – I cannot give it away [...] – [...] Tak niewiele widziałem, Tak niewiele zobaczę [...] Wolność kocham i rozumiam, Wolności oddać nie umiem [...]”.

⁶⁶ Polish rock band, active 1987–2000.

⁶⁷ From the album *Melassa* (2000) with words: “[...] Totalitarian socialism transformed into etatistic-regulatory model, bureaucracy expanded by three times, and the only difference is that instead of one party there are four occupational status groups – and the difference is that some of them say “PRL was cool” and the others “it wasn't” [...] Socjalizm totalitarny zmienił się w koncesyjno-etatystyczny, biurokracja od czasu upadku komuny rozrosła się trzykrotnie, z tą różnicą, że zamiast jednej stanowiska obsadzają cztery partie [...] a różnica, że jedni mówią, że PRL była „cool” – a drudzy, że nie [...]”.

⁶⁸ Kazimierz Staszewski, born in 1963, Polish singer,

There are also songs that were not written as political statements though were used as such by people. One of the best examples is *Less than a zero [Mniej niż zero]*⁶⁹ by Lady Pank⁷⁰ – one of the most known songs of this band. According to the song a good student, who passed high school exams (in Poland: matura) with distinctions, may not be considered a desirable citizen despite his optimistic attitude, and for some people he may even be seen as “less than a zero”. The song became the hit on the radio in May of 1983. The same month 19-year old Grzegorz Przymyk⁷¹ was murdered – it was one of the most known politically motivated murder in the PRL era. His funeral became a huge protest against communist government, and in the following months people would rally at his grave and sing this song. Lyrics: “you think you mean something because you have brains and a will to work, you've passed matura excellently, so you've earned a place on the Earth, but there are still people who think you are just less than a zero”⁷² seemed to fit perfectly – a young inspiring poet, matura graduate, who was beaten to death by the police (Civic Militia, MO), just as if he meant nothing. The song was used as a political comment despite primary intentions of the group⁷³.

songwriter, leader of the band Kult, pursuing solo career as Kazik.

⁶⁹ Lady Pank, *Lady Pank* (1983).

⁷⁰ Polish rock band founded in 1981, s.f.: <http://www.lady-pank.com.pl/>.

⁷¹ Przymyk's mother, Barbara Sadowska was a member of the anti-Communist opposition, and was severely beaten by unknown perpetrators just a few days before her son's death. Grzegorz Przymyk was arrested by members of the Milicja Obywatelska in May 1983 and severely beaten at the police station, he died in the hospital due to sustained injuries. Investigation in his death was also undertaken by the Institute of National Remembrance [Instytut Pamięci Narodowej], s.f.: IPN, *Press release on Grzegorz Przymyk*, <http://ipn.gov.pl/wydzial-prasowy/komunikaty/w-zwiazku-z-podwazaniem-w-debacie-parlamentarnej-roli-pzpr-instytut-pamieci-narodowej-przedstawia-najwazniejsze-ustalenia-z-postepowania-prowadzonego-w-okszipn-w-warszawie>, [10.06.2014].

⁷² “[...] Myślisz może, że więcej coś znaczysz, bo masz rozum, dwie ręce i chęć, twoje miejsce na Ziemi tłumaczy: zaliczona matura na pięć, są tacy – to nie żart, dla których jeseń wart mniej niż zero [...]”.

⁷³ S.f.: *Na pełnej olewce*, „Machina” 66/2011, p.18; *Mniej niż zero*, „Biblioteka Polskiej Piosenki”, http://www.bibliotekapiosenki.pl/Mniej_niz_zero, [10.06.2014].

3. Conclusions

As the most known protest-songs of the PRL can be enlisted: *Walls* [Mury], *Armor* [Zbroja], *Our class* [Nasza klasa]⁷⁴, *The Chace* [Obława]⁷⁵ by J. Kaczmarek, *For Poland be Poland* [Żeby Polska była Polską] by J. Pietrzak, *We want to be ourselves* [Chcemy być sobą], *It's merry around here* [Ale w koło jest wesoło], and *Autobiography* [Autobiografia] by Perfect, *White flag* [Biała Flaga] and *Morning news* [Poranna wiadomość] by Republika, *Do not ask about Poland* [Nie pytaj o Polskę] by Obywatel G.C., *Experience it yourself* [Przeżyj to sam] by Lombard, *Adult children* [Dorośle dzieci] by Turbo, *Headquarters* [Centrala], *There's nothing there* [Nie ma nic], *Fallen is Babylon* [Babylon upadł], and *What you feel, what you know* [To co czujesz, to co wiesz] by Brygada Kryzys, *The Tower of Joy, the Tower of Loneliness* [Wieża radości, wieża samotności] by Szttywny Pal Azji, *Poster* [Plakat] by Dezerter, *Beware of those places* [Strzeż się tych miejsc] by Klaus Mitffoch, *Hey, don't you know* [Hej, Czy nie Wiecie], *Why freedom* [Po co wolność], and *Poland* [Polska] by KULT, *Night Patrol* [Nocny patrol] and *I'm a woman* [Jestem kobietą] by Maanam.

Polish rock music of the 1970s and 1980s was not only expressing youthful rebellion or rejection of social norms and bourgeois lifestyle, as it was typical for rock'n'roll in democratic countries, but it was often politically involved, and certain songs became kind of a cry for freedom of speech. Of course one cannot say that Polish rock scene was one big rebellion against communist power, as it was a diverse and complex amalgamate of artists, but some of them happened to be in opposition to communism. An interesting and important topic is also songs that were written or recorded after the collapse of communism but relating to the political past.

Rock music in the 1980s was not only the instrumental power and significance of the lyrics - it was also the physical aspect of the album. Album's covers are used to present certain vision of an artist, they are usually coherent with the image of the artist or/and musical content. Nevertheless, today – in an era of mp3,

one can be familiar with the certain song or an album of an artist without even ever seeing the front cover of the CD. Vinyl records were large objects, their graphics had bigger impact on the buyer than today's CDs. By using certain colors or images artists could also present their political views and make a statement. Such statements can be seen on the covers of *UNU* by Perfect, *Adult children* [Dorośle dzieci] by Turbo, or *Brygada Kryzys live* by Brygada Kryzys.

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⁷⁴ The song was rewritten and extended, there are 3 versions of this song edited in 1983, 1987 and 1992. S.f.: *Pieśni Niepokornych*, „Polskie Radio”, <http://piesninielokornych.polskieradio.pl/>, [13.07.2014].

⁷⁵ The song was issued on the album *Krzyk* [Scream] (1981). There were also follow-up versions issued in 1983, 1987 and 1990. S.f.: *Pieśni Niepokornych*, „Polskie Radio”, <http://piesninielokornych.polskieradio.pl/>, [13.07.2014].

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