

Introduction

Gwido Zlatkes, Paweł Sowiński, and Ann M. Frenkel

This anthology endeavors to provide wide-ranging analyses and testimonies of the underground publishing and printing industry in Poland between 1976 and 1989. It gives a broad overview, historical explanation, and assessment of the phenomenon of Polish “second circulation,” including discussions of various aspects of underground printing, and the distribution and circulation of independent publications. The authors bring to light mostly anonymous activists, present obsolete technologies, and demonstrate how these people and technologies changed history.

The virtually bloodless transition in Poland between 1976 and 1989 from a (dysfunctional) totalitarian regime to a (functioning) democracy that triggered similar changes in half of the European continent can be regarded as one of the miracles of the 20th century, or possibly in the entire course of human history. The transition did not happen overnight; its completion took more than a decade in a process that can be termed by an apparent oxymoron: “a peaceful revolution.” This revolution was initiated by a few scattered individuals whose efforts seemed at the time utterly quixotic and hopeless, destined for the communists’ “dumpster of history,” or at best to bear fruit in some distant future. Only in its very last phase did this process assume a breakneck tempo that surprised all the participants who found themselves almost overnight in an entirely different world. No one knew this in advance or even as it was happening; only in retrospect can one perceive and appreciate the dynamics of the change. There were many factors at play, both rational and irrational: international politics and macroeconomics, personalities at the summits of power, calculations and miscalculations, as well as good will and ill will. Paper with words printed on it was not the least of these factors, and Poland was a place where this turned out to be particularly significant.



After World War II Poland found itself in the Soviet sphere of influence. It was nominally an independent state, and never overtly communist.¹ The period of dogmatic oppressive Stalinism lasted between 1948 and 1956, and after the 1956 workers' protests, the ruling party effectively abandoned its main goal of reforging the Poles' souls and turning them into proper communists. Instead, the Party settled for society's resigned acquiescence to political and economic "facts on the ground" in exchange for limited cultural freedom. As a result, while succumbing to what was mockingly termed by poet Tadeusz Różewicz as "our little stabilization," and with an increasingly insolvent and backward economy, Poland became "the merriest barrack in the communist camp" with semi-open public discourse in spheres that were deemed not politically sensitive. This tacit social contract was periodically interrupted by waves of protests, in most cases sparked by the communist authorities' desperate attempts at salvaging the sinking economy through draconian price increases for basic consumer goods. These protests were brutally suppressed, but then the authorities, to mollify the people, would promptly revoke the price hikes, thus further deepening the economic debacle.

One of these protests took place in the summer of 1976. Its pacification was harsh. The court trials of the arrested protesters (both actual rioters as well as some incidental passers-by) resulted in numerous long prison sentences. In response, a group of prominent public figures—writers, artists, scholars, and lawyers—formed the Committee for the Defense of Workers, or KOR, in order to provide legal and material aid to the victims and their families and to inform public opinion in Poland and internationally. Since the founding members were themselves victims of censorship and publishing restrictions, the issue of free circulation not just of information, but also of ideas, immediately emerged.

However to meet these goals was by no means easy. Not only were the large circulation press and media under complete control of the communists, but everything, including obituaries and wedding invitations, had to

¹ Even Poland's ruling party was not communist by name. Its official name was *Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza* (PZPR), or the Polish United Workers' Party (PUWP). Since it was the only party in Poland, to maintain a pretense of pluralism two "allied" puppet political organizations were permitted (*Stronnictwo Demokratyczne*, or the Alliance of Democrats, and *Zjednoczone Stronnictwo Ludowe*, or the United Farmers' Alliance). PUWP was commonly referred to as the Party; this usage is used throughout this book.

be cleared by the censors.² All printing shops, even the smallest ones that produced nothing more than restaurant menus and electricity invoices, were under lock and key. Therefore independent publishing in communist Poland started with what was at hand: onionskins typed and retyped with carbon paper and passed among friends. But then, instead of settling for the practices of *samizdat*, it embarked at “reinventing the wheel” — developing technologies and practices from scratch that were already obsolete elsewhere.

Still many people in Poland found out about the political opposition from Western radio broadcasting and its campaign for greater freedom of thought. Radio Free Europe, Voice of America, and the BBC broadcasted the names and addresses of the KOR activists. This transnational network of advocacy gave substantial help to the opposition within Poland, and increased their chances of survival: the more visible they were, the safer they were. In this manner, thanks to the independent media, it became possible to create a framework of a wider social movement. The strength of this network was based not only on individual moral choices but on common values and symbolic power shared by international human rights movements.

KOR’s initially limited formula was soon expanded; subsequently it changed its name to KSS-KOR: the Committee for Societal Self-Defense KOR. The literary journal *Zapis* (a play on several meanings of the word “note,” as both a diary entry as well as a censor’s ban) was first published in early 1977. The first issue appeared in 12 copies—its 250 pages were typed twice through six onionskins. From that modest beginning, several duplicating techniques were developed, printing machines were “organized” (most often smuggled from the West), and the whole infrastructure developed—from obtaining paper and ink, to the actual printing, to collating and binding, and to the distribution networks. By 1980 independent publishing was running at full speed, though never able to meet the growing demand for uncensored information and literature.

Printing without state permission was prohibited and a punishable offense, but the authorities, increasingly dependent on Western loans, were reluctant to apply harsh measures against well-known intellectual figures from KOR or the people associated with them. The communists limited themselves to petty albeit often painful harassment, such as bans on publication in state-owned media, frequent home searches, and short term “preventive” detentions (in addition to the confiscation of materials and equipment). In February

² One of the authors of this article owns a copy of his father’s 1964 *klepsydra* (announcement of death and funeral) which was printed in only a few copies, but still included a censor’s identifier.

1980 two underground printers, Mirosław Chojecki and Bogdan Grzesiak, were jailed with the charge of stealing a junked duplicator. After protests in Poland and internationally, they were given suspended sentences.

This “incubation period” changed almost overnight on August 31, 1980, when the Polish Communist authorities signed an agreement with the striking workers at the Gdańsk Shipyard. *Solidarność* came to life, nominally a trade union, but in fact a social phenomenon on an unprecedented scale, an emanation and expression of self-organizing society. In the communist bloc, this was the first mass movement independent of the communists. Within a few weeks some eight million people, effectively more than half of Poland’s workforce, joined *Solidarność*; it was the largest trade union in the world. The need for reliable information was but a fragment of the society’s thirst for independent uncensored publications. Every scrap of paper printed outside official venues was immediately snatched up by anxious readers. Union cells claimed and gained access to their factories’ printing facilities. In no time a large cadre of independent editors and printers emerged. They started producing bulletins with information pertaining to current local and national union affairs, but also materials of general interest, and literary and historical topics that could not be published in official media because of their alleged anticommunist nature.

At the same time the *Solidarność* regional offices ran their printing shops 24/7. They were equipped with machines which “surfaced” from the underground, soon augmented with equipment sent by sympathetic organizations in the West. Yet not all underground printing structures went above ground. Sensing the fragility of the situation and fearing the Communists would try to restore the previous order by force, some underground publishers decided to hide at least some of their equipment.

On the night of December 13, 1981 the authorities declared martial law “to keep the legal balance of the country, to create guarantees that give a chance to restore order and discipline.”³ The military action was swift and very efficient; within a few hours Poland was effectively paralyzed. All phones were disconnected, all communication lines blocked, most of the *Solidarność* leaders detained, and all independent organizations suspended. Isolated strikes in factories and coal mines lasted for several days, and several dozen people were killed. During raids on the offices of *Solidarność*, virtually all printing equipment was either seized by the authorities or vandalized, with the exception of a very few machines saved amidst the chaos by *Solidarność* staff.

³ A quote from the December 13, 1981 speech by Gen. Wojciech Jaruzelski declaring martial law.

Yet the shock within society was short-lived. Almost immediately the activists who had managed to survive the initial wave of repression started organizing resistance. Independent publishing went back underground. During the initial days and weeks it resumed in the hand-copied onionskin form, but very soon it returned to all methods of printing, and on a much larger scale than before 1980. The foresight of those independent publishers who decided to keep their equipment hidden proved invaluable. Their machines survived the initial wave of repression, and almost immediately went back to work. As it turned out, the previous 16 months, aptly dubbed “the carnival,” created in society an irrepressible need for independent information, as well as a large cadre of providers. No state power could stop this.

Technically, martial law was lifted in 1983, but this was not perceived as a breakthrough. The entire 1980s in Poland can be regarded as a period of creeping disintegration of the system, from the initial fear at the introduction of martial law to a cat-and-mouse game with an increasingly toothless cat. In February 1982 Ewa Kubasiewicz was handed a ten-year prison sentence for distributing a leaflet calling for resistance to martial law.⁴ By 1986 or 1987 you could still be arrested for underground printing and sentenced to a few years in prison, but there was a good chance that by the next major state holiday an amnesty would be declared, and within three to six months from your arrest you would be released. The ordeal gradually became an acceptable deal.

This ended in August 1988 when another wave of strikes engulfed Poland, and the government bowed to the demand to restore legal *Solidarność*. In March 1989 the Round Table negotiations started. They resulted in partially free elections on June 4, 1989, which unexpectedly turned into a referendum that effectively voted the communists out of power, and in August 1989 Tadeusz Mazowiecki became the first noncommunist head of government in the Soviet Bloc. In October 1989 on the main edition of TV news the actress Joanna Szczepkowska symbolically declared that communism in Poland was over, and in April 1990 the office of censorship was disbanded. Underground printing was no longer needed.

According to the most recent bibliographies (that surely are not complete, considering the nature of underground publishing), over those 14 years about 6,500 books were published underground in Poland in runs up to 40,000 copies. For instance, *Obywatel a Służba Bezpieczeństwa* (a guide on what to do when arrested by the Secret Service) by Czesław Bielecki and Jan Krzysztof Kelus was published in 40,000 copies; and full-length novels such as *Mała apokalipsa* (published in English as *A Minor Apocalypse*) by Tadeusz Konwicki and *Wielki*

⁴ She was released from prison in May 1983.

strach (*The Great Fear*) by Julian Strykowski were published in 15,000 copies each. At the same time, some 6,000 periodicals appeared—weeklies, monthlies, quarterlies, irregulars, thin and thick, of all kinds, and with a circulation that was up to 70,000 copies per issue. Many of these were ephemeral, but more than a few lasted for several years, or, like *Tygodnik Mazowsze*, eventually transformed into mainstream newspapers in 1989.

There can be little doubt that the duplicator revolution—breaking the state monopoly on information—was one of the principal factors in the ultimate success of *Solidarność*. The scale of the independent word was astounding: hundreds of underground presses, innumerable tons of printed paper, thousands of people involved in all aspects, including writing, editing, organizing, printing, and distributing. What was unique about Polish underground publishing was that texts were produced for different social strata. For example, there were newspapers for industrial workers, and there was a newspaper for children, one for women, and an underground newsletter was even published for the police. The underground presses ran for 14 years, 365 days a year, 24/7. It took more or less 120,000 “duplicator hours” to dismantle communism in Poland, and per extension, the whole Soviet Bloc.⁵



This book is the first attempt at a comprehensive in-depth English-language discussion of Polish underground printing in the 1970s and 1980s. However, it is not the first work ever published in English on the subject of underground printing. One of the pioneering works is Joanna M. Preibisz’s *Polish Dissident Publications: An Annotated Bibliography* (New York: Praeger, 1982) with an introduction by Jane L. Curry, documenting the then-current holdings at Columbia University. Curry also prepared the English edition *The Black Book of Polish Censorship* (New York: Random House, 1984). The volume of underground essays by the most famous Polish dissident writer Adam Michnik, *Letters from Prison and Other Essays* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985) finally brought Polish dissident writings out of the shadows. This work paved the way for an even more comprehensive presentation of Polish intellectual anti-totalitarians, *From the Polish Underground: Selections from “Krytyka,” 1978–1993*, edited by Michael H. Bernhard, Henryk Szlajfer, and Maria Chmielewska-Sz-

⁵ The neologism “duplicator hours” (in Polish, *powielaczogodziny*) was coined by Jan Krzysztof Kelus in the song that opens the present volume. The word is constructed similarly to the bureaucratic term *roboczogodziny*, “labor hours,” which was a communist unit for tracking work time.

lajfer (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995). Since the 1990s, numerous works on Polish dissidence have appeared; most in some form acknowledge Polish underground publications.

Samizdat, or publishing in defiance of state restrictions, is considered an East European phenomenon. The most important monograph about it remains Gordon H. Skilling's *Samizdat and an Independent Society in Central and Eastern Europe* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, in association with St Antony's College, Oxford, 1989), which focuses mostly on Czechoslovakia. Friederike Kind-Kovács presents a cross-border vision of the dissent milieu in her recent work, *Written Here, Published There: How Underground Literature Crossed the Iron Curtain* (Budapest: CEU Press 2014). She analyses external and internal factors, although her attention to the Polish contribution is limited. The relationship between state power and clandestine writings was explored by European researchers in the recent volume *Underground Publishing and the Public Sphere: Transnational Perspectives*, by Jan C. Behrends and Klaus Lindeberger (Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2014).

A more theoretical approach is represented by American social scientists Maryjane Osa, *Solidarity and Contention: Networks of Polish Opposition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003) and Jeffrey C. Goldfarb in his excellent *The Politics of Small Things: The Power of the Powerless in Dark Times* (Chicago: University Chicago Press, 2006). Gender perspective on Polish resistance including independent publishers is provided in Kristi S. Long's *We All Fought for Freedom: Women in Poland's Solidarity Movement* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996). Shana Penn brings a fresh perspective on the same issue in *Solidarity's Secret: The Women Who Defeated Communism in Poland* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005).

Newspaper coverage also contributes to our knowledge on underground publishing practices. The reports for the American press by Robert Darnton, Jackson Diehl, Michael T. Kaufman, and Lawrence Weschler are among the most insightful. Journalists such as Peter Koper from the *Baltimore Sun*, or *Daily Telegraph* reporter David Shears occasionally witnessed underground printing. More general overviews of Polish resistance culture are well-documented by the following highly regarded historians in the field: Timothy Garton Ash, Michael H. Bernhard, Padraic Kenney, David Ost, and Andrzej Paczkowski.⁶

⁶ Timothy Garton Ash, *The Polish Revolution: Solidarity*. (London: Cape, 1983); Michael H. Bernhard, *The Origins of Democratization in Poland: Workers, Intellectuals, and Oppositional Politics, 1976–1980* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993); Padraic Kenney, *A Carnival of Revolution: Central Europe 1989* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002); David Ost, *Solidarity and the Politics of Anti-Politics: Opposition and Reform*

These brilliant works deepen understanding of the Polish underground publishing scene, but there are still many historical gaps to fill. In particular, these works primarily concentrate on the intellectual content, or what the *bibuła* was, and not on the technical, logistic, and organizational side, i.e., how it was made.⁷ Another significant common feature in the literature to date is the perception of Polish independent publishing as another instance of samizdat, whereas in our opinion it was a phenomenon of an entirely different order. While in the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, or Hungary independent publications circulated among several hundred providers and readers, *bibuła* in Poland was produced in a semi-industrial way, and reached an audience of tens if not hundreds of thousands.

Recent Polish scholarly literature on the underground offers many detailed studies at the countrywide level, and there is a good selection of bibliographic works. New narrative accounts are also being published all the time. However, these works are mainly rather narrow case studies. Researchers usually explore a small group or a larger center in the underground, and treat them like a separate organization without paying much attention to the interconnectivity within the entire underground network. In general, combining Western concepts on social movements with empirical knowledge is not a strong point of Polish historiography. Thanks to the Institute of National Remembrance and the opening of the secret police archives, “vetting” studies (or in more scholarly terms, studies on external intervention into the social movement) have become a Polish specialty. On the other hand, oral histories are booming; thus the inner voices of underground printers and participants of the rank and file are heard much more than before.

Most Polish historians conduct their research on the so-called “meso-level,” which means taking the subject from a social group’s point of view and its relation to the state power. Less common is the “micro-level” perspective, i.e., individual motivation and decision-making processes, kinship relations, or cultural history of the small objects—books or printing machines, people’s emotions, etc. There also is very little work on the “macro-level.” Almost no noticeable progress has been made in the field of exploration of the social landscape that surrounded the protesters. Scientists have looked only superficially into the problem of merging the official and unofficial sphere in everyday life.

in Poland since 1968 (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990); Andrzej Paczkowski and Jane Cave, *The Spring Will Be Ours: Poland and the Poles from Occupation to Freedom* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2013).

⁷ Literally “blotting paper,” in the early 1900s Józef Piłsudski edited and published a clandestine socialist journal *Bibuła*; the title later became a common term for all illegally published literature.

Needless to say there is very little research on the transnational connections of Polish publishing.

Some of the finest examples of current Polish scholarship are Adam Mielczarek's *Śpiący rycerze: Szeregowi działacze warszawskiego podziemia wydawniczego lat osiemdziesiątych* (Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Wolnego Słowa, 2006) and Mateusz Fałkowski's *Biznes Patriotyczny: Historia wydawnictwa CDN* (Gdańsk: ECS, 2011). A new current of cultural studies is represented by Paweł Sowiński's *Zakazana książka: Uczestnicy drugiego obiegu 1977–1989* (Warsaw: ISP PAN, 2011). Jan Olaszek's recent book, *Revolucja powielaczy: Niezależny ruch wydawniczy w Polsce 1976–1989* (Warsaw: Trzecia Strona, 2015) is an overview of the history of the independent publishing movement in communist Poland addressed primarily to a general audience. Some studies of regional scope are also very inspiring. Szczepan Rudka's *Poza cenzurą: Wrocławska Prasa Bezdebitowa 1973–1990* (Warsaw: PWN, 2001) is well-documented and essential for those particularly interested in details of underground production.

Justyna Błazejowska's *Papierowa Rewolucja* (Warsaw: IPN, 2010) is infused with politics in terms of focus and agenda. She makes a distinction between the elites in the resistance circle and the working masses, and emphasizes the importance of inner clashes and tensions. Her rather strong opinions about who was more and less heroic invite criticism. Opponents point out that she supports the rightist point of view on the issue and at the same time attacks people on the other side of current political conflict in Poland. Adherents defend her work as being the first vision that describes reality without embellishment. In any case *Papierowa Rewolucja* contributes to the debate on the objectivity and subjectivity of historical writings, and the role of memory and historians as a part of "transitional justice."

In the big picture there is a tradition of illegal publishing in Poland that dates back to the 19th century, and a romantic belief in the power of clandestine books that make the nation morally stronger and more resistant during difficult moments of history. Polish scholarly literature tends to be optimistic about how much Polish society was impacted by forbidden publications. However, there is not much known about consumption culture, readership, and symbolic use of these small objects. Book reception can be seen as a subtle political and cultural vehicle for mobilization for nonviolent campaigns. It helped the opposition to formulate political strategies and to create charismatic leaders such as Adam Michnik. It is safe to say that prohibited readings acted as a soft power on the dynamic of 1989 in Poland and the whole of Eastern Europe. The question is how and to what extent the printed word empowered

the “opportunity structure” of the social movement.⁸ In what circumstances can the clandestine book be a danger to the communist state-power? What were the main barriers, risks, and difficulties in transmitting those independent values and knowledge to society?



Researchers who take up the topic now benefit from access to archival materials in institutions specialized in human rights movements and Eastern Europe. In the US, the most significant collection is held by the Hoover Institution Library and Archives at Stanford University. The Open Society Archives (OSA) in Budapest and the Forschungsstelle Osteuropa in Bremen, Germany, can also be very helpful in researching international contexts and dimensions. All three institutions have rich collections of underground journals and books. In addition to this, the OSA and the Hoover Archives preserve records related to Radio Free Europe. Traces of underground activities can be found in private archives of the Polish political diaspora. The most important of these is the archive of the so-called Paris *Kultura*, located in Maisons-Laffitte (on the outskirts of Paris). The second one worth mentioning is the Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum in London.

Advanced research in Poland includes institutions such as the Warsaw-based Ośrodek KARTA (the KARTA Center), Europejskie Centrum Solidarności (the European Solidarity Centre) in Gdańsk, Sowiniec—Fundacja Centrum Dokumentacji Czynu Niepodległościowego (Sowiniec—the Foundation for the Documentation of Pro-Independence Activities) in Kraków, and Ośrodek “Brama Grodzka-Teatr NN” (the Grodzka Gate-NN Theatre) in Lublin. They collect not only publications, but also personal papers and oral accounts.

American and European intelligence service records are still classified; currently those archives offer very little or nothing on specific subjects. The exception is Instytut Pamięci Narodowej (IPN, the Institute of National Remembrance) in Poland that provides scholars access to the Polish secret service (SB) files on a regular basis. Yet these materials are incomplete due to the fact that during the transition (1989–90) the SB destroyed many of its dossiers, including those on the underground publishing scene. Still the existing records are

⁸ A term from Doug McAdam. See Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy, and Mayer N. Zald, eds., *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

sometimes a source of excellent information about the protesters' milieu, as the investigators were able to imbed agents who spied on the core activists.

On the other hand, the police files can be misleading for many reasons. Some maintain that they mainly reflect the SB point of view, that the materials tell more about the informers and officers handling them than about the resistance itself. Indeed it is vitally important to confront the agents' stories with memories of other people involved, and even to expand the discussion beyond the state domination over the citizens. For instance, a closer examination of the SB files of Janusz Górski reveals that although he was a very dangerous spy within the inner circle of NOWA, his reports were also full of fabrications.⁹ Górski's ability to balance between the police and the opposition was his most striking characteristic. His skill in changing sides as needed suggests that he was not only a proxy, but also had individual agency. He did not tell the police everything he knew. To some extent, it was he who decided what and upon whom he would report.

The very nature of this kind of social movement means it did not generate much in the way of solid sources, extensive data, or reliable statistics. Existing materials are dispersed and contain many lacunae. For instance, the absence of financial documents prevents historians from exploring the shadowy economy of the publishing resistance. Almost no one from the circle took notes or kept ledgers at the time. Therefore it is necessary to use retrospective memories. The following personal narratives and recollections are among the most penetrating: *Obieg NOW-ej*, by Łukasz Bertram (Warsaw: IPN 2013); *Lublin – Drogi do wolności* (Lublin: Ośrodek "Brama Grodzka," 2009–11);¹⁰ *Przegląd Wiadomości Agencyjnych 1984–1990: Przerwana historia ilustrowanej bibuły*, by Jan Bryłowski and Jan Doktor (Warsaw: Ossa, Wydawnictwo Dom na Wsi, 2011); *Będzie Strajk*, by Krystyna Zalewska (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Tres Piedras, 2012); and *Buntownicy: Polskie lata 70. i 80.*, by Joanna Wawrzyniak and Anka Grupińska (Warsaw: Świat Książki, 2011).

⁹ See Paweł Sowiński, "Biograficzne konsekwencje ruchu społecznego: Przypadek braci Andrzeja i Janusza Górskich," available at <http://solidarnosc.collegium.edu.pl/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/WPSM-8.pdf>," accessed August 14, 2015. Janusz Górski was the brother of prominent NOWA printer Andrzej Górski.

¹⁰ A three-volume set published as three issues of the journal *Scriptores*, nos. 36, 38, and 39: *Lublin: Drogi do wolności*: v. 1, *Siła wolnego słowa*, ed. Marcin Skrzypek, *Scriptores*, no. 36 (2009); v. 2, *Janusz Krupski: Wspomnienia, artykuły, biografia, rewolucja powieściowa, opozycja*, ed. Marcin Skrzypek, *Scriptores*, no. 38 (2011); v. 3, *Spotkania*, ed. Anna Kiszka, Maciej Sobieraj, Wioletta Wejman, and Agnieszka Wiśniewska, *Scriptores*, no. 39 (2011). In WorldCat (<http://www.worldcat.org>) these volumes are listed as monographs under separate titles.



This work adds new dimensions to the topic. It is primarily focused on history from below, or at the “micro level.” Unlike previous attempts, which have focused on the intellectuals within the opposition circle, we concentrate on the rank and file printers who did unusual things without many people knowing or watching. In portrayals of the whole conspiracy against the government, considerable attention is paid to the cultural and social maintenance of dissidence according to cultural shifts in the social sciences. The intellectual circle of the opposition very much needed the skills of the rank and file; without these talented technicians it would have been very difficult for writers to develop self-publishing. This work also traces the pattern of an informal economy to describe underground publishers not only as heroes, but also as entrepreneurs who profited from the illicit book trade.

This book consists of three parts. The first is a collection of scholarly essays by Polish historians and social scientists.¹¹ The second is a selection of primary sources reflecting *contemporaneous* perceptions and reflections on what was happening.¹² The third comprises written and oral histories gathered several years after the fall of communism, thus including much more personal analyses and evaluation, and reflection on ramifications, meanings, and outcomes. The work covers a sizable portion of late 20th-century Polish history: from events and processes to their historical interpretation that leads to their incorporation into the national historical narrative.



The book is a cross-generational endeavor in many respects. The majority of the scholarly essays are written by historians and scholars for whom the events they describe, if remembered at all, are distant memories from childhood. Yet when they were trained as scholars that past was still very fresh, so in addition to acquiring the toolkit of a modern historian or social scientist, they were in the very privileged position of being able to work with first-hand testimonies (some of which they collected themselves), documents, and artifacts. Their work is characterized by an intrinsic understanding of concepts

¹¹ Only one author, Siobhan Doucette, is not Polish.

¹² The term “primary sources” used in this part needs a clarification. The standard definition of primary sources refers to documents, testimonies, or physical objects written or created during the time under study, and usually unpublished at the time. Here the notion is broadened to include accounts gathered and published (mostly underground) within the period covered.

and contexts and deep respect towards their subjects, while at the same time preserving a critical distance. They know things that the participants in the events could not have known and can see things the participants could not see. What their older compatriots experienced and perceived as a flow of life, they see and try to understand and describe as a graspable process, or rather as many interwoven sociological processes that logically (though not inevitably) led to a resolution. They are past the justifiable wonder and disbelief at what happened; they are asking and trying to find rational answers to why it happened the way it did.¹³

They concentrate on specific cases concerning underground production and distribution in various regions and social groups. Their studies are based on both oral histories and Polish secret services archives. They examine institutional context, such as police harassment and official propaganda, but what seems to be essential is the strategy of civil resistance, the inner dynamics of the process of growing freedom, and the everyday life of the core activists.



The epigraph opens the volume with lyrics to a song by Jan Krzysztof Kelus. This song is not unlike Woody Guthrie's famous social protest anthems both in style (a scratchy voice against a 4-chord guitar tune) and message.¹⁴ It contains two of the most powerful metaphors that capture the essence of what happened in Poland between 1976 and 1989: "paper revolution" and "words like dynamite." The song inspired titles for several works on underground publishing, including Wiesława Grochola's compilation and the interview with Mirosław Chojecki, in this work.¹⁵ Also the title of the present work, *Duplicator Underground*, is taken from the translation of Kelus's song.

Kelus wrote it during the 16 months of "the carnival" between August 1980 and December 1981. By then the author already perceived the vestiges of petrification and "veteranism" slowly creeping in. Today it is hard to understand the exact feelings evoked by the song at the time because martial law delayed this process for almost a decade. The song circulated on clandestinely-

¹³ This also applies to the Polish editors of this book. When, on December 13, 1981, the older editor was woken up by a friend at three in the morning and driven away to avoid a 6:00 a.m. encounter with the SB, the younger editor was very disappointed to miss a showing of a cartoon film because all the movie theaters were closed.

¹⁴ *Piosenka patetyczna*, available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hW4ciqzw1sg>, accessed August 7, 2015.

¹⁵ See "Words Like Dynamite" and "Words Against Tanks," in this volume.

copied cassettes—the audio equivalent of underground printed literature.¹⁶ The translation in the present work is designed so the song may be performed in English as well. This involved inevitable changes and compromises to the original; consequently, the exact rendition of individual phrases was the first victim; the main objective of the translation for this book was to accurately capture the overall meaning and historical ramifications.



The scholarly section of the work opens with a general account of the underground publishing scene of the 1970s and 1980s by Andrzej Friszke, a leading historian of the period. His article “The ‘Second Circulation’: The Underground Publication Market in Poland, 1976–89” describes the historical and social background for the emergence and development of underground printing and the second circulation in Poland. It provides a summary of the relationship between the communist authorities and dissident intellectuals as well as that of the audience and circulation mechanisms of independent publications.

“Printers of the Mind” by Paweł Sowiński, on the culture of Polish resistance, considers the historical development of technologies for small-scale printing and compares underground publishing in Poland to that in other communist countries.

The two essays about publishers—on *Spotkania* by Małgorzata Choma-Jusińska, and on *Wydawnictwo Młoda Polska* by Konrad Knoch and Mirosław Rybicki—give accounts of the emergence and development of the two oldest (outside of Warsaw) “firms” in underground publishing. Both initiatives originated in the second half of the 1970s, in Lublin and Gdańsk, respectively, and they predated the emergence of *Solidarność*. Despite many important differences, they showed remarkable similarities; both were the voices of and at the same time served as catalysts for their respective milieus—the upcoming generation of dissidents. In particular the essay by Knoch and Rybicki on underground publishing in Gdańsk demonstrates the nature of the underground networks between families, friends, and neighbors. While

¹⁶ The audio cassette *Z nieskończoną wciąż piosenką* by J. K. Kelus was published in 1982 by CDN. Its cover contained this message by the author: “As an independent artist working outside of the state entertainment monopoly, I reserve the copyright to the songs on this cassette. [...] I approve duplication of this cassette for the payment of 100 zlotys per copy, or \$10 outside of Poland. [...] If the payment cannot be delivered to the author, please contribute its equivalent to aid for the persecuted or for independent culture.”

at times it seems like an exhaustive list of relationships between people, the reader can actually viscerally experience how underground networks developed.

The essay on the second circulation in Wrocław by Kamil Dworaczek focuses on another large and important center of independent publishing. Although the text touches upon the pre-Solidarność period, it primarily deals with martial law and later when the majority of the *bibuta* production in Wrocław was created by small dispersed cells of the organization Solidarność Walcząca, a radical splinter from mainstream Solidarność. This decentralization proved both effective and resilient against police repression.

The text about Częstochowa by Jarosław Kapsa presents a smaller setting where conspiracy was much more difficult and faced different challenges than in large urban centers. The uniqueness of Częstochowa was shaped by Jasna Góra, the shrine of the Black Madonna and the destination of religious pilgrimages. Kapsa was a participant in the Częstochowa underground in 1980s, and his essay is notable in that it combines a first-hand personal account with scholarly research. Jan Olaszek discusses even smaller centers than Częstochowa in his essay on reprinting Warsaw journals in locales that were unable to develop self-sustaining underground structures and were dependent on ideological and in-kind aid from larger centers.

The essay by Siobhan Doucette “The Third Wave,” focuses on a generational shift in underground publications in the mid-1980s. As the initial resistance against martial law wore out, activists and the population at large felt drained and disheartened with the apparent futility of their struggle. Then a younger cohort of activists, people who came of age under martial law, developed new ideas and forms of activity. Their focus on draft resistance (a taboo for Solidarność), alternative culture, and the environment—subjects previously overlooked—brought in new energy and reinvigorated underground publishing.

The next set of essays focuses on the technical and logistical aspects of printing, and the legal and police contexts. Szczepan Rudka and Jan Strękowski discuss printing equipment and technologies used underground in Poland in detail. The ways and means were relatively simple and most had been discovered previously; in many cases underground printers were essentially “re-inventing the wheel.” That the printing wheel needed to be reinvented speaks to the power of the grip the communists had on society in stifling communication and expression. On the other hand, these efforts testify to the great ingenuity and inventiveness in breaking this grip in a situation of limited resources and tight police control. While Rudka’s text describes the printing equipment and techniques most often used in actual printing, Strękowski describes the

very little-known phenomenon of the budding local underground production of equipment for the needs of the growing publishing industry.

The social and legal ramifications of underground printing are discussed in the essay by Jerzy Kolarzowski and Gwido Zlatkes. The authors point to the 1974 Helsinki Accords that created instruments for the West to press for the observance of human rights in communist countries. Hence the dissidents in these countries insisted on strictly applying existing laws, especially in regard to the protection of human rights. Furthermore Kolarzowski and Zlatkes discuss Polish penal legislation on printing and censorship. This legislation was rooted in laws from the Stalinist period that underwent only superficial updates. The laws swung back and forth from being more or less stringent, and were particularly harsh during martial law. Yet the actual practice, dictated by the geopolitical situation and calculations of the people in power, was that of a gradual shift from penalization to fines, and from harsh repression to (primarily financial) harassment.

The police strategies employed by the communist authorities in fighting the publishing underground are the subject of Grzegorz Wołk's essay "To Limit, To Eradicate, or To Control? The SB and the 'Second Circulation,' 1981–89/90." Based primarily on surviving SB files in the IPN archives, he describes different units within the police apparatus and their approaches to their tasks. The documents analyzed by Wołk include contemporaneous internal reports and statistics of success and failures prepared by the SB. Of particular interest is the period from the fall of 1988 to the first half of 1989, i.e., before and during the Round Table talks when some members of the SB seemed not to notice the upcoming changes.

In his essay "A Social Movement and an Underground Market: Independent Publishing and Its Logics of Action in Communist Poland, 1976–89," Mateusz Fałkowski discusses the economic ramifications of the underground publishing industry; he analyses its gradual transition from a mission-driven approach to that of a market mentality. This fascinating evolution was a part of the process where the citizens in the egalitarian Polish society developed a tolerance to the inequalities inherent in a capitalist system.

Adam Mielczarek's "The 'Second Circulation' of the 1970s and 1980s as a Component of a Social Movement" closes this section and analyses the Polish second circulation as a hybrid social movement that combined the spontaneity and uncontrollability of grassroots elements, with the political calculations of the leaders in developing effective repertoires of contention against the communists. The analysis leads the author to the question of why the cadre of second circulation activists did not play a more prominent role during the

transition of 1989 and why many were effectively sidelined by professional leaders and politicians.

These texts present the Polish underground publishing industry as an increasingly diverse and complex phenomenon at the time, undergoing a significant evolution during the 13 years between 1976 and 1989.



All the primary source texts appear here for the first time in English translation. These texts are emblematic of underground printing in Poland in more than one respect. First, they provide real-life snapshots or vignettes: attempts at trial and error, homespun solutions and inventions, cat-and-mouse games with the SB, etc. They also touch upon larger moral and historical issues that ensued in the alternative reality of the underground.

Alongside factual details, they provide opinions and evaluations that were current at the time they were recorded. What prompts us to include them under this label rather than as secondary sources or oral histories is their date of publication; these accounts all come from the period that is the subject of this work. They also originally appeared in underground or émigré publications. All use some form of disguise, including pseudonyms, obscuring certain details, etc. They are not retrospective interpretations; they are ad hoc reflections on the conditions, ramifications, prospects, and drawbacks of underground publishing.

This section begins with another epigraph: the mission statement of the NOWA publishing house, printed before August 1980 in all NOWA books and journals. This statement, developed for the largest, and arguably the most important underground publishing “firm” of the era, also manages to encapsulate the purpose of the entire movement.

The narrative by Jan Walc “We, The Free Drum’n’Roller Press” was first printed (probably by Walc himself) in 1980 in *Biuletyn Informacyjny* no. 4/38. Rather than being a continuous account about a single event, it is distilled from numerous printing situations, and not necessarily all of them were personally experienced by the author.¹⁷ This does not take away from the psychological or even factual credibility. For instance, the description of recovering the pa-

¹⁷ There is a photograph, taken by Zenon Pałka, of Jan Walc with the famous A. B. Dick duplicator. The picture was taken in Walc’s villa in the Warsaw suburb Podkowa Leśna—which means that instead of the elaborate chases with SB tails, all he would have to do was just to step down to his basement... which, by the way, was strictly against the very basics of conspiratorial *BHP* (*bezpieczeństwo i higiena pracy* or “occupational health and safety”).

per by cutting off police cars on a highway is recalled slightly differently by Mirosław Chojecki in an interview with Wiesława Grochola, in section three of this book.¹⁸

“Lasting Values of Culture,” an interview with the publishers from Krag, another leading “firm” in the 1980s, offers an overview of their editorial profile and titles. It also reveals various aspects of the publishing “kitchen.”

“A Printer’s Handbook” has no date or place of publication in the copy used for this work. According to the records of Poland’s National Library, two separate editions were published in Wrocław in 1984.¹⁹ This text belongs to the period when underground printing became widespread, prompting a need for instructional materials. The manual is signed *enen*; today it is known that it was written by Witold Łuczywo, one of the founding fathers of independent printing in Poland. His manual is both awesome in its ingenuity and inventiveness, and at times hilarious. Even with all the details provided, some of these procedures are not replicable today. It is not just that typewriters from which ribbon can be removed in order to type a stencil are obsolete, since you can still find typewriter ribbons in thrift stores. The stencil itself is the problem—the author silently assumed it was readily available so he did not dwell on it much; but today a blank colloid stencil is virtually impossible to find.

This manual is followed by “Fifty Thousand Copies,” an account of the semi-industrial printing infrastructure of *Tygodnik Mazowsze (TM)* given by its coordinators; an interview with “a simple laborer,” an actual rank-and-file printer from *TKO Solidarność*; and finally, by the account of *TM* distribution structure and network.



The oral history section comprises testimonies given after the end of the period under discussion, in the 1990s and early 2000s. Documentation on the history of underground printing began to be gathered as early as the 1980s.²⁰ In the 1990s the imperative to preserve and document the immediate past became pronounced, and work on it became more systematic. There are many

¹⁸ See Grochola, “Words Like Dynamite,” in this volume.

¹⁹ See *Bibliografia niezależnych wydawnictw ciągłych z lat 1976–1990*, Biblioteka Narodowa, available at <http://mak.bn.org.pl/cgi-bin/makwww.exe?BM=22>, accessed July 21, 2015.

²⁰ This early documentation includes materials which were not made specifically for historical documentation, such as records of police raids on underground printing shops, including inventories of searches and filmed materials, as well as records of court cases against printers.

narratives gathered by the IPN, Ośrodek “KARTA,” and several local centers as well as individual accounts published in various places, including on the internet. It is relatively safe to assume that by now the bulk of the narratives by the immediate participants of the events have been recorded. Of these, one of the earliest is the comprehensive “round table” compiled by Wiesława Grochola from multiple interviews she conducted with NOWA activists. It touches upon many diverse topics such as social life, the declared openness versus the perceived exclusiveness of the NOWA milieu, etc.

The interview with the legendary printer Witold Łuczywo, “How Come You’re Buying All This Soap?” given to *Gazeta Wyborcza* in 2008, offers anecdotes from the earliest period of underground printing, while the interview with Mirosław Chojecki (the title of which, “Words Against Tanks” evokes Kelus’s song) considers the issue of Western aid to the underground and smuggling printing equipment to Poland.

Joanna Szczęsna’s account, given specially for this volume, provides interesting and rarely recorded details on both the underground community and society at large. Her first-person narrative on producing a strike issue of *Tygodnik Mazowsze* in August 1988 gives the sense of a “little-big” milieu of the Warsaw publishing underground.²¹ It sheds light upon the issues of the relatively small and close-knit community of resistance and its enormous impact, and the effectiveness (or the lack of thereof) of the police against it.



Some threads, motifs, or events appear in this book more than once in different configurations or interpretative contexts. For instance, Jan Walc’s story about rescuing paper by blocking the “tail” of SB cars finds its confirmation in Mirosław Chojecki’s recollection in Wiesława Grochola’s interviews. The hypothesis by Grzegorz Wołk that the raid on *Tygodnik Mazowsze* in October 1988 was a direct result of the establishment of the Bureau of Studies of the SB seems somewhat incompatible with Joanna Szczęsna’s account that her work on the August 1988 strike issue—done practically in the open—effectively broke the conspiracy of *TM*.²² Such presentations of certain details in different

²¹ A somewhat different account of the same event, focusing on its different aspects, is related in Penn, *Solidarity’s Secret*, 267–68.

²² Additionally it seems not too far-fetched to assume that in October 1988, i.e., in the preparatory period for the round table talks, a raid on the editorial board of *Tygodnik Mazowsze*, the most important journal of the underground *Solidarność*, had to have been authorized at the highest level. At least to some extent, the authorities relied on information delivered by *TM* and likely would not want to cut off this source entirely.

lights or from different angles seem particularly valuable as they open these accounts to further analyses and interpretation regarding the whole phenomenon of the second circulation.

Far from glossing over the complicated and sometimes disorderly reality of a large-scale social phenomenon, this volume does not shy away from including and acknowledging contradictions and inconsistencies in theories and practice, and ideals and reality. It is our hope that by presenting such a diverse picture we will contribute to a better understanding of the Polish underground publishing industry of the 1970s and 1980s, as well as of the final period of communism in Eastern Europe, and the factors, processes, and forces that brought about its end.