

KAROL WIĘCH

AUDIOVISUAL TACTICS OF RESISTANCE  
OF THE POLISH ANTI-COMMUNIST OPPOSITION IN THE 1980S  
AS ILLUSTRATED BY TOMASZ ŁABĘDŹ'S  
*KALENDARZ WOJNY (WAR CALENDAR)*

INTRODUCTION

In addressing the idea of independent film production of the Polish anti-communist opposition in the 1980s, this article is driven by the need to present this form of activity among Poles living in the Polish People's Republic (PRL) as a peculiar tactic of resistance to the communist regime, realized with audiovisual methods. The concept of tactics of resistance is drawn from Michel de Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life*, where it was juxtaposed with that of strategy. Both strategies and tactics are examples of practices (activities) with which attempts are made to establish power and gain advantage in a clash between two conflicted parties. Each of these practices, however, achieves their respective goals in a specific way. According to de Certeau, strategies

are actions which, thanks to the establishment of a place of power (the property of a proper), elaborate theoretical places (systems and totalizing discourses) capable of articulating an ensemble of physical places in which forces are distributed.<sup>1</sup>

As a long-term phenomenon, a strategy is always based on an existing authority contingent on its own visibility. When assessing its forces, the authority seeks to legitimize its own 'places of power', thus outlining its rela-

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<sup>1</sup> M. DE CERTEAU, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Berkeley: University of California Press 1984, p. 38.

tions with the external by identifying specific goals or threats. In the context of the PRL, the communist regime officially manifested itself in physical locations such as schools, universities, courts, workplaces and, above all, in the appropriated public media outlets, i.e. the press and television.

Ascribed to the anti-communist opposition in this text, tactics stand for different activities, emancipated from a specific location yet closely tied with time. According to Michel de Certeau, tactics are an art of the weak, one that is founded on deception, tricks, jugglery and wit, employed to penetrate a certain order.<sup>2</sup> To a large extent, circumstances enable a specific activity that transforms itself into a situation advantageous to those struggling with hegemonic strategies. In this sense, the notions of extraterritoriality and lack of one's own place are cast in a totally new light, i.e. as opportune circumstances for the realization of anti-systemic tactics that evade being traced by the ruling power. Importantly, one of the fundamental activities practiced as part of tactics is to demonstrate the cracks and exposed elements within the official system in order to tip the balance of power between the visible authority and its antagonists.

This article pays special attention to the Paris-based Polish émigré media center Video Kontakt, founded in 1984 by Mirosław Chojecki and Tomasz Łabędź, and to their first production titled *Kalendarz Wojny* (War Calendar), directed in that year by Tomasz Łabędź. The choice of this particular picture as a research subject was dictated by the author's conviction that *Kalendarz Wojny* not only illustrates the diverse tactics of resistance practiced by the Polish anti-communist opposition between 1982–84 but also serves as one of the key tactics in the fight against the regime.

On the one hand, the production of War Calendar falls within the category of wide-ranging independent publications released across Eastern Europe, known as *samizdat*, also known in Polish as *drugi obieg* (second circulation) and *tamizdat*.<sup>3</sup> They were a form of communication between dissidents and

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<sup>2</sup> Ibidem, p. 37.

<sup>3</sup> Derived from the Russian word *samesbyaizdat*, the acronym *samizdat* denotes a situation in which the author publishes and frequently also distributes their work outside of the official structures; in particular, *samizdat* stands for textual materials printed, reproduced and photocopied to transmit "unofficial" information. Other formats derived from this unofficial form of production and distribution included *radizdat* (materials copied from foreign radio stations onto audiotapes, frequently translated into local languages and recirculated illegally); *magnizdat* (derived from the magnetic tape recorder and relating to covered music, speeches, poetry readings, and talks based on live recordings or copied from the radio); *kolizdat* (used with reference to high-volume *samizdat*, produced e.g. by binding several issues of periodicals together and/or increasing the original publication volume); *tamizdat* (materials originally published "out there" (Rus. *tam*), i.e.

society while also enabling the formation of an intellectual and moral alternative to the social model developed under the communist regimes of the Eastern Bloc.<sup>4</sup> Independent films, copies of audiotapes, and illegally printed periodicals and books constitute examples of breaking up the state monopoly for the production and distribution of media content. On the other hand, the audiovisual character of activities pursued by Polish dissidents in exile transcends the printed dimension of the *tamizdat*, and enhances the trans-media dimension of the (video) text whose significance and form are subject to change along with the movement across state borders and cultures.<sup>5</sup>

Comparing independent films to *(ta/sa)mizdat* also makes it possible to highlight the subversive nature of these two dissident practices. Ann Komaromi suggests that playful subversive projects express the need for ‘preserving culture and defending the author as those serious political dissidents who protested the trial of dissident authors with demonstrations and letters’.<sup>6</sup> Subversion was most vividly pronounced in the aesthetic dimension of *samizdat*, e.g. in its distorted or exaggerated representations of social realist aesthetics, which sought to undermine the foundation of the communist system. In her case study of Ardis Publishing, however, Komaromi notices the political implications of cultural subversion, whose high efficiency was recognized among others by the CIA, which supervised the book distribution program implemented by the New York-based International Literary Center (paradoxically, the nature of the literature distributed under the program was mostly cultural rather than political) to the countries of the Eastern Bloc.<sup>7</sup>

The examples above indicate that the proliferation of independent audiovisual content in Poland was not merely dictated by the resentment and anger of Poles towards the communist authorities, in particular following the introduction of Martial Law on December 13, 1981. Equally important were the external factors, i.e. popularization of VHS tape recording and playback

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outside of the territory of a given country, and smuggled back inside for their dissemination. See: G. JOHNSTON, *What Is the History of Samizdat?*, “Social History” 24(1999), no 2, p. 115-133.

<sup>4</sup> See: F. KIND-KOVÁCS, *Written Here, Published There: How Underground Literature Crossed the Iron Curtain*, Budapest: Central European University Press 2014.

<sup>5</sup> J. LABOV, *Transatlantic Central Europe: Contesting Geography and Redefining Culture beyond the Nation*, Budapest: European University Press 2019.

<sup>6</sup> A. KOMAROMI, *The Material Existence of Soviet Samizdat*, “Slavic Review” 63(2004), no 3, p. 615.

<sup>7</sup> Ardis Publishing – A publishing house based outside of Russia dedicated to Russian literature. A. KOMAROMI, *Ardis Facsimile and Reprint Editions: Giving Back Russian Literature*, [in:] *Samizdat, Tamizdat, and Beyond: Transnational Media During and After Socialism*, ed. F. Kind-Kovács, J. Labov, Oxford: Berghahn Books 2013, p. 39.

technology, the efforts made by the Western countries' trade unions towards the Solidarity movement's media emancipation (the Polish trade union was provided with a video equipment), or the Western institutions' strategy of combating the communist regime by distributing independent media content and educating Polish society.<sup>8</sup>

In view of the above, this study addresses several issues with regard to a) the trade union Solidarity and its delegalization under Martial Law, which spurred the development of independent media outlets; b) the authorities' reactions to the symptoms of their loss of media monopoly; c) the influence of the Western trade unions, including the AFL-CIO and the ICFTU, on the growth of the technical facilities available to the Polish opposition; d) the Cold War climate shaped by ideological and cultural struggle; e) the specificity of Polish independent film milieus, the functions of independent productions, and their role in the process of political transformation in Poland. At the individual level, many of these themes have been addressed by other scholars, as has been the case with the cultural dimension of the Cold War and the CIA's part therein or the assistance granted by the Western trade unions to their Eastern Bloc counterparts.<sup>9</sup>

On account of its compilation-like, subversive and affective character, *Kalendarz Wojny* is a film that fits the bill as a synthetic production whose director strives to capture the experience of Martial Law in Polish society. To this end, current events are intertwined with the historical and ideological problems shaping the dynamic of the final decade of the Polish People's Republic.

## 1. METHODOLOGY

To account for the genesis and specificity of the first production released by the Paris-based Video Kontakt, and to discuss it in the broader political and social context characteristic of the final decade of the Cold War, this

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<sup>8</sup> A.A. REISCH, *Hot books in the cold war*, Budapest: Central European University Press 2013.

<sup>9</sup> For CIA impact see: *The Cultural Cold War in Western Europe 1945-1960*, ed. G. Scott-Smith, H. Krabbendam, London–New York: Frank Cass Publishers 2003; H. WILFORD, *The Cia, the British Left and the Cold War*, New York: Frank Cass Publishers 2003; I. GODDERIS, *Western trade unions and Solidarność: a comparison from a Polish perspective*, "The Polish review" 52(2007), no 3, pp. 305-329; I. GODDEERIS, *Solidarność, the Western world, and the end of the Cold War*, "European Review" 16(2008), pp. 55-65; and I. GODDEERIS, *Lobbying allies? The NSZZ Solidarność Coordinating Office Abroad, 1982-1989*, "Journal of Cold War Studies" 13(2011), no 3, pp. 83-125.

study uses diverse source materials. These include the publications of the US Department of State, declassified CIA files on the Polish anti-communist opposition, and above all statements of the Polish authors of independent media content and audiovisual productions released in the 1980s. One among such statements comes from a hitherto unpublished interview with Tomasz Łabędź, conducted by the author on March 19, 2018. Due to the shortage of alternative source texts, aside from the numerous interviews and publications on the activity of Mirosław Chojecki, Łabędź's commentary as the director of Video Kontakt between 1984–89 constitutes a fundamental reference on the operations of this entity and the specificity of its first production.

Aside from the aforementioned interview, it is essential to analyze the very film *Kalendarz Wojny* with respect to its structure (i.e. the selection and editing of individual scenes), employed (discursive) narrative, and the fact that it meets the premise of an 'audiovisual tactic'. Thus, it seems pertinent to turn towards the critical discourse analysis (CDA), which brings to the fore such phenomena as manipulation involving the abuse of power between groups and entities, as manifested on the verbal, textual, audiovisual, and multimodal planes.<sup>10</sup> Another methodology that lends itself to this study is the discourse historical-approach (DHA), which emphasizes the transdiscursive dimension of research on ideology and power, while also accounting for their historical, political, sociological, and psychological aspects.<sup>11</sup> Within the above understanding, independent films exemplify emancipatory discourses that grapple for power with official discourses of political regimes by exposing their hypocrisy and authoritarianism. Thus, the analysis of *Kalendarz Wojny* presented in this article involved an investigation of key notions, utterances, and images in the 23 fragments that amount to the film's structure (each driven by significant events that transpired in Poland between 1982–84).

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<sup>10</sup> T.A. VAN DIJK, *Discourse and manipulation*, "Discourse & Society" 17(2006), no 3, pp. 359-383.

<sup>11</sup> R. WODAK, M. REISIGL, *The Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA)*, [in:] *Methods for Critical Discourse Analysis*, ed. R. Wodak, M. Meyer, London: Sage 2009 (2nd revised edition), pp. 87-121.

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## 2. THE 1980s STRUGGLE FOR MEDIA DOMINATION BETWEEN THE ANTI-COMMUNIST OPPOSITION AND THE STATE AUTHORITIES IN POLAND

The 1980s evolution of independent audiovisual media in Poland was a phenomenon driven by a number of interconnected factors (technological, social, and cultural), on the one hand, and the ongoing processes initiated several years earlier among the Polish opposition circles. One should not overlook the fact that in 1976 Poland saw the crystallization of a strong public opposition sphere which came to light during the period of Solidarity in 1980–81.<sup>12</sup> Five years prior to Martial Law in Poland, the country was host to three media paradigms: the official one (controlled by the state authorities), the alternative one, which was most frequently associated with the Roman Catholic Church (censored albeit axiologically different from the mainstream media outlets), and the dissident one, exemplified among others by the operations of the Workers' Defense Committee (KOR). The above phenomena may be seen as catalysts to the development of media literacy among PRL citizens (defined as the knowledge about how the mass media function in economic foundations, organizational structures, psychological effects, social consequences, and their 'language', i.e., the representational conventions and rhetorical strategies of mass media content).<sup>13</sup> Not only does improved media literacy raise the awareness of mass media and its workings but it is also associated with the ability to skillfully utilize cinematic production, radio and television programming, and print journalism.<sup>14</sup> Highly media-literate individuals are more capable of taking charge of programming they own independent mental codes that support their control over communication.<sup>15</sup> Media literacy in the Polish People's Republic peaked with the emergence of Solidarity, raising the social awareness of mass media functioning in the country.

In the light of the stenographic records of the First National Congress of 'Solidarity' Delegates, which took place on September 26, 1981 at the Olivia sports arena in Gdańsk, Jerzy Jastrzębowski—who was working as a news-reader at the Polish Radio at the time—vehemently opposed the idea of co-

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<sup>12</sup> K. JAKUBOWICZ, *Musical Chairs? The Three Public Spheres of Poland*, "Media, Culture & Society" 12(1990), no 2, p. 199.

<sup>13</sup> P. MESSARIS, *Visual Aspects of Media Literacy*, "Journal of Communication" 1998, p. 70.

<sup>14</sup> J.A. BROWN, *Media Literacy Perspectives*, "Journal of Communication" 48(1998), no 1, p. 44.

<sup>15</sup> W.J. POTTER, *Media Literacy*, 9th edition, Los Angeles: Sage Publications 2020, p. 30.

operation between Solidarity and the news bulletin *Dziennik Telewizyjny* (TV Journal, DTV):

Those at DTV spit at us and will continue to do so, I have no doubt as to that whatsoever. I do not believe in any talks with those gentlemen. I do not believe in the possibility of complete authorization. We saw their doings during the first round of this very congress, we saw them at work during Lech Wałęsa's conference, we saw them with Onyszkiewicz, we saw magnetic heads seize up, we received proposals to go all way down to Warsaw to authorize a broadcast [...]. We recommend that you completely abstain from broadcasting the congress. [If] they forbid us to talk about ourselves the way we want to, let them not talk about us at all. If DTV is so determined to cover Solidarity, let it do so in the language of TASS communications [delegates' applause].<sup>16</sup>

Jastrzębowski, who had sat on the Committee of Radio and Television for 22 years, used his speech as a platform to criticize the Solidarity Press Information Bureau (BIPS) for hastily sharing information with the Polish Television.

It should be stressed here that the first symptom of the government losing control over the official media outlets was the publication of 21 demands of the Inter-Factory Strike Committee in Gdańsk, printed in the August 27, 1980 issue of the daily *Sztandar Młodych*.<sup>17</sup> Thus, one of the fundamental demands put forward by the striking workers in Poland at the turn of 1981 included the so-called 'media postulates', stipulating a greater transparency and liberty for Polish mass media, along with guarantees of freedom of speech, print and publication, a reduction of censorship to state secrets, and the publication of the demands of the Inter-Factory Strike Committee and any non-confidential information on the actual socio-economic condition of Poland in official media channel.<sup>18</sup>

The media potential of 'Solidarity' was recognized not only within the organization but also by a number of foreign trade unions, e.g. the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) and the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO).

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<sup>16</sup> First *National Congress of Delegates of NSZZ "Solidarity"*, stenographic records, vol. 2, ed. G. Majchrzak, J.M. Owskiński, Warszawa: IPN 2013, p. 53. Jastrzębowski makes allusions on Russian News Agency TASS (Информационное агентство России ТАСС).

<sup>17</sup> R. HABIELSKI, *Polityczna historia mediów w Polsce w XX wieku*, Warszawa: WAiP 2009, p. 309.

<sup>18</sup> T. GOBAN-KLAS, *Wartki nurt mediów. Ku nowym formom społecznego życia informacji*, Kraków: Universitas 2011, p. 265-266.

It should be noted that as early as on August 19, 1980, the ICFTU issued its first declaration of support to the Polish strikers. Given that the ICFTU (of which the AFL-CIO was an offshoot) had been engaged in supporting dissident groups across the Eastern Bloc, such as Charter 77 in Czechoslovakia (Charta 77) or the Polish KOR, it was only logical for the trade union to commit itself to endorsing Solidarity. It should also come as no surprise that the ICFTU was called ‘Solidarity international advocate’, participated in the National Congress, and called on its members to protest against Martial Law and send aid to Poland.<sup>19</sup> Significantly, one of the first packages donated to Solidarity was a film camera Sony U-matic HB, one hundred VHS tapes and a mounting kit that helped establish the first independent ‘film company’ in Poland, Agencja Telewizyjna Solidarność.<sup>20</sup> The camera and the mounting kit went through customs on September 7, 1981 at the Rębiechów Airport. The set was collected by the future members of the Telewizja Biura Informacji Prasowej KKP ‘Solidarność’ (TV BIPS), headed by Hanna Terlecka (co-founder of TV BIPS with her husband Marian Terlecki), who was accompanied by Ryszard Troczyński (cameraman), Marek Gąsecki (cameraman), and Ryszard Kobus (sound engineer).<sup>21</sup> As a result, the camera crew recorded the First National Congress of Solidarity Delegates without the appropriate training; however, these recordings enabled Solidarity to establish an independent news medium, and expedited its emancipation from state-supervised facilities, filming crews, and institutions.

The first person in charge of the ICFTU camera was Krzysztof Kalukin.

The story of TV BIPS continued until the announcement of Martial Law in Poland by General Wojciech Jaruzelski. Pursuant to the newly introduced law, one was prohibited from publicly denigrating the PRL political system and/or authorities, including via mass media outlets, under penalty of up to 10 years’ imprisonment.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> GODDEERIS, *Western trade unions and “Solidarność”*, p. 317.

<sup>20</sup> M. CHOJECKI, *Jak przy pomocy gumki od majtek obaliliśmy komunizm*, 19.10.2010, “Res-publica”, <https://publica.pl/teksty/jak-przy-pomocy-gumki-od-majtek-obalilismy-komunizm-3220.html> [accessed: 20.08.2021]

<sup>21</sup> M. GAŚECKA, *Krótką historią o telewizji BIPS*, “Biuletyn IPN” 2011, no 11-12, p. 147-151.

<sup>22</sup> Polish Penal Code Act dated April 19, 1969, Journal of Laws of 1969, no. 13, item 94, <https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=WDU19690130094> [accessed: 9.07.2021].

Following is a selection of articles passed as part of the Act:

Art. 270. § 1. Whoever publicly insults, derides or degrades the Polish Nation, the Polish People’s Republic, its system or leaders, shall be punishable by imprisonment from 6 months to 8 years.

As recalled by Krzysztof Kalukin, the authorities quickly realized how dangerous a dissident video camera can become to the regime. This is because in special context, video (as a social activity and a form of control) plays the role basic communication, education, people's organization, political struggle, and the recording of cultural phenomena.<sup>23</sup>

One of the first initiatives (strategies) adopted by the authorities under Martial Law was to deprive the dissident circles of their recording equipment, while one of the first anti-systemic practices (tactics) adopted by the opposition was to conceal the said equipment. Following the disappearance of the digital camera, Kalukin was summoned to a police station, with the hope of forcing him to reveal its whereabouts. One of the ways to reach the hidden equipment involved offers of promotion extended to the interrogated cameramen. Despite the attractiveness of the offer, which included assurances of being able to shoot feature films and travel the world as 'a true filmmaker', the hiding place was never revealed to the authorities.<sup>24</sup>

Analogical overtures were made by the Security Service to various independent filmmakers like Grzegorz Boguta, co-founder (with Mirosław Chojecki) of Niezależna Oficyna Wydawnicza NOW-a, the largest underground publishing house and the parent organization to Videonowa (est. 1985). Boguta was approached by the Security Service, who offered him economic, technical and personnel support for the price of infiltrating NOW-a. Boguta jokingly retorted he had been offered one million US dollars per year by the CIA, and asked the Security Service for a counteroffer. Boguta's sarcasm towards the regime resulted in his arrest.<sup>25</sup> Paradoxically, the introduction of Martial Law in Poland sparked the slow but steady growth of initiatives

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Art. 273. § 1. Whoever commits the acts specified in art. 270–272 hereof, by means of print or another mass medium, shall be punishable by imprisonment from 1 to 10 years.

§ 2. Whoever creates, stores, transports, carries or sends a written document, print, or another carrier of content specified in art. 270–272 for the sake of its dissemination, shall be punishable by imprisonment from 6 months to 5 years.

§ 3. If the defendant is found guilty of the crime(s) specified in § 1 or 2, the court may adjudicate the forfeiture of devices or any other objects used or intended to be used to commit the said crime(s), even if the guilty party does not own the forfeited devices or objects.

Art. 282. Whoever publicly calls for disobeying or counteracting an act or a legal regulation issued by a public authority shall be punishable by imprisonment for up to 2 years, a restriction of freedom, or a fine.

<sup>23</sup> W. GODZIC, *Wideo, czyli kontrolowanie iluzji wolności*, [in:] *Nowe media w komunikacji społecznej w XX wieku*, ed. M. Hopfinger, Warszawa: Oficyna Naukowa 2005, p. 325.

<sup>24</sup> *Wideo niekontrolowane* (Uncontrolled video), dir. by A. Ferens, Telewizja Polska–IPN 2009.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibidem*.

seeking to expand dissident operations onto a new medium, namely analogue VHS technology.

### 3. DIVERSIFICATION OF ASSISTANCE EXTENDED TO THE POLISH OPPOSITION: FINANCING, POLITICAL SUPPORT, DEVICES AND ARCHIVAL MATERIALS

The prevailing reaction from the Western states, governments and NGOs to the introduction of Martial Law in Poland required the establishment of structures that could coordinate the assistance offered to Solidarity. One such institutional structure was the NSZZ Solidarność Coordinating Office Abroad and its collaborators, Chojecki and Łabędź.<sup>26</sup> Before the appointment of the Office, French trade unions headed by the CFDT (Confédération Française Démocratique du Travail) collected about 8 million francs, half of which was remitted to the Coordinating Office in Brussels, while the other half was to be allocated to Solidarity in Paris.<sup>27</sup> Similarly, Lane Kirkland, the 1979–95 president of the AFL-CIO, and Tom Kahn, Kirkland's assistant and the subsequent Director of International Affairs with the AFL-CIO, not only lobbied for financial support for Solidarity. During his presidency, Kirkland funneled more than USD 6 million in aid to Polish workers in the form of cash transfers and communications equipment.<sup>28</sup> Kirkland and Kahn were both staunch anti-communists, determined to mount a successful campaign that would aid Solidarity in a number of ways in a long-term perspective.

The above is ascertained by Adrian Karatnycky, Director of Research and Publications at the AFL-CIO Department of International Affairs, who wrote about the movement for *The Washington Post* in 1989. Karatnycky mentions donations in the amount of USD 1 million passed by the Congress in 1987, followed by another donation in US dollars next year, which made it possible to organize shipments of printing presses, computers, radio broadcasting

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<sup>26</sup> GODDEERIS, *Lobbying Allies? The NSZZ Solidarność Coordinating Office Abroad*, p. 84.

<sup>27</sup> M. HERUDAY-KIELCZEWSKA, *Solidarność nad Sekwaną*, Gdańsk: Europejskie Centrum Solidarności 2016, p. 122.

<sup>28</sup> *Key People in Labor History – Lane Kirkland*, aflcio.org, <https://aflcio.org/about/history/labor-history-people/lane-kirkland> [accessed: 23.08.2021].

equipment, mimeograph machines, an inordinate amount of stencils and printer's ink and, last but not least, different makes of video cameras.<sup>29</sup>

At the same time, agencies such as the CIA saw economic pressure as an effective strategy that helped the Western states keep the Eastern Bloc in check, including Poland whose public debt amounted to USD 25 billion towards the end of 1980, which constituted over 31% of the total debt of the Eastern Bloc states.<sup>30</sup> As per the Memorandum compiled for the Director of Central Intelligence in April 1982, the Western interference in Poland should not be excessive, nor should it involve efforts to alter Poland's foreign policy, the country's military stand as part of the Warsaw Pact, or the status of socialism as its fundamental political system.<sup>31</sup>

Furthermore, it seems that the financial, material, and psychological aid provided by the Western trade unions was not laden by the intention to meddle with the internal structures of 'Solidarity' or the formula of its protests.<sup>32</sup> Despite the widespread support of governmental and non-governmental organizations and individuals donors from around the world, the assistance extended to independent publishers and filmmakers in Poland was disproportionate to their expenses and demands, as noted by Anna Mydlarska (documentary film director and translator at the Office of the National Committee of Solidarity in Warsaw in the 1980s).<sup>33</sup>

The change in, or rather the expansion of, the paradigm underpinning the communication activities of Solidarity was also driven by a strictly technical aspect that belatedly boosted the demand for audiovisual productions, which were accompanied by the advancements in the VHS technology throughout the 1980s. While it is problematic to provide the exact number of video recorders in the Polish People's Republic at the time, it can be provisionally assumed that in 1981 there were several thousand such devices in Poland, while four years later the number rose hundredfold and amounted to ca.

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<sup>29</sup> A. KARATNYCKY, *How we helped Solidarity win*, August 27, 1989, "Washington post," <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/opinions/1989/08/27/how-we-helped-solidarity-win/443c4c9c-0a8f-4e88-8657-a6404fe11cc7/> [accessed: 22.08.2021].

<sup>30</sup> The Soviet Bloc Financial Problem as a Source of Western Influence, April 8, 1982, General CIA Records, Document Number (FOIA) /ESDN (CREST): CIA-RDP83T00966R000100030026-0, p. 4, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP85T00176R001300110002-9.pdf> [accessed: 10.10.2021].

<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 17.

<sup>32</sup> E. CHENOWETH, *AFL-CIO Support for Solidarity: Moral, Political, Financial*, Belgium: Ghent 2011, p. 6, [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/305233146\\_AFL-CIO\\_support\\_for\\_solidarity\\_Moral\\_political\\_financial](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/305233146_AFL-CIO_support_for_solidarity_Moral_political_financial) [accessed: 16.06.2021].

<sup>33</sup> A. MODZELEWSKA, *Struktury organizacyjne NSZZ „Solidarność” w latach 1980-1989*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo UJ 2019, p. 269.

400,000.<sup>34</sup> Crucial from the cultural perspective was the preferred use of the VHS recorders, which ranged from public presentations (workplaces, schools, places of worship) to private screenings ('pilfering' video recorders from work to watch films on VHS tape at home). Another way of using VHS recorders in Poland in the 1980s was for political screenings.<sup>35</sup>

In this sense, independent audiovisual content was not intended to supplant written content, but rather enable a syncretic co-existence of both media, each targeting the Polish communist regime. However, while VHS technology experienced progression (in terms of the newly available functions and the growing demand for the technology itself), printed publications saw a dramatic downturn. While between the autumn of 1982 and the end of 1983, Poland was had around 1,200 illegal periodicals, this figure dropped to 750 by 1984, and plummeted further to 490 a mere two years later.<sup>36</sup>

The evolution of PRL dissident media was represented by such newly established institutions as Studio Video Gdańsk (1981), Paris-based Video Kontakt (1984), Niezależna Telewizja Mistrzejowice (1984), Videonowa (1985), along with independent Church-affiliated centers and local film clubs (Dyskusyjne Kluby Filmowe, DKF). While the establishment of some centers can be treated as an audiovisual extension of underground publishing presses ('audiovisualization' of *samizdat*), their respective productions added a brand new quality to the dissident media sphere.

As per 'The Opposition Movement in Poland', compiled on June 10, 1986 by the Eastern European Division of Central Intelligence, the CIA saw the opposition's tactic of educating society using uncensored printed publications on Polish history, politics, philosophy and literature, coupled with the increasing use of audio- and VHS tapes as the greatest success of Polish dissidents..<sup>37</sup> Delegalized under Martial Law, Solidarity was perceived by the CIA as the maker of a parallel society that strove to strip the regime of its monopoly in education, publications, and the media, on the one hand, while also forcing the government towards specific political compromises. One of the most interesting conclusions drawn by the CIA was the assertion that while the Polish Security Service gained detailed knowledge on dissident ac-

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<sup>34</sup> P. SITARKI, M.B. GARDA, K. JAJKO, *Nowe media w PRL*, Łódź: Wydawnictwo UŁ 2020, p. 64.

<sup>35</sup> Ibidem, p. 108.

<sup>36</sup> Analiza drugiego obiegu w okresie od 13 grudnia 1981 r. do 30 czerwca 1987 r. opracowana w Wydziale I Departamentu III MSW, Warszawa 1987, [w:] J. OLASZEK, G. WÓŁK, *Drugi obieg wydawniczy w oczach Służby Bezpieczeństwa*, „Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość” 21(2013), no 12(1), p. 375-377.

<sup>37</sup> *The Opposition Movement in Poland*, General CIA Records, June 10, 1986, Document Number (FOIA) /ESDN (CREST): CIA-RDP86T01017R000404050001-7, p. 8, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP86T01017R000404050001-7.pdf> [accessed: 10.10.2021].

tivities in the course of interrogations of activists who worked for or cooperated with independent publishing presses, its overarching goal was not so much to destroy the underground printed media but merely to control them.<sup>38</sup> The CIA's diagnosis resembles those of numerous independent filmmakers approached by the Security Service with a view to appropriating the parallel society created by the opponents of the communist regime.

#### 4. VIDEO KONTAKT (PARIS): THE CLASH WITH THE COMMUNIST REGIME ON THE VISUAL PLANE

Founded by Mirosław Chojecki and Tomasz Łabędź in Paris, Video Kontakt exemplified the new paradigm of the audiovisual opposition that not only assumed the role of journalists reporting on the current affairs in Poland and abroad but also that of teachers whose films addressed the historical problems that were either distorted or tabooed in the official media discourses of the Polish People's Republic. The inspiration to go beyond printed texts came from Poland where numerous tapes were published underground: New Cassette, CDN Cassette, Radio "Solidarność", tapes with songs *Zielona Wrona* and *Songs of the Interned*, Orwell's 1984, Report on martial law according to Marek Nowakowski, and especially tapes with historical programs like *Piłsudski, Election 1947* (which in Video Kontakt evolved into documentary films directed by Witold Zadrowski).<sup>39</sup>

In the above context, the main problem does not concern the substantive or aesthetic qualities of the films created in Poland in the 1980s, but rather the notion of independence. According to Susan Hayward, independent cinema

refers to films made by filmmakers independently of the dominant, established film industry. Because they are made outside mainstream cinema practices they tend to be avant-garde or counter-cinematic, and, even if not experimental, they all tend to give an alternative voice to dominant ideology. They are mostly low-budget films either privately financed or in certain countries partly subsidized by government.<sup>40</sup>

In the light of the above, the films of eminent Polish directors representing the 'cinema of moral unrest', and the productions released in the early

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<sup>38</sup> Ibidem, p. 7.

<sup>39</sup> *Warszawa – Paryż – Warszawa. Z Mirosławem Chojeckim rozmawia Hanna Bartoszewicz*, "Podkowiński Magazyn Kulturalny" 2009, nr 60, <https://www.podkowiaskimagazyn.pl/nr60/choj.htm> [accessed: 26.09.2021].

<sup>40</sup> S. HAYWARD, *Cinema Studies: The Key Concepts*, 5th edition, London: Routledge 2018, p. 233.

1980s, did enjoy a degree of independence, albeit not in the sense discussed by Hayward. This was so due to the fact that all productions were authorized by the state censorship apparatus, shot using state-owned equipment, and produced using state funding.

The above problems did not concern independent dissident films of the 1980s, which remained outside of the official cinematography and as such was not subject to censorship procedures. One media company whose situation was different from that of independent film producers in Poland was the Paris-based Video Kontakt,<sup>41</sup> headed by Tomasz Łabędź and co-founded with Mirosław Chojecki (the then director of the monthly *Kontakt*, edited by members and collaborators of Solidarity). The fact that Video Kontakt sprang out of the *Kontakt* resulted in certain overlaps between them in terms of their focus on historical and cultural issues, as well as their wholehearted subscription to values associated with Solidarity, Video Kontakt's operations were best summarized by the blurb published on several back covers of the *Kontakt*, intended to promote films produced by Video Kontakt:

[Video Kontakt is] a VHS publisher that supports independent videotape publishers in Poland, distributes videotapes in Poland, produces films based on footage otherwise unattainable in the country; donates proceeds from videotape sales to the development of independent culture in Poland; offers films on political, historical, cultural, and social themes related to Poland.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> During Video Kontakt's period of activity (1984-89), the center produced over a dozen documentaries, which could be classified under four categories:

a) *Historical documentaries*, covering the biographies of Józef Piłsudski, three Polish generals (Anders, Maczek and Sikorski), and three "couriers" of the Polish underground who smuggled information out of Nazi-occupied Poland and delivered it to the Western allies: Jan Nowak-Jeziorański, Jerzy Lerski, and Jan Karski.

b) *Documentaries on the experience foreignness (emigration)*, which featured testimonies of Polish artists, directors, scholars, and politicians, including Agnieszka Holland, Tadeusz Konwicki, Marek Edelman, Jan Lebenstein, and Ludwik Stomma. One of these documentaries was devoted to the Polish-Jewish diaspora in Israel.

c) *Anticommunist opposition documentaries*, covering the key entities of the Polish democratic opposition: the Workers' Defense Committee (KOR), Janusz Szpotański, Lech Wałęsa's 1988 visit to France on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (interviews with Elie Wiesel, Andrei Sakharov, Lane Kirkland (AFL-CIO), Pierre Mauroy, Francois Léotard).

d) *Cultural documentaries*, showcasing the members of the Literary Institute in Paris (Jerzy Giedroyc, Józef Czapski, Gustaw Herling-Grudziński, Zofia Hertz, Konstanty Jeleński, Czesław Miłosz), as well as recordings of concerts by Jacek Kaczmarski and Piwnica pod Baranami.

<sup>42</sup> Back cover of the "Kontakt" monthly [nr 4 (60) kwiecień 1987], which also served to promote upcoming documentaries produced by Studio Video Kontakt in Paris.

The idea to branch out beyond printed texts and audiotapes published by Kontakt in Paris first appeared during a contraband project conducted by Tomasz Łabędź and Mirosław Chojecki. In Łabędź's own words,

[...] we thought about making a film rather than [prepare] a book, because books were commonplace and printed on location in Poland or imported from the West. I suggested a film, to which Mirek replied, "Tomek, why don't you find out how much the editing studio would cost." The materials were free of charge, which saved us a great deal of money on royalties.<sup>43</sup>

Due to the specificity of the analogue technology in the 1980s, Łabędź estimated the production of a 52-minute documentary at two weeks. This suggests that producing a film was a painstaking process, even if one had a fine-tuned editing timeline. The access to free the source materials behind *Kalendarz Wojny* requires further clarification. The images used in Video Kontakt's first film came among others from American and French journalists visiting Poland for reporting purposes. The unofficial agreement between Video Kontakt and the Western journalists involved a trade-off in which the latter would gain access to the underground printing shops and dissidents hiding from repressions, while the former would receive copies of materials recorded in Poland for the Western media outlets.<sup>44</sup>

Thus, the agreement between the parties was founded on a 'media symbiosis'. Some of the materials used in *Kalendarz Wojny* came from the archives of television networks, i.e. ABC and NBC. Tomasz Łabędź then approached Pierre Salinger, former Press Secretary of the late US President John F. Kennedy, who encouraged CBS to follow suit and share its database, too. Unlike the American networks, the German ZDF refused to share its materials with Video Kontakt on the grounds of the network's apolitical character.<sup>45</sup> Luckily for Video Kontakt's crew, all source materials were readily available in France.

In turn, when discussing the sharing of audiovisual materials, Mirosław Chojecki additionally mentions Gabriel Mérétyk, the co-author of Polish Radio Three (*Trójka*).<sup>46</sup> Between 1975 and 1980, Mérétyk served as a corre-

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<sup>43</sup> Interview with Tomasz Łabędź, Poland–Paris, March 19, 2018.

<sup>44</sup> Interview with Mirosław Chojecki conducted by the author of this study at Media Kontakt's Warsaw office in December 2016.

<sup>45</sup> *Warszawa – Paryż – Warszawa*, <https://www.podkowianskimagazyn.pl/nr60/choj.htm> [accessed: 26.09.2021].

<sup>46</sup> Gabriel Mérétyk and Krzysztof Talczewski collaborated on the film *Solidarność* (*Solidarity*)

spondent of Radio France and TF1 to Moscow, while from 1980 to 1985 he was one of the chief editors of TV France's evening news service. According to Chojecki, a number of materials received by Video Kontakt (other than those delivered by its journalist collaborators) came from Mérétyk, who held a high-ranking position at the French television and was supportive of Solidarity and its cause.<sup>47</sup>

##### 5. THE SUBVERSIVENESS OF *KALENDARZ WOJNY*: AN EMOTIONAL CHRONOLOGY OF POLISH SOCIETY

*Kalendarz Wojny* can be decoded as an audiovisual diary of a Polish dissident of the late communist era, provided that he or she was given an hour to educate the audience on the phenomenon of Martial Law, its genesis, course, and social consequences. The idea of 'calendar' can be applied to the paradigm of dates that organize the structure of the respective images in the film. Tomasz Łabędź's narrative moves chronologically from January 1982 to October 1984, highlighting memorable events that most aptly illustrated the dynamic and tragedy of Martial Law.

It was not the director's goal to create a neutral film presenting a step-by-step account of events in the country, leaving them without commentary. Such an approach ran counter to Łabędź's didactic film, *Od wojny do wojny*, commissioned two years earlier by Centre Georges Pompidou on the occasion of the exhibition 'Leçons de Solidarité' (Lessons in Solidarity) held between March 26 and April 26, 1982.<sup>48</sup>

*Kalendarz Wojny* is thus an anti-communist propaganda film in which Polish authorities are polarized from society; at the same time, the film is largely representative of Cold War cinematography. In his *Introduction to Cold War Film Genres*, Homer B. Pettey notes that the Cold War produced a type of propaganda that formulated the world in geopolitical terms, pitting the democratic West against the communist East, liberal capitalism against Marxism-Leninism. Most importantly, Pettey argues that the history of Cold

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directed by J.-M. Meurice in 1990. A winner of the Award for Political Documentary at the Angès Festival in France, Meurice's film featured archival materials rendered available by Studio Video Gdańsk.

<sup>47</sup> Quoted interview with Mirosław Chojecki.

<sup>48</sup> Exposition « Leçons de Solidarité » (17 mars–26 avril 1982), Communiqué De Presse, Centre National D'art Et De Culture Georges Pompidou, <https://www.centrepompidou.fr/fr/programme/agenda/evenement/cpgxp79> [accessed: 17.11.2021].

War filmmaking also included the development of new genres and sub-genres resulting from social needs and concerns.<sup>49</sup> Analogically, Martial Law in Poland provided the foundation for *Kalendarz Wojny* as a production tapping into a new genre that could provisionally be referred to as “Polish independent opposition and propaganda cinematography”. While incomparable with any Hollywood productions in terms of budget or cast, the genre nevertheless responded to the social needs and frustrations, while also painting a detailed picture of its political adversary.

In its attempt to present Martial Law in a nutshell, *Kalendarz Wojny* covers Poland’s latest history in a selective manner. In total, Tomasz Łabędź navigates between 23 dates, of which some denote whole months (January 1982, April 1983, May 1984), whereas others are narrowed down to single days (August 31, 1982, May 3, 1983). Between the first date that illustrates the ambience following the introduction of Martial Law in Poland (military patrols in the streets, a nationwide scapegoating campaign), and the last, funeral ceremony for Fr. Jerzy Popiełuszko, murdered by Security Service agents (an emotionally charged footage unaccompanied by the director’s commentary), a multi-thread narrative unfolds whose goal is to discredit the communist regime in Poland. The structure of the respective scenes is outlined in the chart below:

<p><b>JANUARY 1982</b> A month into Martial Law, the PRL legitimizes its friendly relations with the USSR. Army and Citizens’ Militia’s units patrol the streets of Polish cities. The blame for the current state of affairs is attributed to extreme fractions of Solidarity. --- <b>MAY 1, 1982</b> Radio Solidarity sends its signal. The official Labor Day parade gathers crowds of protesters carrying banners with the inscriptions of ‘Wolność internowanym!’ (Free the interned) and ‘Solidarność!’. ---</p>	<p><b>JANUARY 1983</b> The Warsaw Military District Court tries a group of defendants accused of organizing Radio Solidarity. --- <b>FEBRUARY 1983</b> A speech by General Jaruzelski. The narrator denounces some Polish artists as “antisocialists.” --- <b>MARCH 1983</b> Protests at the Gdańsk Shipyard. Uniformed services disperse protesting citizens. The narrator reports on the seizure of printing equipment and materials brought from the West.</p>	<p><b>MAY 1984</b> A crowd chants ‘Uwolnić więźnów!’ (Free the prisoners), ‘Solidarność!’, ‘Zbyszek Bujak!’. Citizens’ Militia use water cannons against protesters and passengers at bus stops. A shot of General Jaruzelski gesturing with his hand, followed by images of armored vehicles patrolling urban areas, and people running for cover. The subsequent scene shows a communist parade featuring the portraits of Lenin, Marx, and Engels, set to the tune of Jacek Kaczmarski’s song, ‘Od kłamstwa do kłamstwa, od błędu do błędu, od gór aż do</p>
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<sup>49</sup> H.B. PETTEY, *Introduction to Cold War Film Genres*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press 2018, p. 2.

<p><b>MAY 3, 1982</b> An intervention of uniformed services: water cannons and gas shells are used against protesters; footage of brutally contained protests. ---</p> <p><b>AUGUST 31, 1982</b> A march of a crowd carrying a Polish flag, resulting in clashes with the Citizens' Militia and a repeat use of armored vehicles against protesters. Vehicles of uniformed services are toppled by the crowd. Footage of Jarosław Hyk being run over by a ZOMO (Motorized Reserves of the Citizens' Militia) truck. ---</p> <p><b>SEPTEMBER 1982</b> Footage of the 'Lublin Crime', in which three men participating in a peaceful demonstration were killed by the regime forces. Outtakes of rifle shells, victims' shoes, and a caption: 'This is how the People's Republic talks to the Polish nation'. A shot of people raising their hands to form a peace sign. ---</p> <p><b>OCTOBER 1982</b> General Jaruzelski speaks at the lower chamber of the Polish Parliament (October 8); the government adopts a new law on trade unions, and delegalizes Solidarity. Workers' protests at the Gdańsk Shipyard, accompanied by the chants 'Solidarność!' and 'Solidarność Żyje' (Solidarity lives on) banners. Images of motorized military and police units monitoring passers-by with water cannons. ---</p>	<p>---</p> <p><b>APRIL 1983</b> Consecration of Easter food. A shot of cartons labeled: passport, furniture, brandy. A close-up on one of the consecrated eggs, bearing an inscription 'Jestem, będę wolnym Polakiem' (I am and I shall be a free Pole). The narrator suggests that the Polish opposition is aided by external anti-socialist powers, which provide it with various pieces of equipment, e.g. a transmitter donated to Radio Solidarity, constructed by CIA experts using funds allocated by the Western secret services. ---</p> <p>Footage of Lech Wałęsa accompanied by journalists. Reporting on the event, the narrator refers to the meeting between the Solidarity leader and the Temporary Coordination Committee. ---</p> <p><b>MAY 1, 1983</b> Uniformed services charge on a crowd of protesters who chant Solidarity. The attackers resort to water cannons and beating. These images are followed by footage of a Labor Day parade featuring white-and-red flags and propagandist slogans, and by shots of a military parade. ---</p> <p><b>MAY 3, 1983</b> General Jaruzelski witnesses the hoisting of the Polish People's Republic flag. More footage of clashes between the Citizens' Militia and protesters, who hurl stones at the uniformed services. ---</p>	<p>Gdańska, dosyć mamy obłądu' (From one lie to another, from one mistake to another, from the mountains down to Gdańsk –Enough of the madness). This is followed by a reference to the Paris-based <i>Kontakt</i> magazine and a short account of a seizure of a shipment sent from the West (printing machines, chemical agents, telegraphic and filming equipment), address to the Charity Commission of the Polish Episcopate in Cracow, and the subsequent arrest of the driver Jacky Chalot. ---</p> <p><b>JULY 1984</b> An account of the court trial of the killers of the 19 years' old Grzegorz Przemyski, in which the judge sentences two principal defendants to 1 year and 11 months of imprisonment, respectively. In a subsequent interview, Przemyski's mother concludes there is no hope for justice to be done. Footage of political inmates released from prison. A Western journalist interviews Jacek Kuroń. ---</p> <p><b>AUGUST 1984</b> A nationwide pilgrimage to the Jasna Góra Monastery, attended by a multitude of people of all ages. Dozens of banners with slogans and names of regional branches of Solidarity. A countless crowd listens to Cardinal Glemp's sermon. One of the shots features a large Star-Spangled Banner amidst Polish flags. ---</p>
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<p><b>OCTOBER 13, 1982</b> Nowa Huta. Crowds of people at the funeral of a technical high school second grader shot by the state services. Dramatic images of Włosik's family members (individual suffering) and the gathered crowd (collective suffering). ---</p> <p><b>NOVEMBER 1982</b> Cardinal Józef Glemp addresses an audience of followers, who hold crosses in their raised hands. The narrator informs the audience that respecting the Catholic community is one of the imperative principles in the relations between the state and the Church. However, adds the narrator, Church holidays frequently turn into manifestations of political views. Poland is in need of peace, which will be reached by any means necessary, for the greater good of society and the nation. The crowd chants 'Lech Wałęsa!' and 'Zwycięzimy!' (We shall prevail). Footage of the announcement of the verdict sentencing Polish dissident Władysław Frasyniuk to six years of imprisonment. ---</p> <p><b>DECEMBER 1982</b> General Wojciech Jaruzelski announces the suspension of Martial Law on Polish Television. Footage of a list of casualties and injured, followed by an interview of Lech Wałęsa with international journalists.</p>	<p><b>MAY 14, 1983</b> Grzegorz Przemyski's funeral. The participants raise their hands in a gesture of peace. ---</p> <p><b>JUNE 1983</b> John Paul II's visit to Poland, with the Pope symbolically kissing the ground upon leaving the plane. "I have come to the fatherland, all of my fatherland, all of Poles," says the pontiff. The visit attracts crowds of people, regardless of the weather conditions, with the attendees raising hands in a gesture of peace and chanting 'Niech żyje papież!' (Long live the Pope). The montage concludes with Lech Wałęsa's brief account of his meeting with John Paul II. ---</p> <p><b>AUGUST 1983</b> Fragments of statements from, and interviews with, Lech Wałęsa in Gdańsk: 'Instead of trying to understand us, you offend us; you disband just about everything, and sic tanks and truncheons on us'. ---</p> <p><b>OCTOBER 5 – DECEMBER 10, 1983</b> Lech Wałęsa is awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Footage of Wałęsa's wife, Danuta, accepting the award on his behalf in Stockholm, and an interview with the newly announced laureate.</p>	<p><b>OCTOBER 1984</b> Excerpts from a church meeting between Lech Wałęsa and Fr. Jerzy Popiełuszko. Footage of Popiełuszko's sermon on Solidarity, with followers raising their hands in a gesture of peace. This is juxtaposed with General Jaruzelski's dictum ('The people's republic can be harsh when needed and lenient when possible'). Footage of events following Fr. Jerzy Popiełuszko's death, with an emphasis on strong emotions: public prayers, funeral (with a number of people observing the ceremony from the surrounding apartment blocks). Short zoom-ins on Lech Wałęsa, Jacek Kuroń and other dissidents. The coffin is exhibited on a pedestal wrapped in a torn Polish flag. Wałęsa says, 'Solidarity lives on, because you lay down your life for it.'</p>
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Table 1. Structure of the film and main problems in *Kalendarz Wojny*

However, this 'selectiveness' is not driven by the director's motivation behind his respective choices; rather, it is strictly dependent on the archival

materials at his disposal. As admitted by Łabędź in a conversation, his work began with the materials, i.e. a maximum number of high quality and sharp recordings in possession of Western television networks, to which Polish viewers had no access. Any images previously watched by the Polish audience were to be discarded from the documentary. They were irrelevant to the production, which was primarily addressed to Poles and intended to confront them with something seemingly familiar and customary yet also surprising and stirring strong emotions. The uniqueness of these source materials also impacted the aesthetic aspects of Łabędź's documentary. Vivid fragments featuring static shots and clear-cut sound are juxtaposed with the scenes of night time clashes of protesters with the Citizens' Militia, in which the camera movement mirrors the social unrest. The aesthetic aspect is far less important here than in the case of mainstream production (including documentaries). As a film genre, the documentary is determined by credibility and factual accuracy.<sup>50</sup> This implies that shaky cam effects or, for that matter, any type of distortion, overexposure and other 'faults' (under feature film aesthetics) could potentially lend the documentary greater authenticity.

The images edited into *Kalendarz Wojny* are accompanied by a significant soundtrack, which includes: original statements by the representatives of the authorities or officers of the Security Service, statements by Polish dissidents and representatives of the Roman Catholic Church, upbeat opposition songs, and chanting crowds. The film is narrated by Mirosław Chojecki, since according to Łabędź Chojecki's was the most spiritless and shallow rendition of the regime's text.

The fundamental narrative devices employed in *Kalendarz Wojny* was counterpoint, a strategy that helped create a discord between the visual and the textual in the documentary. A simple composition tool, counterpoint added extra emphasis. While editing *Kalendarz Wojny*, Tomasz Łabędź remained in close contact with Jerzy Giedroyc and *Kultura Paryska*, which had subscribed to all regime-controlled Polish press, including the daily *Trybuna Ludu*. Using *Kultura Paryska* archive, Łabędź selected propagandist texts to match the respective film sequences. The dichotomy of counterpoint in *Kalendarz Wojny* alludes to the hypocrisy and omissions of the Polish government and television under the Polish People's Republic (as evidenced by the oft-quoted opening titles of *Dziennik Telewizyjny*). Thus, the text delivered by the newsreader were not written by dissident émigrés but by

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<sup>50</sup> D. BORDWELL, K. THOMPSON, *Film Art.: An Introduction*, 8th edition, New York: McGraw-Hill 2010, p. 352.

journalists working for the regime-controlled media. It was only through the juxtaposition of these narratives with the images of brutally quashed strikes, Citizens' Militia's crackdowns on protesters, mass chants of 'Solidarność' and 'Zwyciężymy' that a far more extensive perspective on the social situation in Poland in the 1980s was established. One could presume such a perspective was especially valuable to those who did not personally participate in the clashes with the Citizens' Militia or became passive witnesses to such antagonisms. This was mostly the case with the citizens residing outside of the major metropolitan areas, in locations where the regime's oppression was not as extreme as in the most populous cities.

When analyzing the respective scenes that organize the structure of *Kalendarz wojny*, one should address a group of essential problems taken on in Video Kontakt's first documentary:

1) *The communist regime and its agencies* are represented as aggressors and cynics, whose activities involve physical assault (crackdowns on protests), oppressive legislation, and falsified representations of reality (state-controlled media). The presentation of friendly gestures exchanged between the representatives of the USSR and the Polish People's Republic suggests the puppet-like character of the Polish government. Also noticeable is the regime's language: bureaucratic, authoritarian, jurisdiction-based and uncritical of itself. This stands in direct opposition to the articulation used by Polish society and dissident milieus.

2) *The image of the West* in the regime-controlled media is that of an anti-socialist unofficial patron of the Polish opposition circles, mostly associated with foreign secret services, i.e. the CIA or the international branches of Solidarity. Western media—in particular French- and English-speaking outlets—are depicted in the context of their great commitment to covering Martial Law in Poland and conducting interviews with representatives of the Polish political opposition.

3) *The relations between the Roman Catholic Church and the opposition* involved close-knit cooperation, expressed among others by the coorganization of transports of equipment smuggled from abroad for Solidarity, as well as spiritual support and efforts towards an alternative public sphere offering a semblance of normalcy to many Poles. In *Kalendarz Wojny*, the Church does not openly oppose the authorities, although major events attracting throngs of followers, such as John Paul II's pilgrimage to Poland or Fr. Jerzy Popiełuszko's funeral, were a testament to the political potential of the Roman Catholic Church in Poland. Contrary to the regime's narrative, reli-

giously charged vocabulary (lament, supplication, prayer), as well as the lack thereof (silence, reflection), were a key ingredient in the dissident discourse on the Martial Law experience.

4) *Social emotions under Martial Law* lie at the foundation of *Kalendarz Wojny* and act as a binding agent holding Tomasz Łabędź's film together. The emotional spectrum is wide-ranging and runs from the outrage directed towards the authorities of the Polish People's Republic and the USSR, through a profound sorrow in liminal situations involving regime-induced deaths (individual murders, pacifications), to moments of euphoria, such as the announcement of Lech Wałęsa as the laureate of the Nobel Peace Prize. It seems it was precisely through this dynamic of extreme emotions that Łabędź's documentary found its voice, depicting the period of 1981–83 as a state of permanent tension and instability imposed on Polish society by the communist regime. On the other hand, individuals confronted with the state apparatus (footage of court trials) are usually depicted as passive. The lack of statements from defendants sentenced for political crimes in the Polish People's Republic attest to the resignation and apathy of individuals pitted against the system. These images of resignation are juxtaposed with footage showing crowds of Poles united in chants of pro-Solidarity slogans.

#### CONCLUSION

The audiovisual tactics of resistance of the Polish anti-communist opposition in the 1980s are an example of the strategy-tactics dichotomy, which was strongly pronounced in particular in visual practices. This dichotomy was visible both in the development of independent productions of dissident media centers and the end-result of their work, i.e. uncensored films. Above all, one should bear in mind the context in which *Kalendarz Wojny* was made (as a representative of what this text classified as Polish independent opposition and propaganda cinematography). Łabędź's film was produced as a reaction to the power of the communist authorities, out of 'whatever was available', and its overarching goal was to field a counterattack based on subversion, plurality, and demystification of the official discourse. It thus seems that *Kalendarz Wojny* to a certain extent mirrors the Polish street protests of the communist era, which it also frequently uses for its own sake.

Tomasz Łabędź's trump card is no doubt the exposure of the co-existence of physical violence (represented on the visual plane) and symbolic violence

(at the narrative level) as symbiotic forms of the regime's reactions to dissident activities in Poland. *Kalendarz Wojny* appropriates and subverts this official discourse. Thus, through the abrogation of the official narrative Łabędź's becomes a 'transdiscursive' tactic of resistance. Changing the context of the statements (quotations) used in the film, originally uttered by the regime, and putting these same words in the mouths of 'victims', 'witnesses', and 'political opponents' creates powerful, anti-systemic undertones.

Not only is *Kalendarz Wojny* an intertextual audiovisual production offering a synthesis of Poland's modern history but it also empowers one towards a better understanding of the standpoint and sensibility of Polish anti-communist émigrés, along with the expectations of Polish society towards media reporting in the 1980s. The director's use of counterpoint exposes the disingenuous character of official media messaging under the communist regime, and facilitates the development of greater awareness among the audience, forcing it to consume cultural texts in an active way (i.e. one that involves the (de)construction of signs).

*Kalendarz Wojny* may be interpreted as a panoramic picture, since it is not limited to a single problem or event, and its director moves between different aspects of relations between Polish society and authorities in the 1980s. The production fails to address the economic situation in the country, the overall shortage of goods, endless lines in front of stores, or the poor condition of the Polish health service. Individual statements were reduced to a handful of recognizable figures (Lech and Danuta Wałęsa, Jacek Kuroń, John Paul II), passing over the experience of average citizens confronted with the oppressive state apparatus. Aside from the families of individuals murdered by the Secret Service under Martial Law—whose strong agitation was captured by the video cameras—the viewer is left oblivious as to the individual motivations and struggles of Polish strikers. On the other hand, *Kalendarz Wojny* abounds in examples of a sense of community, manifested through mass protests or religious ceremonies, as well as the chants of slogans of the delegalized Solidarity.

*Kalendarz Wojny* is also a superb case in point for the ways in which the development of the VHS technology in the 1980s enabled the registration, production, and reproduction of films created by independent media outlets. The material and financial aid offered to the Polish opposition by the Western trade unions (ICFTU, AFL-CIO), government agencies, or individual donors was but one among many manifestations of solidarity with Poland in the 1980s. By providing Polish dissidents with video cameras, video recorders,

VHS tapes, and source materials such as the archives of international television networks and the audiovisual archives of numerous government agencies vitally contributed to their struggle with the communist regime, one that many scholars tend to overlook. Aside from moderate economic sanctions imposed on Polish authorities by the USA and some of the Western states, one important way of influencing the communist regime in the Polish People's republic involved 'media pressure'. As can be inferred from the CIA documents, the interference in Polish affairs by the Western states was not supposed to be excessive. Therefore, the American intelligence encouraged any initiatives aimed at educating Polish society and promoting independent media outlets that would shape the civic consciousness of Poles and promote a parallel society. Between 1984 and 1989, Studio Video Kontakt headed by Tomasz Łabędź produced over a dozen documentaries on historical, social, and cultural issues, while also publishing numerous periodicals (information bulletins) featuring images unavailable in Polish media. Illegally shipped to Poland on VHS tape, copied and shown as part of illegal screenings held by dissident entities, Video Kontakt's films offered a direct alternative to the state-controlled audiovisual media (film, television), and made for an attractive media outlet of the anti-communist opposition.

Refusing to intimidate the authorities, incite violence, or shelter himself behind the Western allies, Łabędź focused on exposing the absurdity of the official media outlets and appropriating the regime's discourse. The emotions featured in his documentary, from fear, through dejection, a sense of powerlessness but also that of community, along with the diverse forms of protests and religious agitation, were compiled into an effective tactic of audiovisual opposition for the anti-communist dissidents in Poland. To this end, Łabędź's eclectic, compilation-based documentary constitutes a valuable historical and cultural reference, one that vitally contributes to our understanding of the ways of, and motivations behind, the Polish opposition's fight with the communist authorities through independent cinematography.

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AUDIOVISUAL TACTICS OF RESISTANCE OF THE POLISH ANTI-COMMUNIST  
OPPOSITION IN THE 1980S AS ILLUSTRATED  
BY TOMASZ ŁABĘDŹ'S *KALENDARZ WOJNY* (*WAR CALENDAR*).

Summary

This study is an interdisciplinary presentation of the changing media paradigm of the Polish anti-communists opposition in the 1980s. The article, in particular, emphasizes the first production of the Polish émigré media institution Video Kontakt, titled *War Calendar*, directed by Tomasz Łabędź. Interpreted as an example of audiovisual tactics of resistance, his work employed subversion and counterpoint to expose the discursive hypocrisy of the communist regime in Poland. The article also discusses the support that Polish dissident groups received from the Western trade unions and government agencies leading to the 'parallel society' with its own communication potential.

**Keywords:** Video Kontakt; tactics of resistance; documentary film; anti-communist opposition; Polish People's Republic.

AUDIOWIZUALNE TAKTYKI OPORU POLSKIEJ OPOZYCJI ANTYKOMUNISTYCZNEJ  
W LATACH 80. NA PRZYKŁADZIE PRODUKCJI *KALENDARZ WOJNY*  
W REŻYSERII TOMASZA ŁABĘDZIA

Streszczenie

Niniejsze opracowanie przedstawia w sposób interdyscyplinarny zmieniający się paradygmat medialny obecny w polskiej opozycji antykomunistycznej lat 80. XX w. Skupiono się na pierwszej produkcji polskiej emigracyjnej instytucji medialnej Video Kontakt pt. *Kalendarz Wojny* w reżyserii Tomasza Łabędzia. Dzieło to, będące przykładem audiowizualnej taktyki oporu, wykorzystuje dywersję i kontrapunkt w celu ujawnienia hipokryzji reżimu komunistycznego w Polsce. W artykule omówiono także wsparcie dla ugrupowań polskich dysydentów, jakie zostało udzielone przez związki zawodowe i organy rządowe krajów zachodnich, co doprowadziło do powstania „społeczeństwa równoległego” posiadającego swój własny potencjał komunikacyjny.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Video Kontakt; taktyka oporu; film dokumentalny; opozycja antykomunistyczna; Polska Republika Ludowa.