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# Popular Culture in 1970s and 1980s Poland

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Popular Culture in 1970s and 1980s Poland

By Monika Jankowski

Submitted to the committee of Undergraduate Honors at Baruch College of the City University of New York on May 9, 2016 in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in History with Honors.

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Abstract:

The focus of this thesis is to analyze the popular culture in Poland during the 1970s and 1980s. The 1970s and 1980s were a crucial time for Poland which contained many political and cultural changes. For the citizens of Poland, the 1970s represented a time of economic prosperity and a time of adherence to the government. This contrasts the political unrest that occurred during the 1980s. The popular culture of the 1970s and 1980s reflects this shift. The popular culture of Poland during the 1970s will be analyzed by using music, magazines and comedy skits. It will portray propaganda that was in circulation to the people and how performers overcame it. The popular culture of Poland during the 1980s will be analyzed using music and comedy skits and how it reflected the tensions between Poles and the government. This shift in actions by entertainers will be shown to have aided the criticism of the Party.

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Definitions and Abbreviations:

1. RFE: Radio Free Europe
2. PZPR: Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza, The Polish United Workers' Party, the governing party from during communism in Poland.
3. The Party: Reference to The Polish United Workers' Party.

## 1. Introduction:

The decades after World War II were plagued by the Cold War when two World Powers fought for dominance. This dominance was mainly ideological and political, but it was not limited to these factors. Cultural dominance was also important, especially to the Communist government which governed the Eastern Bloc of Europe. Censorship affected aspects of cultural life, and limited the creative expression of the people. This was true for the Polish People's Republic.

During the Censorship, all aspects of Polish popular culture were affected. Magazines promoted a communist agenda, comedians were unable to use politics in their skits and music was banned if it did not fit the standards of the Communist Party in Poland. Popular culture in the 1960s and early 1970's was reluctant to go against the government in a direct fashion, due to the fear of punishment. However, a shift began to occur during the mid-1970s. Comedians were more direct in their skits, which made the usage of propaganda clear to the people. Music began to take pride in Poland's history and culture instead of the values of the Party. By the early 1980s, music was being used to rally the people. Performances by bands and comedy groups appear to have been more rebellious than magazines because they were less traceable and able to use facial expressions to portray emotions.

The popular culture of Poland in the early 1970s continued to reflect the values of the communist party and submitted the people to propaganda. However, this changed in the late 1970s to 1980s and can be attributed to the regression in fear of the regime. During prosperous economic times, comedians, and musicians began to critique the government more freely. Entertainers of various forms brought attention to the implicit propaganda that was present in

popular culture. This awareness allowed people to be more willing to join the rebellion. The transformation of popular culture from being obedient to propaganda into being critical of the government aided the liberation of Poland from communism by helping change the outlook Poles had on the government.

## 2. Arguments for the fall of Communism in Poland:

The Cold War has been studied by many historians. Poland's struggle for freedom has been studied as well. This has led to historians to argue that different elements influenced the success of Solidarity and led to the fall of communism in Poland in 1989. The elements vary from economic, political, relations with other countries in the Eastern-bloc and religion. All of these elements illustrate different aspects of life in Poland. These elements are not only discussed in retrospect, but also during the time in which they were occurring.

The year 1968 was a revolutionary time in Poland and in Czechoslovakia. Students revolted during this time in both countries, however it was handled by the Communist leadership in different ways. In Czechoslovakia students were initially faced with violence from police, which later turned into discussions that led to improvements in Czechoslovakia.<sup>1</sup> In Poland it was met with violence which led to the government forming an anti-Zionist campaigning; Jews were blamed for the unrest of the students, instead of the issues that the students were protesting.<sup>2</sup> Historian V.C Chrypinski argues that this inability to resolve the issues caused further unrest.<sup>3</sup> In 1968 Chrypinski viewed this as an issue which would grow from then on.<sup>4</sup> This illustrates that historians during the time predicted that Poles would not be submissive to the regime for long and that the solutions being proposed were temporary.

The influence of the Prague Spring of 1968 on Poland was also seen by the historian Jan B. De Weydenthal. De Weydenthal argues that the military involvement of Poland in the Prague

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<sup>1</sup> V.C. Chrypinski, "Unrest in Poland," *International Journal* 23, no. 3(1968): 466-470, 466.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, 468.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, 470.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, 470.

Spring strengthens the leadership of Gomulka, the leader of Poland during the time.<sup>5</sup> However, De Weydenthal did state that it was a way of "reopening the Zionist problem".<sup>6</sup>

The influence of economics has also been considered by historians. Historian Paul J. Best focuses on the economics of Poland in the 1970s and its contribution to Poland becoming less reliant on the Soviet Union. Best argues that loans given to Poland by Western Powers in the 1970s caused Poland to encourage the purchases of Western products.<sup>7</sup> Best views this as a divide between Poles and communism.<sup>8</sup> Best cites the issue for Poles trusting the Soviet Union because Russia was seen as a "historic enemy" of Poland.<sup>9</sup> Best's economic argument made in 1979 emphasizes that historians at the time viewed the economics of Poland as a potential downfall. It provides an additional factor that influenced the anti-communist movement which occurred in Poland.

Best is not the only historian that has attributed a diminished relationship between Poland and the USSR to economics; Historian Marek Thee argues this as well. Thee argues that the Soviet Union did have the economic power to satisfy the needs of the people.<sup>10</sup> Economic issues in the USSR due to the arms race with the West led to the USSR being reluctant to involve themselves with Poland's 1981 conflict with Solidarity.<sup>11</sup> This fostered a hatred for communism

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<sup>5</sup> Jan B. De Weydenthal, "Polish Politics and the Czechoslovak Crisis in 1968," *Canadian Slavic Papers* 14, no. 1 (1972): 31-56, 50.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, 52.

<sup>7</sup> Paul J. Best, "Poland's Politics in the 1970s", *International Journal of Politics* 9, no. 1 (1979): 3-15, 6.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, 7.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, 4.

<sup>10</sup> Marek Thee, "The Post-Cold War European Landscape: The Aftermath of the 'Velvet Revolutions' in Central-Eastern Europe", *Journal of Peace Research* 28, no. 3 (1991): 241-247, 241

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, 243.

which Solidarity united people under.<sup>12</sup> Economics is an issue that many historians argue played a role in the divide between Poland and the USSR and the rise of Solidarity.

Historians have focused on the events present in the 1960s and 1970s as the reasons why communism in Poland fell, however some look further back in Poland's history. Historian Andrzej Walicki argues that the change in power in 1956, as the beginning of change in Poland.<sup>13</sup> This is due to the change from Stalin's totalitarian communism to authoritarian communism.<sup>14</sup> This changed the everyday life of the Polish people and is seen by Walicki as the "pioneering role" of the 1980 strikes.<sup>15</sup> Walicki portrays the change in government leadership as a way for the people to begin to feel a sense of freedom that would come.

The Catholic Church in Poland is an essential feature of many Poles' lives, and historian Gracjan Kraszewski argues it was a key factor for political change and unrest.<sup>16</sup> In 1978, Pope John Paul II became the first Polish Pope, and in June of 1979 he made a pilgrimage to his homeland.<sup>17</sup> The Pope's speeches were nationalistic, and tied the Poles faith to their nationality, Kraszewski argues that this pilgrimage gave the people hope that they were going to be freed from communism.<sup>18</sup> The Pope's speeches also tied the people back to their faith. Lech Walesa, the leader of Solidarity, was a Catholic man and the organization itself was as well.<sup>19</sup> Kraszewski

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid, 243.

<sup>13</sup> Andrzej Walicki, "Totalitarianism and Detotalitarization: The Case of Poland," *The Review of Politics* 58, no.3 (1996): 505-559. 515, 516.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 515.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 516.

<sup>16</sup> Gracjan Kraszewski, "Catalyst for Revolution Pope John Paul II's 1979 Pilgrimage to Poland and Its Effects on Solidarity and the Fall of Communism", *The Polish Review*, 57, no.4 (2012): 27-46, 29.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 29.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 29.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 42.

illustrates how no previous strikes were united under faith, demonstrating that the Pope's pilgrimage and unification of Poles with their faith had caused them to trust Solidarity.<sup>20</sup>

The arguments made in previous years by historians have all been valid, however they fail to recognize the influence of popular culture in the political changes of the 1980s. The violence that met protestors in 1968 caused many entertainers to demonstrate their anti-communist attitudes in an implicit way, which prepared people for the strikes of the 1980s. In the early 1970's censorship and propaganda shaped popular culture, however, as the decade continued performers became direct in their criticism and brought attention to issues. Attention to issues allowed the people to be more willing to enter rebellion and to support groups such as Solidarity, thus shaping political change.

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 43.

### 3. Brief History of Poland 1945-1989:

Poland's future was decided during World War II by the United States, Great Britain and the Soviet Union. During the war, the Polish government was in exile and three powers decided that the Polish people would be able to decide their own government, however, this did not occur. Poles were allowed to vote on three topics by the Soviet Union. The topics were the dissolution of the government, land reform and whether to become a nation, and the western borders of Poland.<sup>21</sup> These elections have been criticized for being corrupt, however for popular culture purposes, this election caused the Soviet Union to gain more control over Poland.

Once the elections took place in 1946, it did not take long for the Polish people to experience the rule of the USSR under Stalin. In 1948 a six-year plan was created in order to place Poland under Stalinism.<sup>22</sup> This resulted in numerous violent acts by officials against the public. During this time, Western powers were attempting to find a way to influence politics in Poland. This led to the establishment of Radio Free Europe (RFE), which was broadcasted in countries throughout the Eastern bloc.<sup>23</sup> This was a way for the Western Powers to have an influence on the Poles during the Cold War. It was what established the way that the inhabitants of Poland, as well as Poles around the world, viewed communism.

In 1953 the Catholic Church was attacked when Cardinal Wyszyński was arrested in order to take power away from the church.<sup>24</sup> The church was, and still is today, a key aspect of Polish culture whether it is popular or traditional. During Cardinal Wyszyński's imprisonment from 1953 to 1956, RFE fought on behalf of the church by providing information to listeners,

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<sup>21</sup> Anthony Kemp-Welch, *Poland Under Communism: A Cold War History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 9.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, 39.

<sup>23</sup> Michał Kasprzak, "Radio Free Europe and the Catholic Church in Poland During the 1950s and 1960s," *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 46, no 3/4 (2004):315-342, 317.

<sup>24</sup> Kemp-Welch, 39.

and by defending the priests that had been falsely accused.<sup>25</sup> The strategy of the Communist Party in Poland of attacking Polish culture through the church was furthered when church publications were censored or banned during the implementation of the six-year plan.<sup>26</sup> This ban on the literature of such an important institution caused great fear among the people.

After Stalin's death in 1953, a change in policy in relation to literature occurred. In April of 1955, Włodzimierz Sokorski, the Minister of Culture, publically announced that "literature and art could have a dogma".<sup>27</sup> Although this announcement was made publicly, many writers were reluctant to believe the announcement and to start writing again.<sup>28</sup> This change in policy took the totalitarian communism of Stalin and transformed it into an authoritarian communism, which initially was more lenient toward actions against the government.<sup>29</sup> Władysław Gomułka, leader of Poland during the time, was praised for allowing artists to create without the intrusion of the communist ideology.<sup>30</sup> During this change in policy, which is often seen as the "thaw", students began to protest more. Students at the University of Warsaw and the University of Wrocław staged multiple protests. The USSR feared students and prepared troops during this time to subdue any political unrest.<sup>31</sup> The students' protests continued in the 1960s; this time it was to defend their culture and to stand up against the censorship which was limiting it.

On November 25, 1967, the Warsaw National Theatre began its production of Adam Mickiewicz's drama entitled "Dziady" (Forefathers).<sup>32</sup> This drama is seen as a Polish classic, especially since it was written by the highly respected writer Adam Mickiewicz. However, the

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<sup>25</sup> Kasprzak, 325.

<sup>26</sup> Kemp-Welch, 47.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 66.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, 66.

<sup>29</sup> Walicki, 515.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, 518.

<sup>31</sup> Kemp-Welch, 96.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, 148.

play was only in production for two months. It was banned on January 30, 1968. It was deemed anti-Russian because it depicted the struggle of Poles under Russian rule during the division of Poland from the late 18th century into the 19th century.<sup>33</sup> Gomulka used an anti-Semitic argument to justify to the leaders in Moscow that it was the Jews who caused an issue, not the Pole's; this was untrue.<sup>34</sup> This enraged students at the University of Warsaw, many of whom protested the ban of the Polish classic. A protest held on March 8, 1968, resulted in the beating and the arrest of many protesters who were students at the University of Warsaw. Many students continued to yell "Freedom and Democracy" and "Down with the Gestapo" as they were beaten and arrested.<sup>35</sup> The students held their culture very close to them. They did not want their expression of it to be limited. The comparison of the USSR to the Gestapo represented that the students felt that they had been freed from the rule of one occupier to be placed under the control of another. The "thaw" in the eyes of the students may have been seen as a form of propaganda to make the people believe that better times were upon them.

The students of the University of Warsaw did not fight this battle on their own, they were supported by students from other universities. Students in Lublin, Wroclaw, and Gdansk showed their support for the students in Warsaw.<sup>36</sup> Students from the Jagillonia University in Krakow held protests and created signs that stated "Help Warsaw" and "Down with Censorship."<sup>37</sup> This represented a cultural revolution, that the youth of the 1960s wanted to preserve their culture and did not want the interference of the Soviet Union in their affairs. It also makes clear that the people were aware that their culture was being heavily monitored and censored. The popular

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid, 148.

<sup>34</sup> Chrypinski, 468.

<sup>35</sup> Kemp-Welch, 152.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, 155.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, 154.

culture reflected this awareness of the censorship. Propaganda was a tool used by the Party to emphasize their ideals and denounce the ideals of the West.

Poland was not the only country which dealt with student unrest in 1968, Czechoslovakia did as well. Both student revolts wanted to change the system, not eliminate it, it was a revolt against the leadership not the political system.<sup>38</sup> The protests were similar, but each countries leadership publically denounced the revolts in the other country.<sup>39</sup> However, writers on both sides supported each other.<sup>40</sup> The ideas behind the revolts were similar and they were both initially handled with violence. However, Czechoslovakia saw a turned into a discussion, this did not occur in Poland, where repression was the result of the revolts. This is a key difference between the two movements and leaderships. In Czechoslovakia this led to improvements in the country, in Poland it lead to an anti-Zionist approach.<sup>41</sup> This led to denial of the core issue and did not allow what Poles truly wanted which was a "normalization of relations with the Catholic Church, recognition of non-Marxist value, and equal opportunity for all men and women regardless of their beliefs".<sup>42</sup> Illustrating that the core issues of the political system were never addressed but instead put off.

Political unrest was temporarily solved in 1968, but in 1970 the Party was faced with a strike in the shipyards of Gdansk. The protests occurred shortly after the announcement of an increase in food prices.<sup>43</sup> Gomulka was unable to handle the issue, which caused Edward Gierek to be appointed the new leader of Poland.<sup>44</sup> Gierek chose to use loans from the Western powers

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<sup>38</sup> Chrypinski, 466.

<sup>39</sup>De Weydenthal, 35.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, 34.

<sup>41</sup> Chrypinski, 466.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, 470.

<sup>43</sup> Kemp-Welch, 182.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, 187.

to help the economy.<sup>45</sup> This resulted in billions of dollars in loans being used to increase the production of the country. The Party encouraged people by not punishing them for making purchases at stores such as Pewex, which only accepted foreign currency, usually American dollars.<sup>46</sup> This led to economic expectation of Poles to rise, which caused many to be disappointed when in the mid-1970s the economic situation began to decline.<sup>47</sup>

In August of 1980 included strikes in Gdansk led by what would become Solidarity. These strikes began with the decision to increase food prices.<sup>48</sup> This was a non-violent strike. This strike remained non-violent because the workers stayed in the factories, limiting the physical force the Party could take, and a ban on alcohol which created a calm atmosphere among the strikers.<sup>49</sup> Workers created twenty-one demands and remained in the factories while using the Workers Defense Committee (KOR) and RFE to stay informed on what was occurring in other regions of Poland.<sup>50</sup> The Catholic church radio propelled Solidarity into the national spotlight, and the Party compromised, thus creating an agreement by late August 1980.<sup>51</sup> This agreement was known as the Gdansk Agreement.<sup>52</sup> Initially, Solidarity had a fractured structure which allowed it to enter many aspects of Polish Society.<sup>53</sup> However, Solidarity had a difficult time fulfilling demands.<sup>54</sup>

Solidarity's 1980 strike affected the way in which censorship was implemented. On July 31, 1981, a Censorship law went into effect which placed stricter requirements on what could be

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid, 201.

<sup>46</sup> Best, 6.

<sup>47</sup> Walicki, 520.

<sup>48</sup> Martin Walker, *The Cold War: A History* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1993), 257.

<sup>49</sup> David S. Mason, "Solidarity as a New Movement", *Political Science Quarterly* 104, no.1 (1989): 41-58, 53.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, 44.

<sup>51</sup> Walker, 258.

<sup>52</sup> Kemp-Welch, 268.

<sup>53</sup> Mason, 49.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, 48.

published, but it did not restrict how publications would be used post-publication. This law was inspired due to groups such as Solidarity.<sup>55</sup> Article 16 of this law stated that the government was allowed to ban any publication, audio, or film that was deemed as "[infringing] upon values protected by censorship such as the Polish 'constitutional system' or Poland's alliances".<sup>56</sup> The vague description of what would be censored allowed the Party to apply it to all forms of media.

Solidarity did see a decline in members in 1981.<sup>57</sup> Although they were able to have 1000 Solidarity "organs" functioning throughout Poland by July 1981, many Poles cited Solidarities affiliation with the Catholic Church and the Pope as the reason for joining.<sup>58</sup> Solidarity also represented materialistic improvements, as well as non-materialistic improvements, which appealed to many.<sup>59</sup> Solidarity's non-violence and usage of the Catholic Church as a forum led to General Wojciech Jaruzelski, leader of the Party, in January 1989 to threaten resignation if Solidarity was not legalized.<sup>60</sup> This shows a drastic change through the 1980s, because Jaruzelski is the one who implemented Martial Law in December 1981 in order to ban and repress Solidarity.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Alexander Remmer, "A Note on Post-Publication Censorship in Poland", *Soviet Studies* 41, no. 3 (1989): 415-425, 415.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid*, 419.

<sup>57</sup> Kemp-Welch, 49.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid*, 54.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid*, 52.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid*, 54.

<sup>61</sup> Kemp-Welch, 227.

#### 4. Polish Magazines in the 1970s role in the spreading of Party Propaganda.

Magazines play a key role in spreading cultural norms because they influence the way we view fashion, music, and world events. Magazines in Poland during the 1970s did this as well. They shaped the way that the Poles viewed issues of cultural and of political importance. One magazine that did this was called "Przekroj". Przekroj began its publication in 1945 and continued to be published until 2009. It experienced its height in popularity from 1945 to 1969. The magazine's focus was to report cultural aspects of the East and some cultural aspects of the West.<sup>62</sup> The magazine reported fashion, history, politics, music, and television; aspects that all shape and further popular culture. The magazine "Przekroj" interestingly used aspects of American popular culture and promoted them to the Poles, however it appeared to denounce the political positions of the West. Przekroj contained sections such as "Moda" (fashion) and " Moi Drodzy! " (My Dears!), which reviewed movies.

The "Moda" section describes trends such as long skirts being popular for the spring 1970 season<sup>63</sup>. The fashion shown and described is similar to the fashion seen in America during the 1960s. The styles that are portrayed are comparable to the "hippie" style in America during the time. In the magazine, the style is referred to as a "Cyganske" style, or the Romaine of Europe. The style is described as being popular due to the ability to wear the skirt without any shoes.<sup>64</sup> This presents an interesting trend that is seen throughout the description of fashion in the magazine. Aspects of Western fashion are described in ways that omitted any influence of the West on the style trends. It appears to be an attempt to ensure that Poles preferred Eastern

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<sup>62</sup> Wyborcza News Paper. *Historia tygodnika "Przekroj"*.

[http://wyborcza.biz/biznes/1,101716,8254739,Historia\\_tygodnika\\_\\_Przekroj\\_.html?disableRedirects=true](http://wyborcza.biz/biznes/1,101716,8254739,Historia_tygodnika__Przekroj_.html?disableRedirects=true)

<sup>63</sup> Moda. *Przekroj*, January 4, 1970, 1291.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

European styles over Western styles.

The "Moda" section does appear to have a Western influence in it, although, it does present fashion that does not appear to have been influenced by the West. The fabric of velvet is portrayed as being popular for men and women. This is described as being due to the versatility of it.<sup>65</sup> The magazine also addresses fashion for certain activities, such as skiing. Aviator jackets are said to be a good choice to wear after skiing. While, full body suits are recommended to wear during skiing.<sup>66</sup> This presents that printed popular culture encouraged Poles to have a sense of style, and to an extent to express themselves. The Party appeared to be lenient or uninterested in influencing the way people dressed.

A significant aspect of the "Moda" section is the omission of any brands. The magazine simply presents a model upright, and wearing a certain style. This reflects that in Poland many brands did not have a place on the market. The magazine merely suggests a fabric, a length of skirt, or type of jacket. It was up to the reader to interpret it and to create their own sense of style. It can be inferred that the magazine failed to mention brands in order to allow people to make their own clothing, as this was common during this time.<sup>67</sup> This inference is limited by the fact that the magazine does not provide instructions on how to create the styles. However, the extent to which Poles were influenced by the magazine's description of what was "in style" varied. People in rural areas tended to be less influenced, due to the inability to access the fabric necessary, and they also commonly made their own clothing and passed clothing on to friends

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<sup>65</sup> Moda. *Przekroj*, January 11, 1970, 1292.

<sup>66</sup> Moda. *Przekroj*, January 25, 1970, 1294.

<sup>67</sup> Alina Jankowski, interview by Monika Jankowski, February 3, 2016.

and family.<sup>68</sup> Although, this differed slightly in urban areas, where people lived closer to stores and to the influence of magazines.

Movies are described in the magazine, however it is interesting that they are American films. In the reoccurring article entitled "Moi Drodzy", a man simply referred to as Aleksander reviewed movies. Polish and American movies are reviewed in a positive light. This is most visibly seen with the review of the music video of the Beatles song "The Yellow Submarine" and the science-fiction movie "Planet of the Apes". The article states that the song would be loved by children and adolescence. The only criticism it faces is that it will not be enjoyed by the older generations.<sup>69</sup> However, the popularity of the Beatles was mainly among the youth in the West as well. The review of the "Planet of the Apes" is also positive. Aleksander states the movie is the type of film that is under appreciated and under represented on the film screen.<sup>70</sup> This is an example of aspects of Western popular culture appearing to be praised publicly, although, positive review of the West is limited to movies and music.

The magazine was not limited to reporting on fashion and films but also reported on American politics and policies in other countries. The Vietnam War is discussed in an article entitled "Sprawiedliwy z Song My" ( Testimonies from Song My), where a massacre of the Vietnamese people is described from the point of view of one of the soldiers that witnessed it, Michael Bernhardt. Bernhardt is quoted as stating that he did not want to participate in the massacre and that he went for swim after the massacre as a way of trying to cleanse himself. These massacres are described as common. Bernhardt is quoted as describing the expectation of his superiors that he would shoot without question. The article does state that some publications

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Aleksander, "Moi Drodzy!", *Przekroj*, February 8, 1970, 1296,5.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

in the US did denounce the massacre, such as "Time", however the article mainly discusses how the massacres are supported by some Americans. At the end of the article the US actions are compared to the actions of the Nazis.<sup>71</sup> Usage of the Nazi's can be seen as a way of connecting an unfamiliar enemy of America to an enemy the Polish people knew well. The negative portrayal of America and its policies in Vietnam, is a vilification of the Western power and demonstrates the subtle propaganda present in popular culture of the 1970s. It was meant to make Poles feel that they lived in a superior and morally just system, unlike the one of the West.

Vilification of the West, or portrayal of it being an unsafe place, is also shown in articles that do not discuss politics. *Przekroj*, discusses how unsafe the citizens of America are. An article entitled "Nowy mord w USA"(New murder in USA) describes the murder of Joseph Yablonski, who was the son of a Polish immigrant. No details are given but the murderer is described as being "on the loose".<sup>72</sup> This article does not portray Joseph Yablonski as a significant figure in America or in Poland. However, he was a leader of a workers union in America.<sup>73</sup> Omitting his leadership position but mentioning Yablonski's murder appears to be the magazine portraying the danger that Polish immigrants and their families faced in America. Indirect propaganda is used in the death of Yablonski, not to mourn his death, but to ensure that the Poles viewed the West as a dangerous place and Poland as a safe one.

Press coverage of negative aspects of the American politics is evident in the popular literature of Poland, however, the literature is not as critical of Polish politics and the actions taken by the government. The Party's actions are praised. This can be seen in the magazine

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<sup>71</sup> Czeslaw Komarnicki, "Sprawiedliwy z Song My", *Przekroj*, January 18, 1970, 1293, 3.

<sup>72</sup> "Nowy Mord w USA", *Przekroj*, January 18, 1970, 1293, 2.

<sup>73</sup> Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, *Murder of the Yablonskis*, <http://newsinteractive.post-gazette.com/thedigs/2013/04/26/murder-of-the-yablonskis/>.

"Zycie Literacki" (Literary Life). It was a weekly magazine that began in 1952 in Krakow and continued to be printed until 1991.<sup>74</sup> In an article entitled "Miejsce dla Kultury" (A place for culture), the government is praised for their increase in building in the voivodeship(district) of Tarnowie. The article discusses that the Komitet Powiatowego (District Committee) is moved into the building of the Hotel Leliwa. In order to fulfill duties the voivodeship will need a 300% increase in building spaces. This was being addressed with a 5 year building plan. The change would cost 75 million zloty from 1975 to 1976. 2.5 million of which was to build 150 new buildings. The increase in buildings is seen as a way of increasing the culture of the voivodeship, which at the time was seen as culturally rich because of the theaters, art studios, and two museum it has.<sup>75</sup> The illustration of the plan by the magazine implies that the government is being diligent with finances. Housing and building were an important to Poles, as it was one of the issues that that caused the Gdansk strikes of December 1970.<sup>76</sup> Zycie Literackie is providing Poles information that shows that their values and the values of the Party align.

Polish magazines portrayed the polices of America as negative but portray Polish politics in a positive light. This is tied to the Cold War theme of Western and Eastern power attempting to portray to their people the negative aspects of the politics of the other power. This was a clear attempt of the Polish media portraying Poland in a positive light and America in a negative. This is shown in the description of the Vietnam War and the comparison of American soldiers to Nazi's, a comparison that has a negative association in all countries, but particularly Poland. The praising of Poland government was to show the people that the government was more concerned with the people than with expanding their power to other countries. The goal of the media was

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<sup>74</sup> Onet.pl, *Zycie Literackie*, [http://portalwiedzy.onet.pl/50132,,,,zycie\\_literackie,haslo.html](http://portalwiedzy.onet.pl/50132,,,,zycie_literackie,haslo.html).

<sup>75</sup> Jerzy Lottman, *Miejsce dla Kultury*, *Zycie Literackie*, June 29, 1975, 1222,13.

<sup>76</sup> Kemp-Welch, 182.

also to cause the Poles to have pride in the communist leaders that built their government, as seen with the description of Vladimir Lenin.

1970 was the year that Vladimir Lenin would have celebrated his 100th birthday, *Przekroj* was aware of this significant date and announced it to its readers beginning in January of that year. The magazine celebrates this by adding an article to their weekly issue entitled "Zywy Lenin" (Lenin Alive). *Przekroj* also describes the preparations for the event discussed during the 18th European communist party meeting in Moscow.<sup>77</sup> Mentioning that the whole Eastern Bloc is preparing for this event is described in order to illustrate the importance of the anniversary to the Eastern Bloc. This issue described different aspects of Lenin's life and different ideologies that he held. One article from the four month series speaks about Lenin's death and sicknesses. It describes how Lenin became sick and paralyzed in 1922, however, his illness did not hinder him from working. The article encourages the reader to acquire "mysli Leninowskiej" (Lenin state of mind). Lenin is described as a genius and a unique individual.<sup>78</sup> It portrays the importance of Lenin and his thinking. By encouraging the people to think like Lenin the issue is subliminally influencing the people to adhere to the ideals of the Party.

In order to tie the ideas of the Party to Lenin, the articles also describe him as an atheist. This is described to be a positive attribute.<sup>79</sup> Inclusion of faith portrays a way of making the reader reconsider their own faith. During the six year plan the Communist Party tried to destroy the influence of the church by arresting clergy and banning religious publications.<sup>80</sup> This strategy led to the Party receiving a negative reaction from the people and from Western sources such as

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<sup>77</sup> Spotkanie w Moskwie, *Przekroj*, January 25, 1970, 1294,2.

<sup>78</sup> Lenin Zywy, *Przekroj*, January 25, 1970, 1294, 2.

<sup>79</sup> Lenin Zywy, *Przekroj* February 8, 1970,1296,3.

<sup>80</sup> Kemp-Welch, 317.

RFE. Eliminating the Catholic Church directly would not work in Poland, where the culture and traditions are very much tied to the church. The Party's approach of glorifying Lenin in the eyes of the people and stating his atheist beliefs was a form of encouraging Poles to renounce Catholicism without a negative reaction from the masses. Articles such as these appear to be a form of propaganda.

Tying Lenin to Poland was also key in making the people idealize Lenin. An issue of *Przekroj* described Lenin's time in Poland. One article focused on the 35 essays Lenin wrote during his time in Poland from June 1912 to August of 1914. The article mentions how he was arrested by the Austrians during this time and how he was broken out of prison by his Polish friends. The article also includes excerpts of the letters he wrote. The letter speaks about how desirable the unity of workers is.<sup>81</sup> Portraying the Polish people as Lenin's saviors from arrest leads the reader to believe that the ancestors of Poland believed in his ideologies. This was a way to tie Communism and Lenin to the Polish people and their history. Another issue includes a photo of the house in which Lenin stayed while in Poland in 1913 and 1914.<sup>82</sup> The tone of this article is one of pride. This article appears to encourage a sense of pride for Poles in the fact that Lenin had lived in Poland for a period of his life, and had written some of his essays in Poland.

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<sup>81</sup> Lenin Zywy, *Przekroj*, February 1, 1970, 1295.

<sup>82</sup> Lenin Zywy, *Przekroj*, February 8, 1970, 1296.

### 5. Comedy Skits in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s:

After the censorship that occurred in the 1950s, the tensions between the censorship of the Government and the artists was still present in the 1960s. Creative ways were used by many groups, especially comedy groups, called "Kabarety", to mock the government. This is seen with the comedy group Wagabunda and a skit they performed in their shows in the 1960s. Wagabunda was established in 1956 by Maria Koterbska, Karol Szpalski and Mariana Zaluski. The group was very popular and performed shows in Poland, London, Czechoslovakia, and America.<sup>83</sup> The skit portrays a man shaving his face to critique the political party. This is done by the man beginning the skit by stating that shaving is relaxing because there is nothing one cannot think about while shaving. Then he goes on to state that this person is unqualified to be an official, and that another party leader is not doing his job well or that certain aspect of the economy or education system is not doing well. However, right before a specific group is mentioned the comedian moves his mouth in a manner which makes his words incoherent. This was disguised as just a face one makes while shaving.<sup>84</sup> This portrays a loophole in the censorship of the time because it allowed for a criticism of the Party. Political groups and politicians are not mentioned causing the government to either overlook or to be unable to take actions against the comedy group. This illustrates that it was important for the audience to understand the context to jokes, because the comic could not directly state anything against the government. It depicts a clever way that Wagabunda was able to develop even under censorship. This continued in the 1970s.

In a skit called "Aby Do Wiosny" (Till the Spring), a group of people are presented in an

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<sup>83</sup> WyborczaNews Paper, *Maria Koterbska konczy 90 Lat*.  
[http://wyborcza.pl/1,91446,16315363,Maria\\_Koterbska\\_konczy\\_90\\_lat.html](http://wyborcza.pl/1,91446,16315363,Maria_Koterbska_konczy_90_lat.html)

<sup>84</sup> *Propaganda PRL-u: Humor w PRL-u: Polskie Kroniki Filmowe czesc II*. DVD. Wprost magazine. 2007;Poland: Takt, 2007.

apartment as a narrator speaks about the issues of cold apartment building due to the lack of heating in cities. To reiterate this point people are shown jogging in their apartments to keep warm. For comic effect, a dog is shown wearing a coat, and people are shown bathing in their clothing. Then it cuts to a man storming out of the bathroom angrily. He sits down to write a letter to the "Minister of Warm water". The man addresses the camera directly and discusses how this position does not exist but it should. As a joke he states that all the warm water must have been driven out of the country during the German occupation.<sup>85</sup> Humor is used to bring attention to issues occurring in the country. This "funny" criticism of the Party and of Communism shows that the government either allowed certain criticism or was too preoccupied with other political issues occurring at the time, such as the Gdynia strikes. It illustrates a subversion of rules that was utilized by Wagabunda was also used in this skit.

Skits criticized aspects of communism and the people that gained power from it. In a 1971 skit named, "Kochany Panie Jonesco" (Dear Mr. Jonesco), comedians Ryszard Pracz, Jan Tadeusz Stanislawski and Stanislaw Tym in showed how store owners gained power from the ration system.<sup>86</sup> The skit shows a man walking into a store and a women is sitting there staring ahead. The man asks the women if the store has combs. The women continues to stare ahead and ignores the man. The man begins to poke fun and states that the women must be deaf and blind.<sup>87</sup> This is a reference to the lack of products in stores and to the control that store owners had. If one got into an argument with a store owner then they would be ignored by the store owner; they would state that they did not have a certain product when they did, or go on break when the

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> RP Kronika, *Serwicia: Kochany panie Jonesco*. <http://www.kronikarp.pl/szukaj,13580,tag-689417,stroma-7>.

<sup>87</sup> *Propaganda PRL-u: Humor w PRL-u: Polskie Kroniki Filmowe czesc 11*.

person walked into the store.<sup>88</sup> This illustrates that unlikely people gained power from the lack of products in Poland. It portrays how comedians attempted to publicly criticize those who profited from communism in any way.

The group "Kabaret pod Egida" began performing in Poland in 1967 and consisted of Jan Pietrzak, Adam Kreczmar, Jan Raczkowski, Krzysztof, Hanna Okuniewicz, Brabara Kraftowna, Anna Pucnal, Kazimierz Ruddzki, Wojciech Siemian, Wojciech Brzozowicz and Jan Stanislawski.<sup>89</sup> This group portrayed a skit called "Zyciorysu ciag dalszy". It illustrates what the comedians thought of themselves. The performance takes place in the basement of a building. The comedian, Jan Pietrzak, welcomes the audience to the "underground performance". He states that it would be fitting to have a code name, which he decides is going to be "FP".<sup>90</sup> The welcoming to the underground creates a connection to the resistance fighters during World War II. It implies that the performance will be fighting against a power, meaning the Party's control in Poland. It portrays that the comedians felt that they were helping the resistance that was growing the late 1970s.

Comedy groups did not only use skits to convey their points they also used song. One of the most famous songs by a comedy group during the 1970s was "Zeby Polska Byla Polska". This song was written by Jan Pietrzak in 1976. It later became the song of the Solidarity movement.<sup>91</sup> When it was performed in the late 1970s it was preformed with Jan Pietrzak and other comedians on stage. They would sit in chairs and sing. They did not smile, and sung in a

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<sup>88</sup> Marek Jankowski, interview by Monika Jankowski on January 3, 2016.

<sup>89</sup> Janpietrzak.pl, *Kabaret pod Egida*, <http://janpietrzak.pl/informacje/kabaret-pod-egida>.

<sup>90</sup> *Propaganda PRL-u: Humor w PRL-u: Polskie Kroniki Filmowe czesc 11*.

<sup>91</sup> The University of Texas at Austin. "Let Poland Be Poland" By Jan Pietrzak. [http://info-poland.buffalo.edu/search-all/web/arts\\_culture/music/hymns/zeby/cache.html](http://info-poland.buffalo.edu/search-all/web/arts_culture/music/hymns/zeby/cache.html).

unemotional manner.<sup>92</sup>The unemotional form of performance was meant to contrast the emotional song. The song is a patriotic one, which was meant to display to the people the beauty of Poland and its history. Lyrics such as "I kto szable mógł utrzymać, Ten formował legion wojska, Żeby Polska, żeby Polska" (And whoever could hold a sword would organize army legions That Poland, that Poland That Poland be Poland) demonstrate the fighting nature of Poles.<sup>93</sup> It demonstrates that the Poles had risen up to gain freedom before, and implies it can be done again. The song also unites Poles that had emigrated with Poles in the homeland. This is demonstrated in the lyrics; " Matki, żony, w mrocznych izbach Wyszywały na sztandarach Hasło: "Honor i Ojczyzna", I ruszała w pole wiara z Chicago do Tobolsk" (Mothers, wives, in dark huts, Would sew on banners, The slogan: `Honor and the Fatherland' And faith would set forth into the field (of battle) From Chicago to Tobolsk).<sup>94</sup>It illustrated that Poles from around the world are united. Lyrics such as this portrays why Solidarity chose this song to represent their movement. It also illustrated why it was banned; it not only placed pressure on Poles in Poland to stand up and fight, but also for Poles around the world to aid the fight.

This song's influence became clear when it won the 1981 Opole music festival, however it was shortly after banned. This did not stop Pietrzak, he would stand on stage in silence as the audience sang the song for him.<sup>95</sup> Pietrzak's actions further displaying the creative tactics that performers used to avoid censorship. The people willing to sing the song shows a turn, people appear to understand the influence propaganda, and wanted to overcome it in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Comedians also began to portray in their skits how Poles were at the time following Solidarity.

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<sup>92</sup> *Propaganda PRL-u: Humor w PRL-u: Polskie Kroniki Filmowe czesc 11.*

<sup>93</sup> The University of Texas at Austin.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

In a comedy skit presented by "Kabaret pod Egida" named "Na fali odnowy" (National Character) the Solidarity movement, specifically its leader Lech Walesa, is endorsed. The skit consists of three people, one is a party member, one is a commoner, and one is a priest. They discuss politics and the commoner becomes irritated and storms off stage, indicating frustration on the part of the people. The priest and the party member continue to discuss politics. The party member states to the priest "Ludzie nie sa jak gesi, kazdy diszaj sie Walesi" (" People are not like geese, everyone today is Walesing"). The term "Walesi" is a reference to Lech Walesa. The priest replies to this by stating "Ave Maria", to which the party member states "Ave Partia". The crowd finds this entertaining and claps and laughs.<sup>96</sup>

The mention of Walesa is meant to show that the party was worried about him. The usage of the geese simile, was a tie to the division of Poland. In Poland the saying represents the Poles did not lose their language during the 18th and 19th century; although it being banned to learn a language other than the ruling power.<sup>97</sup> This tied the historic struggle to maintain a culture, to the struggle occurring under communism. The use of the term "Ave Maria" is a reference to the devotion of many Poles to the church, its Latin meaning is "Hail Mary". It appears as an endorsement of Solidarity by the church. The response of "Ave Partia" translates to "Hail the Party" this implies that the Party felt that some Poles were devoted to the Party the way others were devoted to the Catholic church. Illustrating the Party still felt they had the ability to win back the Poles and stop Solidarity. Popular culture was reflecting in the early 1980s that the movement to end communism and tying it to the cultural struggles of the past.

Propaganda was something that was present in the lives of the Poles under Communism. As time passed and performers became more direct in their defiance of the Party; they brought

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<sup>96</sup> *Propaganda PRL-u: Humor w PRL-u: Polskie Kroniki Filmowe czesc 11.*

<sup>97</sup> Alina Jankowski, interview by Monika Jankowski, February 10, 2016.

awareness to the propaganda being presented to the people. In a comedy skit presented by "Kabaret Pod Egida" propaganda was addressed. A man sits on stage and reads the paper. He begins by stating that he is glad to read the paper because it makes him feel positive about the place in which he lives. He demonstrates to the audience why that is by reading the paper. He begins by reading the "World News" which describes terrible inflation in America, increased rates of unemployment in the West and acts of violence and terrorism. Then he states that it may seem terrible but he states that reading the "National News" brings him joy. He again demonstrates this by reading from the magazine about the increase levels of production in Polish factories, and how the government has provided \$5 million zloty to provide facilities for the youth to use. He finishes by stating how great it is to live in Poland. The tone of the skit is sarcastic and ironic. The audience appears to understand the irony by laughing and clapping.<sup>98</sup> This illustrated that by the early 1980s, when this skit was being performed, the people were aware of the propaganda that was being presented to them. Awareness of the lies, or exaggeration that the magazines and newspapers made were just attempts to have the people view the West in a negative light.

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

## 6. Music Festivals of the 1970s and 1980s:

In the decades after World War II many festivals became very popular. None was as popular as the Festival of Polish Music in Opole. This festival occurred from 1963 to 1981, when it was canceled during Martial Law, but began again in 1983 and continues to occur every summer today. It was hosted by a "Miss. Obiektywu" until 1981, when it became "Mr." because Bohdan Somlen became the first man to host it. In 1970 Jan Pietrzak, the comedian from the group Kabaret pod Egida, won first place at this festival with his song "Marsjanie nie zagrazaja Ziemi" (Martians do not threaten the Earth).<sup>99</sup> This song describes how Martians are not the main threat to Earth, but that humans on Earth threaten smart ambitious people. Jan Pietrzak was known for using song to illustrate his feelings. It can be inferred that he is singing about the great minds that were silenced by censorship. However, Pietrzak hid his views illustrating how reluctant artists in the early 1970s were to openly critique the Party. Jan Pietrzak is an example of how artists began to be more direct in their violation of censorship, as seen with his performance of the song "Zeby Polska byla Polska". Jan Pietrzak went on to win the Opole festival again in 1981 with his song "Zeby Polska byla Polska" before it was banned.<sup>100</sup> It portrays how the Party began to see artists as a growing threat to their power. Popularity of festivals explains why popular culture was a powerful tool against communism; it was able to reach a broad audience and unite people.

The Opole Festival focused on Polish music, however the Communist Party did organize a festival to celebrate Polish culture, and achievements. It was called the Festival of Polish song, and honored people such as Miroslaw Hermaszewski, who was the first Polish man to be sent to

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<sup>99</sup> Krajowy Festiwal Piosenki Polskiej Opole, *Opole 1970*, <http://festiwalopole.tvp.pl/>

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

space by the USSR.<sup>101</sup> Specific people and songs were chosen to present the USSR in a positive light. Promoting Poles that had succeeded in communism was a way of causing Poles and citizens of the Eastern Bloc to believe they could succeed as well. The Polish government was able to present this festival in Vitebsk in 1988. It was one of the only festivals organized by the Polish government outside of Poland.<sup>102</sup> This promotion of Polish culture may have been an attempt to turn attention away from the tense political situation in Poland in 1988.

After Martial law ended a committee was created to help the culture “normalize” again. The party wanted to promote the entertainment called *rozrywka*, since it is a broad topic the committee wanted to put many aspects of Polish culture under that umbrella. It was thought that if the party was able to make Poles focus on their own culture then they would not look to the West for entertainment.<sup>103</sup> *Rozrywka* culture was present in the festivals. In April 1987, Prime Minister Jaruzelski and Gorbachev agreed to intertwine Polish-Soviet culture through art. It was a way of causing the people to feel that their Polish values were reflected in the Soviet Union.<sup>104</sup> This attempt by Gorbachev and Jaruzelski to use popular culture to bring the people back to the Eastern values, demonstrates the power of popular culture and that the leaders in the USSR and PZPR recognized this as the Iron Curtain was crumbling.

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<sup>101</sup> Andrea F. Bohlman. "Where I cannot room, my song will take wing" *Polish Culture Promotion in Belarus' Music and International History in the Twentieth Century* Edited by Jessica C.E. Gienow-Hecht , (2015:NewYork, Berghahan Books), 226.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid, 228.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid, 236.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid, 228.

## 6.1980s Rock music and the Communist party

Music is a key aspect of popular culture. Popular music tells what the listeners find important. Music in the 1980's began to directly reflect tensions that were occurring between the people, especially the youth, and the government. Bands such as Lady Pank and Dezertez were a part of this youth that was growing up with the Solidarity movement, and was willing to portray the tension they felt in their music. They varied in their approach and their message but both bands brought attention to the injustices that were being carried out during the early 1980s.

Lady Pank is a rock band that was formed in 1981 in Wroclaw, Poland. The original members were Jan Borysewicz ,guitar and composer, Andrzej Mogielnicki, head song writer, and Janusz Panasewicz, lead vocalist. The spelling of "Pank" instead of "Punk" is due to the band not wanting to be confused for a punk rock group.<sup>105</sup> The band changed members in 1982 with the addition of Pawel Mscislowski on the bass, Edmund Stasiak on the guitar and Jaroslaw Szlagowski on the drums. The band released their first self-titled album in 1983, and sold millions of copies in Poland.<sup>106</sup> One of the songs on that album was "Mniej Niz Zero" (Less than Zero). This song has been reported as becoming important to the youth after the death of Grzegorz Przymek.<sup>107</sup>

Przymek was brutally beaten by MO officials in the precinct near Jezuckiej Street in Warsaw. This beating was so severe that it led to Przymek's death just two days later on May 12, 1983.<sup>108</sup> The song "Mniej Niz Zero" does not directly state anything against the Police and was

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<sup>105</sup>Oficjalna Strona Lady Pank, *Historia Lady Pank*, <http://www.lady-pank.com/HISTORIA>.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Kamil Chamakh, *Interpretacje piosenek: Mniej niz Zero*, [http://www.wiadomosci24.pl/artykul/interpretacje\\_piosenek\\_mniej\\_niz\\_zero\\_318258.html](http://www.wiadomosci24.pl/artykul/interpretacje_piosenek_mniej_niz_zero_318258.html).

<sup>108</sup> Polskie Radio, *Grzegorz Przymek- Smiertelnie pobity maturzysta*, <http://www.polskieradio.pl/39/156/Artykul/841291,Grzegorz-Przymek-smiertelnie-pobity-maturzysta>.

written in early 1983 and therefore was not inspired by these events. However, it is clear that the youth of the time was able to make a connection between the song and the events that were occurring. This is seen with the report that the youth that attended Przymek's funeral hummed the song during the ceremony.<sup>109</sup> This illustrates how the youth was interpreting songs to fit their situations. The youth at the time may have felt that the song was written about Przymek because the song was released around the time of his death. However, it is unlikely that he inspired the song because it was written before Przymek's death but released during the spring due to the lyrics relating to tests the students were taking during the time.<sup>110</sup>

A close observation of the lyrics of the song "Mniej Niz Zero" provides an understanding as to why the youth at Przymek's funeral made the connection between his death and the song. The songs chorus is one that promotes the idea that the youth was not as important as they may have believed themselves to be. The pre-chorus exemplifies how the youth felt that they were important; "Myślisz może, że więcej coś znaczysz/Bo masz rozum, dwie ręce i chęć" (You think maybe that you mean something more/Because you have a mind, two hands and a desire).<sup>111</sup> This illustrates that the youth was hopeful for their future . It may be a reference to student involvement in Solidarity, or who may have been inspired by the political revolutions that were beginning to occur during this time. The chorus is repeated twelve times in the song. It consist of the repetition of the words "Mniej Niz Zero" meaning " Less the Zero". Considering that this was rock song that was meant for the youth of the time it can be assumed that the band wanted for the youth to see that they are seen as unimportant by the government. A connection is drawn

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<sup>109</sup> Chamkh.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Tekstowo.pl, *Lady Pank-Mniej Niz Zero*,  
[http://www.tekstowo.pl/piosenka,lady\\_pank,mniej\\_niz\\_zero.html](http://www.tekstowo.pl/piosenka,lady_pank,mniej_niz_zero.html).

between the governments disregard for the youth and the embracement of Solidarity by the youth.

The lyrics of the song that may have caused the youth of Warsaw to tie the song to the death of Przymek is the last verse of the pre-chorus. These lyrics state; " Zaliczona matura na pięć/Są tacy - to nie żart,dla których jesteś wart/Mniej niż zero" (Baccalaureate classified into five/There are some people - this is no joke, for which you're worth/ Less than zero).<sup>112</sup> The matura is the exam that Przymek and his friends were celebrating the end of, at the time of the incident.<sup>113</sup> The "people" here was interpreted as a reference to the MO police whom injured Przymek. Stating that he meant nothing to them appears to be an explanation to why the officers felt the need to beat Przymek to an extent that could cause death.

This song demonstrates how popular culture can represent a generation and its struggle without the intention to do so. Lady Pank intended to reflect the life of a young person under communism but it resulted into being a song of rebellion. The view that this song was one of rebellion was shared by government officials. Authorities viewed the song as anti-communist and ordered Marek Niedzwiedzki, the head of the radio station "Tojka", to take the song off of the top hits list.<sup>114</sup> This reflects how music was a way for the youth to deal with events occurring in their lives and how censorship attempted to omit any government criticism from the youth.

Lady Pank was not the only group promoting rebellion , the band "The Dezerters did as well. The Dezerters was a band formed in 1981 under the name of SS-20. A name change followed in 1982 due to pressure from authorities. In 1983 the band wrote seven songs but were

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<sup>112</sup> Trojka.pl.

<sup>113</sup> Chamkh.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

only allowed to release three.<sup>115</sup> One of these songs was "Spitaj Milicjanta". This song presents a satire to the police at the time. The song presented the bands anti-government view which was further seen in their actions. In 1984 the band performed at the Jarocin festival, however, they argued with organizers and were unable to perform at the festival again until 1987.<sup>116</sup> It appears that the Polish government did not want them to spread their ideas due to the rejection of their visa, which did not allow them to perform in Yugoslavia. However, the band still managed to spread their ideas in 1985. Dezerter met a Canadian band named D.O.A, who took their album to North America and published it as "Underground out of Poland".<sup>117</sup> The bands rebellious nature and influence was not ignored by the government, nor by the anti-communist movement of the time. In 1983 the band had a secret meeting with the Catholic Church and leaders of Solidarity. The goal of the meeting was to address how each group was to fight communism in different ways.<sup>118</sup> It illustrates that the influence of the band in popular culture was important and that it was seen as a way to bring people away from the propaganda of the government and into the movement to liberate Poland.

The reasons for Dezerter being involved in the movement, can be seen in the lyrics of their song "Spitaj Milicjanta". The tone of the song is sarcastic, which is shown in the usage of questions throughout the song. It illustrates how the police felt they were helping people but instead actually hurting them. The usage of questions was to demonstrate what the propaganda wanted people to believe the government would do for them. This is seen in these lyrics; "Która droga słuszna/Według prawa i porządku?/Kto prowadzi mnie do szczęścia/i zaszczytnych obowiązków?" (Which way is rightful according to law and order?/Who leads me to happiness

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<sup>115</sup> Dezerter, "Historia", <http://www.dezerter.com/dezerter/Historia>.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Larry Rohther, "Musicians Who Poked at the Iron Curtain", *New York Times*, November 8, 2009.

and the honorable duties?).<sup>119</sup> It illustrates the ideals the government wanted people to believe they could provide. The chorus of the song instructs the listener to ask a Police officer how to achieve the goal and he will show them the correct path. The sarcastic tone mixed with the aggressive nature of the song, causes the listener to feel that they should be afraid of the officer instead of looking for his help.

The song also illustrates the force of the propaganda at the time. The song presents how people were curious about the world; "Chcę poznawać świat/Ale nie wiem jak/Kto mi powie prawdę o tym/Jak to zrobić mam?"(I want to get to know the world, but I don't know how/Who will tell me the truth about the way how I should do it?).<sup>120</sup> It demonstrates that the people wanted to know about worldly events. The chorus is the response to the question; "Spitaj sie milicjanta" (Ask the police). This phrase is repeated six times in the song. It illustrates that the government and its officials were the main source of information implying censorship was the reason for this. The sarcastic tone of this song contrasts "Mniej Niz Zero" well, demonstrating that there were multiple ways for music in popular culture to demonstrate their thoughts despite censorship.

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<sup>119</sup> Tekstowo.pl, "Dezerter-Spitaj Milicjanta",  
[http://www.tekstowo.pl/piosenka,dezerter,spytaj\\_milicjanta.html](http://www.tekstowo.pl/piosenka,dezerter,spytaj_milicjanta.html).

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

## 7. Conclusion:

Entertainers that made up Polish Popular Culture during the time showed themselves to be a powerful force in the movement to liberate Poland from Communism. Their ability to have the courage to publicly show patriotism and critique the government allowed Poles to be more critical as well. In the early 1970s it valued communism and was used to bring the people closer to the Party and its values. This was most clearly seen in the magazines that only discussed positive aspects of Polish government, but denounce Western politics.

In the late 1970s it began to expose the Poles to the issues that were hidden from them. Comedy groups were able to publicly unite the people, and allow them to see that they were not alone in their views. It portrayed that many felt silenced by the government, or felt that the newspapers and magazines only reported half of the narrative that was occurring in the world at the time. During this time, music was able to bring pride to the people and remind them of all the positive attributes of their country, both culturally and historically. Entertainers criticism of the Party allowed Poles to feel that they were not alone in their frustration with the government.

In the early 1980s music was able to present a tragic occurrence and issues with authorities to the Poles. It brought youth to the movement, who may not have had an awareness of what was occurring in their country. Popular Culture played a role in Poland being a freely democratic country today. It was able to overcome censorship and give Poles an identity separate from communism. This ability allowed popular culture to aid the movement that led to the fall of communism in Poland.

8.Apendix:

Lyrics 1:

Jan Pietrzak "Zaby polska Byla Polska"

Lyrics in Polish:

Z głębi dziejów, z krain mrocznych,

Puszcz odwiecznych, pól i stepów,

Nasz rodowód, nasz początek,

Hen, od Piasta, Kraka, Lecha.

Długi łańcuch ludzkich istnień

Połączonych myślą prostą.

Żeby Polska, żeby Polska,

Żeby Polska była Polską!

Żeby Polska, żeby Polska,

Żeby Polska była Polską!

Wtedy kiedy los nieznany

Rozsypywał nas po kątach,

Kiedy obce wiatry grały,

Obce orły na proporcach,

Przy ogniskach wybuchała

Niezmożona nuta swojska.

Żeby Polska, żeby Polska,

Żeby Polska była Polską!

Żeby Polska, żeby Polska,

Żeby Polska była Polską!

Zrzucał uczeń portret cara,

Ksiądz Ściegienny wznosił modły,

Opatrywał wóz Drzymała,

Dumne wiersze pisał Norwid.

I kto szablę mógł utrzymać

Ten formował legion, wojsko.

Żeby Polska, żeby Polska,

Żeby Polska była Polską!

Żeby Polska, żeby Polska,

Żeby Polska była Polską!

Matki, żony w mrocznych izbach

Wyszywały na sztandarach

Hasło: "Honor i Ojczyzna"

I ruszała w pole wiara.

I ruszała wiara w pole

Od Chicago do Tobolska.

Żeby Polska, żeby Polska,

Żeby Polska była Polską!

Żeby Polska, żeby Polska,  
Żeby Polska była Polską!

Żeby Polska, żeby Polska,  
Żeby Polska była Polską!  
Żeby Polska, żeby Polska,  
Żeby Polska była Polską!

Lyrics in English:

A long chain of human beings  
United by a simple thought:  
That Poland, that Poland,  
That Poland be Poland.

When an unknown fate  
Scattered us to the corners of the earth.  
When foreign winds chased  
Foreign eagles on banners.

At the hearth there would burst out  
an overwhelming and familiar note:  
That Poland, that Poland,  
That Poland be Poland.

A pupil threw down a portrait of the czar,

Father Sciegienny offered his prayers

Drzymala fixed up his wagon,

Norwid wrote proud verses.

And whoever could hold a sword

would organize army legions

That Poland, that Poland

That Poland be Poland.

Mothers, wives, in dark huts

Would sew on banners

The slogan: 'Honor and the Fatherland'

And faith would set forth into the field (of battle)

And faith would set forth into the field

From Chicago to Tobolsk

That Poland, that Poland

Lyrics 2:

Lady Pank "Mniej Niz Zero"

Lyrics in Polish:

Oooo, oooo, oooo oooo

Myślisz może, że więcej coś znaczysz

Bo masz rozum, dwie ręce i chęć

Twoje miejsce na Ziemi tłumaczy

Zaliczona matura na pięć

Są tacy - to nie żart,

dla których jesteś wart

Mniej niż zero

Mniej niż zero

Mniej niż zero

Mniej niż zero

Oooo oooo oooo

Zawodowi macherzy od losu

Specjaliści od śpiewu i mas

Choćbyś nie chciał i tak znajdą sposób

Na swej wadze położą nie raz

Choć to fizyce wbrew

wskazówka cofa się

Mniej niż zero

Mniej niż zero

Mniej niż zero

Mniej niż zero

Oooo oooo oooo oooo

Myślisz może, że więcej coś znaczysz

Bo masz rozum, dwie ręce i chęć

Twoje miejsce na Ziemi tłumaczy

Zaliczona matura na pięć

Są tacy - to nie żart,

dla których jesteś wart

Mniej niż zero

Mniej niż zero

Mniej niż zero

Mniej niż zero

Oooo oooo oooo oooo

Lyrics in English:

Oooo, oooo, oooo oooo

You think maybe that you mean something more.

Because you have a mind, two hands and a desire.

Your place on the Earth explains

Baccalaureate classified into five

There are some people - this is no joke,

for which you're worth

Less than zero

Less than zero

Less than zero

Less than zero

Ooo ooo ooo ooo

Professional scammers of fate

Experts from the singing and the masses

Even if you do not want, and so will find a way

On their weight will put more than once.

Although physics

The tip moves back

Less than zero

Less than zero

Less than zero

Less than zero

Oooo oooo oooo oooo x4

You think maybe that you mean something more.  
Because you have a mind, two hands and a desire.  
Your place on the Earth explains  
Baccalaureate classified into five  
There are some people - this is no joke,  
for which you're worth

Less than zero

Less than zero

Less than zero

Less than zero

Oooo oooo oooo oooo x4

Lyrics 3:

Dezerters "Spitaj Milicjanta"

"Spitaj Sie Milicjanta"

Która droga słuszna

Według prawa i porządku?

Kto prowadzi mnie do szczęścia

i zaszczytnych obowiązków?

Spytaj milicjanta

On Ci prawdę powie!

Spytaj milicjanta

On Ci wskaże drogę! (2x)

Chcę poznawać świat

Ale nie wiem jak

Kto mi powie prawdę o tym

Jak to zrobić mam?

Spytaj milicjanta

On Ci prawdę powie!

Spytaj milicjanta

On Ci wskaże drogę! (2x)

Jak stać się doskonałym

Męskim, pięknym, silnym

Którędy dojść do celu

I zawsze być niewinnym

Spytaj milicjanta

On Ci prawdę powie!

Spytaj milicjanta

On Ci wskaże drogę! (2x)

Lyrics in English:

Which way is rightful according to law and order?

Who leads me to happiness and the honorable duties?

Ask the militiaman

He will tell you the truth!

Ask the militiaman

He will show you the way!

He will show you the way!

I want to get to know the world, but I don't know how

Who will tell me the truth about the way how I should do it?

Ask the militiaman

He will tell you the truth!

Ask the militiaman

He will show you the way!

He will show you the way!

How to become perfect, manly, beautiful, strong?

How to get to the destination and be always innocent?

Ask the militiaman

He will tell you the truth!

Ask the militiaman

He will show you the way!

He will show you the way!

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