

Screamed Poetry: Rock in Poland's Last Decade of Communism

by

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List of Abbreviations

BART	Baltic Artistic Agency (Bałtycka Agencja Artystyczna)
FSZMP	Federation of Socialist Polish Youth Unions (Federacja Socjalistycznych Związków Młodzieży Polskiej)
GSA	Gdansk Alternative Scene (Gdańska Scena Alternatywna)
GUKPPiW	Main Office of Control of the Press, Publication, and Entertainment (Główny Urząd Kontroli Prasy, Publikacji i Widowisk)
KOR	Workers' Defense Committee (Komitet Obrony Robotników)
MKiS	Ministry of Culture and Art (Ministerstwo Kultury i Sztuki)
MMG	Music of the Young Generation (Muzyka Młodej Generacji)
MO	Citizens' Militia (Milicja Obywatelska)
MSW	Ministry of Internal Affairs (Ministerstwo Spraw Wewnętrznych)
PAGART	Polska Agencja Artystyczna
PRL	People's Republic of Poland (Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa)
PSJ	Polska Stowarzyszenie Jazzowe
PZPR	Polish United Workers' Party (Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza)
SBIA	Capital City Bureau of artistic events (Stołeczny Biuro Imprez Artystycznych)
SZSP	Socialist Union of Polish Students (Socjalistyczny Związek Studentów Polskich)
ZHP	Union of Polish Scouting (Związek Harcerstwa Polskiego)
ZMW	Union of Village Youth (Związek Młodzieży Wiejskiej)

ZOMO Motorized Reserves of the Citizens' Militia (Zmotoryzowane Odwody Milicji Obywatelskiej)

ZSMP Union of Socialist Polish Youth (Związek Socjalistycznej Młodzieży Polskiej)

Abstract

While the martial law years in Poland, 1982-1983, are often remembered as a time of fear and repression, they are also fondly recalled as the peak of Polish rock music. “Screamed Poetry: Rock in Poland’s Last Decade of Communism” seeks to resolve the paradox of this explosion of controversial music and culture in an authoritarian communist state. Based on an array of sources, including archival documents from the Party and state, music periodicals, underground fan publications, interviews, and music and texts, “Screamed Poetry” shows how rock became a fulcrum against which various people, groups, and institutions sought leverage to push socialist Poland in the direction of their own ideals and interests. As rock became popular over the 1980s, debates over its interpretation determined whether the music would be accepted as a form of Polish amateur youth culture, harnessed as a badly needed financial asset, studied as a symbol of social crisis, or suppressed as a threat to socialism and the Polish nation. Meanwhile, young Poles performing and listening to rock sought to prevent their music from being hijacked for these uses by politicians and social activists.

“Screamed Poetry” tells the story of Polish rock as a struggle to define Polish youth, the nation, and its culture – a debate that took place in Party meetings, in the press, in production decisions at record factories, at performances, and in the sound of a guitar chord. It reinterprets the 1980s – often mischaracterized as stagnant between martial law and 1989 – as a dynamic period that set up the fall of communism and subsequent transition to capitalism. Beyond Eastern Europe, “Screamed Poetry” offers a solution to a central challenge in studies of popular culture – that of accounting for the politics of culture without resorting to a binary model based on “resistance” or “complicity” with power. Using models of power based on the concepts of “hegemony” and “discourse,” it shows how rock’s meaning and political power was contingent upon the efforts of all those around it – performers, listeners, and the wider public – to shape its meaning.

Chapter I

Introduction

On December 13, 1981, General Wojciech Jaruzelski, First Secretary of the Polish Communist Party, appeared on Polish television and announced:

Citizens of the Polish People's Republic!
I come before you today as a soldier and as the leader of the Polish government. I come before you with matters of the highest gravity.

Our fatherland stands at a precipice.

The accomplishments of many generations, our Polish home, raised from the ashes, is coming to ruin. The structures of the state have ceased to function. The fading economy is everyday subjected to new blows. The conditions of life are crushing the people with ever greater weight.

....

At midnight, the National Council, in agreement with the principles of the Constitution, initiated a state of war on the terrain of the entire country.¹

With these words, Poland entered martial law. The gravity conveyed by Jaruzelski's address was felt by much of Poland's population. Michael Bernhard, for instance, writes that martial law "temporarily disrupted the reconstitution of civil society by withdrawing legal recognition of the actors in the public space, and by attempting both to liquidate

¹ "Przemówienie gen. armii W. Jaruzelskiego," *Trybuna Ludu*, December 13, 1981. As the official periodical of the Central Committee of the Polish communist party, *Trybuna Ludu* (The People's Tribune) was one of the few media outlets that was allowed to continue its operation during martial law. It dutifully carried Jaruzelski's speech on its front page on December 13. After this quotation, I follow the English language general practice of translating the Polish "stan wojenny" into "martial law." Here, I substituted a more literal translation – "state of war" – to capture the sense of doom the term conveys in much of the literature.

almost all independent organization and to collapse the public space.”² Similarly, Jan Józef Lipski writes, “The state of war crushed the numerically impressive but still rather loosely organized open structures of Solidarity. It paralyzed all free social life in the country.”³ When mentioned today, the period invokes memory of fear, repression, and a strong distaste for the show of authoritarian state power. And for good reason: martial law closed the presses, banned the Solidarity labor movement, and reversed the liberalization that had come with Solidarity’s success. It brought a new set of rules, initiating more stringent censorship, a curfew, and suspending the right to assemble. In its first months, it affected not just political events, but also interrupted even the most conventional daily activity like simply going to the movies or reading a magazine. Even the country’s song festivals, long a cultural tradition and source of national pride, were suspended for the first year of martial law.

With one exception, that is. In the summer of 1982, in the midst of martial law, a most unlikely event took place some seventy kilometers southeast of Poznań in the town of Jarocin. From August 24-26, the Third Statewide Festival of Music of the Young Generation (III Ogólnopolski Festiwal Muzyki Młodej Generacji) was held. One of the bands, under the name SS-20 (a Soviet missile), let listeners know exactly what it thought about the current situation with the equally controversially titled punk rock song, “Aborted Generation.”

Żadnej satysfakcji, za dużo frustracji	Scarce satisfaction, too much frustration
Oto obraz mojej generacji	That’s a sketch of my generation
Żadnego celu, żadnej przyszłości	No goal, no future
Żadnej nadziei, żadnej wolności	No hope, no freedom

Not that this took place without controversy. To the contrary, the political authorities extensively debated whether to permit the festival. Yet, in the end, they decided to allow it.

Jarocin was not an anomaly. The years 1982-1983 are remembered by many Poles as a time of fear and repression, but they are also recalled as the peak of Polish rock, as either a quick glimpse in a Polish music store or a discussion with a Pole who was a

² Michael Bernhard, *The Origins of Democratization in Poland: Workers, Intellectuals, and Oppositional Politics, 1976-1980* (New York, 1993).

³ Jan Lipski, *KOR: A History of the Workers’ Defense Committee in Poland, 1976-1981* (Berkeley, 1985).

teenager or younger adult in the 1980s will attest. It was a time of great popularity not just for rock and roll, but for punk, the musical phenomenon that was frequently banned and suppressed in that most tolerant of democracies, the United Kingdom, as well as reggae, Jamaica's musical form of protest, and heavy metal. How could these cultural forms exist in authoritarian, communist Poland, and particularly at a time when it was at its most oppressive since the stalinist era? What is the significance of this explosion of rock in the context of a late communist state?

These questions are important and fascinating from a historical perspective, but they were also pressing issues in the context of 1980s Poland among the people, groups, and institutions that attempted to fit rock into their own ideas about society, politics, and culture in the People's Republic of Poland (PRL). As rock became popular over the early 1980s, it became a fulcrum against which various people, groups, and institutions sought leverage to push socialist Poland in the direction of their own ideals and interests. Rock featured prominently in the 1980s in the struggle to define Polish youth, the nation, and its culture – a debate that took place in party meetings, in the press, in production decisions at record factories, at performances, and in the sound of a guitar chord. The debates over how rock should be interpreted structured whether rock could be accepted as a new form of Polish youth culture, harnessed as a badly needed financial asset, studied as a symbol of a social crisis, experienced as an alternative to official culture, or suppressed as a cultural and social threat to socialism and the Polish nation.

Looking at the PRL through the lens of rock challenges the widespread characterization of 1980s Poland in terms of a binary of society versus the party, “us” versus “them.”⁴ Opinions about rock and the larger issues related to it – Polish culture and youth – were not divided along party lines, and indeed, suggest that such a thing scarcely existed in the 1980s. As the debate over rock took shape over the decade, the two sides that emerged were not “the people” and “the state” – the groupings often assumed to be self-evident for defining socialist Eastern Europe. Rather, the opposing forces were divided into those who could find a way to fit rock into their vision of Poland (interpreting rock as a new form of Polish youth culture or a potential financial asset),

⁴ Jan Kubik, *The Power of Symbols against the Symbols of Power* (University Park, 1994) explores this division perhaps most closely, but it turns up in virtually all of the scholarship on the opposition in 1980s Poland (see footnote 5).

and those who could not (seeing it as a cultural threat to the nation or the state). Rock separated reformists from hard-liners in the communist party and demarcated progressives from traditionalists in the opposition and the Catholic Church. It also sometimes produced surprising alliances between conservative Catholics and unreformed stalinists, who could agree on their opposition to the controversial music. Rock thus foregrounded fracture lines running right through “the state” and “the opposition,” suggesting that the differences within each of these groups were as significant as the divisions between them. Understanding the emergence of this new political fracture line is crucial to understanding both the dissolution of the party’s power at the roundtable agreements in 1989 and also the origin of the political spectrum that has dominated Poland from that moment up to the present.

The us/them binary between the party and society was indeed important, but it was a construction by the opposition rather than a description of an existing reality. Moreover, who and what counted as “us” and “them” was widely and vehemently contested, in part in the struggle to define rock. Looking at rock redefines how we see the party, which is often identified as a monolithic, opaque mastermind scheming for the most effective way to hold power. Of course, authority to govern was an important concern in party circles, as with any governing body. However, opinion within party groups and committees on how to maintain authority was anything but uniform, and even when agreements were reached, there was considerable latitude for seeing how they were carried out. “Polish society” too was diverse; in fact, debates about rock can be read as attempts to define Polish society and culture – a topic subject to considerable range of opinion.

Approaching the 1980s through the lens of rock also amends the Solidarity-dominated story about dissent in the late PRL.⁵ The Solidarity labor union is indeed a

⁵ Accounts on the first incarnation of Solidarity include Alain Touraine, *Solidarity: Poland 1980-81* (Cambridge, 1983); Roman Laba, *The Roots of Solidarity* (Princeton, 1991); and Lawrence Goodwyn, *Breaking the Barrier: The Rise of Solidarity in Poland* (Oxford, 1991). Retrospective accounts, written after the fall of communism include Timothy Garton Ash, *The Magic Lantern: The Revolution of '89 Witnessed in Warsaw, Budapest, Berlin, and Prague* (New York, 1990); David Ost, *Solidarity and the Politics of Anti-politics: Opposition and Reform in Poland since 1968* (Philadelphia, 1990); Michael Bernhard, *The Origins of Democratization in Poland*; Gale Stokes, *The Walls Came Tumbling Down: The Collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe* (New York, 1993); Shana Penn, *Solidarity's Secret: The Women Who Defeated Communism in Poland* (Ann Arbor, 2005); Kristi Long, *We All Fought For*

crucial part of understanding Poland in the 1980s: its strikes threatened to shut down the Polish economy in August of 1980, the entire country in 1981, and in 1988 the union earned the roundtable talks that ended the party's monopoly on power the next year. Solidarity's story has less to offer, however, for understanding the interim years when the organization that had been rooted in widespread popular support was forced underground, where, as Gale Stokes and Padraic Kenney have both demonstrated, it was not equipped to exist.⁶ Indeed, David Ost has observed that from shortly after martial law until as late as 1987, most of the union's activists referred to the movement in the past tense.⁷ This has left the period from martial law until the return of Solidarity in the late 1980s to be interpreted as an "eight year hiatus" – a blank space about which there is little to be said aside from reports on the absence of Solidarity.⁸ Additionally, it leaves the union's return to the forefront of politics at the roundtable talks in 1989 bearing an uncanny resemblance to the Polish national myth of the phoenix, or Christ of Nations – destroyed by its oppressors, but fated to rise again from the ashes.

Martial law appears quite different from the perspective of Polish rock than from the Solidarity movement that was banned. A vibrant palette of cultural life existed through the entire 1980s; there is more to martial law than sheer repression. Telling the story of Polish rock affords a view of Polish society and what life was like in Poland in the last decade of communism, particularly in the interim years when Solidarity was forced underground.

Looking at the production of rock music also challenges the primacy of politics in studies of socialist Poland by examining economics as well: institutional constraints of the music industry were just as significant as political policy in shaping the conditions of the rock scene.⁹ From the perspective of the production of culture, martial law was significant in terms of the economic reforms it introduced as much as for its display of

Freedom: Women in Poland's Solidarity Movement (Boulder, 1996); and Kubik, *The Power of Symbols against the Symbols of Power*.

⁶ *The Walls Came Tumbling Down; A Carnival of Revolution: Central Europe, 1989* (Princeton, 2003).

⁷ *Solidarity and the Politics of Anti-politics*.

⁸ The reference to martial law as an "eight year hiatus" is from Bernhard, *The Origins of Democratization in Poland*.

⁹ This approach to understanding culture has been explored by sociologists studying culture from a production perspective. See Richard A. Peterson, "Culture Studies Through the Production Perspective: Progress and Prospects" in Diana Crane, ed., *The Sociology of Culture: Emerging Theoretical Perspectives* (Cambridge, 1994).

force.¹⁰ At the same time, examining the economy of Poland in the 1980s challenges many of the assumptions about the nature of East European socialism in comparison to capitalist systems, as I will explain in the next chapter.

Examining all of these areas – politics, culture, economics, and society – through the lens of rock shows that 1980s Eastern Europe was not “stagnant” until the revolutions of 1989. Rather, it was dynamic, setting in place many of the conditions that structured the fall of communism and the transition to capitalism in the next decades. As I show in my conclusion, my approach offers a new take on the fall of communism and the roundtable talks in 1989. Once told in heroic terms of a standoff between a valiant opposition and an implacable party, the difficult transition in the years after has given rise to a reinterpretation of the roundtable as an empty promise, a cowardly compromise, or even a collusion among party and Solidarity elites to dupe ordinary Poles into accepting their own subordination in a slightly different form. Instead, I show how developments within and between political authorities, the opposition, and the rock scene created a context that made the agreement to compromise at the roundtable a significant choice, but one that can be understood without resorting to conspiracy theories.¹¹

Besides amending our understanding of late socialist Poland, though, I also will offer new perspectives on key debates about popular culture. In particular, this dissertation addresses the long-term standoff between models that define popular culture in terms of “resistance” to power and “complicity” with it.¹² To apply this division to

¹⁰ For a more detailed argument to this effect, see Kazimierz Poznański, *Poland's Protracted Transition* (Cambridge, 1996).

¹¹ My evidence supports the similar argument made briefly by Padraic Kenney at the end of *Carnival of Revolution* – that the shock of alternative, avant-garde cultural forms made the differences between Solidarity and the party seem less drastic in comparison.

¹² These alternate possibilities can be traced to historic currents of thought emphasizing popular culture as a repressive force or as a potential liberator that persist to today. The former strand, traceable to the Frankfurt school's concern about modernization in the early 20th century, but continuing today in the arguments of scholars like T.J. Jackson Lears (see *American Historical Review* 97, no. 5 (December 1992): 1369-1430), emphasize the changes accompanying the mass production of culture – shifts from home based production to factories, from patronage based to profit based structures for funding arts, with the development of a popular press and mass entertainment – in order to emphasize the cooptation of culture by ruling powers. Through these processes, these accounts argue that the “folk” culture of the working class was replaced by a “mass” culture, produced for and imposed upon the working class by the bourgeoisie. The latter strand of thought emphasizes the possibility of resistance, arguing that popular culture (note the distinct connotations of the terms “popular” and “mass”) might reflect real needs of working people through its themes and accessibility, as well as the possibility of working people making it “their own” through creative use. In the mid 1960s, the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS), founded in Birmingham, England initiated one of the most noted long-term efforts to resolve the tension between these

Polish popular culture, at one end, theorists of the “incorporation” model might cite the communist party’s tolerance and occasional support for rock as solid evidence that popular culture is a false solution to real problems and a vent for dissatisfaction that distracts people from real, meaningful action. On the other end of the theoretical spectrum, “resistance”-centered cultural theorists might argue that whatever the intentions of the communist party, culture operated more as an accumulator than a vent, providing opportunities for Polish society to envision new ways of life and alternatives to communist party authority, as well as an arena to safely challenge Communist ideals and symbols of authority, thus precipitating the party’s downfall less than a decade later. Both models have been applied to communist Poland. The first is prominent among scholars of Solidarity – who, after all, successfully fought the PZPR with labor strikes, words, monuments, songs, and art rather than guns and bullets. The second, perhaps surprisingly, can be frequently found in accounts given by participants in the rock scene in the 1980s.

In recent years, there has been a growing sense of a need among scholars interested in culture to overcome this binary model. For instance, Nan Enstad wrote in 2008,

My... work was concerned with trying to create a notion of agency and resistance that matched the more complex notion of the subject developed in the 1990s. I found the opposition between corroboration with power and resistance difficult to bridge. Despite my best efforts, most read my work as a celebration of my subjects’ use of consumer culture, a consumer culture and a usage I was in fact deeply ambivalent about. ... Whatever nuance I managed to infuse into the work is often flattened out in conversations about it. “Are dime novels liberatory?” is a question I hope never to be asked again. We all struggle with the inevitable shortcomings of our work, but in this case I think my experience is emblematic of a moment in cultural history.”¹³

As Enstad suggests, this binary model is problematic but difficult to overcome. Resistance and incorporation/complicity are important concepts when dealing with Polish

approaches, although focusing particularly on the possibility of resistance. See Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson, eds., *Resistance through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-War Britain* (London, 1976).

¹³ “On Grief and Complicity: notes toward a Visionary Cultural History,” James Cook, ed., *The Cultural Turn in U.S. History: Past, Present, and Future* (Chicago, 2008), 340.

rock – not least because bands and rock fans were often concerned about them – but when used as analytical frameworks, they tend to freeze a cultural form like a song into something with a static, straightforward meaning, the content of which objectively either fits the interests of the state or challenges them. However, most cultural forms have complex meanings, and are consumed in ways that expand the range of possible meanings even further. The same song, story, or image can resist or confirm power – sometimes both simultaneously – depending on a sea of variables.

An alternative to the resistance/complicity binary is to abandon politics altogether, and take an “aestheticist” position, interpreting rock as falling into a sphere of art, as distinct from politics. In terms of Polish rock, many bands indeed went to great efforts to define themselves as non-political, not so much as to avoid controversy as to distinguish themselves from politicians in the party and the opposition. But this is a problem too – there is surely something politically significant about a band singing “I am standing up, I feel great” – particularly in the context of 1980s Poland, for reasons I will show.¹⁴

Popular culture – and specifically rock – cannot be understood as simply opposing power or confirming it in a straightforward, consistent manner. At the same time, abandoning politics and locating rock in a realm of pure aesthetics was sometimes useful for rock’s supporters in 1980s Poland; it is less so for a historian trying to understand the music and its significance.¹⁵ The challenge is to account for culture without reducing it to politics, or turning it into a repression/liberation binary. I will offer a model that promises to navigate this tricky issue. First, though, I would like to talk in more detail about precisely what it was that took place in the world of 1980s Polish rock.

A Brief History of Polish Rock

Of course, rock did not come out of nowhere in the early 1980s. Like the United States and Great Britain, Poland first encountered rock and roll in the 1950s, although

¹⁴ The song – to be explored in detail in the fourth chapter – is Maanam’s “Stoję, Stoję, czuję się świetnie.”

¹⁵ Indeed, in the context of 1980s Poland, referring to rock or art in general as “nonpolitical” was itself a fiercely debatable, and politically inflammatory statement.

somewhat later in the decade and with characteristic local particularities.¹⁶ It is worth discussing the trajectory of the Polish rock and roll scene in some detail because the experience was formative for many participants in the later rock scene, as well as for how the music was received by the state, the press, and Polish society in general in the 1980s. A number of parallels between the two eras turn up, as well as some significant deviations, both of which are instructive in understanding 1980s Polish rock.

Much as in Great Britain, rock and roll made its earliest appearances at the ports. In the city of Gdansk in the late 1950s, popular culture arrived as the metaphorical stowaway accompanying the exchange of goods and travelers.¹⁷ The first rock and roll concert in Poland is frequently identified as the performance of the Polish band Rhythm and Blues in March of 1959, organized by Polish jazz enthusiast Franciszek Walicki at the student Jazz club *Rudy Kot*.¹⁸ Characteristic of early Polish rock and roll, the concert was given entirely in English.¹⁹ That fall, the band toured Poland, hitting several major cities. While its middle-of-the-road rock and roll might sound uncontroversial to the jaded ears of listeners today, at the time it aroused as much distaste in cultural and political authorities as it did enthusiasm among Polish youth. Walicki later recalled – foreshadowing the reaction cultural authorities would soon display toward the second wave of rock in Poland – that from rock and roll’s first days, cultural authorities disliked the music, and particularly the way young audience members behaved “more like at sports matches than at a boring *estrada* concert.”²⁰ In fact, due to its difficulties with

¹⁶Simon Frith, *Sound Effects: Youth, Leisure, and the Politics of Rock'n'Roll* (New York, 1981) offers a useful introduction to the beginnings of rock and roll in the US and Britain.

¹⁷ Of course, rock did not spring out of nowhere in 1959 either; jazz had already followed a similar course, from its introduction to Poland in the interwar years to its cold reception by communist politicians and critics that associated it with the bourgeois degeneracy of the West, and finally its acceptance by 1956 as a legitimate form of popular culture. As will be seen, the meaning of jazz continued to change into the 1980s, as it increasingly came to represent an artistically preferable form of popular culture in comparison to punk rock.

¹⁸ Franciszek Walicki, “Po Dwudziestu Latach,” *Non stop*, May 1979 and Wiesław Królikowski, “Czas Jak Rzeka...,” *Magazyn Muzyczny*, August 1984 both offer useful summaries of the beginnings of the first wave of Polish rock. See Przemysław Zieliński, *Scena Rockowa w PRL: Historia, Organizacja, Znaczenie* (Warszawa, 2005) for a deeper treatment. Just as many of the facilitators of 1980s rock were part of the earlier generation of Polish rock, many of the activists that publicized rock in Poland in the late 1950s were brought up participating in Poland’s jazz scene. Just like many of the venues of the 1980s rock boom, Rudy Kot, like many clubs in Poland at the time, was sponsored by an official socialist youth organization.

¹⁹ In fact, it was only after considerable debate that performing rock and roll with Polish lyrics was even accepted as a theoretical possibility. Here we see another parallel with the reemergence of rock in the late 1970s, and particularly punk, which was often performed in English in its first months.

²⁰ “Po Dwudziestu Latach.”

authorities (reports circulated about the band destroying hotel rooms it stayed in), Rythm and Blues changed its name to Czerwono-Czarni (Red-Black) in 1960. This clip is from the band's 1962 song "Malowana piosenka" **[Track 01]**.²¹

Following in these footsteps, a flurry of rock and roll bands formed around the country over the next months, with experimentation in Polish lyrics commencing by 1962.²² Besides improving the ability of fans to understand their lyrics, this step was also a savvy move by managers wishing to shed some of the associations of rock and roll with the western capitalist world in order to avoid political entanglements. Sensing Polish lyrics were not enough, the band Niebiesko-Czarny even took up the slogan "*Polska młodzież śpiewa polskie piosenki*" (Polish youth sing Polish songs). Similarly, the euphemisms "big beat" and its rough equivalent in Polish, "*mocne uderzenie*" were used to remove some of the taint of capitalist degeneracy – not to mention threatening political metaphor – carried by the term "rock."²³

However, even semantic obfuscation of this magnitude could not mask the transgressive potential of rock and roll. Despite the appearance of the music at socialist student clubs and festivals, beginning with the Exposition of Young Talents in 1962 and eventually including the prestigious national song festival in Opole, it was never fully accepted by political or cultural authorities.²⁴ While early Polish rock and roll was relatively tame, sonically and textually, performers like Czesław Niemen, sparked controversy with expressive, almost superhuman vocals that sometimes reached the emotional intensity of primal yells, and lyrics that addressed issues other than young love. In 1967, for instance, "Dziwny jest ten świat" **[Track 02]** anguished over the sad state of the contemporary world, beset by many evils like war and hatred.²⁵ Yet, rock was never fully suppressed either. While a few official laws restricted rock and roll shows (for instance, one archaic city regulation, revived from 16th century Gdańsk, banned concerts

²¹ Karin Stanek and Czerwono-Czarni, (Muza SP-323, 1962).

²² Several of these took their names from various combinations of colors (usually the colors of the club that sponsored them). The first of these was *Czerwono-Czarny* (red-black) in 1960, followed by *Niebiesko-Czarny* (blue-black) in 1962. Later that decade, the *Czerwone Gitary* (red guitars) took the critical first step in breaking from the dual-color naming scheme.

²³ Królikowski, "Czas Jak Rzeka..."

²⁴ Ibid., Dariusz Michalski, "Co wtedy się stanie?," *Sztandar Młodych*, August 27, 1982.

²⁵ While far from a scathing critique or demand for an end to the system, the song's combination of a realist diagnosis, a utopian prescription, and Niemen's impassioned vocals made many an adherent to the status quo nervous. Czesław Niemen and Akwarele, (Polskie Nagrania/Muza XL 0411, 1967).

with over 400 audience spaces), the music was mostly met with reluctant tolerance or subtly suppressed by cultural gatekeepers who chose to ignore it.²⁶

By the end of the 1960s, (again, similarly to the US and Britain) a lack of new performers and musical ideas turned the genre from a source of constant innovation to a source of constancy. While the talent remained, the music had lost some of its freshness and controversy. Even in 1966, Czerwono-czarni received an award from the state's Committee on Matters of Radio and Television.²⁷ By 1970, even Niemen was on television with a backup choir singing poetry written by the celebrated 19th century poet Norwid. The performance was a brilliant one due to the sheer power of Niemen's vocals, but his turn from simpler rock and roll roots to a more ambitious form of art music suggested that rock had run its course.

Its place was filled largely by disco and professional entertainers that are sometimes designated by the term "*Estrada*." This term, also the Polish word for "stage," is appropriate: the focus is on the center of the stage, on the polished, rehearsed vocals of a dramatic, charismatic frontman or woman. The type of music varied somewhat with performer, but nearly always is characterized by professionally trained singer/entertainers singing texts written by professional songwriters to the accompaniment of large, professionally trained orchestras.²⁸ Familiar comparisons might include performers like Pat Boone, Frank Sinatra, and more recently, Celine Dion.

This type of musical performance was closely tied to the way popular music was conceptualized in postwar Poland. The major division in the world of music was between *muzyka poważna* and *muzyka rozrywkowa*.²⁹ The first – literally, "serious music" – denoted what is often referred to in English as "classical music" – that is, music oriented around the European orchestral and chamber tradition. As the name suggests, this category was widely accepted by cultural critics as true culture – worthy of serious

²⁶ Walicki, "Po Dwudziestu Latach." According to Walicki, this statute arose from the resuscitation of an obscure code written by the Gdansk city council in 1596. The early modern text justifying the ban is bizarrely similar to contemporary criticism of rock and roll: "There exists in music and dance a thick and impolite fashion, out of agreement with a virtuous demeanor with its fanciful bending, turning, and shrieking."

²⁷ <http://www.polskieradio.pl/muzyka/wykonawcy/wykonawca.aspx?id=57765>, accessed June 2009.

²⁸ The term *estrada* is also used to refer to the agencies that organized popular music concerts.

²⁹ *Muzyka ludowa* (literally, the people's music, or folk music) was a third significant category, although its profile was much lower than the other two genres, as I will discuss in greater detail in the chapters to come.

attention, thought, and imbued with the potential to improve its listeners by stimulating higher thoughts.

This interpretation of music and culture can be traced to Matthew Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy* (1869), which identifies culture as the opposite of anarchy, "the best that has been thought and said in the world," and "sweetness and light."³⁰ Music that did not fit into this vision was, at best, "recreational" – that is, designed for the purpose of relaxing and entertaining the listener, without offering the benefits of cultural uplift. The music that fit this category was virtually everything that was excluded from the label "*muzyka poważna*" – that is, disco, pop, and *estrada*.³¹

When rock attracted the attention of critics, both in the 1960s and the 1980s, it too was placed in this category: whatever rock was, critics could agree that it certainly was not *poważna*. However, as we will see, rock fit awkwardly with this division, since it became increasingly clear – particularly with the rise of punk rock in the early 1980s – that this music was neither relaxing nor entertaining. This led some critics to identify it as precisely the opposite of culture in an Arnoldian vision: as anarchy, or "the brawling, bawling, breaking masses." Others challenged this interpretation, attempting to make rock compatible with an Arnoldian concept of culture by reinterpreting it as an art form, or at least a potential gateway to contact with other high culture musical forms.

The Arnoldian interpretation of culture was prominent in postwar Poland, particularly among music critics. However, it was not the only interpretation of culture available. With the communist takeover after World War Two, models of culture based in Marxism also gained popularity. An orthodox Marxist interpretation of culture divides the world into a "base" formed by objective social reality (the mode of production and one's place in relation to the means of production; that is, social class), and a "superstructure," which comprises everything else (culture, politics, art, tradition, customs, what people do and think, how they talk, where and how they live).³² According

³⁰ While this language has led many to understand the model as elitist, Arnold's own efforts were directed at widening access to this valuable resource for the purpose of lifting up society through his work as a school inspector, as Martin Ryle and Kate Soper, *To Relish the Sublime* (New York, 2002) reminds us.

³¹ By the 1980s, jazz fit awkwardly with this division since some cultural authorities had accepted the music as a true art form, thus linking it to *muzyka poważna*.

³² More recent variations of Marxism have complicated this model (for instance, see Williams, *Marxism and Literature*). The interpretation of the base/superstructure model is subject to debate as well, much of it oriented around exactly what was meant by Marx's description in the *Grundrisse* (published in 1858) of the

to Marx, the base determines this superstructure. Put differently, the model separates the world into spheres of the objective, or “real,” and the subjective, or “ideal,” with the former determining the latter. In one sense, this inverts Arnold’s understanding of culture as something that needs to be provided for the purposes of social uplift: for Marx, it is the economic base that determines culture, not the reverse. This understanding of culture was also frequently applied to rock, particularly by journalists with an interest in sociology in the 1980s. In these interpretations, rock was to be understood as a sign of the times and a symbol of the social and economic crises facing Polish youth. These interpretations had their own significance for how rock would be treated, as we will see.

Finally, a third, populist vision of culture played into popular discourse on rock. This vision encouraged mass participation in culture, particularly in the form of amateur and folk art. Here, mass participation was valued regardless of conventional aesthetic value, or rather the concept of aesthetic value was amended to include folk elements. This interpretation could work to rock’s advantage – provided rock was interpreted as an amateur cultural movement. Over the course of the 1980s, precisely this point came up for debate.

Finally, understandings of rock were shaped by contemporary discourse about youth. This often overlapped with discussions about culture, since culture was identified as a primary way of shaping youth for participation in Polish society. As with culture, though, different ideas about whether any form of youth participation in culture was to be valued and whether rock was an effect or a cause of youth delinquency vied for dominance in discourse about rock. These discourses set up the context for how rock would be understood when it returned to prominence in the late 1970s.

The immediate origin of the rebirth of rock in Poland in the 1980s can be traced to two sources in the late 1970s. The first was an organized effort to bring its music back to the Polish stage in a concert under the title “MMG” – Muzyka Młodej Generacji (Music of the Young Generation), which first took place at the annual Międzynarodowy Festiwal Interwizji (International Intervisio Festival) in Sopot in the summer of 1978. The second source, roughly contemporaneous with the first, was the formation of a Polish

base determining the superstructure “in the last instance.” Frederick Engels’ “Letter to Joseph Bloch” (1890) is particularly illuminating in this respect: he accepts that people make their own history, but under specific conditions.

underground punk scene. The awkward coexistence of these two strands deeply shaped the Polish rock scene over the next decade.³³

Music of the Young Generation is difficult to pin down. Depending on the source, it is characterized either as a popular youth musical movement or as a calculated promotional campaign. In the press, it appears alternately as a spontaneous explosion of rock music, as a noisy, irritating outbreak of hooliganism and vandalism by musical means, and as a cynical, musically worn-out attempt to profit from youth with more in common with disco than with genuine rock. The term itself – often abbreviated with the acronym “MMG,” started as a title referring to a particular group of bands performing at a music festival, but by the 1980s was often used in the press as a euphemism for rock music as a whole, much the way “Big Beat” was by the previous generation. The evolution of Music of the Young Generation and all of the meanings associated with it is intertwined with the development of Polish rock.

Its beginnings are clear enough, in any case. The first MMG concert took place at Pop Session '78, an international review of popular youth music in Poland. The program announced that after the official concerts, a “fantastic spectacle” would take place showcasing “young bands beginning their stage careers” under the title *Muzyka Młodej Generacji*.³⁴ The five bands that performed – Drive, Exodus, Heam, Kombi, and Krzak – are all described in the program as playing some type of hyphenated rock; that is, art-rock, symphonic-rock, or jazz-rock. Ironically, as was sometimes pointed out, most of the band members were not particularly young (particularly in the later years of MMG), with the average age falling around 28.

The concert at Pop Session in 1978 – while nowhere near as revolutionary as punk – was met with enthusiasm by many young Poles, at least as indicated by the youth press. The future of the movement was uncertain, however. By the time of the next iteration of the concert in 1979, organizers were left uncertain with the direction to take. As that year’s concert program noted, the previous year’s performers, Exodus, Krzak, and Kombi, had toured and performed in the interim under the title MMG, and even recorded

³³ The careful reader will no doubt notice that the dates here do not quite line up with the decade of the 1980s, with which my title claims to be dealing. To be more exact, the dates I will deal with here span from mid 1978 until the roundtable talks in early 1989 – the “Long 1980s,” if you like.

³⁴ Bałtycka Agencja Artystyczna, “Pop Session 1978 Program,” 1978. Found at <http://www.jarocin-festiwal.com/historia/popsession/1978/folder/folder78.html>, accessed June 2009.

an album. Paradoxically, their growing popularity made their continued performance in the MMG show problematic. First, after touring, simply having another performance of the same groups perform again would have been anticlimactic, particularly for a movement billing itself as something new and fresh. Moreover, all three groups reached the level of popularity – and established their artistic credentials – enough to make it into the main festival at Sopot that year, not just the MMG rock spinoff.



Figure 1. Bałtycka Agencja Artystyczna, “Pop Session 1978 Program,” 1978.

As a result, the organizers found a new set of bands to play, including Kasa Chorych, Kwadrat, Orkiestra do uzytku wewnetrznego (Orchestra for internal use – an amusing name for anyone who has read that familiar stamp at the top of party documents), Res Publica (which later slightly altered its name, music, and style to become one of the most popular bands in Poland), Mech U.N.F., Onomatopeja, and Rock Union. In some respects, these bands were much the same as the previous years, labeled in the program with various types of rock fusion – symphonic rock (Mech), blues-rock (Kasa Chorych), jazz-rock (Kwadrat) and even a more typical *estrada* style band (Onomatopeja). Once again, most of the performers were also older than the “young generation” in the strictest sense of the word; many of the members of Rock Union had participated in the first round of rock and roll in the 1960s, and Onomatopeja’s history went back to 1968.

Perhaps the closest thing to a change was the inclusion of Res Publica: the band’s style pushed the boundaries of prog rock, and its members were actually young, mostly in their early twenties. Even so, the concert was met with significantly less enthusiasm than its predecessor. In a marked contrast with the previous year, the magazine *Non Stop*, one of the only music periodical that was geared to a youth readership, found the concert, with the exception of Res Publica, “uninspired,” as suggested by the title of the concert review, “Nic Nowego na Pop Session” (Nothing New at Pop Session).³⁵

This critique of MMG was damning, particularly by a magazine that came closer than most to representing the tastes of a young audience. By the end of 1979, the future of MMG was uncertain. The music had found an interested audience, but had quickly lost its novelty and vigor. As the inclusion of Krzak, Kombi, and Exodus in the main portion of Pop Session in 1979 suggested, its bands fit alongside the older generation of Polish rock bands – suggesting something less than completely new music for the young generation. MMG needed to regain its vitality and its appeal to youth. It needed an infusion of something exciting, engaging, and different. The movement’s promoters found exactly this in punk rock.

Like rock and roll twenty-some years earlier, punk arrived in Poland as an import from Britain. In Britain, punk developed in the mid 1970s as a musical rebellion against

³⁵ Wojciech Soporek, August 1979.

the commercialism of pop as well as the hierarchical, increasingly complex, polished state of rock, then dominated by progressive bands. Socially, punk arose at a time of crisis, with unemployment provoking mass dissatisfaction with the government. By 1976, punk music – and the style that accompanied it – breached into public awareness, with the Sex Pistols’ quintessential single “Anarchy in the UK” becoming a radio hit by early 1977.³⁶ Punk was calculated to shock, programmed to irreverently upend social and cultural mores in the midst of a situation of crisis in Britain.

As early as 1977, elements of punk filtered into Poland’s music scene. That year, Walek Dzedzej performed a folksy, Dylanesque but punk-tinged repertoire in clubs in Gdańsk and Warsaw in what were later often cited as the first punk concerts in Poland. Already in 1983, Dzedzej’s few shows were regarded as legendary.³⁷ In 1978, Dzedzej formed the Walek Dzedzej Pank Bend (the spelling somewhat humorously approximates the phonetics of “punk band” in Polish pronunciation), but after only a few concerts, Dzedzej emigrated, eventually ending up in New York.³⁸ That year, Henryk Gajewski, director of the Riviera Remont student club in Warsaw, invited the British punk band the Raincoats to Warsaw. With them, they brought a sample of the British punk scene to Poland.

Punk was exciting to many young Poles: the meetings at Riviera Remont even attracted an occasional mention in the youth press. However, it would probably have remained an underground, avant-garde subcultural experience had it not attracted the attention of the impresarios responsible for MMG. In 1980, Jacek Sylwin and Walter Chełstowski combined these two musical currents at a festival in Jarocin. This small town in western Poland between Poznań and Kalisz had been the site of the Wielkopolska Youth Rhythms (Wielkopolskie Rytmu Młodych) festival since 1970. The Youth Rhythms festival was mainly a competition organized for amateur bands with the objective of improving their performance skills. With the combination of the MMG element of Pop Session with the Youth Rhythms festival, the festival became the First

³⁶ Greil Marcus, *Lipstick Traces: A Secret History of the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, 1989) offers a history of British punk as well as a fascinating argument about how the Sex Pistols and impresario Malcolm McLaren distilled the intellectual impulse of Situationism and incarnated it as a billboard hit.

³⁷ Marek Wiernik, “Dokąd zmierza polski rock?,” *Forum Rozrywki*, 1983.

³⁸ Robert Jarosz, “Oops! muzeum sztuki nienowoczesnej „Obertas”: Walek Dzedzej (?-2006),” <http://www.oops.pl/blog/?p=2230>.

All-Poland Review of Music of the Young Generation (I Ogólnopolski Przegląd Muzyki Młodej Generacji). The new three-day format combined elements of both of its parent festivals – a section featuring amateur bands (with the most popular receiving a special award – the Golden Chameleon), and professional guest bands that were popular among youth. Even in its first year, however, it expanded in popularity beyond either of its predecessors, for fans and performers alike. Fifty-seven bands applied to perform in the amateur portion of the concert, with only 15 making it into the competition.³⁹

This combination of rock's accessibility and punk's alternative allure spun off a number of bands that skillfully combined these two equally essential elements. The resulting fusion I have labeled "punk rock" – an atypical use of the term, which usually operates as a synonym for "punk," but here captures the blend that drew elements of punk and combined them with more popular and commercially viable elements of rock.

Over the next year, punk rock flourished in the period of cultural openness that accompanied Solidarity's activity. This took the form of ever increasing numbers of concerts, festivals, and bands forming. In 1980, these included new wave festivals in Toruń and Kołobrzeg, the Jarocin festival, a performance by punk rock band Maanam at the annual song festival in Opole, and a new rock festival, Rockowisko, in Łódź. 1981 continued the expansion of the year before, adding Rock Arena in Poznań, Rock Jamboree in Warsaw, and countless smaller local events.

When martial law was announced at the cusp of 1981 and 1982, it ended the era of cultural openness, but as the introduction suggested, it did not stop rock. In fact, just the opposite took place; the music expanded to new heights of popularity and, more remarkably, availability. Starting in February of 1982, a mere two months after Martial Law, a series of rock concerts were organized in Warsaw; in May, the annual Statewide Youth Song Review featured rock for the first time; and large-scale rock festivals in Poznań and Łódź continued, as well as countless smaller-scale local concerts brought the controversial sounds of punk and rock to the ears of tens of thousands of young Poles. When not attending concerts, young Poles could hear this new music from their own homes: April of 1982, the third channel of Polish State Radio reoriented its program

³⁹ Roman Radożewski, "Trzeci Etap Ekspansji," *Non stop*, July 1980.

toward youth, including a “hits list” program that allowed listeners to choose what music would be played.

The spread of rock into the mainstream media did not stop at radio and television: a number of films about young rock bands sprang up between 1982 and 1985. The first film to use new rock extensively was Krzysztof Regulski’s *Wielka Majówka*, which came out in October of 1981, shortly before martial law. The next years saw the release of a diverse range of films, including a collection of recordings of concerts (*Koncert*, Michał Tarkowski, 1982), a documentary on punk rock (*Film o pankach*, Mariusz Treliński, 1983), a documentary about Maanam (*Czuję się świetnie*, Waldemar Szarek, 1985), a feature film about fictitious band Krzyk that struggles to negotiate the music industry, dealing with an impresario who manipulates and cheats them (*To tylko rock*, Paweł Karpiński, 1984), and another on youthful love and the healing powers of rock (*Miłość z listy przebojów*, Marek Nowicki, 1984), to name a few. The objectives of the films ranged from showing the demoralization of Polish youth to interrogating the conditions of the music industry to simply appealing to young viewers who were interested in rock.

From 1982 to 1984, the availability of rock on television, radio, and records and cassettes expanded dramatically. 1983 saw the number of rock records produced quadruple compared to the year before – itself an improvement from 1981 by the same margin.⁴⁰ The bands Republika, Maanam, Lady Pank, Perfect, and Lombard, were particularly popular in this period. Each could be heard on the radio, seen on television, and idolized in fan clubs and through band paraphernalia. Lady Pank even had its own product line, including Lady Pank brand perfume. Alongside these widely popular groups, 1982 saw the development of an scene of hardcore, metal, and reggae bands like SS-20/Dezerter, Siekiera, Kat, and Izrael. Even when these bands were denied wide media exposure, tens of thousands of young poles had access to it at festivals like Jarocin, as well as alternative radio stations like the Rozgłosnia Harcerska’s (Scouting Broadcast) “Polski Independent.” In these years, Jarocin grew from a small affair to a week-long event that attracted some 20,000 Polish youth. Jarocin was a place youth could come and experience what it was like living in another culture without ever leaving the country.

⁴⁰ The precise production figures will be cited in the next chapter, on the Polish music industry.

By 1984, the press reported that rock was dominating even Poland's most prestigious song festivals, not to mention on radio and television. Even bands that were not played on the radio managed to get records, such as Brygada Kryzys and Dezerter. By 1985, fans could even go to state record stores to find (or more accurately, "search for," given the scarcity of records) a full length hardcore punk compilation under the title *Fala*.

Rock's rise was dramatic. Yet, it was also brief. By 1985, the bands that had been tremendously popular began to lose fans. Fan clubs closed. Concert attendance went down. Reports circulated of bands that once guaranteed a sell-out had large numbers of tickets left unsold for their shows. In 1985, Republika was nearly booed off the stage at Jarocin. The next year, most of Lady Pank's fan clubs ceased operation. All of the popular bands I mentioned previously – Republika, Maanam, Lady Pank, Perfect, and Lombard – ceased activity by 1986. Some of the bands that had been mainstream rose to take their place, getting some of their less controversial music played on the radio – but this introduced the same set of complications that had affected their more popular counterparts.

By 1988, even the Jarocin festival had lost much of its allure. However, it found a new sponsor: key representatives from the state's Ministry of Culture (Ministerstwo Kultury i Sztuki, or MKiS hereafter) and the PZPR's Central Committee's Division of Culture (Wydział Kultury KC PZPR) agreed that the Jarocin festival "should become the main place of searching for a form of presence of state patronage in the milieu of youth subcultures." The decision was confidential, but even subtle differences were recognizable to the sensitive world of Polish rock. Fans immediately recognized that something was amiss: during the festival, one reporter noted fans demanding the death of one of the organizers, chanting, "Kill Winder."⁴¹ Even more rock-friendly writers had misgivings about the condition of the festival. Shortly after the event Perfect's Zbigniew Hołdys – now an editor of a music periodical and something of an "elder statesman" of rock – published an obituary for the festival. It read, "With deep regret, we inform that on the days of August 3, 4, 5, and 6, 1988, after a long, painful illness, at 19, others say 9 years of age, the Jarocin Festival died." It continued,

⁴¹ Mirosław Soliwoda, *Świata Młodych*, 1988.

In the deceased we lose a tested friend, who was with us in the most difficult moments, a merited fighter for matters of rock in Poland. The symptoms of a terminal illness could be observed for a long time. Already in the late Walter [Chelstowski] years examples of this abounded. The short, but intense [Marcin] Jacobson episode today seems more wonderful than we judged it a year ago. Neither man found understanding or acceptance among the people permanently posted at the sick bed.⁴²

Hołdys' position was an exaggerated one; the festival continued to exist for six more years until 1994. But it was difficult for anyone to deny that the explosion of rock that had taken place in the early 1980s was a distant memory by 1988.

My Theoretical Approach

As I suggested earlier in my discussion of the historiography of studies of popular culture, this story can be told many ways. Some might identify rock's narrative as a classic instance of incorporation. Under this view, rock was allowed, or even encouraged, as part of a strategy by the party/state as a "safety valve" (*wentyl bezpieczeństwa*), allowing rock to diffuse the oppositional impulses of youth into meaningless recreation.⁴³ The adoption of the Jarocin Festival as part of the official cultural program and the main arena for outreach to youth by the party fits this interpretation. On the other side, though, advocates of the "resistance" approach might point out that if rock's popularity had receded by 1988, the party's fate was still worse: it gave up its monopoly on power at the roundtable agreements in the first months of the next year. Instead, rock would be interpreted as a successful resistance movement, working along with more official opposition movements like Solidarity to end the authoritarian rule of the communist party.⁴⁴ In this view, rather than a "safety valve," rock served as an accumulator of public

⁴² "Festiwal Rockowy Jarocin," *Non stop*, September 1988, 3.

⁴³ Curiously, this interpretation is particularly prevalent among ex-participants in what they describe as the "alternative" rock scene, where it is applied to the more popular, or "official" bands that were played more frequently on the radio and television.

⁴⁴ This interpretation has grown increasingly prominent in Poland in recent years. As I will discuss in the conclusion, the celebration for the 20th anniversary of the fall of communism was capped with a performance of 1980s rock bands, interspersed with video clips about Solidarity and its challenge to the party.

dissatisfaction, challenging the authority of the party to rule, eventually forcing it to abandon power.

As I discussed above, both of these models – the “resistance” and the “incorporation” models – have elements of truth, but neither is satisfactory. Resistance and incorporation, liberation and repression, are important categories in discussing Polish rock. However, much like the “us”/“them” binary, they are constructs of the struggle to define rock rather than descriptions of rock itself. Rock could serve the objectives of the state or challenge its authority; its role constantly shifted according to the efforts on all sides to control its meaning. In short, a model of culture and power that accounts for this contingency in meaning – that explains how culture can both challenge and confirm power, sometimes at the same time – is required. To perform this task, I explore two models of power that allow for the theorization of culture’s political and social power while allowing for this contingency in meaning – models envisioning power in terms of “hegemony” and of “discourse.” While these models arose in different circumstances and on opposite sides of the “cultural turn,” both address the common goal of looking beyond physical coercion or economic dominance, showing how culture is crucial in the construction and maintenance of power, and in resisting it.

The concept of hegemony was first extensively theorized by Antonio Gramsci as an effort to rework Marxism to take greater account of the importance of culture in society, and particularly in the construction of power and authority. In its most basic form, the hegemony model envisions a struggle between a ruling class and the ruled that is carried out in the realm of ideology – beliefs about the way the world is and ought to be organized.⁴⁵ Hegemony thus describes the predominance of one class in society over

⁴⁵ The idea is taken from Gramsci’s *Prison Notebooks*, written in the late 1920s and early 1930s when Gramsci was imprisoned by the fascist regime in Italy. The notebooks are a rich resource, but one that is understandably scattered and lacking in editing. Joseph Femia offers a useful condensing of Gramsci in *Gramsci’s Political Thought* (Oxford, 1981). Gramsci’s tragic fate prevented the hegemony model from getting wide reception until it was revived by Raymond Williams, who used the concept to modify the base-superstructure model of early Marxism; see *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford, 1977). While Williams upholds the possibility of analytically distinguishing consciousness and the material, he insists that they are inseparable in actuality, since no “real life process” can be known independently of the narration of consciousness, and consciousness is always part of a social process. In other words, the real, objective world does not exist apart from people’s awareness of it, and this awareness is shaped by society – that is, the ideological superstructure also shapes the material base, or at least the experience of it. Williams thus affirms ideology’s place at the center of the construction of social reality, and thereby its key role in maintaining or challenging the hegemony.

another through the propagation of an understanding of reality that validates this unequal relationship. The wide acceptance of such an interpretation of reality is achieved through the concerted efforts of the various institutions that shape individuals' outlooks on social reality – educational and cultural institutions, as well as the media.

While this model arose from Gramsci's efforts to understand the failure of Marxist revolution to displace capitalism in the early 20th century, it did not abandon the possibility of resistance and revolution. Rather than force of arms, however, resistance would consist of a protracted struggle to subvert the institutions of socialization by erecting a counter-hegemony that would call hegemonic reality into question by emphasizing contradictions between experience and belief. Hegemony is a process more than a structure; it shifts to combat challenges from alternative constructions of reality by incorporating or otherwise neutralizing them. As it does so, new contradictions and inconsistencies emerge that can be exploited in the realm of culture. The hegemony model thus provides a tool to interrogate how something like a song, a symbol, or a way of understanding the past might reinforce or challenge a particular power structure.

The hegemony model also encourages us to look at the role of institutions in perpetuating the ideological framework that justifies the dominance of some over others. Without arguing that status in a socialist system is synonymous with class in capitalist society, there was a very real distinction in resources and influence on ideological state apparatuses – the media, schools, the press – between Poles with varying degrees of status in the party system.⁴⁶ Within these institutions, work in the field of sociology has shown how factors on the production side of the realm of culture can influence distribution of cultural goods, as well as the goods themselves, offering a useful lens for understanding the relationship of culture to the conditions of its own production.⁴⁷ For instance, laws and even who is chosen to present music at a radio station has a tremendous effect on the popularization of certain types of music at the expense of other types. As I will show, these production-side factors had a tremendous influence on the

⁴⁶ The term “ideological state apparatus” comes from Louis Althusser. See *On Ideology* (London, 2008) and *Lenin and Philosophy, and Other Essays* (New York, 1972). For another use of this concept, see C. Wright Mills, “The Cultural Apparatus,” Irving Louis Horowitz, ed., *Power, Politics, and People* (New York, 1963).

⁴⁷ Besides the work on the production perspective on culture, noted above, Paul Starr's *The Creation of the Media* (New York, 2004) shows how deeply regulations and even informal decisions affect the way media institutions operate, and the effects of this on culture in the context of the United States.

Polish music scene. At the same time, the hegemony model encourages us to look at the other side of the relationship, examining how culture, in turn influences the industry. Additionally, the description of hegemony as a “moving equilibrium” between resistance and neutralization/cooptation fits the delicate battle of maneuver between rock musicians and the state particularly well, with rock bands fighting to maintain the balance between being suppressed as an outright threat and the equally disastrous consequence of rock being characterized as just one more aspect of proper socialist life.

One question remains, however, about employing the concept of hegemony in analyzing 1980s Poland. By the 1980s, the party had little popular support, and few people believed in orthodox Marxism. This might be taken to suggest that it is not hegemony at work here, but rather brute force. However, first, while the Polish state certainly had recourse to coercive methods, their application was limited – even at the peak of coercive, brute power during martial law, deaths were few and extended prison sentences were largely reserved for notable figures in the opposition. Further, the era closest to the model of a land of communist “true believers” was the stalinist period in the late 1940s and early 1950s – also the time of its greatest reliance on coercive methods.⁴⁸ As these examples suggest, any firm dichotomy between coercion and hegemony is questionable.⁴⁹

In fact, as I will show, the 1980s are not characterized by a drop off in party efforts to enhance its authority. Rather, it was at this time that the party sought a new basis for its authority to rule in place of the no longer practical model of the 1970s, based

⁴⁸ Indeed, any formulation of hegemony that excludes states that depend on coercion or the threat of coercion for authority would be universally inapplicable, as is demonstrated by even a quick look at court cases, prisons, or responses to riots in modern liberal democracies – or, for that matter, something like the Patriot Act in the contemporary United States.

⁴⁹ Ultimately, this distinction rests on the assumption that hegemony shapes the way people perceive reality, while coercion simply prevents them from acting, leaving their thoughts unaffected. Without delving too deep into the realms of psychology, it seems quite possible that violence and the threat thereof, especially over a long period of time, would shape how individuals perceived reality. In fact, one could only argue that the experience of repression could never coexist with (or even result in) support for the oppressor by assuming a straightforward causal connection moving from objective reality to consciousness. But this is just the sort of reduction that hegemony is so successful in overcoming. Of course, the simultaneous experience of coercion and assertions of legitimacy from the state might create contradictions in the hegemony (and one should note that they might not, since the use of coercion might just as easily be seen as a sign of a strong, just state). These contradictions and cracks, however, are part of the process of hegemony’s moving equilibrium. While accepting the rule of the state out of fear and accepting its rule out of a belief in its legitimate authority are analytically distinguishable, we need not insist that hegemony and coercion are naturally at odds.

on the state's role as a provider of goods. Ultimately, hegemony is not just a condition that either exists or does not: it is a way of conceptualizing power. The story of 1980s Poland is not one of ideological hegemony becoming irrelevant; rather, it is one of increasingly dramatic shifts to accommodate new challenges to party authority – a struggle to maintain hegemony. By the 1980s, the numbers of true believers in any sort of orthodox communist system were few, forcing efforts to derive authority from other sources like faith in the possibility of reform, financial security, dislike of capitalism, patriotism, fear of change, and, particularly relevant for this dissertation, its policies on youth and culture. These changes marked increasingly drastic shifts in hegemonic power away from orthodox communism in response to growing challenges to party authority. Rock played a powerful role in forcing these drastic shifts, and in turn had to deal with their often difficult outcomes, as my account will demonstrate.

The second model of power I invoke is the discursive model.⁵⁰ In this model, power operates not as an oppressive force imposed from above, but as a web of meaning connecting all parts of society. Power is not primarily a means of control; rather, it is suffused through discourse – the range of possible ways of understanding reality and forming meaning from it. It is in this sense that discourse is power, since it enables particular types of thoughts and actions while constraining others. This encourages a critical interrogation of simplistic, power/resistance binaries: if everyone is operating within a particular frame of discourse, any us/them distinction is just one more part of that frame rather than an absolute, objective division between forces.

This allows for a more complex theorization of the resistance/complicity binary that is useful in working with Polish rock. It also means that it is necessary to pay attention to other lines of division, for instance, those within the rock scene or the party. The PZPR itself – like the rest of Polish society – was engaged in an effort to fit rock to its understanding of the world. Being a party member did not guarantee a particular result in this effort; besides personal preferences, older, “hard-line” members were more likely to condemn rock as either a threat or to dismiss it as tasteless noise, while younger

⁵⁰ The most notable reference here is Michel Foucault's writing on power (see *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction* (New York, 1958)). For a useful, brief elaboration of the distinction between ideological and discursive models, see Trevor Purvis and Alan Hunt, “Discourse, Ideology, Discourse, Ideology...” in *The British Journal of Sociology* 44, no. 3 (September, 1993): 473-499.

members were more likely to search for ways it could be made compatible with party goals. In the following chapters, we will examine how these multiple agendas play out and the significance of these alternative interpretations.

These two models of power – discursive and hegemonic – come from opposite sides of the “cultural turn” in the humanities and social sciences, but I have found that they work together extraordinarily well. While hegemony reminds us that power is directional, privileging some over others, and that its reproduction is tied up with institutions and with capital, the discourse model reminds us that power binds and enables the privileged as well as the repressed, and does not necessarily operate through the intent of elites (although, as the hegemony model reminds us, their control of institutions gives them disproportionate access to its dissemination). The hegemony model is sometimes criticized for being too simplistic (often in the same way that I have criticized other approaches – that it is too binary, dividing society up into two mutually exclusive, antagonistic forces).⁵¹ However, looking at the discourse on rock shows how hegemony was constantly in flux as it was constructed, challenged, reconstructed, and reinforced from and within all sides in 1980s Poland. In dealing with rock, I want to avoid reducing the music to politics. Rather, I want to maintain a sense of how it was heard by its fans: as music. Yet, in the end, I also do not want to lose sight of the political significance of punk bands performing in authoritarian Poland in the 1980s.

Using these models, I will tell the story of Polish rock as a struggle to define the very essence of Poland – the meaning of Polish socialism, the nation, its culture, and its youth. This debate took place in party meetings, in the press, in a rock performance, in production decisions at record factories, in the sound of a guitar chord, and in fans’ decisions about which bands they loved and which they hated. These questions were relevant not just to the communist party, but also to the opposition, the Catholic Church, rock bands and their fans, and Polish society in general.

⁵¹ Ann Szemere makes precisely this argument about the hegemony model in *Up from the Underground: The Culture of Rock Music in Postsocialist Hungary* (University Park, 2001), suggesting that Stuart Hall’s formulation of “the people” versus “the power bloc” imply too rigid and static a binary between the state and society.

A Word on Sources

Historians often go into their research with archives as a central resource. Here I was no different, dutifully scouring the Archive of New Acts (Archiwum Akt Nowych) in Warsaw. This was a great resource for locating central party documents. The archives of the Central Committee's Division of Culture (Wydział Kultury Komitetu Centralnego PZPR) were particularly useful here. I then traveled to the regional archive in Kalisz, where I could find regional and local party and state documents. But what about other aspects of the rock scene? It is difficult to get the sense of the concert experience from a party conference or a security service report, reading "against the grain" or otherwise. I quickly discovered that a good deal of punk's traces have slipped through the archival system.

My experience with Polskie Radio is illustrative. Rock musicians (except for the more uncompromising hardcore punks) frequently recorded and gave live performances, as well as occasional interviews, on the radio. This was particularly true of the Trójka, which became oriented toward a young audience (meaning it focused on rock) in 1982. The broadcast even included a hits list, which allowed listeners to write in and select the music they wanted to hear, as well as call in and make requests and comment. With great anticipation, I imagined that I could listen to the very broadcasts that connected Polish rock to its fans across the country, and even allowed them to interact, choosing and commenting on their favorites! Alas, upon traveling to Polskie Radio, I quickly learned that whether or not a broadcast was archived and kept for posterity was decided by the criterion of whether it had "lasting historical or artistic value," and that this determination was made by radio officials (not rock fans, and certainly not punk rock fans, as a rule). Despite the helpful staff, I quickly discovered that the likeliness of a recording being useful to my research and the likeliness of its being saved were in a relationship of inverse proportion.

The story is much the same for many other resources – libraries did not bother collecting or keeping underground publications, houses of culture keep few records, and concert venues still fewer. All was not lost, however. To my surprise, I discovered that Poland in the 1980s had a small but lively core of rock journalists and even a couple of rock-centered magazines. Due to the continued popularity of rock from the 1980s in

Poland today, many albums are readily available in stores, as are a wealth of extensive interviews with many of the most important performers from the 1980s.

Perhaps my greatest surprise, however, has been the incredibly rapid development of resources available through the internet, many of which were not available even a few years ago when I began my research. In the past years, people who were fans of rock bands and attended concerts in the 1980s have started to record and share their experiences and memories. This includes images of underground, self-published periodicals, posters and paraphernalia, recollections from concerts, and personal bootleg recordings from punk concerts, among other things. Besides offering an opportunity to acquaint myself with the complexity of determining “free use,” these resources have made it possible to get a close and vivid view into the world of rock in the 1980s, even its underground portion.

Place and Organization

In recent years, both global and local histories (and histories looking at the relationship between the global and the local) have challenged the dominance of nation-centered approaches to the past. This is an important and merited change in the field, and I have tried to keep an eye out for local variations (with Gdańsk and Warsaw known for punk, and Toruń known for new wave, for instance), and for the transnational contacts in Poland’s rock scene that are crucial for understanding rock, punk, metal, and reggae. In the case of this dissertation, though, talking about Polish rock makes sense in a way that discussing “Varsovian” rock or the global rock movement in central Europe would not. This is not so much a matter of nationality or even language as it is of the condition of operating in a centralized authoritarian state. No matter where a band was located in Poland, it had to deal with a common set of regulations and conditions. Besides the occasional reward of trips abroad, most Polish rock bands spent much of their existence heavily touring, but doing so within Poland. At the same time, comparisons (and contrasts) with other socialist and capitalist countries are instructive – as are local specificities in addressing rock. I will point these out over the way.

The chapters of my dissertation each explore a different aspect of Polish rock music that attempts to engage with its relationship to power, while keeping in mind that music is an art form that is primarily meant to be heard, not read about. I will examine four areas: the music industry, the government, bands and their music, and rock's public. One of the weaknesses of many models of popular culture up to this point is that these areas are sometimes viewed in isolation, leading to not just incomplete pictures, but sometimes skewed perspectives. For instance, some of the difference between "incorporation" centered and "resistance" centered models flows from a difference in focus, with the former more likely to look at the industry conditions and the latter more likely to look at how music is experienced by listeners and fans.⁵² Likewise, scholars with a preference for the methods of social sciences have been more likely to look at the industry, and those with an inclination toward culturally focused methods have tended to focus more on use. High politics, on the other hand, have largely been left out of the debate on either side, left to diplomatic history and political science. The same might be said of the press, which is often used as a secondary source to confirm observations about the music scene and industry more than meriting analysis in its own right.

One of my central goals in writing is to demonstrate precisely how these categories and institutions – government and politics, industry and economics, society, and culture – interact, each perpetually affecting the others. I also hope to show how concerns more typically associated with social approaches – economic statistics, mode of production, political and social institutions – and those more typically associated with cultural approaches – questions about discourse, the construction of meaning, and language – are not mutually exclusive methodologies or ideologies, but rather equally essential components that must be assembled as a coherent whole, each lending significance to the other.

Paradoxically, in order to show the nature of this interaction, I have divided the music industry, the government, rock bands and music, and rock's public into separate sections. The four topical areas I have chosen are not discrete; they are both internally heterogeneous and also overlap with each other. The government in the PRL, for

⁵² This is true to a large degree, for instance, in the debate carried out in essays by Lawrence W. Levine and T.J. Jackson Lears, in *American Historical Review* 97, no. 5 (December 1992): 1369-1430.

instance, consisted of parallel state and party organs (much as in the Soviet Union). Each branch is further divided into central and regional bodies, each of which has members with somewhat diverse points of view. One of my discoveries has been that even when one branch of the communist party has a clear opinion on a matter – which often was not the case – there was still a good deal of miscommunication, disagreement, and debate between departments and between the party and the state. While concepts like “official party policy” are useful, it is equally important to remember that a great deal of diversity exists behind the monolith of the party – unless this kept in mind, how the action plays out over the course of the 1980s is impossible to understand. Similarly, the music industry includes state-run firms as well as semi-private record labels. This heterogeneity is not necessarily a liability: it can help us move away from the simplistic binary division between the state and rock that has dominated scholarship up to this point. This model lends itself to treating rock in terms of multiple lines of conflict rather than exclusively a clash between two opposing sides.

In addition to their internal heterogeneity, my topical divisions also often overlap with each other. This reminds us that these divisions are artificial (although not arbitrary), and that these categories are interlinked. For instance, is a young member of the Union of Socialist Polish Youth that organizes a rock festival part of the government, the music industry, or rock’s public? Particularly in a state directed economy, the music industry and the government cannot be completely disentangled – for instance, the largest Polish record producer is ultimately run by the Ministry of Culture and Art itself. Sometimes the Ministry acts more like the government, coming up with policy directives, while other times it acts more like industry, concerning itself with production details and finances.

Despite the overlaps and internal divisions of these categories, I have kept these categories for the sake of conceptual clarity: the fear of losing my argument in a muddled mass of “everything affecting everything else” was greater than my fear of reifying the very division I was trying to overcome.⁵³ After all, as Raymond Williams has noted, to suggest that these work together is not to deny that they can be conceptually

⁵³ This is not unlike the paradoxical definition of sameness and difference: in order to show that two things are the same, they must first be conceptually distinguished into different objects, while showing that two things are different requires that they be placed side by side, as comparable objects.

distinguished.⁵⁴ I have tried to make up for this imposed division by drawing connections between these categories frequently, developing the sense of mutual interaction.

The second chapter examines the Polish music industry, and considers how its basic conditions facilitated but also limited possibilities for rock bands in the 1980s. It challenges assumptions about the socialist economy and the primacy of politics in approaches to socialist culture, and clarifies the relationship between the structures of production, the character of the cultural forms produced, and how they are received by their audiences.

The third chapter considers the cultural politics of the communist party and the debate over how rock music related to its cultural model in the face of an ongoing struggle to maintain authority. In a rare archival glimpse inside the party in the 1980s, the chapter shows the surprisingly diverse range of attempts to square rock with party cultural policy, as different voices sought to use it to symbolize the possibility of reform and to attract young Poles, or alternately, to suppress it as a sign of the party's failure to fulfill its cultural mission.

The fourth chapter analyzes rock performances, songs, and texts. It considers the struggle of bands to define their position amidst the pressures on them described in the previous chapters – from the industry, from politicians, and from fans and detractors in Polish society – all of whom attempt to associate different meanings with rock. This struggle took place in sonic, performative, and textual form.

The fifth chapter looks at rock fans (and opponents), and considers their relationship to the music as well as the responses to it in the popular, youth, and underground presses, and in fan clubs. The meaning of rock was subject to a constant debate, determining whether bands were heard as challenges to official culture, as meaningless noise, as praiseworthy examples of the achievements of socialist culture, or as complicit with the system. This section also considers the ambivalent relationship between rock and the more formal opposition.

Finally, the epilogue and conclusion look at the memory of 1980s rock in Poland today and consider the struggles of rock bands to adapt to the new, capitalist reality. This chapter assesses how looking at Polish rock affects our understanding of late socialist

⁵⁴ *Marxism and Literature*.

Poland and also factors into wider transnational and interdisciplinary debates about popular culture and politics. Finally, it considers the significance of rock in the fall of the PZPR from power with the roundtable accords in 1989.

Chapter II

The Socialist Music Industry

In a sense, it is appropriate that a dissertation on a cultural form like rock music in socialist Poland would begin by analyzing the conditions according to which the music was produced: after all, this is precisely where Marx would have suggested that we start. Yet, nearly all of the work that has been done on production and the culture industry, and its relationship to culture and society has been concerned with capitalist systems.⁵⁵ This makes sense, since much of this work was inspired by Marx's critique of capitalism or has attempted to revise it. However, as I will show, the structures and institutions governing the production and distribution of music in socialist Poland were essential in setting the conditions that allowed, but also limited, the renaissance of rock in the 1980s.

Examining economics and the music industry offers a significantly different interpretation of the last years of communist Poland than the Solidarity-centered approach described in the introduction. From the perspective of Solidarity, martial law derailed reform efforts and allowed for the retrenchment of the authoritarian communist regime. However, in the music industry, while martial law's increase in censorship and crackdown on dissent made political restrictions in the cultural sphere tighter in many respects (although not all – as I will show), it came with a series of economic reforms that increased the relevance of market conditions in the music industry. These reforms allowed some prices and production figures to be set by the manufacturers rather than central planners, and therefore to correspond more closely to market pressures. Shortly after, additional reforms opened Poland's economy to investment from foreign capitalist firms – a change that had extensive effects on the music industry.

⁵⁵ For just a few examples from this expansive array of scholarship, see Karl Marx, *A Critique of Political Economy* (Chicago, 1904); Theodor Adorno, *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture* (New York, 2001); Althusser, *On Ideology*; Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*; Mills, "The Cultural Apparatus." For more recent work, see Crane, *The Sociology of Culture: Emerging Theoretical Perspectives* and Lisa Lowe and David Lloyd, eds., *The Politics of Culture in the Shadow of Capital* (Raleigh, 1997).

Focusing on these reforms, economic historian Kazimierz Poznański has suggested that the martial law years are best understood as a period of transition to capitalist democracy, which even allowed for the development of civil society – the sphere of individual and social action independent of the state that is often identified as a key component of democratic systems.⁵⁶ From this perspective, martial law was not a break from revolution, but rather, a key moment in the transition to capitalist democracy. The “transition” model of the 1980s is an important amendment to the focus on martial law in terms of pure oppression and stagnation. Yet, looking closely at the music industry shows that this model is incomplete as well.

This chapter will examine the culture industry to show how the 1980s were not merely stagnant years spent waiting for a revolution or an uninterrupted route from socialism to capitalism. Rather, they were years filled with contradictions and tensions that sometimes briefly opened up opportunities for cultural production and social mobilization, but closed off these avenues at other moments. The PZPR’s need to resolve the economic crisis and the crisis in authority provoked by Solidarity brought about a series of contradictory impulses – reform versus retrenchment, ideology versus practical necessity, and the need for change versus the inertia of the immense bureaucracy – that created new possibilities as well as limitations in the music world. Due to constraints I will outline below, market reforms provided economic incentives that allowed rock to proliferate rapidly, at least for a few years. Yet, mechanisms were in place that worked to limit the development of a semi-independent cultural and social phenomenon of debatable political value like rock. The rapid growth of rock did create spaces for individual initiative that resemble civil society in some respects, but unlike classic civil society, these spaces almost always had ties to the state.

Beyond reinterpreting the 1980s in Poland, examining the production of rock music offers insight into the nature of the latter years of East European socialism. It is sometimes assumed that market pressures were irrelevant given the “planned economy” of socialist systems, but the music industry in 1980s Poland challenges this view,

⁵⁶ *Poland’s Protracted Transition*. These changes might be compared with Hungary’s New Economic Mechanism, introduced in 1966. Ivan Berend, *Central and Eastern Europe, 1944-1993: Detour from the Periphery to the Periphery* (Cambridge, 1996) offers a more pessimistic interpretation of the market reforms and the subsequent transition to capitalism.

particularly (but not exclusively) after the economic reforms of 1982.⁵⁷ Likewise, contrary to images of enormous bureaucracies stifling individual initiative in socialist economies, the music industry shows how the complex hierarchy sometimes left gaps in which burgeoning entrepreneurs could pursue their own projects within the bounds of the system. Yet, the presence of market constraints and individual initiative should not be interpreted as a progression to capitalism: while market pressures were crucial in shaping the Polish rock scene, we will see that they often operated in ways quite different than in capitalist countries.⁵⁸

The rock scene demonstrates the complex interrelationship between politics, economics and industry conditions, and cultural production in socialist countries. Scholarship on culture in socialist countries – whether high art or popular forms – often assumes the narrative of a struggle between the heroic artist and a repressive state, creating a false impression that culture is a complex matter of economics and institutions in capitalist countries, and of bald politics in socialist ones.⁵⁹ A behind-the-scenes look at the dramatic popularization of rock music in 1980s Poland quickly challenges this view. As we will see, the structural and economic constraints of the music industry were at least as significant as political policy in shaping the conditions of the rock scene. Censorship – often taken as the key limitation in cultural production in socialist systems – indeed

⁵⁷ See, for instance, Janos Kornai, *The Socialist System: The Political Economy of Communism* (Princeton, 1992). Even Katherine Verdery's convincing reinterpretation of socialism in terms of the state's control over distribution relegates market considerations like consumer demand to the second economy; see *What was Socialism, and What Comes Next?* (Princeton, 1996). Recently, Krisztina Fehervary has sought to redress the omission of a discussion of material goods and consumerism in socialist states in "Goods and States: The Political Logic of State-Socialist Material Culture," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 52, no. 2 (2009): 426-459.

⁵⁸ This speaks to the debate over the nature of socialism's distinctness from capitalism. In addition to Verdery and Fehervary (referenced above), Kate Brown has suggested in "Gridded Lives: Why Kazakhstan and Montana Are Nearly the Same Place," *The American Historical Review* 106, no. 17 (2001): 17-48 that socialism and capitalism are better understood as alternate routes to modernity than as polar opposites. Elizabeth Dunn counters that while the structures of socialist and capitalist modernization appear similar, they have different meaning for the people living them and lead to "different modernities" in *Privatizing Poland: Baby Food, Big Business, and the Remaking of Labor* (Ithaca, 2004).

⁵⁹ For instance, the fierce debate over the Soviet composer Dmitrii Shostakovich is over whether the composer was a dissident or a loyal stalinist – but both sides share the assumption that politics are the key framework for understanding his life and work. In scholarship on rock, see Sabrina Ramet, ed., *Rocking the State: Rock Music and Politics in Eastern Europe and Russia* (Boulder, 1994). While some recent works have added nuance to this binary model, such as Kenney's *A Carnival of Revolution*, the effects of economic and institutional constraints on culture in communist countries remains largely unaddressed.

played a role, but its effects were less pervasive and easier to negotiate than more mundane institutional constraints.

Finally, while it is important to consider how the conditions of production enabled and constrained the Polish rock scene, it is equally crucial to consider how rock affected the conditions of its own production. To use Marx's terminology, the material base created the conditions for the operation of the cultural superstructure, but the superstructure also impinged on the structure of the base.⁶⁰ Rock did this in some ways that resemble market constraints, by pushing the industry to reorient itself toward producing and promoting rock to meet demand, but it also worked indirectly, through the intervention of political authorities in the party and the state who were pressed to reform the industry in part due to contingencies arising in the rock scene. The peculiar balance between these pressures made up the structures governing the music industry in 1980s Poland.

Like the state to which it was linked (which we will address in the next chapter), the music industry in 1980s Poland was caught between a number of contradictory conditions and imperatives. First, while the music industry was theoretically responsible to centrally issued plans and directives, its structure was actually quite decentralized and resistant to oversight. Second, while the industry's fundamental purpose was to provide cultural resources to the population as part of the broader socialist project, the scarcity of goods made it impossible to approach this goal. Third, the ideological goal of producing music for cultural uplift was in tension with the practical necessity of maximizing earnings. Here, I will briefly outline each of these tensions in the music industry. I will then examine the diverse effects on the rock scene as various individuals – in the government, in rock bands, and in the spaces in between – sought to negotiate and resolve them, providing both opportunities and limitations for the development of a social and cultural phenomenon like rock.

⁶⁰ Antonio Gramsci brilliantly showed in his *Prison Notebooks* how superstructure (in the form of ideology) affected how people understood the base, a concept expanded upon by Raymond Williams in *Marxism and Literature*, which argues that the realm of superstructure (consciousness) and the (material) base are analytically distinguishable, but inseparable in actuality, since no "real life process" can be known independently of the narration of consciousness, and consciousness is always part of a social process. In other words, the base and superstructure are mutually constitutive.

In capitalist countries, the music industry might be defined as the institutions designed to profit from the production and sale of music, including branches handling repertoire (recording studios, scouts), material production of media (record/tape/CD factories), distribution, retail, and concert organization, to name a few. This definition does not carry over to the “*branża*” (“the trade,” as many bands and journalists referred to the music industry) in socialist Poland because profit was only one concern among many on a list of requirements that also included politics, cultural policy, and international prestige. Which factor dominated varied by time, situation, and who was making decisions.

Given the frequent use of the term “planned economy” to describe socialism, one might assume that the industry structure would be orderly and centralized in socialist countries, with the state directing a rationally organized group of producers and distributors. Indeed, the music industry in the PRL was theoretically under the oversight of central authorities and was responsible for carrying out its plans and directives, but conditions were more complex in practice. The “planned economy” moniker only fits if one means that it was planned over several decades of changing cultural policy, interpreted by many different committees at different locations in the party/state hierarchy, each of which is only dimly aware of the activities of the other and occasionally even the statistical data necessary for planning. And this is still before deviations in the plan’s implementation, often extensive, are taken into account.

In socialist Poland, the functions listed above were performed by a broad range of institutions, under the oversight of overlapping government agencies. These included Polish Radio and Television, several record producers (around 10 at different times, subdivided into state firms, émigré firms, and private firms after the economic reforms in 1982), studios (including those that were part of record producers, those associated with the TV and Radio, and later, a few private studios), a collection of 20-30 regional agencies responsible for organizing concerts (known as *estrada* agencies, from the Polish word for “stage”), a statewide agency for promoting Polish culture abroad (PAGART), unions (including, among others, a union of composers, of songwriters, and of jazz musicians (PSJ)), individual concert venues (from arenas to cafes to houses of culture), a few record distributors (including the largest, Składnice Księgarstwo, and the separate

distributor for Tonpress, Centralna Handlowa Przemysłu Muzycznego), and hundreds of local retailers and factory outlets.

To complicate matters further, these institutions were overseen by various combinations of branches of the party and state, including the Division of Theater and Estrada, the Department of Music, the Department of Cultural Cooperation Abroad, and the Committee on Matters of Radio and Television (all under the MKiS), the Ministry of Chemical and Light Industries, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Finance, the Division of Culture of the Central Committee of the PZPR, the Cultural Committee of the Central Committee of the PZPR, the party Group for the Dissemination of Culture, the National Cultural Council (beginning in 1982), and the Cultural Commission of the Sejm (the Polish parliament). And this just includes examples of central, government oversight – to this must be added layers of regional and local committees and the directors of the firms themselves.

If this organizational scheme seems intimidating, don't feel bad – most Poles, including those involved in the industry, didn't understand it either. Industry journal articles attempted to explain the operations of the *branza* over the decade, but even professional musical journalists sometimes got caught asking questions that betrayed a misconception about the industry structure (like asking a record producer how many distribution points it had, when distribution fell under the auspices of a completely different firm). Fortunately, it is less important to understand the specific details of how the system functioned than to understand how the structure of that system affected the rock scene and the politics of rock.

In short, the Polish music industry was intended to be responsive to central authority, but its structure was too complex and decentralized to make this possible. The industry's complexity had contrary effects on the music scene. On one hand, this complexity made it very difficult for an amateur band with little understanding of bureaucracy to penetrate the *branza* and secure a recording, a show, or even musical instruments to play. Along the way, countless gates had to be passed (and palms greased), and each link in the chain was capable of capriciously putting an end to a band's quest for wider exposure.

At the same time, this complexity made management, oversight, and policy formation just as challenging. While the Division of Culture of the PZPR's Central Committee theoretically had the power to shape how the industry operated, affecting any sort of change required a tremendous amount of coordination. In fact, at multiple points over the 1980s, committees were formed and special positions were created with the express purpose of coordinating the decisions of various branches responsible for governing the industry – but in every case, the committee or job dissolved after a short time due to ineffectiveness.⁶¹ Finally, while this difficulty in government and oversight of the industry prevented it from running effectively or efficiently, it also created occasional loopholes that a savvy band manager could exploit.

If the first basic tension governing the Polish industry was between its centralized responsibilities and its chaotic structure, the second was the conflict between its objective of making culture widely accessible and the enduring condition of material scarcity. The difficulties facing the Polish economy starting in the mid 1970s and elevating to a crisis in the 1980s also applied to the music industry. By 1980, there was a scarcity of goods at every level. One result of this situation was an extremely tight policy for licensing bands to record – one that did not favor new, young punk rock bands. The director of Polskie Nagrania noted in 1980, “Our guide for production is what stores order. If we made other things, they would sit in warehouses. Right now, our economic indicator is the value of records sold [to distributors]. This means we have to sell everything at once.”⁶² Economic conditions discouraged risk-taking, and new rock music seemed risky – particularly for many older industry executives thinking about satisfying the widest possible audience. Tellingly, when asked what the company had planned for rock music, the same director responded, “We will put out a cycle of the most interesting archival rock recordings, illustrating the history of polish rock.”

The situation was much the same at the radio, where a similar query got the smug response, “At the radio, we record professional bands.” This opinion was not unusual, particularly since most industry executives were considerably older than most rock bands and their audiences. One music journalist summed up,

⁶¹ A. Kaczmarek: Wydział Kultury PZPR KC, “Rozrywka: Sztuka, przemysł, rynek,” 1985, 1354 Wydział Kultury PZPR, 1027, 924/49, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw, Poland.

⁶² Wiesław Królikowski, “Nadzieje i znaki zapytania,” *Jazz: Magazyn Muzyczny*, 1980.

The problem is that those who decide about entertainment music are not aware that it is music worth attention and that youth want it. Thus, there is a lack of confidence from the side of directors, organizers, and even publicists and critics, each tending to his own garden without looking at matters more broadly. They are somewhat older and simply don't know what is happening here; for them powerful amplification is an indication of vulgarity. The blame falls on a few publicists, propagators, and casual record collectors who are stuck somewhere in the 1960s and are trying to ignore changes that for the majority are matters beyond debate.⁶³

These limitations on the possibility of recording and producing rock physically or broadcasting it on airwaves favored live performance as the primary medium for rock. However, the condition of shortage also affected bands in terms of equipment costs and availability. Punk rock was largely electronic, which meant it depended on costly equipment, a large portion of which was imported. For a guitar, bands had a choice between settling for an inferior (but still costly) Czech model, or spending huge amounts of money on an import from the West (or, for a multi-talented few like guitarist and vocalist Lech Janerka of Klaus Mitternacht, building your own). Amps, microphones, and drums were equally costly and difficult to acquire. One music journalist estimated that renting equipment for a performance cost 500 *złoty* an hour in 1980.⁶⁴ Compare this to the 150 *złoty* pay for a musician in an amateur band for a concert.⁶⁵

This limitation also affected the way bands sounded: inferior equipment made amateur bands sound less polished, less skilled, and less professional than their more economically established counterparts. This made it easier to identify which bands were professional and which were amateur for industry professionals and fans alike. In the case of the former, it means that amateur bands had even more trouble getting recorded by studios that preferred “professional bands.” In the case of the latter, it meant audiences were closely attuned to whether bands sounded like they were complicit with the system, as we will see.

⁶³ Robert, “Co w prasie piszczy: Konflikt Pokoleń,” *Non stop*, January 1980.

⁶⁴ Piotr Nagłowski, “Jak Słyszeć muzykę,” *Non stop*, December 1980.

⁶⁵ Rafał Szczęsny Wagnerowski, “Muzyka Młodej Generacji: Kryzys,” *Non stop*, January 1981.

This brings us to the third defining tension of the Polish music industry: its dual imperatives of politics and profit. Ideological debates between socialists and capitalists about the effect of the market on culture notwithstanding, money and profit were central to the music industry in socialist Poland. The need for the music industry to make money, or at least finance itself, was not a secret, but it was seen as a potential conflict of interest. The Vice Director of the Department of Theater and Estrada noted in one interview that his was a “strange industry” since it functioned as an artistic institution and also was required to make earnings, unlike other areas of the arts.⁶⁶ Unlike almost every other sphere of culture, the music industry continued to bring profits into the state treasury over the entire period dealt with in this dissertation. In 1979, live performances alone brought in 39 million *złoty* in profit.⁶⁷ This was all the more significant considering almost everything else in Poland, and particularly in the sphere of culture, was operating at a deficit by 1980.

Financial motivations became even more important after martial law, when the economic reforms drawn up in the IX Extraordinary Congress (to be covered in detail in the next chapter) took effect, making the industry “self-financing” (*samofinansowany*) as well as “self-governing” (*samorządny*). In the words of the party’s Division of Culture and the MKiS, “The economic reforms theoretically eliminated the command-obligation system, replacing it with a tax system, applying new ... a new form of rules to the industry and economy.”⁶⁸ This did not turn the socialist culture industry into a clone of its profit-driven capitalist counterpart; profit had already been a motivating factor in decision making and cultural politics remained a concern. But these changes did create additional incentives to make decisions with profitability in mind.

The martial law period is often discussed in terms of its sheer oppressiveness, including in the cultural sphere. There are important truths to this depiction, but beneath the surface of a political crackdown, new economic incentives to conform to market pressures were making cultural forms like rock possible in subtle ways. Besides

⁶⁶ Jerzy Bojanowicz, “Rozmowa z Jerzym Bisiakiem, Wicedyrektorem Departamentu Teatru i Estrady MKiS,” *Non stop*, November 1981. Perhaps for this reason, policy makers preferred to refer to the “earnings” (*dochody*) of the music industry rather than its more capitalist sounding “profit” (*zysk*).

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ Wydział Kultury and MKiS, “Raport o stanie estrady: zasady i system ekonomiczno-finansowy funkcjonowania przedsiębiorstw estradowych,” May 1982, 1354 Wydział Kultury PZPR, 685, 908/65, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw, Poland.

reaffirming state firms' need to make enough profit to cover their production of classical music (run at a significant deficit), these new conditions also attracted new émigré-run firms, as well as a few private companies to the Polish record industry. These new firms had good reason accept rock – a musical form that had seemingly endless demand among youth in the 1980s. Boycotts by more established performers to protest martial law made rock still more appealing for the industry. Under these new conditions, choosing to present the most popular rock performers certainly made more financial sense than leaving concert venues empty.

Yet, the necessity of taking profitability into consideration existed in constant tension with political imperatives – although not always in the way that one might expect in a country ostensibly based on Marxist materialism. By the 1980s, party politics were inspired as much by romanticism, nationalism, populism, and positivism (particularly its reverence for productive work) as by the ideas of Marx. Art and culture were widely understood as tools for public uplift and education – an idea that found approval among diverse constituencies such as progressive-minded socialists (who emphasized the democratizing aspect of extending high culture to the masses) and conservative aesthetic elites (who appreciated this recognition of high culture's importance).⁶⁹ For this reason, while the party never developed an official stance on music, there was wide agreement on the value of *muzyka poważna*, (“serious music” or what is often called “classical” in English).⁷⁰

The value of *muzyka rozrywkowa*, or “recreational music” was less certain. This category included pop, disco, cabaret, and *estrada* – a genre characterized by professionally trained singer/entertainers singing texts written by professional songwriters to the accompaniment of large, professional orchestras. In between *muzyka poważna* and *muzyka rozrywkowa* were jazz and folk music, both of which were considered forms of art in the 1980s, but not quite on the level of the esteemed *muzyka*

⁶⁹ This interpretation of music and culture can be traced to Matthew Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy* (1869), which identifies culture as the opposite of anarchy, “the best that has been thought and said in the world,” and “sweetness and light.” In Polish journalism, similar views continued in the communist era in the columns of music critics Daniel Passent (a frequent and virulent critic of rock in the 1980s) and Jerzy Waldorff (author of the column “Music Soothes the Senses,” who avoided discussing rock altogether).

⁷⁰ Similarly, the Soviet Union also never established a coherent policy toward music. See S. Frederick Starr, *Red and Hot* (New York, 1983).

poważna.⁷¹ On the other hand, *muzyka rozrywkowa* was in much higher demand than *muzyka poważna* – to the point that proceeds from the former were used to fund the latter. Industry executives, much like their state and party overseers, constantly worked to balance financial incentives with political imperatives when selecting a repertoire for recording, what to broadcast, or the bands to invite to a music festival. A series of regulations set down by the MKiS sought to codify the balance between these necessities, but sometimes created new difficulties and tensions of their own. These rules ensured that the Polish industry – while still concerned with profit – took a different shape than in capitalist countries, and correspondingly, so did the rock scene.

These dual objectives – profit and politics – carried over into the fourth defining tension of the Polish music industry. In theory, it was strictly regulated by rules set down by the Ministry of Culture and Art. Yet, in practice, officials, managers, and entrepreneurial impresarios often found ways to skirt regulations. Moreover, much like the industry itself, these regulations were formed and reformed at many different meetings over decades. The combined influence of regulations and the unique techniques that arose to avoid them ensured that the Polish industry – while still concerned with profit – took a very different shape than in capitalist countries, and correspondingly, so did the rock scene.

Perhaps the most important regulation for rock bands was the way a band's pay was determined. Poland did have something like a market for music – people bought records and concert tickets, after all – but market conditions and a band's pay were almost completely separate. Rather than a system based on percentages from ticket sales, album sales, or royalties, bands were paid according to a table of rates by minutes recorded in the studio, or by the concert for live shows. This policy alone deeply shaped how the industry functioned, as well as how the rock scene developed. First, this regulation favored live performance over recording (much as did the material shortages described above): a concert could be given several times in many places – with each paying wages – while a recording could only be made once. If bands depended on live

⁷¹ “Folk” might seem an odd genre for an ostensible workers’ party to venerate, but such was the PRL, in which the influences of populism are as discernable as those of classic socialism – perhaps even more so than in the Soviet Union, where Lenin adapted socialism to the idea of a worker-peasant alliance. In the 1980’s, jazz had only recently achieved wide acceptance as a serious art form after decades of provoking controversy as a symbol of degenerate, bourgeois culture.

performances for the bulk of their income, shortages in record production ensured that live performance was often the only way for fans to hear new rock bands. As a result, the Polish music scene was oriented overwhelmingly toward live performance.

Additionally, the categories listed on the table of rates limited a band's possibilities for someone acting as a manager. Since "manager" was not included on the chart as an occupation, it meant that a manager got no pay. While this was not a problem for an underground punk band, any band that wished to interact successfully with the bureaucratic tangles of the music industry needed someone with the experience, or at least the time, to take on these challenges. Remarkably, the Ministry of Culture and Art recognized this shortcoming in 1978, and decided to sanction the position of impresario/artistic-programmatic director as an "important stimulator of activity on the matter of ensuring performers better work situations and freeing them from organizational distractions." After all, the MKiS was concerned with the artistic level of bands; moving them toward professionalism fell within their interest. However – once again demonstrating the frequent miscommunication between oversight branches – the Department of Theater and Estrada liquidated the position in 1980.⁷²

For all these reasons, it is amazing the Polish music industry allowed for rock's dramatic expansion at all. Of course, while the presence of these regulations shaped the structure of the industry, it did not guarantee that they would always be followed. Second economy conditions reached into the music industry, much as they did into the rest of Polish economic life. The most popular bands, for instance, sometimes could earn extra payment "on the side" in exchange for performing at a show in order to boost ticket sales (while band members did not benefit from large audiences, concert organizers – and the state, which shared in profits – certainly did). Nor did economic conditions govern all activity in the rock scene. Some large concerts – such as the Jarocin festival – took place where proceeds went toward funding the festival, and bands were not paid at all. Instead, they played for prestige, exposure, and most of all, fun.

Above I outlined the four main aspects of the Polish music industry affecting the development of the rock scene – centralized theory imposed on a decentralized structure, the objective of broad distribution despite scarce resources, the motivations of profit and

⁷² Jerzy Bojanowicz, "Impresario - zawód, którego znow nie ma," *Non stop*, October 1980.

politics, and regulations and ways of avoiding them. Now, I will look more closely at how these contradictory conditions and directives played out over the 1980s in live performance, broadcast, record presses, and among impresarios – the young professionals that helped some rock bands navigate the rough waters of each of these branches of the *branza*. Besides offering an example of how some of the tensions of the latter years of socialism in Poland played out in the culture industry, this also affords a broader view on the interrelationship between production conditions, politics, and culture in socialist Eastern Europe. It will suggest why Polish rock proliferated so quickly in the early 1980s, but also how the same conditions created significant difficulties and limitations, particularly at the end of the decade.

Live Music

Each of the tensions outlined above ensured that Polish rock was centered on live performance, particularly at the beginning of the music's surge in popularity in the early 1980s. While each division of the music industry – performance, recording, and broadcasting – was unwieldy and complex, the structures set up around live performance were the most decentralized. Radio, television, and the record presses were all directed from Warsaw. While the thirty-some agencies that organized live performances – often referred to as *estrada* agencies – ultimately responded to central authority as well (in the form of the Department of Radio and Theater and ultimately the party's Division of Culture), their locations were scattered across Poland. These agencies were responsible for submitting reports of their planned activities and explaining any negative reports from security services to higher authorities, but they were more or less autonomous in their day-to-day decisions.

In comparison to the rest of the industry, this created less of an imperative for adhering to cultural politics, and conversely, more room for featuring popular and profitable recreational music. In turn, Polish rock fans, who frequently had distaste for the political establishment, valorized live performance for precisely this reason: it was the form of rock that was least obviously tainted by signs of cooperation with Furthermore, the condition of scarcity meant that performing live was the best way to provide music to the masses. Few bands had the opportunity to record, and those that did record saw their

albums released late and in too small a press run to meet the demands of fans. If a band wanted to be heard, it had to perform live. Conversely, if rock fans wanted to hear their favorite band, the difficulty of finding a recording meant that they had to attend a concert.

Finally, state regulations on the music industry also favored live performance. A band's income was determined not by market conditions, but rather by a table of rates (*stawki*) devised by the Ministry of Culture and Art. As noted above, since recordings did not offer royalties, bands relied on performances for their daily income. Further, the way the pay rates were set up ensured that bands would have to perform frequently in order to sustain a livable wage. Pay was given on a per-concert basis. For each performance, the amount of pay depended almost entirely on two factors: the type of performer (that is, from highest to lowest rates, whether one was the conductor, the first violinist in a symphony orchestra, or an ordinary musician, where members of a rock band fell) and the artistic level (*poziom artystyczny*) of the performer (a school degree in music or a voucher from the Ministry – something few rock bands had – allowed for a higher pay rate).⁷³ This meant that the size of the audience or profitability of the concert was not a factor in determining a band's official pay. In short, a highly trained performer with no audience had the opportunity to make a good deal more from a performance than a tremendously popular but informally trained rock band member.

Since most (although not all) punk rock band performers lacked formal musical training, they were left to either seek approval from the verification committee, or accept the lowest pay category on the chart, which in 1980-81 left them earning a meager 150-200 złoty a concert. This meant that rock bands had to give an amazingly high number of concerts to make a living in comparison to their counterparts in capitalist countries. In 1981, a member of Maanam – one of the more popular, professional sounding punk rock bands – told an interviewer that the band performed an average of 30 concerts a month because, “with existing pay rates, it's not possible to play any less.”⁷⁴

On the other hand, concert agencies received much of their income from ticket sales, which meant that attendance figures were a primary motivator in booking a band's

⁷³ MKiS, “Zarządzenie nr 44,” December 1985, 1354 Wydział Kultury PZPR, 1381, 959/21, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw, Poland. This iteration made some modifications to earlier tables, but the format was much the same.

⁷⁴ Marian Butrym, “Zjawisko zwane MAANAM,” *Razem*, April 19, 1981.

show (although political considerations played a role as well, as I will show). Due to economies of scale, it was advantageous for a concert agency to book a smaller number of larger shows. For bands, though, it made more financial sense to give a show for a small audience, since it meant the audience would be distributed over more performances, leading to greater income. This created a conflict of interest between bands and concert agencies, particularly after economic reforms.

This conflict of interest was frequently alleviated by second economy (“black market”) conditions. In some cases (not surprisingly, these exchanges are seldom documented, but are referred to in the music press and occasionally in security service reports), a concert agency would offer a band an extra cash incentive “under the table” to book a popular band in order to raise ticket sales. These dealings were helpful for rock bands that could barely sustain themselves from official pay rates – at least the more popular bands that merited these payments. However, these backroom deals contributed to tensions that developed in the rock scene over the course of the 1980s.⁷⁵

In short, pay regulations necessitated that bands give as many concerts as possible, and concert agencies seek the highest attendance possible. In combination, this fueled rock’s dramatic expansion in the early 1980s. In effect, in order to exist at all, bands had to play all the time, in many places, for as many people as possible. This allowed fans access to an unprecedented range of live entertainment by exciting new bands. Concerts took place frequently, and attendance was routinely high for the first several years of the 1980s. These conditions also lent a certain vitality and intensity to the Polish rock scene: since rock was first and foremost about live performance, it created a closer link between performer and audience than would be typical of a rock scene characterized by individuals mostly purchasing and listening to records. As I will show in the fourth and fifth chapters, rock was often a deeply social experience, gathering fans and band members in what was often described as an exchange of energy.

Now that we have looked at some of the basic characteristics of the live performance scene, let’s look closer at the structure of the scene itself. In the introduction I discussed how rock attracted an ever-expanding audience in the early 1980s with its

⁷⁵ This type of accusation abounds in the music press; for one example see Dariusz Michalski, “Niech Pan nie gada, to jest estrada,” *Sztandar Młodych*, January 13-15, 1984.

musical vitality. More concretely, though, it performed this task by picking up additional artistic agencies willing to sponsor concerts and festivals. In 1980, rock finally moved beyond BART, the Baltic Artistic Agency (Bałtycka Agencja Artystyczna), the organizer of the Sopot festival, discussed in the introduction), and gained the sponsorship of the Poznan Jazz Association (Poznańskie Towarzystwo Jazzowe) for the 1980 festival at Jarocin.⁷⁶ Soon after, it caught the attention of the Regional Agency of Artistic Events in Katowice.⁷⁷ These were still fairly small, isolated cases, but each one marked an important step toward wider popularity.

As rock rose in popularity and its audiences grew, it brought with it increased financial incentive for concert agencies to seek out rock bands and schedule more rock concerts, responding to the potential to generate unprecedented amounts of income through ticket sales. Just as importantly, it gave political authorities incentive to overcome their political reservations about tolerating or even supporting rock since the state shared the profits of concert agencies (usually somewhere between 40 and 60 percent of earnings).

The conditions of martial law – that is, a shortage of established performers, rock’s demonstrated popularity, and the relative increase in the industry’s relationship to market pressures – made rock even more tempting as an economic proposition. Between 1980 and 1984, ever more *estrada* agencies, music unions, and other institutions with the ability to arrange concerts decided to sponsor rock. Alongside the sponsorship of early patrons like the Baltic Artistic Agency, the Regional Agency of Artistic Events in Katowice, and the Poznań Jazz Union, newer relationships formed over the next couple of years with the Polish Jazz Union (PSJ, which became one of rock’s major sponsors), the Capital City Bureau of Artistic Events, the United Entertainment Industries, the Polish Artistic Agency, Polish Radio and TV, *estrada* agencies in Poznań, Kraków, and elsewhere, and newly-developed agencies oriented specifically toward rock like the Federation of Rock Music and Rock-Estrada.

These concert agencies brought rock to the masses. Where early punk rock existed in the form of small shows for a defined audience, mainly focused in student

⁷⁶ This is also another example of a mostly older crowd, this time jazz musicians, seeing something familiar in rock’s struggle to find a space in the Polish entertainment world, a recurring theme, as we will see.

⁷⁷ Errad, “Młoda generacja Na Fali?,” *Non stop*, May 1980.

clubs in Warsaw and Gdańsk, agencies made it possible for rock bands to play in much larger venues like arenas and stadiums, all around Poland. Compared to capitalist countries promotion was still negligible (as journalists and bands complained over the course of the decade), but in the context of socialist Poland, rock was more visible and available than it ever had been before.

These connections were instrumental in introducing Polish rock to the festival scene – one of the particularities of Polish musical culture. Each year, a series of song festivals took place around Poland. These included the military song festival in Kołobrzeg (Festiwał Piosenki Żołnierskiej), the Soviet Song Festival in Zielona Góra (Festiwał Piosenki Radzieckiej) – both straightforwardly pro-Communist political song festivals – and two more popularly-oriented festivals in Opole and Sopot (where MMG made its first appearance, outlined in the introduction) . The Opole festival was the most prestigious domestic song festival, designed as a yearly review of achievements in Polish song, and the festival in Sopot was the Eastern Bloc’s answer to Western Europe’s Eurovision (it sometimes carried the title “Intervision” (*Interwizja*)). Along with these main, state-organized festivals, a series of smaller regional and local festivals completed the annual festival scene. Besides fulfilling the task of providing contact with culture to Poland’s citizens, the festivals were oriented around improving the quality of Polish song, and frequently included juries that rated and critiqued the performances.

In the first few years of the 1980s, rock made inroads into the national festival scene. Events that had previously been hostile to rock, like the All-Poland Youth Song Festival in Wrocław (Ogólnopolski Młodzieżowy Przegląd Piosenki), now became amenable to including it. While the Soviet and Military song festivals kept rock bands at a distance (and *vice-versa*), rock had a growing presence in Poland’s most prestigious international and domestic annual music events in Sopot and Opole. Performing at these festivals gave rock bands the chance to play for a large audience, but also offered the Polish music industry and party politicians a chance to show that it had its own popular music scene rather than depending on capitalist culture.⁷⁸

⁷⁸ A similar argument might be made for the state and the party, although many authorities remained ambivalent as to whether rock reflected positively or negatively on Polish culture, and whether it was an alternative to capitalist popular culture or a crude imitation of it, as I will show in the next chapter.

Besides earning a place in these traditional fixtures of the Polish music scene, rock was also showcased in a series of new festivals that were organized across Poland in 1980 and 1981. To name just a few, these included Open Rock (Kraków), Rock Blok (Warsaw), Rock Atlas (Leśnica), Rock Marathon (Katowice), Rock on the Baltic (Kołobrzeg), Rock without Stars (Szczecin), as well as Rockowisko (Łódź), Rock Arena (Poznań), the New Wave Festival (Toruń), Musical Camping (Lubań), Rock Jamboree (Warsaw), and most famously, the rock festival in Jarocin.

This growth was particularly evident after martial law. To take the example of the Jarocin festival, from a small affair with 15 bands and a modest audience in 1980, the 1982 festival developed into a 3-day affair with 5,000-7,000 audience members.⁷⁹ To accommodate this expansion, the festival was moved from the Jarocin Cultural Center to the city's amphitheater. Just a few months after martial law, 161 bands applied to perform, of which 27 were accepted. In contrast, at the same time the more traditional Opole festival was cancelled that year due to Poland's financial woes. Rock thrived even when more established forms of Polish song were suffering.

When the Opole festival returned in 1983, it added a portion dedicated to rock music, which included the rock bands Republika, Perfect, and Lombard. While this section was not part of the official festival competition, the presence of bands like these was significant in itself. Rock even found its way into the awards section of the festival at Opole that year. Pop-punk band Lombard came away with not only the audience choice award at Opole in 1983, but also second place in the jury competition for premier acts. Rock was clearly making inroads into the mainstream of the Polish music scene, although not without objections from groups and fans that identified as "alternative," as well as conservative cultural elites, as we will soon see.

The following year, rock was incorporated into the competition portion of the festival, with the bands Lombard, Lady Pank, and Kombi all among the performers (in fact, Kombi won the festival's audience choice award). The inclusion of these bands in the official, main portion of Opole was a tremendous step; it meant that the band performed for the entire public (including the nationwide television audience), not just

⁷⁹ Urszula Bielous, "Woodstock w Jarocinie," *Polityka*, Nr 29, 1982; Rafał Szczęsny Wagnerowski, "Bania z festiwalami," *Non stop*, October 1982.

those who chose to view the rock portion. Meanwhile, Jarocin that year had grown into a week-long behemoth, with some 20,000 Polish youth estimated in attendance – a figure that kept up until the late 1980s, when the festival’s popularity started to wane for reasons I will address below.

Along with the domestic concert scene, the music industry was also involved in an international exchange of artists and music. While economics were important factors in the domestic scene, they were even more important in decisions about bringing rock bands from abroad to Poland. Unlike most imports, rock bands offered a chance to make money since combined ticket sales for performances were greater (by design) than the cost of bringing the band. In contrast to most communications to party authorities on domestic rock bands, which usually balanced political and economic concerns, the agency responsible for importing rock bands, PAGART (Polska AGencja ARTystyczna), often used arguments based exclusively on economics and audience satisfaction to request permission to present an artist from abroad. By 1982, they were importing acts like Britain’s pioneering metal band, The Budgie; in 1984, they brought Iron Maiden to Poland.

The concert agencies discussed above were responsible for some of the highest profile events that brought rock to enormous audiences. However, at least as important to the Polish rock scene were smaller-scale, local sponsors like student clubs and houses of culture where much of rock’s day-to-day activity took place. As with the first wave of rock in Poland (recall that the first rock show took place at the student club Rudy Kot in 1958), much of the activity of the rock scene took place inside student clubs. This includes the concert often cited as the first real punk show in Poland, which took place in Riviera-Remont, a Socialist Union of Polish Students (Socjalistyczny Związek Studentów Polskich, or SZSP) club associated with Warsaw’s Polytechnic. Its main competition in the Warsaw rock scene was from Hybrydy – another SZSP club in Warsaw, this one affiliated with the Warsaw University (which housed the proto-punk Walek Dzedzej concert discussed in the introduction).⁸⁰

⁸⁰ As venues associated with rival schools – Warsaw’s University and its Politechnic – a similar rivalry may have existed between the clubs. I have found no indication of tension on the part of rock bands or their fans, however; many rock bands played at both clubs.

Outside Warsaw, the Kołobrzeg New Wave Festival (1980) – to be discussed in detail later in the chapter – took place at the local SZSP club as well, while Jarocin was co-sponsored by the local Union of Socialist Polish Youth (Związek Socjalistycznej Młodzieży Polskiej, or ZSMP). This pattern of close ties to the PRL’s student unions continued over the entire period covered in this dissertation. As the names suggests, the clubs were affiliated with socialist youth unions, themselves linked to the communist party (the unions all included clauses acknowledging the supremacy of the party in their founding documents). I will discuss the intricacies of these institutions in detail in the next chapter. Here, though, it is most important to understand their place in setting the conditions for the Polish rock scene, where they provided a chance for many bands to play, but also contributed to the tensions of Polish rock that would play out over the course of the 1980s.

Like local student clubs and youth unions, houses of culture often provided a place to perform, a place to practice, and crucially, assistance that made it possible to get started as a rock band. The institution of the “house of culture” (*dom kultury*) was set up by the state to offer access to culture among workers and peasants by providing books, showing films, sponsoring dance and musical groups, and similar activities. Houses of culture also frequently possessed basic sound equipment necessary for a band, like a mixer, an amplifier, microphones, cables, and speakers. Some even offered musical instruments. Any one of these pieces would have been tremendously difficult to obtain for the average young Pole in 1982; taken together, they were the difference between having the chance to make a band and not being able to even get started.

The character of the institution varied locally, depending on its employees. Some were sympathetic to rock; houses of culture were the most common starting point for young rock bands. Houses of culture operated in a peculiar balance between extending central authority into the countryside and providing an opening for individual, local initiative. This limited independence from the party is symbolized by the proportion of house of culture employees in the party, which varied from roughly 20 percent to 50 percent.⁸¹

⁸¹ July 1982, 1354 Wydział Kultury PZPR, 936, 923/65, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw, Poland. Roughly the same percentages of members (statewide) had been in Solidarity.

Besides the already-noted activity of Jarocin's cultural center in organizing the rock festival, other houses and centers of culture also sponsored rock events. For instance, in late 1982 and early 1983, the house of culture *Za Zubardzkiej* in Łódź sponsored a monthly concert under the rather inclusive title "Punk-Rock-Estrada." The location offered an accepting attitude, a hall, and decent amplification equipment – as well as a small-scale impresario in the form of a house of culture employee who "inspired and organized" the concert.⁸² *Za Zubardzkiej* was perhaps not an average house of culture, but it was not rare either; a typical rock show program from an amateur festival or competition in the 1980s demonstrates that more than half of the performers were usually sponsored by their local house of culture.

The ubiquity of these institutions associated with the party (youth unions) and the state (houses of culture) in the rock scene may seem surprising given the general reluctance of rock bands to associate with representatives of the establishment. However, alternatives were almost nonexistent.⁸³ Particularly in smaller towns, these institutions were often the only means for procuring an instrument or somewhere place to play. At the same time, most bands did not discuss sponsorship by a house of culture or youth union as a political choice, or generally discuss it at all. This was characteristic of the curious dynamic in Polish rock of denial of cooperation with the state despite its continuous proximity that will return in the chapters to come.

The ambivalence between rock bands and student clubs and houses of culture also went the other way. While most beginning rock bands were sponsored by houses of culture, most houses of culture did not sponsor rock bands. Reasons for this reluctance might be as simple as cultural conservatism, fear of juvenile delinquency, a disdain for rock, or a genuine belief that the duty to promote culture meant avoiding rock. The simplest way to prevent a rock band from forming was for a local house of culture to withhold its equipment or refuse to let a band use its space. One contemporary article in the music press described this as a typical experience for a starting band, which would

⁸² L-P, "Punk-rock-Estrada w Lodzi," *Non stop*, January 1983.

⁸³ The only other possibility was an independent benefactor with access to money or other resources – a rare but occasional asset in the Polish rock scene.

then have to try different houses and centers of culture, as well as institutions affiliated with youth unions and schools before finding someone willing to tolerate and assist it.⁸⁴

For less decisive directors, intermediate options were available. Sometimes a house of culture would allow amateur bands to use its older, semi-functional equipment, saving its better equipment for more traditional purposes. This detail is worth keeping in mind when considering critiques in the press complaining about amateur bands' terrible sound quality: sometimes this was indeed the case, and it was not always the band's own fault. Similarly, student clubs and youth unions were also sometimes wary of sponsoring rock bands. The political ambiguity of the music made them quick to turn against rock at the first hint of a breach of order, as the next chapter will demonstrate.

Houses of culture and student clubs also merit consideration in this section in another respect. Compared to concert agencies, these local institutions stood to gain little financially from rock. This fact contributed to the difficulty of becoming a successful rock band: without a financial lure, there was less to convince local level gatekeepers to promote rock. In another sense, though, this lack of financial incentive suggests the limits of a material approach to rock's expansion in 1980s Poland. In many cases these institutions used their own funds – and sometimes the funds of the state – to promote rock. Economics were not the primary motivator in these cases. This reminds us that economics were not the only factor shaping the context of Polish rock; one of the basic conditions governing the industry was that economics was in an ever-shifting balance with political imperatives. In some cases the intricacies of cultural politics could create room for student clubs and houses of culture to support rock – for instance, by arguing that it was spreading culture to the masses.

However, as rock's profile increased, it attracted ever more central attention, and at least initially, even economic incentive was insufficient to overcome the cultural and political shock of rock. As I noted, live performance offered the greatest leeway of all the ways rock proliferated. But when rock showed up front and center at Opole in 1984, it caught the attention of the press, and in turn, authorities. That year, the party's Division

⁸⁴ Krzysztof Domaszczyński, "Narodziny gwiazdy," *Razem*, August 19, 1984; JOTEM, "Trzy gitary i poezja," *Magazyn Muzyczny - Jazz*, February 1984.

of Culture decided that economics should give way to cultural politics in deciding how to treat the festival in the future, noting:

The Festival of Polish Song in Opole, the largest event in this area of recreation, cannot passively register the state of events in a given sphere. It can only develop as an event capable of preference for defined, ideologically and artistically valuable types of song. This is to be achieved even at the cost of greater financial investments.⁸⁵

In other words, rock was to be suppressed at the most prestigious Polish festival. Economics made rock alluring, but not beyond assail.

At roughly the same time, the most drastic, highly publicized, and fiercely contested decision affecting rock came from the Ministry of Culture and Art in the form of a policy called verification (*werifikacje*). According to this policy, a band's pay rate per performance was determined according to their "artistic level." In 1985, for instance, an instrumentalist in a recreational band (rock fell under this category) could earn between 100 and 900 złoty for a standard performance, depending this level.⁸⁶ On January 2, 1985, all verification cards ceased to be valid, requiring artists to re-establish their verification either by showing they had attained a basic musical education or by undergoing an examination given by the MKiS.⁸⁷

Strictly, it was not a new policy: bands had been grouped into pay brackets since at least 1978 according to their artistic level, as determined by their education or through a license from the MKiS or a trade union or a number of other state institutions. In practice, however, the previous policy was flexible enough that professional-level rock bands were typically paid at the higher end of the scale. This did not make most rock musicians wealthy in the face of the high costs of equipment, transportation, and lodging on tours, but it made it possible to operate a band professionally. This policy also worked to the advantage of concert venues and agencies, since they could offer a pay rate high enough to attract a popular band to play and bring a large audience, which in turn boosted their profits from ticket sales (money sometimes changed hands under the table for this

⁸⁵ Wydział Kultury KC PZPR, "Ocena Krajowego Festiwalu Polskiej Piosenki "Opole 1984,"" July 1984, 1354 Wydział Kultury PZPR, 685, 908/65, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw, Poland.

⁸⁶ MKiS, "Zarządzenie nr 44," December 1985.

⁸⁷ Jerzy Bojanowicz, "Czy podzwonne dla Polskiego rocka?," *Non stop*, December 1985.

same reason). The new regulation removed this flexibility: performers without verification were required by law to receive the lowest pay rate on the chart.

This left any band that wanted to receive a wage sufficient to exist as a professional musician to seek verification, which meant an examination for the MKiS committee for most rock musicians, who were not formally trained in music. Besides a symbolic submission to state authority, this process was also much stricter than it had been before. The exam included both a practical and theoretical section, the latter of which typically required showing “a familiarity with principles of music, harmony, instrumentation, and a basic knowledge of musical history...”⁸⁸ The former was only slightly less intimidating, since it meant performing songs for the approval of a committee of cultural bureaucrats.

The justification for this policy was raising the “artistic level” of performers – precisely what the party had requested a few months earlier after the fallout of Opole in 1984. While the MKiS never claimed that the policy was intended to combat the proliferation of rock, in effect, it used economics to limit rock’s growth by reducing bands’ ability to make a livable wage off their music. A member of the metal band Turbo gave his thoughts on the policy in an interview for *Non Stop*:

The absurd idea of making all musicians undergo verification once again has driven us to the point that bands not only receive the minimum payments, but have even stopped playing. Most of our groups are young people, often without degrees or artistic training. Beyond this, what can a young person know about Miles Davis, the history of music, literature, film, and these kinds of questions asked by the commission... In order to have artistic training, you need somewhere to play and a professional band, but in order to play, you have to have training. Thus, it’s a circle of problems.⁸⁹

The only surprise in this, he added, is that people still wanted to play at all: “a healthy person would long ago have packed up his instruments and done something else with real earnings.”

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Krzysztof Domaszczyński, “W błędnym kole,” *Razem*, March 3, 1985.

Robert Milewski, a musician in the relatively professional early MMG band Mech even wrote an editorial in *Non Stop* criticizing the policy, and with it an article by Urszula Bielous that had defended the policy as an attempt to make up for the lack of professionalism and training on the Polish stage. Using a pseudonym, Milewski counters Bielous' accusation that rock performers could not say anything about even as basic a figure as Chopin, writing:

And what should he be able to say? That Chopin is a romantic period composer whose work has nothing to do with his creative work, and thus he has nothing more to say on the topic? What if we asked a philharmonic musician what he could say about [Led Zeppelin's] Robert Plant?⁹⁰

Much of the rock press – and particularly *Non Stop* – joined in criticizing the policy on the grounds that it not only damaged rock, but would do nothing to help the situation in culture. Instead, for them it was just another symbol of the inadequacy of the Polish music industry. Jerzy Bojanowicz provocatively phrased the question in terms that linked verification to the sensitive issue of Poland's lack of pride in its own performers, asking, "Why don't we have polish stars on level of other countries? We don't have great artists like the Rolling Stones, Genesis, Abba, the Police, or soloists like Bowie, Jackson, Wonder, and Stewart." "Instead," he smirked, "We have a State Examination Commission for stage artists and musicians."⁹¹ For Bojanowicz, the irony of the rule was that in the name of artistic quality, it created a situation where Poland was unable to match the quality of capitalist countries despite its possession of proven musical talents.

The other irony of the policy was that it was particularly harmful to professional bands – that is, those with ostensibly the highest artistic level. This perhaps is why it got such attention in the musical press. A drastic reduction in pay would make it difficult for bands like Maanam or Republika to continue to tour and support themselves, but would do little to interfere with amateur bands playing at the local house of culture. In this sense, it worked precisely contrary to the objective of accepting "high level" bands and suppressing those of a lower ideological-artistic level.

⁹⁰ Robert Lor, "Po lekturze artykułu Urszuli Bielous pt. "Nikifory Estrady Polskiej": Rock czyli weryfikacja weryfikacji," April 1985, 24-25.

⁹¹ "Czy podzwonne dla Polskiego rocka?"

Decisions by the party and Ministry of Culture as central authorities noticed how widespread rock had become were only some of the growing challenges rock began to encounter in the second half of the 1980s, however. Long-term effects of basic industry conditions also began to negatively affect the scene by the mid 1980s. Besides offering some explanation for why rock developed so rapidly in the early 1980s, the basic constraints of the music industry also speak to its limitations. Initially, particularly for the live music scene, industry conditions facilitated the rapid expansion of rock (although not for all bands), especially with the economic reforms accompanying martial law. With time, though, negative effects of the imperative to perform frequently for large audiences began to accumulate.

Most obviously, this condition led to the rapid exhaustion of bands, both physically and creatively. Performing thirty shows in a month year-round wore bands down, especially given the high energy level for performances demanded by Polish rock fans. Further, performing all the time left very little time for practicing and formulating new songs. This meant that audiences heard the same songs over and over – something that might make rock more accessible for the first few years, but increased the likelihood of audiences tiring of it as the 1980s wore on.

This stagnation in repertoire combined with the built-in tendency to promote the same small group of popular bands. Despite the numerous roadblocks to starting a band in the 1980s, new groups were constantly forming. However, concert agencies were interested in scheduling shows for bands that could bring in the largest audience the most number of times rather than risking an investment of funds in a newer group that might or might not attract a large audience. This created the impression that a few popular bands were monopolizing the rock scene, to the detriment of smaller bands.

In the context of socialist Poland, this impression was particularly significant. First, since rock bands depended on performances to make their income, a difficulty in scheduling concerts was particularly damning for a newer rock band. This meant that the rock scene was unusually competitive – a trait that spread from performers to their fans, creating animosity between factions supporting different groups. By the second half of the 1980s, these tensions made rock fans look more like warring rival camps than a single “scene,” as I will show in the fourth chapter. This fact combined with another aspect of

the Polish rock scene: its focus on authenticity, a crucial aspect of rock anywhere, but one that was especially problematic in socialist Poland. As a small core of the most popular bands dominated the rock scene, many rock fans increasingly associated them with mainstream, official culture.

This problem was compounded by the second-economy conditions of the live performance. The same backroom dealing that provided the most popular bands with a much-needed supplemental income further inflamed tensions in the rock scene. Besides getting more exposure than lesser known bands, the most popular bands were suspected (often correctly) of profiting “under-the-table,” or even (usually incorrectly) of “getting rich” from their music. As with rock in a capitalist country, this detracted from bands’ ability to present themselves as authentic. In Poland, though, this was seen not only as “inauthentic,” but also as a more concrete instance of collaboration with the state, which profited from their performances. This created a situation where the most popular bands were under attack from all sides: they were rejected by many serious rock fans for commercialism even as they were being lambasted by conservative elements in the press for being centered on money rather than art (Daniel Passent, for instance, wrote a critical article about popular punk-pop band Lady Pank, tellingly entitled “Lady Bank”), and investigated by state security services for misappropriation of funds. In combination, these factors made life very difficult for a rock band in the second half of the 1980s.

Reporters noted by mid 1985 that ticket sales had been dropping even for acts that had been guaranteed a full house before.⁹² This both resulted from and contributed to a rise in concert prices (since prices had to be higher to compensate for reduced sales), fueling a downward spiral in attendance. In this environment, many of the most popular bands – Republika, Lady Pank, Lombard, and Maanam, began to collapse in 1986. Perhaps the only bright spots in this dismal situation were that bands that had previously been lesser-known, like Kult and Tilt, gained additional exposure in the absence of bands like Maanam and Lombard from the scene. In 1986, the rock magazine *Non Stop* organized the rock concert at Opole, and was able to invite previously less exposed bands like Kult, Tilt, Daab, and Kat along with more widely presented TSA, Republika, and a (temporarily reunited) Lombard. This was also made possible by the increasing openness

⁹² Wiesław Królikowski, “Lekcja na arenie,” *Magazyn Muzyczny - Jazz*, August 1985.

among industry and political authorities toward rock – although this also came with a downside for bands, who risked hostility from fans who prized their alternative status. Rock concerts continued into the late 1980s and beyond, but the conditions of the industry made it increasingly difficult for bands to achieve success financially and with their fans. Just as the conditions of the music industry had spurred rock’s rapid development in the early 1980s, they conspired to pull the scene apart by the end of the decade.

The Record Presses

To some degree, the story of the record (and cassette) manufacturers follows that of live performance; the basic tensions of the industry also applied here. Like the live music scene, the record presses followed the arc of a quantitative rise and decline in the production of rock over the 1980s, although the timing varied somewhat. However, due to several factors, the record presses were more directly affected by the constraints of the socialist music industry in each of the respects listed above– although the effects of these constraints were more varied than might be expected.

Structural complexity is the first key to understanding the record presses. Looking only at the state firms involved with rock music and at the bureaucratic oversight responsible for governing them, the recording industry included:

Polskie Przedsiębiorstwo “Polskie Nagrania” (Polish Industry “Polish Recordings”) – under the direct oversight of the MKiS

Zakłady Tworzyw i Farb “Pronit” (Factories of Products and Paints “Pronit” – under the Ministry of Chemical and Light Industries (Ministerstwo Przemysłu Chemicznego i Lekkiego)

Zakład Usług Wideofonicznych “Wifon” – under the Committee on matters of Radio and Television (Komitet do spraw Radia i Telewizji)

National Publishing Agency “Tonpress” (Krajowa Agencja Wydawnicza “Tonpress”) – under the Industries of Dissemination RSW Press – Book – Movement/Kiosk

After economic reforms took effect in 1982, several firms formed under the ownership of Polonia – members of the Polish diaspora – including Savitor and Polton, as well as a few foreign private companies like Rogot, Arston, and Merimplex. These non-state firms operated by permission from the MKiS, but had more latitude in production and pricing.⁹³

This decentralized, redundant structure interfered with effective oversight, making changing the direction in which the industry was moving (or pushing it forward out of stagnation) incredibly difficult. This even applied to what should have been routine changes, such as adapting to shifts in technologies of manufacturing, media (like the development of cassettes and later compact discs), and listener tastes. The multi-layered oversight system made it so that responsibility for change was divided between different departments and committees, making adaptation difficult and passing responsibility on to others easy. Further, decisions over which artists were selected to be recorded were the result of backroom bureaucratic negotiation rather than market demand or political/cultural directives from authorities.

In combination with Poland's financial difficulties, these complexities ensured that the production of a record often took more than a year from the time a song was recorded. When a record finally did come out, the quality and quantity was often inadequate since no one managed to pull the necessary strings to update the machinery needed to improve and expand production. Finally, the structural constraints against innovation described earlier encouraged a tendency to continue pressing and repressing the same albums from previous years, leading to stagnation in the repertoire of the Polish music industry.

All of the difficulties in leadership and communication in the industry hint at a single bright spot: along with infinite hoops to jump through, the industry structure also left loopholes. Occasionally, a band with the right connections could slip through the system, evading many of the roadblocks that usually barred the way of young rock bands.

⁹³ MKiS, "Informacja o sytuacji w przemyśle fonograficznym," June 1984, 1354 Wydział Kultury PZPR, 746, 908/125, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw, Poland.

Brygada Kryzys – which was barred from performing in Warsaw – is an excellent example here. It is one of the ironies of the Polish rock scene that after martial law, one of the first bands to be silenced was also one of the first to record an album. Roughly a month after the ban, the record firm Tonpress opened a new studio that needed to be tested.⁹⁴ The members of Brygada Kryzys had a connection inside the firm, got the job, and used their time in the studio to record their first, eponymous album – a classic of Polish punk rock that I will discuss in detail in the fifth chapter.

Usually, though, these conditions ensured that the music press was constantly scrambling to react to rock's growing popularity rather than driving it or even fully taking advantage of it. While the live rock scene was expanding dramatically in 1980, the recording industry did not truly adjust to this rise in demand and shift in taste until three years later, in 1983. Even then, this increase was as much the result of the activity of the émigré and private presses (it took roughly a year for these firms to get to full production levels after they formed in the wake of the economic reforms of 1982) as it was a sign of meaningful adaptation by the state record presses.

Besides these structural constraints, production was also limited by the material shortages facing Poland in the 1980s, making it impossible for the record industry to meet its responsibilities in disseminating culture to the masses. A lack of materials affected all of Poland's music presses. Particularly severe were shortages in acetate (a chemical needed for producing records) and cardboard (necessary for record sleeves), both of which had to be imported at high cost, particularly considering Poland's weak currency in the 1980s.⁹⁵ Just as problematic, though, was the shortage of parts and machinery to replace the worn-out equipment of the state industry, and the components necessary for producing large numbers of cassettes, which were cheaper than records in terms of raw materials but more complex and time consuming to assemble.

These raw materials shortages were, in turn, compounded by the structure of the industry. While it may seem like having such a wide array of companies would assure a surplus of at least some goods, it instead created a chain of dependency that led to the opposite effect. Aside from Polskie Nagrania, none of the companies were able to

⁹⁴ Mikołaj Lizut, *Punk Rock Later* (Warszawa, 2003).

⁹⁵ M. Proniewicz, "Fonografia- Jaka jest, jaka być powinna," October 1985, 1354 Wydział Kultury PZPR, 1143, 924/167, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw, Poland.

produce a record from start to finish on their own. Pronit and Savitor, for example, depended on the machinery at Polskie Nagrania for part of their manufacturing cycle. Production problems also affected retailers and distributors; of course, distribution and sales of records depended on their production. As a result, a slowdown at Polskie Nagrania meant the entire industry would fall behind schedule.⁹⁶

Unfortunately, Polskie Nagrania was always behind schedule. This was partially due to the technical limitations of its facilities. In 1977, the construction of a new production plant in Warsaw was planned, but it was not far enough along by the end of 1981 to contribute to production figures in any way (in fact, it would not be ready for five more years, when it was already semi-obsolete).⁹⁷ The only alternatives for increasing capacity were purchasing expensive equipment, increasing purchases of semi-finished materials – both on the expensive international market, an impossibility in the face of the severe economic crisis – or in cooperating with other socialist countries (Tonpress depended on Czechoslovakia for its covers and the Soviet Union to press its records) that had their own difficulties.⁹⁸ Further, even when cooperation between these firms would have been materially possible, other problems interfered. For instance, Polskie Nagrania was notorious for its refusal to cooperate with émigré and private firms even when doing so would have increased productivity.

As a result of these conditions, the industry consistently produced fewer records and tapes than the market and politics demanded: in 1980, for instance, all Polish firms taken together produced 3.8 million records – roughly one for every ten citizens, or among the worst in Europe, including other socialist countries.⁹⁹ These shortages deeply affected how the rock scene in Poland developed. Scarcity meant that records were precious, costly goods. Even after Polish rock had established its popularity, the director of Tonpress expressed a lack of interest in pressing new bands: “We can only record bands with publics large enough to sell their records. I am happy to hear new groups, and

⁹⁶ MKiS, “Informacja o sytuacji w przemyśle fonograficznym,” June 1984, 746, 908/125, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw, Poland.

⁹⁷ MKiS, “Informacja,” July 1984, 1354 Wydział Kultury PZPR, 746, 908/125, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw, Poland.

⁹⁸ Tadeusz Kretkiewicz, “Notatka Służbowa, P.P. Polskie Nagrania,” 1983, 1354 Wydział Kultury PZPR, 536, 897/88, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw, Poland.

⁹⁹ Jerzy Bojanowicz, “Jeszcze raz o polskiej fonografii: Jak Zrównoważyć podaż i popyt,” *Non stop*, May 1981.

when they advance to the professional level, we will record them.”¹⁰⁰ Of course, playing at a “professional level” was tied to a set of expectations and assumptions about music that punk rock bands were uninterested in, and even repulsed by, as I will show in the fifth chapter. The result of these conflicting agendas was an environment of frustration, tension, and animosity that shaped the rock scene for years to come.

The industry’s dual imperatives – politics and profit – were absolutely essential to the recording industry as well, and were more closely watched than with live performance. In a market system, scarcity combined with market demand for a good like records would generally lead to high prices, but prices were limited by the state in socialist Poland, particularly for state firms.¹⁰¹ Declaring a price increase was certainly a theoretical option – unlike raising food prices, which prompted strikes and protests, increasing the cost of records was unlikely to incite revolution. However, as I will show in the next chapter, the party was in the midst of rebuilding its image as, among other things, the guardian and distributor of Polish culture, as well as responding to Solidarity accusations of its shortfalls in precisely this area. Record prices were already relatively high in Poland at 80-200 złoty (for domestically recorded albums produced by state firms; those produced by private firms or licensed from abroad cost considerably more) in 1981 – that is, roughly the amount that most band members made for giving a concert. Prices on the black market – a frequent source for a dedicated record buyer – were higher still.¹⁰² The party’s claim to be making culture available to the masses pushed against a drastic rise in prices, but operating at a deficit was equally infeasible.

Because it was tied to these equally critical objectives of profit and politics, the ratio of production of the main categories of music – *poważna* and *rozrywkowa* – was a topic of continuous debate. Recall that *muzyka poważna* (or “classical”) was the form widely accepted as having cultural value, but was produced at a deficit due to lower demand. On the other hand, *muzyka rozrywkowa* (“recreational”) was popular and brought potential for profits, although its relationship to the industry’s political

¹⁰⁰ Marek Wiernik, “A jednak się kręci,” *Magazyn Muzyczny*, August 1983.

¹⁰¹ Emigre and private firms had a bit more control over their prices; consequently, records produced by these companies were often more than twice the price of state produced records. This created its own political difficulties, since it created the impression of rewarding capitalist production by allowing exorbitant profit margins.

¹⁰² Bojanowicz, “Jeszcze raz o polskiej fonografii: Jak zrównoważyć podaż i popyt.”

imperatives was ambiguous. In 1981, Polskie Nagrania, the state's largest record producer, produced 29 albums featuring *muzyka poważna* and 24 featuring *muzyka rozrywkowa* (and only 3 *ludowa*, or folk).¹⁰³ What these numbers obscure, however, is the size of the pressings. The top ten records produced by Polskie Nagrania that year were all *muzyka rozrywkowa*, from number one at 326,236 to number ten at 45,770.¹⁰⁴ If the industry – and the state and party – wished to make a profit, it came at the expense of their political objectives of disseminating culture. This meant that balancing these genres – by determining the ideal ratio, by using money generated by *rozrywka* to fund “serious music,” or by rhetorical slight-of-hand (for instance, arguing that some *rozrywka* also qualified as art) – was a constant concern for state, party, and industry officials alike.

Finally, MKiS regulations also affected the recording industry. One regulation required that record companies produce only the number and type of albums ordered by retailers.¹⁰⁵ This departs significantly from the idea of a centrally planned or command economy often associated with East European socialism by linking producers to demand from retailers rather than following a central plan. Yet, this system was distinct from capitalism: it was connected to consumer demand, but only indirectly. Unlike a hypothetical purely capitalist market, where retailers would order records according to customer demand, retailers in Poland tailored their orders to the narrow range and quantity of music that the record industry would actually be willing and able to produce (or risk not having their orders fulfilled and having their inventory reduced).

Further, the industry notated record sales only in terms of what distributors sent to retailers, taking no account for whether albums sold quickly, or remained on the shelves. The data used to determine what the year's best sellers was derived not according to what consumers purchased, but by wholesale distribution. Consequently, rather than popularity, Polish charts reflected retailer expectations about customer demand, as well as retailer tastes and assumptions about what would be available from distributors. This meant that even if manufacturers and retailers wanted to adapt to meet customer demand, they lacked the information necessary to do so. These factors created a loop that led to

¹⁰³ Kretkiewicz, “Notatka służbowa, P.P. Polskie Nagrania,” 1983.

¹⁰⁴ Jerzy Bojanowicz, “Bestsellery Polskiej Fonografii,” *Non stop*, April 1982.

¹⁰⁵ Jerzy Bojanowicz, “Polski Rynek Płyty,” *Non stop*, March 1981.

stagnation, where a record that was not pre-selected for production in large numbers could never generate the demand to support an argument for a larger production run.

Alongside the reluctance of presses to record and produce rock for the reasons listed above, regulations also ensured that there was little incentive for bands to record due to the nature of MKiS pay scales. Even a band that could sell hundreds of thousands of records stood to gain little from recording since pay was determined by the minute of recording time. On the other hand, record companies (and the state) stood to profit tremendously from bands that could sell large numbers of records since they divided proceeds from record sales between them. Yet, these profits could only be made if the records could be produced in large enough number, which was never guaranteed due to shortages in material and machinery. Unlike live performance, where profiting from bands required little more than a concert venue and an entrepreneurially minded concert agency, profiting from rock through recordings required considerable material investment, which was seldom available in 1980s Poland.

A look at quantitative data for the production of rock records over the 1980s illustrates how the constraints of the music industry affected record production. The qualitative influence of these figures on the rock scene can then be taken into consideration. Figure 2 shows the number of bands each year to distribute records, and the number of albums distributed by year. Each section, also shows the amounts produced by state firms and by other (private and émigré) firms.

Before continuing, I would like to note that these lists only include Polish bands, and, due to the nature of the information available, only those that made each firm's top ten list (although most if not all rock albums that were pressed made the top ten; otherwise they would not have been worth pressing). This makes it difficult to compare the number of rock albums to classical or *estrada* albums, since the figures for those albums are not compressed into the top ten like rock. My charts are also limited to LP's and full-length cassettes (and not singles, which skews the figures for 1986 as explained below). For these reasons, these numbers do not capture all aspects of production; however, they are still useful for comparison purposes.

	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986†
Rock bands with LP's distributed	5	8	14	9	9	9
(By state firms)	(5)	(8)	(11)	(5)	(2)	(8)
{By other firms}	{0}	{0}	{7}*	{6}*	{8}*	{1}
Total rock LP's distributed in thousands	244	1002	3675	1460 [2057 ordered]	629	761 [647 adjusted]
(% produced by state firms)	(100%)	(100%)	(72%)	(61%)	(52%)	(93%)

Figure 2. Number of rock bands distributed on LP records and cassettes by year, and rock LP's in thousands distributed by year (sum of all post-1980 Polish rock subgenres). Compiled from article series by Jerzy Bojanowicz in *Non stop* between 1982 and 1987.

*These do not add up to the total because the same band sometimes had albums produced by both state and private firms.

† Three of these albums, for a sum of 225 thousand copies are from Tonpress, which doubled its LP production in 1986 but made a corresponding reduction in its singles production, not represented here. For this reason, the total figures for 1986 here are skewed approximately 15% higher relative to other years. The adjusted figure accounts for this discrepancy.

This chart shows the general trends in production: that is, a dramatic rise in total quantity from 1981 to 1983, and a falloff starting in 1984. These numbers are only part of the story, however: equally important is a consideration of the kinds of music that were pressed. Below I will look more closely at the trends in the record industry over the 1980s alongside a consideration of the music and bands involved. Here, a couple of notes are in order. First, it is important to keep in mind the condition of the Polish music industry, which was constantly lagging behind public demand. Thus, most of these records distributed are at least a year behind what was popular at live concerts and on the radio (which had its own studio, and frequently played recordings before they were pressed onto vinyl or cassette and distributed). For instance, the albums I will discuss that made it to retailers in 1982 were generally recorded in 1981, or even late 1980, and so on. Second, for the sake of simplicity, I am again dealing only with full length albums and occasionally EP's here; the situation with singles was slightly different, with selections typically more current and occasionally more adventuresome since pressing a less established or more controversial band on a single was less of a risk than producing a whole LP. Finally, as with the chart above, the figures I list below represent the number

of albums distributed, not the number of albums sold by retailers (which was not tracked). This means that the numbers represent the choices of retailers and industry officials as much as they do public taste.

In 1981, only Maanam (Eponymous, Wifon) and Porter Band (*Helicopters*, Wifon) managed to bring punk rock to the album format, with distributions of 67 thousand and 27 thousand, respectively. Kombi, Krzak, and Exodus – all part of MMG – ranged from 86 thousand for Krzak to 42 thousand for Kombi (combined with numbers from 1980). This was in comparison to the massive 327 thousand copies of the year's bestseller, *Sun of Jamaica* by the Goombay Dance Band, a disco-tinged West German pop band in the vein of Boney M. Older Polish rock bands from the 1960s and early 1970s also made a strong showing, represented by SBB, Niemen, Budka Suflera, Dwa plus jeden, and a compilation album. The rest of the top list was distributed between mainstays of Polish *estrada* (Maryla Rodowicz, Urszula Sipińska, Wojciech Młynarski, and Krzysztof Krawczyk). As I noted, these numbers do not represent demand; anecdotal reports suggest that far more copies of the Maanam and Porter Band albums would have been sold if they had been available, and that many of the non-rock albums sent to retailers were never purchased by consumers.¹⁰⁶ However, this does give an impression of what record companies were producing in 1981: some new rock made its way to the market, but the dominant place was still held by classic rock, disco/pop and traditional *estrada*.¹⁰⁷

In 1982, however, the largest distribution in Poland went to the eponymous debut (Polskie Nagrania) of Perfect, a Polish rock band founded in 1981, at an impressive (by PRL standards) 440 thousand copies. Also on the list was heavy metal band TSA's *Live* (Tonpress), with a press run of 100 thousand. The biggest surprise of all, though, was the presence of Brygada Kryzys' eponymous album on this list (the album recorded when the band was testing the new Tonpress studio in the first months after martial law, discussed above) with a distribution of 100 thousand. Bank, another new rock band, managed to make the list for the first time with a pressing of 170 thousand (already a larger number than any rock band the year before) for *Jestem Panem Światem* (Polskie Nagrania).

¹⁰⁶ Music magazines frequently describe the challenge of obtaining a Maanam or Porter Band album in record stores amidst shelves filled with unpopular, outdated *estrada* albums.

¹⁰⁷ Bojanowicz, "Bestsellery Polskiej Fonografii."

Maanam and Porter Band both made repeat appearances on the list as well. The rest of the positions were filled with the same older rock bands and *estrada* acts as the previous year.¹⁰⁸ These numbers attest to noticeable growth of new rock's representation in the state record industry, but still suggest significant limitations in that growth, particularly in comparison to the next year.

1983's largest recording was released by Polskie Nagrania; *Supernova* by Exodus led the charts with 476 thousand records distributed. Following it was a string of new rock bands, including Lombard with *Śmierć Diskotece!* (Polskie Nagrania) at 386 thousand copies, and another 100 thousand for that band's live album. The new private firm Polton came in at third with the new wave band Republika's *Nowe Sytuacja*, at 360 thousand. Following were Bank again, Maanam's new album, *O!* (Pronit) with 286 thousand, plus 98 thousand for a second album, Perfect's second album *Unu* (Tonpress) with 225 thousand plus 150 thousand for a live album, the eponymous debut (Tonpress) of Lady Pank (a punkish band in the style of the Police, 210 thousand), RSC (Polskie Nagrania) with 186 thousand, TSA's eponymous first studio album (Polton) with 150 thousand plus 100 thousand more of its live album released the previous year, Turbo (eponymous, Polton) with 110 thousand, Kombi's *Nowy Rozdział* (Wifon) with 105 thousand, Brygada Kryzys once again with 100 thousand more copies, and Krzak (Tonpress) with 60 thousand. As this lengthy list demonstrates, the number of offerings and size of pressing for rock both increased dramatically, as the private and émigré record presses allowed by the economic reforms of 1982 began operations, and also as state firms became more interested in pressing rock.¹⁰⁹

So far I have just accounted for record production for domestic use. In addition, by 1983, Polish rock had reached such popularity that new firms and state industry officials who a couple of years earlier did not consider the music worth pressing alike now looked to enter the market. Beginning in 1983, along with their domestic releases, the most popular Polish bands – and those that the industry thought had a chance at international success – produced albums in English for international distribution. From the perspective of rock bands, these albums were a chance to gain international

¹⁰⁸ Jerzy Bojanowicz, "Polska fonografia w 1982 roku," *Non stop*, March 1983.

¹⁰⁹ Jerzy Bojanowicz, "Tak trzymać!: Polska fonografia w 1983 roku," *Non stop*, March 1984.

recognition. More remarkably, though, this development shows that the Polish music industry finally sought to take advantage of rock's popularity by 1983. From the perspective of the press, these releases were an opportunity for enhancing the international prestige of Polish culture (a political objective) and more importantly, for obtaining foreign currency, which was in high demand. Of these albums, first came Maanam's 1983 *Night Patrol* (an English language version combining songs from *Nochny Patrol* and *O!*), followed by Republika's 1984 (an English language *Nowe Sytuacja*). Lady Pank's English language *Drop Everything* came out in 1985. While their sales figures were modest, the bands also expanded their images on international tours – Maanam in continental Europe, Republika in Britain, and Lady Pank in the United States.

Even with the increases in rock production, however, it is important to keep in mind that distribution was still lower than demand, as the frequent complaints of fans and journalists suggest. The variety of records available was also inadequate: even at the peak of production in 1983, only 10 of the most popular rock bands were represented on vinyl or cassette. When taken in comparison to the number of bands present in the Polish concert scene (127 bands applied to the Jarocin festival alone in 1982, and over 300 by 1984), this number is astoundingly low. Even at rock's peak in industry production in 1983, records were in short supply, and only a select few bands got the chance to record at all.

In comparison to just a few years earlier, 1984 offered a relative variety and abundance of rock. Oddział Zamknięty stood at the top of the list with an eponymous release of 246 thousand copies (Polskie Nagrania), followed by Lady Pank's first album with 210 thousand and its second LP, *Ohyda* with 150 thousand copies produced by another semi-private émigré firm, Savitor. Next was Bajm's eponymous debut (Pronit) with 174 thousand, Kombi again with 165 thousand, Maanam's new third album, *Night Patrol* (Polton) with 150 thousand plus 90 thousand more for its second album, Lombard again with 100 thousand, TSA's third album, *Heavy Metal World* (Polton) with 80 thousand, a collaboration album featuring Zbigniew Hołdys and others (Savitor) with 50 thousand, and Republika's second album, *Nieustanne Tango* (Polton) with 45 thousand.

However, 1984 is also a turning point: compared to 1983, record availability had declined, both in variety and in number. In part, this drop may have been provoked by the

first signs that central authorities were becoming concerned about rock's dramatic rise in popularity, as indicated in the response rock's presence in Poland's song festivals discussed in the previous section. Perhaps even more significantly, though, the condition of scarcity that had characterized the Polish record industry since the 1970s redoubled its effects in 1984. That year, state record companies were unable to meet even the limited orders made by stores based on previous years' sales (all of the 762,000 of records ordered but not produced fell under the state firm Tonpress). To take the example of Lady Pank, 582 thousand copies were ordered by stores (and this figure might have still been lower than demand), but only 210 thousand were delivered – a mere 36%.¹¹⁰

In 1985, the amount of records produced continued to decline dramatically, falling well below the 1982 levels – although this time there was no discrepancy between orders and production, suggesting that retailers had either lowered their expectations of production capabilities, or sensed that demand had decreased (both were likely true). In terms of variety, little changed in terms of the bands that were pressed: the big names of the previous years continued to dominate. That year, Maanam had 302 thousand copies total of its new record, *Mental Cut* pressed by Polskie Nagrania and Merimplex, along with Lombard (a live album, 52 thousand, Merimplex), Kombi (*Best of*, 19 thousand, Merimplex), Turbo (14 thousand, Merimplex), Lady Pank (Polmark, 10 thousand), and Oddział Zamknięty (60 thousand, Polton). Klaus Mittfoch also appeared on LP for the first time in 1985 after distinguishing himself as a standout by winning an amateur talent competition in the summer of 1983. While this was something new for the record industry, as far as fans were concerned, it was belated by at least a year and a half.

One remarkable new LP came out in 1985, however. For the first time, hardcore punk (a genre I will describe in chapter 4) appeared on an LP – in official, recorded form. The private firm Polton pressed 30 thousand copies of *Fala*, a compilation of hardcore punk (“old” Siekiera and Tilt, Dezerter, Abbadon, Prowokacja) and reggae bands (Izrael, Bakszysz, Kultura).¹¹¹ I will describe these musical genres in greater detail in the fourth chapter; here, it is sufficient to note that these bands were considered some of the most fiercely alternative, controversial groups in the Polish scene. The thought of thirty

¹¹⁰ Jerzy Bojanowicz, “Fonografia '84,” *Non stop*, March 1985.

¹¹¹ Jerzy Bojanowicz, “Podzwonne dla firm polonijnych,” *Non stop*, March 1986. These numbers do not include records pressed by the private firm Rogot, which was not included in the report.

thousand of these records finding their way into the hands and ears of young Poles, not to mention groups of their friends, would surely have disturbed conservative cultural authorities had they been more closely aware of the goings on of the youth record market in 1985. At the same time, this suggests that some voices in the record industry had begun to accept even the most controversial bands – a dubious achievement for bands that valued their alternative status. While none of these groups could have been accused of softening their sound to make the record, it still carried the stigma of taking part in the system.

As I have noted, the record industry typically lagged behind trends in live performance and on the radio. On the brighter side, this lag meant that some of the upward impetus from the rock boom in the early 1980s continued to have an effect in the later 1980s when concert attendance was falling, as I noted in the previous section. This delay helped inspire the creation of new émigré firms Merimplex and Polmark that started to produce records in 1985. These new firms helped allow the production numbers for rock to remain roughly the same for 1986 as in the previous year. Even so, that year saw an astounding fall-off in the production of records by private and émigré firms – an ominous statistic since the fate of private and émigré firms was closely tied to the rock scene (and *vice-versa*).

At the same time, by 1986 the state-run record industry was no longer viable without significant reform. In January that year, the director of Polskie Nagrania observed, “right now we are in a period of stagnation. There is nothing going on in the world of *rozrywka*. It doesn't exist... People aren't buying records or cassettes.” As an example, he cited the new Kombi album, which Polskie Nagrania pressed in 1986. At first, orders were 250 thousand, then rose to 300 thousand. However, by the time the firm had produced the album, the number of orders had fallen to 100 thousand. While PN's director blamed a lack of interest in the market, the falling demand was also a result of the extraordinary long time it took records to get from the studio to stores. It is little surprise that in the year between the time Kombi's new songs were played on the radio and its album came out, demand fell by two-thirds. Further, Kombi had been prominent in the Polish rock scene since the MMG in the late 1970s; if the industry had instead chosen to produce an album by a more current band, demand may have been higher.

For all of the reasons described above, as early as February of 1984, the Cultural Commission of the Central Committee deemed the situation in the record industry “catastrophic” in both quality and number. This was seen as a loss for Polish culture as a whole, since Poland’s masterful classical music as well as its *estrada* and theater were recorded either abysmally or not at all. Besides its limits on access to culture, this shortage had created a situation where the most desirable records were selling for up to one thousand złoty on the black market – that is, nearly ten times the official price of state produced records. Even sold legally, records produced by semi-private émigré firms were several times more expensive than a Polskie Nagrania record. Both cases suggested that the PRL was failing to live up to its own standards of providing equal access to culture regardless of individual wealth. The commission also noted that no improvement was in sight since the new record press facility was lagging behind. Moreover, administrative improvements had proven nearly impossible due to the division of decision making responsibility among various departments and ministries, creating a situation where “no one feels responsible” for what takes place.¹¹²

By 1986, the situation was worse still. That summer, Polskie Nagrania was in such a dire financial situation that it would go bankrupt without financial assistance from the state budget. The party’s Division of Culture recommended an overhaul in the firm’s management, and looked to prominent figures connected to rock as a solution. As the next director, they proposed three candidates: Jacek Sylwin, Tomasz Tluczkiewicz, and Marek Proniewicz.¹¹³ Remarkably, the candidates chosen – the organizer of the first widespread rock concerts, the director of the jazz organization that was among the largest organizers of rock concerts, and the director of the state press that had the most rock-friendly policy, respectively – all would have been chosen to take the traditionally conservative record firm in the direction of working more closely with rock. A later formulation of the list also included important figures connected to rock, including the organizer of Robrege (a Warsaw punk/reggae festival), Sławomir Rogowski, along with

¹¹² Komisja Kultury KC PZPR, “W sprawie Polskiej Fonografii,” February 1984, 1354 Wydział Kultury PZPR, 746, 908/125, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw, Poland.

¹¹³ Wydział Kultury KC PZPR, “Notatka Służbowa dot. PP Polskie Nagrania,” June 1986, 1354 Wydział Kultury PZPR, 1327, 947/117, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw, Poland.

Sylwin and Proniewicz.¹¹⁴ These choices suggested that by 1986, a number of central party authorities had found a way of reconciling rock's economic usefulness with its political ambiguity.

Yet rock bands had little to be optimistic about. Even a more rock-friendly director at Polskie Nagrania offered few new opportunities. The individual eventually chosen for the job had a relatively open approach: he announced that as director of the firm, he was willing to work with anyone, "even the devil." This, he clarified, even included cooperating with private firms. However, in practical terms this proposed openness was increasingly less feasible. As many of the rock bands that brought rock to the mainstream disbanded, along with them went many of the private and semi-private firms that had made the rock boom of the early 1980s possible in the first place. This, in turn, caused more difficulties for bands in procuring recordings, forming a downward spiral. Maanam, for instance, ceased its activity shortly after Rogot, which had released its previous album, declined to press its next album.¹¹⁵ Rogot discontinued its activity in Poland shortly after.

This is not to say that private firms had been wholly positive alternatives to working with state labels. After Rogot's refusal to release Maanam's new album in 1986, the band voiced considerable discontent with the company, whose complex contract, according to Marek Jackowski, was designed to exploit the band. In fact, the band preferred its much simpler, eleven page contract for the album "O" with the state label Pronit, obtained through the Polish Jazz Union's president and frequent rock promoter, Tomasz Tluczkiewicz.¹¹⁶

Even so, private record companies had allowed for the possibility of diversity in music that would not have been possible without them. In 1985, eight of the top ten rock albums were produced by private and émigré firms. In contrast, in 1986, of 9 rock albums distributed to retailers, only one (by the reggae band Daab) was produced by a non-state firm (Arston, 52,000 copies).¹¹⁷ By 1987, this firm too had left Poland. To some degree,

¹¹⁴ A. Kaczmarek: Wydział Kultury PZPR KC, "Notatka Służbowa dot. rozwiązań strukturalnych i kadrowych w P.P. Polskie Nagrania," 1987, 1354 Wydział Kultury PZPR, 1538, 960/120, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw, Poland.

¹¹⁵ Wiesław Królikowski, "na Zakręcie," *Magazyn Muzyczny - Jazz*, March 1986.

¹¹⁶ Grzegorz Brzozowicz, "Rockowy długodystanowiec (2): Zyciowe rewolucje," *Non stop*, August 1986.

¹¹⁷ Jerzy Bojanowicz, "Polska fonografia '86," *Non stop*, March 1987.

state firms expanded their repertoire to make up for these absences. Tonpress, for instance, pressed 90 thousand copies of Aya RL's album and 45 thousand copies of Siekiera's new album, and 90 thousand copies of a punk rock compilation that included Kult and other bands. Pronit pressed a Bajm album (117,000) and Voo Voo (30,000), Wifon Pressed another Bajm album (104,000) and Polskie Nagrania pressed Lady Pank (96,000) and Kombi (137,000) in 1986.

In the long run, due to financial and material shortages, state firms were unable to offer the variety and numbers that had been possible a few years earlier when companies like Savitor, Polton, and Rogot had expanded the offerings on the Polish music market. Even if Polskie Nagrania's new president voiced his willingness to work with private firms, by 1987 there was scarcely anyone to work with. This meant that state firms were once again the only option for bands wishing to produce a record. Further, it meant that bands had no choice but to work with a state label if they wished to record, making it even more difficult to maintain their credibility with fans. In the early 1980s, the presence of consistently high demand for rock ensured that even a deeply flawed industry could continue to fund its own existence. However, by the mid 1980s, rock's fan base had become less predictable and enduring material shortages and counterproductive regulations hampered state and private firms alike.

Broadcast Media

Radio and television also became key sites for the proliferation of Polish rock in the 1980s. However, the conditions governing these media differed from live performance and the recording industry in one key respect: broadcast offered no direct mechanism for earning money from rock, either for the industry or the state. Unlike capitalist media, television and radio in the PRL did not rely on advertising for their income. This meant that while the structures oriented around live performance had to take into account the potential for income from ticket sales and the recording industry had to consider income from record sales, the radio and television were isolated from these immediate economic incentives for working with rock. Nonetheless, like other branches of the industry, its repertoire expanded to include increasing proportions of rock in the early 1980s, and particularly with reforms following martial law, in 1982.

How do we explain the growth of rock on the television and radio in the absence of an immediate economic incentive? In place of financial capital, the broadcast media can be understood as attempting to generate political and cultural capital.¹¹⁸ Rather than benefiting the state by earning money, the broadcast media was intended to affirm the legitimacy of the state in fulfilling its socialist modernizing project of cultivating an informed, cultured population. As with other divisions of the industry, this objective contained a potential tension. On one hand, politics played an important role in motivating repertoire and production decisions in the ways I noted above – for instance, by privileging “classical” music over pop and rock. On the other hand, the media’s political objective could only be achieved if Poles were willing to “tune-in.” The same combination of calculations that went into pressing a record thus transferred to playing a song on the radio, although the imperative of politics and profit played out in a slightly different format: politics and popularity. As with the record industry, *rozrywkowa* music attracted far greater audiences, but programs featuring *poważna* music earned the approval of cultural authorities in the party and the state.¹¹⁹ Fulfilling political objectives thus required attracting listeners and earning their good will, and for a young audience, rock was quickly identified as a powerful mechanism for achieving this goal.

The mass media was not shaped by political objectives alone, however. As with other branches of the music industry, structural constraints affected how those objectives were carried out. First, broadcast media were less affected by scarcity than the record presses. The reason for this is straightforward. Producing records and tapes necessitated the constant obtaining of raw materials and assembling them. In contrast, producing a radio or television broadcast required a one-time investment in a centralized station, transmitters, and a population supplied with receivers – all of which had been achieved well before 1980. This relatively minor reliance on material production meant that many popular songs made their appearance on the radio or television long before the corresponding album was pressed, and reached a wider segment of the population. For instance, Maanam’s “O! Nie rób tyle hałasu” was broadcast frequently in April of 1982,

¹¹⁸ The term “cultural capital” comes from Pierre Bourdieu. See “The Forms of Capital,” in J. Richardson, ed., *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education* (New York, 1986), 241-258.

¹¹⁹ “Kultura w Polskim Radiu i Telewizji,” July 1985, 1354 Wydział Kultury PZPR, 1701, 982/47, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw, Poland.

although the album *O!* was not pressed until the following year. In some cases, this disparity was because a single was pressed with the hit song before it came out on album. However, in many situations, it was because the radio had access to the recordings (sometimes they were made at the radio's own studios), and thus could play them long before the lagging Polish record industry was able to imprint them on record.

This process was quite different from radio in the capitalist West, where singles were supplied by the industry primarily to promote album sales. Allowing the radio to play a song a year before the album could be purchased would be a major business blunder, since enthusiasm over the song would likely have died down considerably by the time the industry was in a position to profit from its sales. Due to the decentralized nature of the music industry in Poland, however, Polish radio was not constrained by the financial interests of the record industry. In fact, it would frequently play entire albums – an atypical practice on American radio due to concerns about personal recordings of the broadcast cutting into radio sales. This practice continued throughout the 1980s, even as politicians and concerned representatives from the record presses called for reform in the second half of the decade. Unlike the other branches of the industry, for radio and TV, concerns about profit *per se* were secondary to cultural politics and to ensuring large, satisfied young audiences (and statistics demonstrating it to authorities).

The relative ease in broadcasting rock compared to pressing it onto a record or recording it onto a tape did not translate, however, into a wider range of music. Bands that were played on the radio or television were almost without exception the bands mentioned in the previous section on the music press. This was not a coincidence: bands had to be recorded in order to be played, short of airing a live performance (a risky proposition in terms of quality and politics, since the resources of censors were greatly diminished in dealing with live performance). This subjected even the broadcast media to the condition of scarcity. Music had to be recorded before it could be broadcast, and this was an expensive process. As one of the directors of recording *rozrywkowa* music at Polish Radio (which also operated one of the main recording studios in Poland) explained in 1980, “new recordings cost so much, we try to risk as little as possible. ... We want to meet the tastes of the widest range of listeners, including old, middle aged, and young.

It's difficult to satisfy everyone."¹²⁰ Television had even stricter standards for what it was willing to present since the resources required to produce a video segment – a director, a set, and film – were even greater than those for making a recording.

The tension between the need for popularity and acceptable politics inhibited variety on radio and television. Discussions between radio executives and party committees about what to play on the radio often took the form of balancing the need to attract an audience and the need to provide them with the cultural content that authorities valued. To merit play time, a rock song had to negotiate all of these obstacles: it had to guarantee a large audience, convince industry officials of its “high artistic level,” and, of course, pass censorship, as I will discuss in detail in later chapters. Taken together, this meant the inclusion of some bands and the exclusion of many others.

This is where the role of gatekeepers came into play. In most cases, a professional DJ, or *prezenter* selected the music to be played on the radio. Cultural gatekeepers and their interests and preferences are a key to cultural production, as work in production-centered sociology of culture has demonstrated.¹²¹ Much like houses of culture and youth unions, these individuals fit uncomfortably with the binary us/them, party/people, government/society dichotomy that dominated opposition discourse in 1980s Poland. Broadcasting rock in the 1980s, particularly in the early years, was a risky undertaking since official policy was still ambiguous enough to leave a considerable degree of uncertainty. The *prezenter* was responsible for ensuring that their broadcasts fit the state's cultural politics. On the other side, from the perspective of punk rock bands seeking wider exposure, finding the favor of a *prezenter* became crucial. As a result, accusations of bribery and underhanded dealings arose with some frequency.¹²² Even when operating within the prescribed bounds of their profession, they became another filter as to what music audiences got to hear. As a result, they often became celebrities among grateful fans while attracting the ire of those whose favorite bands went unnoticed.

¹²⁰ Marek Wiernik, “Co jest grane... w radiu?,” *Non stop*, April 1980.

¹²¹ See footnote 9 for details.

¹²² Some reports of these dealings and mixed feelings toward *prezenter*s can be found in Anna Matalowska, “Idole z radia,” *Polityka*, no. 16, 1984 and Zygmunt Kiszakiewicz, “Czarny koń list przebojów,” *Rock Estrada*, January 1984.

Now that I have outlined some of the basic conditions and tensions of the broadcast industry, we can look more closely at how rock was presented (and limited) in the media. Rock had some success in securing a place on Polish radio and TV starting with the MMG in the late 1970s, but this was mainly due to the intense efforts of its promoters to make it fit with the media's cultural politics. This meant finding ways to bolster rock's credentials for having a "high artistic level" – bringing it closer to the level of *muzyka poważna*, the standard by which cultural value was judged. A brief examination of one of the first appearances of the second wave of rock on television is illustrative here.

The first television broadcast featuring a band from the new wave of Polish rock was a performance of Kombi's "Przetul mnie" (Embrace me), as part of the television program *Salon Piękności* (Beauty Salon). Its form is exactly what one might expect of a performance trying to make the way for new rock in the face of culturally conservative critics and music industry officials **[Video 01]**.¹²³ First, the song chosen is one of the band's calmer, more introspective songs – and one with the least in common with rock and roll (instead, it has elements of disco, jazz fusion, and even classical music). Even more significant, though, is the video accompanying the song, which features a professionally-lit and choreographed modern dance performance. The video makes every effort to ensure that the viewer identifies the music as art. The choice of modern dance is particularly significant: it suggests that rock, like modern dance, might be new and different, but that it could nonetheless be incorporated into the canon of culture. Kombi's performance thus made the case that it balanced the imperatives of acceptable politics and attracting audiences.

The ability to attract youth to the state media was even more important a few years later, after martial law. Amidst the political crackdown of martial law, the state sought to continue its modernizing, socialist project and to reach out to potentially alienated citizens through the broadcast media. Following martial law, many young Poles in particular regarded the national media with contempt, viewing it as complicit with an

¹²³ *Salon Piękności*, Telewizja Polska, 1979. Dir. Mark Lewandowski. Available from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xIArUrLzsCc>, accessed May 2009.

oppressive, untrustworthy system.¹²⁴ In order to combat this widespread distrust, the three month break during which radio programming was cut off at the beginning of martial law was used to rework the format of the radio's Third Program (Trójka) to better address listeners of ages sixteen and seventeen.¹²⁵ The objective of the new format was to "educate and rationally present many current views on the current reality of Poland" through programs on current events, literature, reporting, and music. Its main goals were to include the following:

1. Education of the young generation in the area of building and developing political, social, and cultural awareness
2. Popularization of these issues
3. Supplying listeners with recreational contents in the areas of music and satire¹²⁶

In the next section I will show how the new program arose out of the discourse taking place in the party about youth and culture in the turbulent period following martial law. Here, though, it is enough to consider how the industry sought to fulfill these objectives and the effects of this approach on the rock scene. Its program was to include blocks with "the newest recordings of Polish and international music in equal proportion," including the "canon of rock music" (a telling description, suggesting that at least some rock had enough artistic merit to be part of a 'canon') on Mondays, a Polish performer on Tuesdays, the newest albums in recreational music on Wednesday and Thursday, and the Beatles on Friday. The inclusion of the Beatles was a particularly savvy move since the band was widely popular among young (and middle-aged) audiences, but also was perhaps the only rock band accepted by all but the most conservative cultural authorities as possessing some artistic value. On Saturday at 8:00 in the evening, a "hits list" program would be presented live, to be "directed with the cooperation of listeners." Besides its format, the program worked to connect to Polish

¹²⁴ For instance, only 1.5 percent surveyed said they trusted the media's information about domestic events. Wydział Organizacji Społecznych, Sportu i Turystyki, "Tezy do Wystąpienia nt: Młodzieży," 1981, 1354 PZPR KC w Warszawie Pion Środowiskowy, XL/125, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw, Poland.

¹²⁵ Zespół ds Młodzieży KC PZPR, "Program III Polskiego Radia," 1984, 1354 PZPR KC w Warszawie Pion Środowiskowy, XLIII/34, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw, Poland. The document, written after the changes had gone into effect, does not make clear whether the party initiated this process or just approved it.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

youth through its staff: it boasted that only 8 people on the classical and jazz board were above the age of 37, and the average age of the entertainment music staff was a mere 36.¹²⁷ To run the hits list, directors at Polish Radio chose Marek Niedźwiecki, who was just 28 years old.¹²⁸ As we will see, even in the context of an audience-centered hits list, Niedźwiecki functioned as a key cultural gatekeeper.

The hits list (*Lista Przebojów*) is a fascinating lens for looking at the Polish rock scene at its peak. The beginning of the list coincides with the beginning of the phase of rock's peak popularity in early 1982, as the music's representation by the music industry finally began to pick up to approach popular demand. The fact that a station existed that allowed listeners themselves to select what was played was an unprecedented democratic opportunity in the entertainment industry. Each week, listeners could send post cards into the station or call in, voting for their favorite song. As a result, the program was tremendously popular among young listeners: the radio finally corresponded with mass youth tastes. This democracy had its limits, however, eventually leading to some controversy and discontent both in rock circles and outside them.

The hits list also allows us to see what was popular in the Polish rock scene at what time: unlike the lagging record industry, it came close to keeping up with changing listener tastes, or at least those of the majority of fans. The first list, published five months into martial law on April 24, 1982 included two MMG bands (Kombi and Kasa Chorych) and two 1960s Polish rock bands in the top 20. Several slots were filled with western hard rock bands (such as AC/DC – often identified as the chief influence on TSA, Derek and the Dominoes), prog rock (Jethro Tull, an early influence on Republika, and Jon and Vangelis) and a couple of pop bands (including Abba). Already, though, the list featured five songs by some of the biggest new Polish rock bands, with Maanam's "O! Nie rób tyle hałasu" in second place, TSA's "51" in fourth, Perfect's "Opanuj się" and "Pepe Wróć" in fifth and eighth, and Lombard's "O Jeden Dreszcz" in thirteenth.¹²⁹

¹²⁷ Ibid. In an interesting parallel example, see Peterson's *Culture Studies through the Production Perspective: Progress and Prospects* for how an influx of young radio dj's transformed the country music scene in the United States.

¹²⁸ Marek Niedźwiecki, *Lista przebojów programu trzeciego: 1982-1994* (Wrocław, 1996).

¹²⁹ "Notowanie nr 1, Lista Przebojów Trójki." Polskie Radio Online, available at: <http://lp3.polskieradio.pl/notowania/?rok=1982&numer=1>, accessed June 2009.

These bands dominated the list over the next weeks, with Maanam reaching the top position in the second week, and TSA doing so in weeks three through five.

Niedźwiecki recalled later that for the first list, only a couple hundred votes went to the first place song, but over the next few weeks, the number of letters and calls increased dramatically.¹³⁰ In the list's seventh week, Republika showed up for the first time with "Kombinat" – a syncopated, new wave style song set to dystopian lyrics that describe a pulsating, breathing factory, comparing it to a tissue in which the protagonist is a cell. In other words, the protagonist is a living cog in a cybernetic machine, recalling Stalin's famous dictum.¹³¹ This song reached the top position in the list's 11th edition. Four weeks later, Lady Pank made its first appearance with its single, "Mała Lady Pank" (Little Lady Punk). On the 27th week of the hits list, in October of 1982, Oddział Zamknięty entered the list for the first time with "Ten Wasz Świat," (This World of Yours). These seven bands ruled the list, along with a variety of western hits and a few older style Polish *estrada* and rock songs, and a single hit from rock bands Turbo and Bajm for all of 1982. And all of 1983. And all of 1984, with the singular addition of Klaus Mittfoch (whose album was not pressed until the following year).

To summarize, in the first few years of rock's popularity, and particularly starting in 1982, the hits list (and the radio in general) played considerable amounts of rock. However, as with the record press, the variety of bands played was extremely limited compared to the assortment of rock bands performing at the time. The lack of variety in the Polish music industry as a whole (discussed above) was compounded by the very nature of the hits list. People vote for songs they know and like, and in turn, get to know songs that are voted for. This system lent itself to promoting the familiar rather than the new and different – much like the conditions of the industry as a whole. In this sense, the audience choice factor functioned for the radio analogously to the profit incentive for the record presses and live performances: in both cases, industry representatives had to take audience tastes into account, but nonetheless had the ultimate say in what was played. While market pressures and consumer choice did open up new possibilities in the cultural

¹³⁰ Niedźwiecki, *Lista przebojów programu trzeciego*.

¹³¹ Intentionally or not, the concept brings to mind Stalin's notorious reference to ordinary people as "cogs in the machine."

sphere, limitations persisted – not only from high politics, but also at the production level. In turn, these factors had far-reaching effects on the rock scene.

Even the relatively democratically-structured hits list was shaped by the decisions of its gatekeeper. For instance, Niedźwiecki admitted in a later interview to only playing the songs the he personally liked – a common practice for the profession.¹³² The week before the first edition, Niedźwiecki presented his own list of the top 20 songs for listeners to select from.¹³³ For him, this meant mostly melodic rock from the West.¹³⁴ This marked a significant distinction from many of the older generation in the profession, who preferred more traditional song genres – but it also differed from the tastes of younger fans who preferred less polished, more cutting-edge music. Presenters on other programs had their own tastes, and even more influence on what music was played since they lacked the constraint of audience participation in the selection of music.

Despite the limitations, the hits list, with its mechanism for audience participation, was a remarkable phenomenon in the context of socialist Poland. But other, even more daring broadcasts existed as well. As some rock fans grew increasingly frustrated with the limited variety of music available on the Third Program and the hits list, an alternative broadcast rapidly gained popularity: the Scouting Broadcast (*Rozgłośnia Harcerska*), which was sponsored by the Association of Polish Scouting, ZHP (*Związek Harcerstwa Polskiego*). Much like the new third program of Polish Radio, the Scouting Broadcast was created shortly after martial law, with the professed purposes of offering “good youth music, interesting programs about scouting, news from every area of science and culture, discussion about ethical-moral problems, and current information interesting to everyone.”¹³⁵ Even the relatively centralized structure of the broadcast media left room for quasi-independent initiatives.

¹³² Magda Buraczewska-Świątek, “Gram tylko to, co mnie rajcuje,” February 5 2009. Available from <http://www.artstore.pl/gram-tylko-to-co-mnie-rajcuje>, accessed June 2009.

¹³³ Mikołaj Lizut, “Stary Niedźwiedź jeszcze nie śpi,” *Gazeta Wyborcza*, December 14, 2007. Available from <http://wyborcza.pl/1,76842,4743398.html?as=1&ias=5&startsz=x>. Niedźwiecki’s personal tastes thus influenced what was deemed most popular nation wide.

¹³⁴ His autobiographical account of the list, *Lista przebojów programu trzeciego*, offers a list of his own top ten for week 17 of the list. Not a single Polish band is included, where 7 out of 10 on the actual list for that week are Polish.

¹³⁵ “Nadaje Rozgłośnia Harcerska,” *Na Przełaj*, January 1983.

As rock rose in prominence over the early 1980s, the broadcast came to include its own hits list, run by rock journalist and DJ Paweł Sito. Like its counterparts (besides the radio's Third Program, hits lists were run by television and a few magazines), the Scouting Broadcast's hits list had unique results, since each list was formed by independently tallied fan votes (rather than by sales figures like in the West). The Scouting Broadcast soon developed a reputation for playing rougher-edged music than the Third Program. This, in turn, attracted more fans of punk, metal, and reggae to vote in its list.

The differences with the Third Program were subtle, but real. For instance, in May of 1985, while both lists contained songs by Maanam and a supergroup that included Zbigniew Hołdys, the Scouting Broadcast also included the newer "cold wave" (*zimna fala*) band Made in Poland (which did not appear on the *Trójka* until much later) and reggae band Izrael (which was never showed up on the *Trójka*'s list). The station also attracted considerable attention by offering a live broadcast from the Jarocin festival starting in 1985, under the pseudonym "*Radio Nieprzemakalne*" (waterproof radio).¹³⁶

Perhaps by now it is no longer surprising to see an official state and party-sanctioned organization like the ZHP supporting rock. However, the decision was not easy, particularly in 1985 after the uproar over rock in the previous year. The director of the organization went so far as to say decidedly, "There will not be scouting in Jarocin. That is of entirely no interest to us."¹³⁷ Yet, the radio team showed up at the festival and carried out its objective.

When the list provocatively changed its title from the "Rock List of the Scouting Broadcast" to "Polish Independent" in mid September of 1985, its difference from the *Trójka*'s hits list became even more pronounced. In late 1985, songs appeared by Dzieci Kapitana Klossa, Variete, Armia, TZN Xenna, Abaddon, Madame, T. Love Alternative, and Dezerter, representing controversial rock subgenres of punk, new wave/cold wave, and hardcore. The inclusion of hardcore punk bands in particular distinguished the broadcast from the Third Program: this direct, harsh, aggressive style of music had never been played on Niedźwiecki's hits list. This difference was crucial to its listeners. Simply

¹³⁶ Andrzej Pasternak, "Jarocin '85: Niepodległy trójkąta rocka," *Sztandar Młodych*, September 20, 1985.

¹³⁷ Aldona Krajewska, "Ślad na antenie," *Na Przełaj*, December 29, 1985.

choosing to listen to and vote in the list rather than the Third Program's hits list was a way of identifying oneself as part of the alternative scene, a division that remains important up to today when rock fans or musicians talk about what they listened to or where their recordings were played.¹³⁸

Yet, while the Scouting Broadcast billed itself as independent, and its audience upheld this designation, the lines were more difficult to discern in reality. Most literally, the station was certainly not "independent" since it was the radio station of the official, party-sanctioned youth scouting association, ZHP. Further, it depended on Polish Radio, the ZHP leadership, and ultimately the state and party for its operation. This was one of the paradoxes of the socialist music industry: it was so expansive that it was nearly impossible to operate as a band outside it, but it was also so vast and complex that it was possible to set up semi-alternative spaces within. Even the Third Program, more "official" by popular perception by the mid 1980s, fulfilled this function to a considerable extent. Starting in mid 1985, along with the standbys of Republika, Lady Pank, TSA, Bajm, Kombi, Maanam, Lombard, and Oddział Zamknięty, the Trójka's hits list featured new singles by some of the punk bands with the strongest reputation for being uncompromising and alternative: Tilt, Kult, and Siekiera.¹³⁹ However, setting up alternative spaces within state institutions came with a more ambiguous side. It meant that the difference between "mainstream" and "alternative" was fragile and shifting, even as it was critical for rock fans and bands. This created volatility in the rock scene that made it difficult to predict a band's future, or even how it would be heard by an audience.

The migration of rock – or at least part of it – to the mass media marked the beginning of what might be considered a mainstream rock scene. In the first years of rock, the music had done well at concerts and merited an occasional album or record play, but starting in 1982, the hits list, radio, television and film made it part of the mass cultural experience. Of course, the term "mainstream" is a charged one, particularly in the Polish case (although not as charged as the epithet "official" (*oficjalny*), used by bands and fans that considered themselves alternative to denigrate bands they deemed too willing to compromise with authorities). Certainly it would be peculiar to detail the

¹³⁸ T. Love's interview in Lizut's *Punk Rock Later* captures the importance of this division well, although Staszczuk pauses to question whether even the alternative hits list was a "safety valve."

¹³⁹ "Lista Przebojów Trójki," Polskie Radio Online.

difficulty of achieving success due to industry conditions, and then criticize the few that did manage to succeed.

As I will argue in the chapters to come, the lines dividing “mainstream” and “alternative” bands were vague and shifting, perpetually transformed by a combination of factors ranging from a band’s sound, to its relationship to the music industry, to the constant efforts by fans, bands, and the state to define its place. The division was both tenuous and immensely important, particularly as time went on. One of the key factors in determining where a band fell on this spectrum was its relationship to the state media: a band that appeared on radio and television had the chance to reach a wider audience, but risked being labeled “official,” and losing its alternative status, its ability to portray itself as authentic, and ultimately, its fans.

By noting that something was considered “mainstream,” I do not want to imply that it meant that it was “complicit” with the system, in contrast to “alternative” bands that were “resisting” it. From one perspective, the industry was using rock bands to attract young people to state media and improve their feelings about the cultural offerings of the state. But from the other, rock bands were using their popularity among youth to smuggle alternative culture into the lives of countless Poles. In other words, both “resistance” and “cooptation” coexisted on the television and radio, often in the very same band or song. Rather than emphasizing one aspect or the other as inherently more significant, it is more useful to consider these concepts as tied up in the constant struggle over rock’s meaning that started in the late 1970s and continued over the next years – a struggle I will describe over the next chapters. As Niedźwiecki himself commented in a later interview, “Everything was a sort of field of battle, including youth music.”¹⁴⁰ This was true even of the state-controlled media.

Sometimes this battle took a concrete form. In 1984, Maanam was banned from the radio after refusing to perform at an official function in Warsaw. Niedźwiecki recalled,

The boss at the Third Program at the time, Sławek Zieliński, came to me and said that there was an order from on high that Maanam be removed from the list. “Are you ill?” was my response. “There are three songs by Maanam.

¹⁴⁰ Lizut, “Stary Niedźwiedź jeszcze nie śpi.”

I'm supposed to remove them, and say what to listeners?"
Zieliński shrugged; "Maanam can't be on."¹⁴¹

Niedźwiecki's solution to this dilemma was to play a loop of the drum intro from Maanam's "To tylko tango" in the space where the banned "Simple Story" was to appear. He later reflected, "Everyone amazingly knew it represented the intervention of censors. The ban was short, only three weeks. The radio was literally buried in letters."¹⁴² In a gutsy maneuver, Niedźwiecki revealed the state's clumsy interference. Further, this maneuver gave listeners a chance to take part in the battle themselves: they continued to vote for the song on the hits list for nearly four months in 1984.

Even less dramatic displays by fans on behalf of rock could be significant. Years before free voting was allowed in Poland, young Poles could vote for the state airwaves to broadcast songs about the fear and oppression of life in the PRL, about overcoming it through humor and irony, or about living in a way that authorities (and parents) found objectionable. Of course, this is not to suggest that voting for a favorite song (particularly amidst the limitations in choices) is a substitute for free elections, but it did provide an opportunity to choose something that presented a very different vision of culture and life than that which was propagated by the party and the state.

However, the rise of a select group of rock bands in the media also contributed to a developing tension in the music scene – a tension with roots in the early days of Polish rock when elements of punk and MMG were combined to fuel rock's rise to mass popularity. The success of some bands with the mass media meant the suppression of others. By 1985, even the rock-friendly industry professionals that were sometimes blamed for the promotion of polished, professional rock bands over more hard-edged sounds were concerned about the tendencies they saw in the scene. Marek Niedźwiecki admitted in April that year that the "dinosaurs" of rock – that is, the more established bands like Kombi, Perfect, Maanam, Republika, Lombard, and Lady Pank that had

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid. "SB ingerowała w listę przebojów "Trójki"?" describes another incident in which the Ministry of Internal Affairs called for Lady Pank's "Mniej Niż Zero" to be removed from the list because it linked the song (erroneously) with the inflammatory murder of Grzegorz Przemyski by the state police. Unlike the Maanam incident, Niedźwiecki claimed to have never known of the situation, and the song remained on the list for several weeks.

earned their first records and radio play a few years earlier – were blocking the entrance of new bands into the Polish scene.¹⁴³

Adding to the tension, from the perspective of these less-represented groups and their fans, the successful bands were the ones that were most closely cooperating with the state and industry. Even among average youth – not just punks – the state-directed radio and television were abysmally unpopular. As Niedźwiecki himself admitted, some bands “held Polish Radio in wide contempt. They took the Third Program for a safety valve and component of the regime. For many of these bands appearing on the Third Program would be a dishonor.” For a time, the popularity of rock and excitement at its availability outweighed this bitterness. But this optimism would not last forever.

Over the course of the 1980s, as rock became increasingly available, maintaining an alternative identity became increasingly difficult. By 1985, formerly controversial bands like Siekiera, Kult, or Tilt started to appear on both the Trójka and Rozgłośnia Harcerska – mixing the blessing of mainstream exposure with the curse of the label “mainstream.” The divide between the two radio programs collapsed even further over the next two years, as the Trójka began to play even those bands at the farthest end of the alternative spectrum like Armia, TZN Xenna, and Abaddon. In early 1987, the Scouting Broadcast changed the name of its hits list from “Polish Independent” back to its original title, the “Rock Hits List of the Scouting Broadcast.” While the music remained much the same, the change of title was a symbolic blow to the station’s prestige as a source of alternative culture.

Impresarios: Socialist Poland’s Music Professionals

Live music, recordings, and media broadcasts were the main ways in which music was disseminated in late socialist Poland. However, without the efforts of committed managers and organizers, rock would have been unlikely to penetrate any of these divisions of the music industry. We have already gotten a sense for how individual initiative within the industry could have a considerable effect on the music scene, in selecting who was recorded, who was booked for concerts, and who got played on the radio or television. Perhaps the most crucial form of individual initiative with respect to

¹⁴³ Elżbieta Statuch, “Dyskretny urok dinozaurów,” *Sztandar Młodych*, April 19, 1985.

the industry, though, was the activity of professional music industry and cultural workers who took an active interest in rock, grouped here under the title “impresario.” These were mostly men in their thirties, making them older than most punk rock bands, but decidedly younger than the average industry executive. As we will see, many of these impresarios had roots in Poland’s first wave of rock in the 1960s, giving them experience in negotiating political and economic conditions as well as a passion for rock.

It is difficult to define where these individuals fit in my organizational scheme. Even grouping them together under the “impresario” title is somewhat misleading, since they did not see themselves as a single group, and occasionally feuded with each other. Sometimes they acted like parts of the music scene itself. This is particularly true of punk’s early patron, Henryk Gajewski, who was more ideologically committed to the movement than he was interested in its popularization through recordings or broadcasts (in fact, to the contrary, he encouraged alternative means of circulation, like the exchange of recordings through the mail). At other times, they acted as liaisons between the music scene and the party, ensuring that bands were able to meet the demands of their audiences while also fitting with political imperatives. Ultimately, though, I decided to deal with them here since they often had connections to the music industry, and their activities correspond to the conditions of the industry so closely.

Impresarios defied the conditions of the industry by acting like entrepreneurs even as they often were employed by the state. However, it was precisely the conditions of the socialist music industry that made this possible, by offering loopholes in which individual agency could be pursued. Industry conditions also ensured that the help of a skilled impresario was necessary for most bands that wished to have any lasting presence on the rock scene; every ounce of their experience with cultural politics and bureaucracy were required to manipulate political and economic imperatives to create a space for Polish rock amidst a sea of complex, restrictive regulations.

In the previous chapter I outlined the musical history of the development of MMG (Muzyka Młodej Generacji, or Music of the Young Generation – the more commercial, accessible counterpart to punk in rock’s growth in the 1980s) in 1978. The same story can be told from a production perspective, beginning with the decision of a few industry professionals who were interested in bringing rock back to the Polish stage. MMG

formed when several experienced managers/organizers associated with the artistic agency responsible for the song festival in Sopot, BART, decided to organize a concert for youth around a few rock bands. This group of music professionals – Wojciech Korzeniewski, Marcin Jacobson (who had been active in promoting rock in the 1960s as a DJ), Jacek Sylwin, Piotr Nagłowski (who worked for Polish Radio as a *prezenter*), and Walter Chelstowski (who worked for Polish Television’s Studio 2) – worked together with the objective of promoting rock music to youth.¹⁴⁴

Jacek Sylwin, working alongside Walter Chelstowski as director of the first MMG concert, later described the MMG as a “system of promotion, concert tours, and festivals,” or in short, a “rock market” (*rynek rockowy*) oriented around a few bands.¹⁴⁵ This is not to say it was cynical or selfish – at least in the short term, it was a lot more trouble than it was worth. Unlike with the rock boom in the postwar US, Polish youth did not have a large amount of money to spend on leisure.¹⁴⁶ In fact, the organizers of MMG ended up having to let people in for free at the first concert in 1978 since most youth could not easily afford tickets (at least for something that was not yet popular).¹⁴⁷ Making rock work on a large scale in Poland required practical efforts by people whose primary goal was not creating music or taking part in the scene. They acted as liaisons between the state, other parts of the industry, and youth bands and audiences. This difficult balancing act can be discerned in the language used in communicating what exactly the MMG was to the political leadership, industry officials, and the audience.

In order to organize the first MMG concert, BART had to secure permission from the Department of Cultural Cooperation Abroad, which was ultimately responsible for the Sopot festival. In a communiqué to the department, concert organizers presented the festival in a way carefully designed to convince authorities that the diverse interests of all parties involved would be satisfied. The festival as a whole, they affirmed, would “not only serve purpose of *rozrywka*, i.e. offering youth attractive entertainment responding to

¹⁴⁴ “Rock i ministerstwo: Trzydzieści lat temu w Sopocie rock przestał być w Polsce słowem wstydlwym,” *Dziennik Bałtycki*, July 09, 2008. Available from <http://gdansk.naszemiasto.pl/wydarzenia/894556.html>, accessed June 2009.

¹⁴⁵ Wiesław Królikowski, “Antidotum: Rozmowa z Jackiem Sylwinem, impresariem i producentem płytowym,” *Magazyn Muzyczny - Jazz*, October 1986.

¹⁴⁶ For more on youth and rock in the US, see Frith, *Sound Effects: Youth, Leisure, and the Politics of Rock'nRoll*.

¹⁴⁷ Marek Wiernik, “W pieniądzu siła,” *Non stop*, September 1978.

their authentic interests, but will also stimulate certain attitudes, worthwhile thoughts, experiences, and cultural inspiration.”¹⁴⁸ In one short passage, they assured their supervisors that the concert would fit with the dual imperatives of the industry, meeting the industry’s objective of profit (since it was “attractive entertainment” responding to the “authentic interests” of youth) and of politics (since it stimulates “worthwhile thoughts” and “cultural inspiration”). Youth music, they added, is a “mass demand.” Now it is necessary to “raise the artistic and educational benefits of that demand.” Only then does the document segue into its request for the theater in Sopot for the purpose of promoting the “music of the young generation” (MMG).

The organizers’ note to the concert’s audience, on the other hand, was worded a bit differently. Of course, they still had to be mindful of party and industry officials reading the program, but they also had to be concerned with ensuring that the music was heard as new and exciting, and not just like something designed to stimulate “worthwhile thoughts, experiences, and cultural inspiration.” The program’s introduction, written by Sylwin, exemplifies this skilled balancing act between these two risks:

We waited for it. And here it is, the young generation of Polish recreational music. There are voices, there are faces. There is a strength that cannot be disregarded, that cannot be omitted. There is thought – healthy, without complexes, without compromises – at the forefront. And finally, there is MUSIC. It’s nothing else: simple fresh, modern, with a future... and GOOD!!!¹⁴⁹

This introduction balances enthusiasm and caution. Stylistically, it seems spontaneous, using sentence fragments, exclamation points, and capitalization to replicate the cadence of informal speech. This is in marked contrast to the positive but wordy, scientific language of the letter sent to the Department of Cultural Cooperation Abroad. The music is thoughtful and healthy, Sylwin reassures the state, but “without compromises,” he assures the audience. In short, the program it repeats in written form the principle that impresarios used to select the bands to participate in the festival: MMG was to be different and exciting, but not so far from mainstream *rozrywka* as to be jarring for a

¹⁴⁸ Bałtycka Agencja Artystyczna, “Pop Session 1978 Program.”

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

diverse audience, the industry, or the government. Even the name served this purpose, avoiding the controversial term “rock” while still suggesting its popularity with youth.

This example shows how crucial it was to have assistance inside the industry in order to bring rock to a wider audience. Besides the skilful process of negotiation that was required to reconcile the conflicting interests of politics, finances, and popular demand, the festival infrastructure was oriented around professional, established bands operating through concert agencies. Without support inside these agencies, bands like Kombi would not have even been considered for such an event.

The activity of MMG’s creators did not stop there. Over the next years, they used their professional links with the music industry, as well as considerable investments of their own time and effort, to continue to promote rock. Sylwin became the manager of MMG band Kombi, and also assisted Chelstowski in organizing what became the most significant event in Polish rock in the 1980s: the Jarocin rock music festival. Before discussing that, though, let’s look at the role of impresarios in the formation of the other precursor to 1980s Polish rock: the punk scene.

When Walek Dzedzej emigrated in 1978, punk might not have gathered much attention in Poland had it not been picked up by Henryk Gajewski, director of the Riviera-Remont student club and art gallery. The following year, he brought the English punk band The Raincoats to Warsaw.¹⁵⁰ Tomasz Lipiński – who was to join what became an influential punk band – later recalled watching the band with awe, taking notes on their appearance. One English band member had a trench coat and colored hair, so Lipiński and his friends followed suit.¹⁵¹

The Raincoats’ concert was only the beginning. Thereafter, Remont organized weekly musical meetings on Mondays under the title “Sound Club,” during which people from around Warsaw could come listen to punk and new wave presented by DJ Andrzej “Amok” Turczynowicz.¹⁵² In July of 1979, Gajewski showed a series of videos, including tapes from punk concerts in England and a three-hour film about the Sex

¹⁵⁰ Roman Rogowiecki, “Punk w Warszawie,” *Non stop*, June 1978. It is curious that while the Raincoats – the first live example of punk in Poland – were ¾ women, the early Polish punk bands were overwhelmingly dominated by men.

¹⁵¹ Lizut, *Punk Rock Later*.

¹⁵² Henryk Gajewski, “Punk,” December 1979 and Dr. Avane, “Punky Reggae party,” *Non Stop*, February 1984.

Pistols. When the club's management reportedly banned the Sound Club because "dancing to that type of music was bringing down the ceiling," Gajewski took the ban of recorded punk as an opportunity to seek out live acts to perform.¹⁵³

In 1979, punk was first and foremost about the music. However, for Gajewski and others involved in the punk movement around the Riviera-Remont gallery, the music had a range of ideals that came with it. In a 1979 pamphlet entitled "Punk," Gajewski explains the movement: "1977 was the year of punk, just as 1966 was the year of the hippie movement, 1968 was the year of contestation, and 1972 the year of the trivial decadence of the glitter-thing."¹⁵⁴ He traces punk's origins back to the 1930s, but focuses especially on key musical influences in the late 1960s and early 1970s, including the Velvet Underground and Iggy Pop and the Stooges.

Besides elucidating some of the ideas behind punk, this quasi-manifesto suggests why Gajewski might have taken interest in the movement. While he was a few years older than many of the bands, he identified similarities between punk and the political and musical events taking place when he came of age in the late 1960s. Similarly, the DJ at the Sound Club meetings, Andrzej "Amok" Turczynowicz, was often described as an "ex-hippie," associating him with the countercultural movement of the previous generation.¹⁵⁵ The involvement of people nearly a generation older than most punk band members is somewhat surprising – particularly since punks often scoffed at the bands involved in MMG for featuring 30-year-olds under the title "youth." However, since most punks were either in (or had dropped out of) school or barely out of it, with limited financial resources, social connections, and knowledge of what it took to get a band started or show a film or organize a concert, Gajewski (particularly as the director of a student club) and others like him were in a unique position to supply the stability and the practical necessities for maintaining punk's momentum.

Likewise, the generation that grew up in the 1960s had reasons for taking interest in punk. For one, they had grown up at a time when rock's affiliation with liberation and left wing politics (in the West) and with liberation and the West (in Poland) made it all

¹⁵³ Dr. Avane, "Punky Reggae party."

¹⁵⁴ Gajewski, "Punk."

¹⁵⁵ Anka Dabrowska, "Amok Club," *Na Przelaj*, July 1979. Usually this would have been a major strike amongst punks, but since he had "reformed" and turned to punk, they deemed him acceptable.

the more exciting a cultural phenomenon. Many of the people in this generation – in the West as well as in Poland – saw the 1970s and the move toward pop and disco as the defeat of rock’s alternative to dominant, repressive culture and politics. When punk turned up in the late 1970s, many of this generation recognized some of the counter-cultural spirit that had driven rock in their own early adulthood. When I asked Andrzej “Amok” Turczynowicz about his relationship to punk and the hippy movement, his response was telling: “I wasn’t a hippie or a punk. I am Amokpositiv and like a typical Aries always seek absolute truth first of all. The Sex Pistols, Ramones, and Buzzcocks were just as great as Jefferson Airplane.”¹⁵⁶ It was this spirit – the search for truth and great music, irrespective of its time of creation – that tied the generations together.

It is likely that Gajewski was quite self-aware of his own role as a sponsor/father figure of punk. He wrote extensively about the Sex Pistols, including the band’s manager/impresario Malcolm McLaren, whose use of the band to expound his own “anarchic values” Gajewski admired.¹⁵⁷ Inspired by McLaren, Gajewski acted as the Polish equivalent in many respects. Like McLaren, Gajewski was nearly a generation older than many of the first punk performers (most of whom were around 18 in 1979). While McLaren based his operation at a sex shop in London, Gajewski created an art gallery at the student club Remont, carrying on the proud tradition of Punk with its walls decorated with “shocking pictures, posters, and slogans” like the following placard:

How much longer in Poland will we not have our own authentic bands? How much longer will your taste be formed by dilettantes from the radio and discotheques? How much longer will records produced by Polish presses be documents of idiotism and corruption? WRITE A TEXT, FORM A MELODY, START A BAND, ORGANIZE A CONCERT, BUY 100 CASSETTES AND REPRODUCE YOUR RECORDING! SUPPORT OTHER BANDS WHO ARE INDEPENDENT OF INTERWIZJA AND STUDIO-2. DON’T DIVIDE, UNITE!¹⁵⁸

This last line, about supporting bands independent of studio-2 and *Interwizja* – a television program that sometimes showed early rock bands and shows and its annual

¹⁵⁶ Andrzej Turczynowicz, email, June 1, 2009.

¹⁵⁷ See Marcus, *Lipstick Traces* for a fascinating reading of McLaren and the Sex Pistols.

¹⁵⁸ Barbara Dąbrowska, “Dzieci śmieci,” *Na Przełaj*, January 4, 1981.

festival in Sopot – was likely directed against the bands of the MMG. Punk bands were not interested in establishing anything like an official ideology, but punk did come with certain values. Above all, it was an independent art movement that valued doing-it-yourself and rejecting commercial interests. MMG, on the other hand, was based on a model of promoting youth music. For this reason, for Gajewski and many punks, it was only nominally different from musical acts like *estrada* that had long dominated the Polish stage.

As this suggests, while Gajewski might be considered an “impresario,” he was a very different sort than men like Chelstowski and Sylwin. Both Turczynowicz and Gajewski were ideologically and aesthetically committed to punk. Although separated from the bulk of the movement by age, they took its ideals and aesthetic as their own. It is little surprise, then, that he and some punk bands pushed back angrily when MMG made efforts to incorporate some of the energy and imagery of punk into its music and culture.

Between 1980 and 1982, punk gradually emerged from the underground and began to circulate with the music of the MMG in the national concert and festival scene. As this took place, a tension arose between ideologically and aesthetically-driven, countercultural impresarios like Gajewski, and entrepreneurial, promotion-oriented impresarios like Chelstowski and Sylwin, each of whom had a different view of the nature of punk and its future in Poland. The uneasy conglomeration that resulted, balancing rock’s alternative status and its popularity and accessibility, was crucial to the music’s success. However, this balance became increasingly difficult to maintain over the course of the 1980s.

The changes taking place in the punk scene are demonstrated by the contrast between two punk/rock festivals that occurred that year – the New Wave Festival in Kołobrzeg and the New Wave Festival in Toruń. In the August of 1980, the First Statewide Review of New Wave Rock Bands (Pierwszy ogólnopolski przegląd zespołów rockowych “nowej fali”) took place in Kołobrzeg. The Festival in Kołobrzeg would be remembered as moment of underground punk’s peak – filled with energetic, noncommercial, amateur bands that upheld the ideals of punk and its musical vitality. The artistic director was none other than Andrzej “Amok” Turczynowicz, the DJ from Riviera-Remont. He may have been identified as an ex-hippy, but he was accepted

among punks. And rightly so: he even played with his own band, Kanal. Perhaps it will no longer be surprising to note that among the festival's organizers were the local club of the Socialist Union of Polish Students (SZSP), "Mechanic," and the Kołobrzeg Center of Culture (Kołobrzieski Ośrodek Kultury).

Shortly after the Kołobrzeg festival, the First New Wave Festival (I Festiwał Nowej Fali) took place in the city of Toruń at the student club Od Nowa. The name was similar, the venue was another student club, and many of the bands that performed were in fact the same bands that played at Kołobrzeg. Even so, the Toruń festival was a symbolic departure from its Kołobrzeg counterpart, representing changes coming in the punk scene. Both festivals evidently had ambitious organizers: both were labeled "first," preparing the way for a string of annual follow-ups. Of the two, however, only the Toruń festival continued to take place after 1980. As the similar band lineups might suggest, the reason for this was not inherent in the music. Rather, it resulted from organizational and ideological differences.

Simply put, the organizers of the Kołobrzeg festival, Gajewski and Turczynowicz, were punks, or at least "fellow travelers." Their interest in the music and the ideals was personal and emotional. Waldemar Rudziecki, director of the Toruń student club Od Nowa and organizer of the Toruń New Wave Festival, was certainly not a punk. Clearly, he saw something of value in the music – no one with only a wavering commitment to punk would have gone through the trouble and risk necessary for organizing a concert. Indeed, punk bands and Gajewski himself uniformly praised Rudziecki for his tremendous assistance in making shows happen. But first and foremost, Rudziecki was a promoter.¹⁵⁹ His objective was to make punk viable and increase its profile in Poland – in short, to make what had been a purely amateur movement into a professional enterprise.

While this comment was made years later about the Jarocin festival, it speaks to Rudziecki's objectives as an impresario (and a good bit of frustration with Poland's music scene):

¹⁵⁹ Unfortunately, this means that it is trickier to find information on Rudziecki since he spent his time lining up deals behind the scenes rather than writing manifestos. This leaves only a few brief quotations and a greater number of third-party recollections. I have been unable to locate him for additional information.

Truthfully speaking, Jarocin horrifies me a bit. What happens there has little in common with a musical review. Nothing results from that festival – bands play and vanish. Promotion is zero. Bands only benefit from it in that the public gets accustomed to them. I've never heard of anyone employing a band that won the festival. Anyways, this problem affects not just Jarocin. ... The only benefit of Jarocin is that for a couple of days a little bit is written and said about the winning bands. That's all. I haven't seen much interest of the radio in winners of Jarocin. Various people sit there and play music according to their own tastes. For this reason, normal promotion like in other countries is impossible.¹⁶⁰

For Rudziecki, a festival's primary purpose was not to serve as an art gallery, to challenge assumptions about culture, or set up an alternative space; rather, his focus was the practical goal of promoting the bands playing in it, paving the way for their future success.

When the punk scene began to encounter the “mainstream” in the 1980s, Gajewski (and perhaps Turczynowicz) felt alienated and disappointed, since their activity was based on inspiration and an ideological commitment to the punk scene. There was no reason to continue the festival for its own sake. When asked why he did not repeat the festival the next year, Turczynowicz responded, “Such a festival could only happen once.”¹⁶¹ For him, it was a spontaneous experience; anything less was not worth repeating. Rudziecki's objective, on the other hand, remained exactly the same: he simply needed to continue to promote. This gave him the flexibility necessary to adapt punk to the changing situation.

This difference should not be overstated: in both cases, punk was still controversial, clearly on the margins of official culture. Gajewski praised Rudziecki for his efforts in making the Toruń festival possible, distinguishing him from the typical stooges from the music industry.¹⁶² However, the Toruń new wave festival also brought some of the first signs of punk's presence in the general public. It was not a coincidence that it was one of the few early punk events that got coverage in some of the mainstream

¹⁶⁰ Janusz Jaroszczyk and Tomasz Polec, *Gazeta Młodych* 664, no. 61 (February 8, 1988).

¹⁶¹ Turczynowicz, interview.

¹⁶² Gajewski and Piotr Rypson, *Post*, November 10, 1980.

press. In the years that followed, Toruń and Od Nowa in particular became known as a center for Nowa Fala (“New Wave”), a loose synonym in Poland for punk.¹⁶³

Rudziecki was crucial in maintaining the presence of punk in Poland for several years. In the mid 1980s, he was instrumental in reviving Gdańsk as a center of punk. After its initial prominence as a center of punk at the end of the 1970s, the migration of Deadlock to Warsaw left Gdańsk relatively quiet in the early 1980s in terms of new band formation. This changed around 1985, precisely when Rudziecki moved from Toruń to Gdańsk. Soon after, a formation developed in the city known as the Gdańsk Alternative Scene (Gdańska Scena Alternatywna, or GSA). The name itself hints at Rudziecki’s involvement: punk bands were not known for their inclination to form associations or take on titles. Rudziecki decided to move to Gdańsk when he thought the scene in Toruń was starting to stagnate in 1982. He told an interviewer,

There was lots of potential in Gdansk, but someone had to come create the right situation. If the necessary conditions are created, something new always starts to operate. At the beginning of the 1960s, there were managers here like Franek Walicki, who created conditions for bands to exist, and immediately there were results. The majority of bands lacked somewhere to practice. We started to do something, and we didn’t have to wait long for an effect.¹⁶⁴

The “conditions” included turning the local house of culture, nicknamed *Burdel* (literally “brothel,” or a messy place) into a place where bands could come and practice and perform.

The first GSA concert took place in March of 1985. A few months later, Rudziecki himself wrote an article for *Non Stop* introducing (and publicizing) the scene and a few of its bands. The article divides the scene into a few branches, including “avant-punk” “avant-garde,” “reggae and ska-reggae,” “classic rock fused with South American dance music,” and “jazz rock.” Rudziecki returned to the familiar strategy among promoters of balancing the bands between accessibility and artistic legitimacy – nearly all of the categories have some connection to art or a more established genre of music – while also promising something new and different. This second objective was

¹⁶³ The meaning of “new wave” in Poland differs somewhat from how it is used in the West. I will discuss this in greater detail in later chapters.

¹⁶⁴ Grzegorz Brzozowicz, “Przełom w Burdelu: Gdanska Scena Alternatywna,” *Non stop*, April 1986.

even more critical in 1985 than it had been in the past, however. The article concludes with a sentence staking its claim to alternative status: “Besides these underground bands, there is of course also the whole rock establishment, but that is an entire different story.”¹⁶⁵

In each of the cases discussed, impresarios were crucial to the early formation the Polish rock scene. Without them, MMG would not have existed, and punk in Poland would likely be remembered by a small group of Poles as an idiosyncratic band or two playing strange, primitive music for a few months. Impresarios ensured the continued and widespread presence of punk and rock in Poland. Even once rock had established itself as a popular musical form, the Polish music industry continued to necessitate the assistance of experts in negotiating its complex bureaucracy.

Perhaps the most high-profile activity by an impresario was the extraordinary organization of the Jarocin festival by Walter Chelstowski (with some help from fellow creators of the MMG, including Sylwin and Jacobson, who took over as one of the directors when Chelstowski resigned in 1986). Starting in 1980, when the site of the MMG concert was transferred from Sopot to Jarocin, Chelstowski sought to combine rock’s mass appeal with punk’s cache as an alternative to official culture. His success in doing so over the course of the 1980s is remarkable: by 1983, the event spanned over several days and attracted some 20,000 Polish youth. Over the years, Chelstowski continually had to secure the practical necessities of the festival’s continued existence, from finances to the politics of gaining the support of local, regional, and ultimately central authorities, while also ensuring that the event appealed to Polish youth.

One of the ways he performed this task was by constantly shifting the lineup to balance the diverse array of requirements of the industry and rock scene. Much like the gatekeepers at the radio, Chelstowski personally screened the bands that applied to perform at Jarocin, selecting those that would be allowed to play in the festival. In 1984, for instance, when rock had made headway into areas associated with the mainstream, like the Opole festival and radio programs, he selected a particularly controversial lineup on the alternative end of the spectrum, including several hardcore punk bands. This allowed him to combat any feelings that rock had become commercialized, at least as

¹⁶⁵ Waldemar Rudziecki, “Gdanska Scena Alternatywna,” *Non stop*, August 1985, 10-11.

applied to Jarocin. The next year, however, following the harsh criticism of rock in the press and from the party, he selected a more moderate lineup, increasing the festival's acceptability in the eyes of authorities. Another strategy Chelstowski applied was consistently referring to each festival as the "last year of Jarocin." Besides ensuring that fans came to the festival with heightened anticipation, this strategy also made it less likely that authorities would take the time to block the festival in the future.

Despite Chelstowski's role in the MMG, which was sometimes at odds with the early punk scene, Jarocin became known as the center of alternative music in the 1980s. This was likely because Chelstowski chose many bands that were not played on the radio (including reggae, metal, and hardcore punk), and also because the festival was performed live and far away from representatives of the party or the music industry (except for Chelstowski himself, who worked in the music industry – although he directed the festival on his own behalf rather than as a representative of Studio 2, which showed no interest in the festival).

Another well-known impresario, Andrzej Mogielnicki, navigated the rock scene closer to the mainstream, working directly with the music industry for the success of the band he managed. Lady Pank formed in late 1981 when Mogielnicki – long a fixture of the Polish music scene as a lyricist – decided to put together a hit rock band around Jan Borysewicz, the talented guitarist then playing with the older band Budka Suflera.¹⁶⁶ Mogielnicki – 35 years old in 1983, or roughly a decade older than average member of the band he managed – would serve as Lady Pank's manager and lyricist. Mogielnicki's skill at finding the right sound, the right image, the right words, and negotiating the intricacies of the Polish music scene are evident in the group's fast rise to popularity. Where most Polish rock bands had been around for a few years when they got their first record deals, Lady Pank's came at the beginning of their careers, and with a large press run at that. Mogielnicki's lyrics – here from one of the band's many hits, "Mniej niż zero" (Less than zero) point to how this success was achieved:

Perhaps you think that you know something more
Because you have understanding, two hands and desire
Your place on earth translates
To graduating in 5 years

¹⁶⁶ Wojciech Soporek, "Mister Pank: Rozmowa z Andrzejem Mogielnickim," *Non stop*, November 1983.

There are people – no joke
For whom you are worth

Less than zero
Less than zero

The lyrics in this case function mostly to create a certain image to accompany the music – that of a misfit. This both identified the band with alternative culture and encouraged youth who liked the music to do the same (and more importantly for Mogielnicki, vice-versa). It played on the lack of respect that went along with concept of “Lost Generation” while also making fun of those know-it-alls who achieve more traditional goals like graduating on time. At the same time, it avoids any claim or language that would be controversial enough to ban it from radio play or attract special ire from politicians. The band’s sound had a similar effect: it was playful and punkish, but also professional and polished.

With Mogielnicki’s direction, Lady Pank had unprecedented success in its representation on the radio, on television, and in the music press, as some of the numbers listed above indicate. Further, the band achieved an unparalleled degree of commercial, promotional success: Lady Pank brand perfume and attire was available for purchase along with the band’s music.

These are just a few of the most prominent impresarios. Countless others, using their position in the industry, as workers in student clubs or houses of culture, or just their experience or savvy, sought to promote rock or specific bands as impresarios or managers. As important as they were, though, the job of an impresario was not an easy one. Balancing the requirements of the industry and politicians with the demands of the rock scene was an extremely difficult balancing act. Even the most successful impresarios faced problems, particularly by the mid 1980s.

To take the example of Lady Pank, the band’s success depended on maintaining both its acceptability and its alternativeness. This meant the band couldn’t appear too tame, or too controlled by Mogielnicki, or it would lose its appeal. On the other hand, when the band engaged in controversial acts, it was equally disastrous. These opposite pressures grew over the course of the 1980s. Even in 1984, when the band was still at the height of its popularity, some rock fans accused the band of lacking authenticity. For

instance, one reader of the music periodical *Non Stop* wrote in a letter asking, “Does no one know that they are puppets that only play as Mister Mogielnicki tells them to?”¹⁶⁷ The next year, these feelings expanded. When a survey of rock fans appearing in *Razem* magazine in April of 1985 presented the “noose” award for the greatest harm to Polish rock, Lady Pank came in second place, beaten out only by the Ministry of Culture and Art. This bitterness flowed in part from the conditions of the music industry: as detailed above, popular bands like Lady Pank were often perceived (correctly, in many cases) as blocking newer, smaller bands from the stage. Further, as they became part of the mainstream music scene, they were associated with official culture.

On the other hand, a move away from official acceptability was at least as damning. When the band’s guitarist came on stage intoxicated and exposed himself at a concert in 1986, amidst the public uproar, Mogielnicki wrote an editorial separating himself from the band and decrying its breach of public decency.¹⁶⁸ The move may have been understandable as an act of self-defense, but it also shows how delicate the place of rock in socialist Poland was, even with the proficiency of a skilled impresario on its side.

Chełstowski and Sylwin also faced increasing difficulty in sponsoring the Jarocin festival as time went on. Even with the festival’s reputation as an alternative site of culture (certainly compared to Lady Pank), Chełstowski had to work hard to maintain this position. As early as 1982, he faced accusations that he was using the festival as a device to make money – a key challenge to its ability to serve as an alternative cultural sphere. An article by journalist Dariusz Michalski in the socialist youth organization paper *Sztandar Młodych* presents a remarkable financially-based critique of Jarocin. Michalski traces the festival to its roots in the MMG concerts in the late 1970s – or as he puts it, the “Five years existence of false ideas, representations, views, and above all myths stubbornly propagated by Jacek Sylwin and his coworkers.”¹⁶⁹ Rather than a musical or ideological movement, Michalski argues that MMG should be understood as a “system of dependency, quietly voicing the principle, ‘whoever is not with us is against us.’ For rock bands it is clear: either participate in the MMG movement, or else. [...] Money. [...] That was the real motivator of the MMG movement.” Not that Michalski begrudges their

¹⁶⁷ Jacek Korczak, *Non stop*, 1984.

¹⁶⁸ Jerzy Bojanowicz, Jacek Zwozniak, “Nokaut czy Harakiri?,” *Non stop*, August 1986

¹⁶⁹ Dariusz Michalski, “Rock swobodny, rock otwarty,” *Sztandar Młodych*, September 3, 1982.

success: he has no problem with those who are talented at “earning a great deal quickly.” Rather, the problem is their dishonesty, using the system of verification at Jarocin to screen bands that did not fit with their promotional interests. While claiming to promote rock, he argues they secretly torpedoed bands that follow a course of their own, like Perfect and Turbo.

Michalski’s argument is remarkable because it combines the sensibility of a socialist critique of market-driven art with the anti-establishment, do-it-yourself aesthetics of early supporters of punk like Henryk Gajewski. Not that it is overly surprising that these critiques can be aligned, since punk was in part an assault on capitalism. However, in the context of Poland, Michalski’s blend of punk anti-commercialism and old-fashioned socialist distrust of the market’s effects on aesthetics was highly effective. Michalski even quotes song lyrics by WC, a popular punk band that applied to perform at Jarocin but was refused by the verification committee (i.e., Chełstowski):

You disguise yourself
No one knows you
Again the jukebox plays
The generation endures

Always being yourself
You don’t understand anything
Among the pack of lies
Sylwin makes cash

...

Despite his hundred years
He plays for you
And always gets angry
When he’s here with you

...

Put three fingers together
Love or destroy
Hołdys gets mad
And wants money

Young – young generation

Young – young generation

Michalski's critique is not entirely fair – if Chelstowski and Sylwin were truly only interested in getting rich, they could have found easier ways than promoting rebellious music in an authoritarian state. It is not entirely unfounded, though; the movement was particularly designed to create a market for rock, and even the more punk-leaning years of Jarocin like 1982 and 1984 excluded bands according to the tastes of the festival organizers to fit program time constraints. Further, while the economic reforms after martial law left much unchanged in the music world, the relative increase in some firms' independence from the state budget made accusations of profit-seeking more plausible.

There is nothing particularly surprising in tension between bands and the people putting on rock shows – the relationship is similar to an employer-employee relationship. However, in the context of Poland, Chelstowski and Sylwin were as far from the conservative directors of the industry and the state officials regulating it as they were from the punks in their shows. Jarocin was tied to them, and rock in Poland was tied to Jarocin and other festivals like it. When Michalski challenged the motives behind Jarocin, he questioned the authenticity of all of the bands “complicit” with the festival.

This challenge was a powerful one. As I suggested in the previous chapter, the rock scene reacted strongly against any perceived cooperation with the party. In Poland, where the state, party, and industry were all tied together, being seen as bowing to the demands of the industry was akin to being seen as collaborating with political authorities. It meant being “official” rather than “alternative” – and thus not being authentic. And this meant attracting the ire of the most dedicated portion of punk rock fans.

Yet, the danger on the other side was just as great. When Chelstowski went too far in asserting the festival's alternativeness, he risked not only the festival's right to continued existence, but also the wellbeing of himself and associates. In this environment, Chelstowski finally made good on his promise to stop organizing the festival. In an interview in July of 1987, he bitterly observed,

I said there could be a cultural event in Poland that isn't
“dangerous” and brings in a lot of currency, that will be one
of the centers of European and even maybe a world

amateur movement, and everyone said it was impossible. In the end, they were right. Because for example, I encountered a barrier where I wanted to push something, but a mid level bureaucrat in the MKiS could liquidate the entire following movement with his decision. . . . The whole mechanism in which the festival operates is sick. Nowhere in the world is there a cultural event done by bureaucrats. It isn't possible. It is always done by a few people who know what they are doing. I know what to do to make Poland competitive in the music market in the next few years, but no one wants to do it, no one cares. They just want a pension, and to move into a bigger office. . . . I am tired of fighting for the festival's existence.¹⁷⁰

It was more than general malaise that drove Chelstowski away. In an interview in 2000, he identified a key reason for his resignation as the increased pressure from authorities. One of Chelstowski's stage managers was arrested for interference with police access to the stage. In 1986, Chelstowski was accused by Poland's national court of discriminating against certain varieties of music in organizing the festival.¹⁷¹ Even though the events of the summer of 1986 had not resulted in a ban on rock, the countless barriers set up by countless "mid-level bureaucrats" combined to make it virtually impossible to continue to organize an independent alternative cultural event. In fact, unbeknownst to him, the barriers went considerably higher: in September 1985, the Division of Culture of the Central Committee of the PZPR discussed replacing him as the festival director.¹⁷²

The fate of the festival after Chelstowski's departure affirms that he had been exceptionally talented at negotiating the balance between acceptability and alternative credibility. In 1987, Marcin Jacobsen, another of the organizers of the MMG movement, in cooperation with Leszek Winder, a participant in MMG as a member of the band Krzak, took Chelstowski's place in directing the festival. Reviews of the festival were mixed. On one hand, there was none of the kind of publicized incidents that had taken place the previous year. However, for some reviewers, the festival had lost its vitality. An article in *Non Stop* that offered an extensive review of its high and low points concluded

¹⁷⁰ Sławomir Gołaszewski, "Dlaczego Robilem Jarocin?," *Magazyn Muzyczny - Jazz*, July 1987, 29.

¹⁷¹ Jacek Krzeminski, "Bunt kontrolowany," *Rzeczpospolita*, August 11, 2000.

¹⁷² Wydział Kultury KC PZPR, "Ocena i wnioski wynikające z przebiegu festiwalu piosenki 1985," September 24, 1985, 1354 Wydział Kultury PZPR, 1027, 924/49, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw, Poland.

that the festival “took place because it had to.” This was a good thing, because “without it, it would be impossible to imagine the music” and it was “awaited by fans, locals, musicians, and journalists.”¹⁷³ On the other hand, the description hardly fit with the life-altering excitement often described by fans attending the festival in its early years. When asked why he considered it successful, Jacobson responded,

First, the festival took place. It turned out that it was possible to do it without any unnecessary scandals. The majority of programmatic concepts came to fruition. It was the calmest (*najspokojniejszy*) festival in history.¹⁷⁴

The interviewer replied, asking if that was because it was more conservative. Jacobson acknowledged that Chelstowski had expressed this opinion, but he did not quite agree, arguing, “It was not progressive or conservative. It was how it had to be.” The vision he had for the festival, along with Winder, was for it to “sum up what happened in the preceding season.” Finally, the interviewer asked if perhaps Jarocin had become “an empty skeleton, a shell. Perhaps only its form remains?” To this, Jacobson answered,

There have been better and worse Jarocins. Walter Chelstowski had exceptional success in formulating catchy slogans that ensured the empathy of reviewers and others. I do not have the ambition for formulating these slogans. I believe the festival in Jarocin should be a musical festival, not a political one that has the strength to change something or call for some kind of cultural revolution.¹⁷⁵

It would be unfair to blame Jacobson for this approach to the festival. After all, as he noted, the festival took place, and this was no small feat considering the bad publicity of the year before. Since intervention by the state was always a possibility, he may have been speaking the literal truth when he said “it was how it had to be.” Further, rock bands were not generally interested in attending political events; why should Jarocin have been one in the first place? However, in the context of communist Poland, placing the festival in a sphere of pure art also had its own political implications. It meant it was closer to becoming just another artistic event in the cultural calendar. In fact, the purpose of the

¹⁷³ Jan Skaradziński, “Rock around the clock,” *Non stop*, October 1987.

¹⁷⁴ Barbara Józwiak and Mirosław Makowski, “W Połowie,” *Magazyn Muzyczny - Jazz*, December 1987, 4-5.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

festival Jacobson offers – to “sum up what happened in the previous season” – was nearly a literal rendering of the more mainstream Opole festival’s stated purpose.

Even subtle differences were recognizable to the sensitive world of Polish rock. Fans immediately recognized that something was amiss: during the festival, one reporter noted fans demanding the death of one of the organizers, chanting, “Kill Winder.”¹⁷⁶ Even more rock-friendly writers had misgivings about the condition of the festival. Shortly after the event, *Non Stop*’s new director, Zbigniew Hołdys of the rock band Perfect, published an obituary reading, “With deep regret, we inform that on the days of August 3, 4, 5, and 6, 1988, after a long, painful illness, at 19, others say 9 years of age, the Jarocin Festival died.” It continued,

In the deceased we lose a tested friend, who was with us in the most difficult moments, a merited fighter for matters of rock in Poland. The symptoms of a terminal illness could be observed for a long time. Already in the late Walter [Chelstowski] years examples of this abounded. The short, but intense [Marcin] Jacobson episode today seems more wonderful than we judged it a year ago. Both men did not find understanding or acceptance among the people permanently posted at the sick bed.¹⁷⁷

Hołdys’ position was an exaggerated one; the festival continued to exist for six more years until 1994. But it was difficult for anyone to deny that the explosion of rock that had taken place in the early 1980s was a distant memory by 1988.

Conclusion

The contradictions of the Polish music industry opened up new opportunities and also set limitations for rock’s growth in the 1980s. The political changes of martial law affected many participants in the rock scene – some band members reported being beaten or arrested at rallies. However, for the scene as a whole, the contemporaneous economic changes in the direction of a market system were at least as significant. Thus, along with repression, the 1980s were also filled with creativity and social opportunities, including events like listening to music on the radio, going to concerts, or starting a band. Yet, the

¹⁷⁶ Mirosław Soliwoda, *Świata Młodych*, 1988.

¹⁷⁷ Hołdys, “Festiwal Rockowy Jarocin.”

effects of market pressures on Poland were very different than in the music industry in the capitalist West. Rather than “stagnation” or “progression” to capitalism, the music industry in 1980s Poland suggests the numerous tensions and contradictions in the economic, cultural, and ideological structures in this period of East European socialism. These tensions brought a range of opportunities and challenges for the people struggling to carve out space for cultural creativity and social action.

Looking at the socialist music industry affords a chance to reevaluate how we think about late socialist Eastern Europe. The socialist economies of Eastern Europe (specifically Poland, but a similar argument could likely be made for Hungary, which underwent even more extensive reforms) operated in a manner quite differently than phrases like “planned economy” or even “command economy” suggest. Particularly after reforms were initiated in 1982, market conditions were relevant in the music industry, although in diverse, complex ways. In the case of Poland, it is meaningful to talk about a culture industry and a “rock market” in the 1980s, but it was different from its capitalist counterpart in numerous respects, including its bureaucratic regulation (and lack thereof), its endemic scarcity, its close relationship with cultural politics, and the peculiar set of regulations governing it.¹⁷⁸

The ambiguities of the rock market in Poland also allow us to reflect on the relationship between market structures and cultural freedom. As I noted, the existence of private presses did create opportunities for bands that otherwise would not have had the opportunity to record. However, they also relied on bands’ abilities to attract a mass audience, and brought a new sort of restriction in the form of complicated contracts designed to extract profit from musicians (compared to the clumsy, obvious extraction of profit by the socialist state), as the negative experience of Maanam with private firm Rogot reminds us. The structures of the socialist system offered their own small spaces of freedom as well, since its expansiveness and structural complexity prevented efficient oversight. This allowed studios, houses of culture, student clubs, and even occasionally the radio and recording studios to allow rock to develop in ways not intended by

¹⁷⁸ Similarities might be closer to actual existing capitalist systems, which seldom rely on a true free market for all conditions – an important reminder that as with socialism, the practice of capitalism often varies from theory. In the contemporary US, for instance, some music is funded for its lasting cultural value by state and nonprofit organizations. Further, even a free market itself can make cultural/political concerns into financial incentive when, for instance, people and social groups boycott a controversial hip hop album.

authorities. In this sense, spaces emerged within the socialist industry that operated somewhat like civil society, although they were formally linked to the state and/or party.

Finally, the production-centered approach I have taken in this article begins to suggest how a model of popular culture in socialist Eastern Europe that goes beyond political resistance and compliance by incorporating the conditions of production. While the authoritarian political system has attracted most scholars' attention as the main factor dictating conditions of Polish reality, we have seen that even in the midst of martial law, the structure of institutions like the music industry were critical in determining what life and culture were like in Poland. Politics were indeed important, but they existed in a constantly shifting balance with financial imperatives, as well as structural and regulatory constraints within the industry. At the same time, the relationship between rock music and its production is more complex than a straightforward base-determines-superstructure model allows. Even the unwieldy Polish industry changed to meet the new conditions and opportunities created by rock's success. Further, industry conditions deeply affected the rock scene, but in diverse, difficult to predict ways. Constraints made it difficult for bands to exist, but also ensured that rock's growth would be rapid since performing casually or occasionally was not an option. Economic considerations ensured that there were serious incentives for the industry to support rock as long as it was popular (and profitable), but also potential disincentives, depending on how political winds were blowing at a given moment. This created a wide range of possibilities that could be exploited, but also limitations that could be crippling to bands that lacked a manager or impresario to help negotiate them.

Any consideration of the politics of rock music is also linked to the music industry through the concept of authenticity, which was crucial to bands and their fans alike. It is yet another tension in the music industry that being seen as authentic and alternative meant separating oneself from the industry, but being heard meant working with it. In this sense, Polish bands had it twice as difficult as their capitalist counterparts. In capitalist countries, rock bands must figure out how to negotiate a path through the industry's capitalist mechanisms to get their music to the audience without becoming subsumed into that system – that is, “selling out.” In the Polish case, though, authenticity was even trickier since it involved not just a band's relation to the commercial sphere, but

also to the political sphere. Alongside abstract charges like “selling out,” any sign of cooperation with the industry risked the more serious charge of cooperation with the state and the party – precisely the opposite of being “alternative.” Yet, signs of cooperation could be found everywhere. Unlike capitalist countries where independent labels and small venues afford a chance to separate oneself from the market, even “independent” radio and student clubs were ultimately linked to the party. For the first few years of the 1980s, aided by the skillful rhetoric and practiced maneuvers of impresarios and managers, at least some rock bands managed to successfully negotiate this narrow path between being rejected by fans as complicit with the system and being rejected by the state as a threat to order, the nation, and socialism. At the same time, even at rock’s peak, there were constant limitations that prevented bands from successfully reaching their audiences. These responses occurred every day – a record label would refuse to make a record for a rock band, a radio presenter would choose something safer to play, an *estrada* agency would refuse to book a band for a concert, an MKiS Committee would refuse to give a band artistic verification. The music industry was set up in a way that made neglecting rock natural and effortless, if costly in terms of missed financial opportunities.

Most complaints about the restrictions of the industry come from the more popular, successful bands. This makes sense when one considers that they had significantly more representation in the press (and perhaps a greater sense of entitlement), but they were far better off than their amateur counterparts. After all, these were the bands that had managed to break through the system negotiating their way through all of these possible barriers. Even so, they brought their negative experiences with them into the spotlight, and continued to experience challenges and setbacks even at the height of their careers. Even the most popular, prominent bands faced regular challenges to their ability to present their music. Perfect’s Zbigniew Hołdys – the musician in Polish rock that was probably closest to an impresario himself – constantly complained of his difficulties in getting a record pressed, a process that took him 31 years. Live performances could also be difficult to secure, even for a band like Perfect. While the band was not officially banned, they sometimes ran into individual venues or agencies refusing to present their shows; one journalist even mistakenly believed they were banned

from playing in Warsaw.¹⁷⁹ Smaller bands that lacked the clout, experience, and facility of a band like Perfect faced many of the same difficulties, but were less able to resolve them, or even find an audience for their complaints. This was true even at the peak of Polish rock. As the 1980s wore on, the conditions of the industry had an increasingly negative effect on bands. What had once been advantages to rock's expansion – the need to constantly tour and the combination of alternative allure and mass appeal – rapidly became liabilities.

In these ways we can see how deeply the music industry affected the trajectory of Polish rock. Yet, this is only one side of the story. Even here, taking an industry perspective, we have seen how rock brought about changes in the industry – no small feat for the reasons I detailed above – through its potential for profit, its mass appeal, and by attracting the attention of some key young music professionals. In the chapters that follow, we will see that the ways these conditions played out depended on and responded to the actions and reactions of political authorities, Polish society, and of course, the bands and music of the Polish rock scene.

¹⁷⁹ “Giganci rocka odchodzą?” *Na Przelaj*, April 10, 1983. It is conceivable that the band was actually banned and Holdys was attempting to alleviate the situation by not mentioning it – although I have found no documents suggesting this, and his array of other complaints suggests that coming to terms with the state was not his priority in the interview. That this consideration comes to mind does demonstrate the ease with which following the Polish rock scene can lead to conspiracy theories, though – even two and a half decades after the fact.

Chapter III

The Party and the State

When rock began its dramatic rise in popularity in the early 1980s, the Polish communist party (PZPR) was struggling to maintain its authority amidst crisis. Even before 1980, it had become clear that Poland's weakened economy could no longer afford the heavy subsidizing of food prices. When changes in food prices brought heavy resistance from Polish society in the form of strikes, the effects went far beyond mere economic loss: it demonstrated that the government could no longer rest its authority on its ability to deliver goods to its citizenry.

As I will show, the party sought to restore its authority in Poland in the 1980s by recasting itself as the guardian of the Polish nation and the defender and disseminator of its culture. Yet, party members were sharply divided as to what the nation and its culture would look like. In this context, rock's rise in the early 1980s became significant politically. As I have shown, rock's meaning was never straightforward or self-evident. On one hand, it could be interpreted as fitting party goals of disseminating culture by popularizing music among youth and encouraging youth participation. On the other hand, it could be seen as the very antithesis of Polish culture, and a sign that the party was failing in its role to protect it.

To use the terms of Antonio Gramsci and their adaptor, Raymond Williams, party leadership sought ideological authority to rule – hegemony – in part through its claim to disseminate and defend Polish culture.¹⁸⁰ In this context, when rock music came up for discussion, it was either incorporated (by emphasizing how it might fit with a particular vision of the Polish nation and its culture) or suppressed (after defining it as a threat to Poland). This chapter will look at the discursive struggle over rock within organs of the

¹⁸⁰ See my coverage of the concept of hegemony in the introduction for a summary of the concept's origins and uses.

party and the state as various individuals and groups sought to situate rock with respect to the Polish socialism, the nation, its culture, and its youth.

Along with culture, the PZPR also redoubled its attention toward youth in the midst of the crises of the 1980s. While youth had always been a concern in party circles, in the 1980s, some party members became increasingly concerned with new information attesting to its abysmal popularity among youth. This was particularly distressing in tandem with the participation of youth and university students in the strikes of August 1980. As with culture, though, how the “youth question” should be addressed was subject to debate, as was the place of rock in the issue. On one hand, rock could be interpreted as the symbol of the degeneration of Polish youth and a contributor to their straying from the central values of Poland and socialism. On the other, rock could be seen as a valuable resource and an opportunity for attracting youth to the party, showing its ability to reform, and to relate to and tolerate youth culture.

In this chapter, I will show how rock music became a focal point at the junction of party debates in the critical areas of youth and culture. This occurred through the shifts that followed in the wake of a series of crises in the late 1970s and early 1980s; taken together, they contributed to the creation of a political environment in which rock could temporarily flourish. As rock grew in popularity, it attracted growing attention of critics and defenders alike within the party. Moreover, its location at precisely the junction of youth and cultural matters ensured that discourse on rock was understood in the context of the attempt to restore party hegemony amidst the numerous difficulties of 1980s Poland. The debates over rock were also tied in with industry conditions, what was going on in the rock scene itself, and its interpretation by fans and Polish society, filtered through the press.

Looking at the debate over rock also affords the opportunity to address some misconceptions in historiography of the PZPR. The communist party is often at the center of discussions about 1980s Poland, where it plays the part of the sinister foil opposite Solidarity. Paradoxically, it is often presented as either opaque or as transparent – either way not meriting a closer look. Its motives are often taken as a self-evident desire for maintaining power and privilege, and its nature as homogeneous and monolithic – a gray,

cynical, bureaucratic mass.¹⁸¹ Its every maneuver is presented as a calculated step of a master plan.

To be sure, this depiction has much to recommend it. The party as an institution was deeply preoccupied with maintaining its power in the 1980s, although this is hardly remarkable for governments. Further, while socialism had attracted revolutionary thinkers in its early years, by the 1980s, they had made the way for more practical, stable, and uninteresting bureaucrats. From the perspective of a historian researching party documents, it does not take long to be lulled into complacency by the wooden language of party meetings, where typically the most revolutionary statements are decades-old quotations from Lenin.

However, this portrait of the PZPR is also misleading. First of all, I showed in the previous chapter, daily reality in the PRL was not dictated solely by decisions made by the party, or even in a struggle between party and opposition. Rather, factors like industry structures and individual initiatives outside the realm of politics were also crucial in determining how daily life, particularly in the cultural sphere, played out. Further, there was a great deal more internal diversity in the PZPR in the 1980s than is often allowed. Most simply, analogous to the music industry, the party was an enormous structure, with numerous committees and divisions at the central, regional, and local levels. The interests, ideals, and personalities of party representatives at these various levels did not always line up. When combined with the ambiguous way central organs often phrased their directives, this diversity opened up room for considerable variation in opinion as well as between theory and the execution of plans.

Even at the center, though, the party has been ascribed a misleading degree of coherence and homogeneity. This is tied up with the term itself – “the party” lends itself to generalizations that would raise flags if terms like “the government” were used in its place. There are reasons the term is often used casually as a generalization: both the opposition and the party’s own members refer to it as homogeneous and monolithic (although differing as to whether it was the antagonist or the protagonist in the narrative of 1980s Poland). Lenin’s practice of democratic centralism – that is, allowing debate

¹⁸¹ This is true of much of the scholarship focusing on 1980s Poland from the perspective of Solidarity (see my introduction for details). This makes sense, since from Solidarity’s outside perspective, the party probably did appear to be a sinister united front.

only internally, and only until decisions were made by the center – also encouraged a culture of greater unity than, say, in the Democratic Party in the United States.

However, by the 1980s, there was considerable variation on many issues discussed among the broad groups and range of individuals assembled under the title “PZPR.” Differences in opinion within the party were generally kept from the public eye, behind closed doors (and are sometimes equally challenging to discern in the archives, where documents often summarize final positions rather than enumerating the contentious debate that led up to them), but they did exist. It is worth remembering that many party members were also Solidarity members in 1980. Some of these members were removed after Martial Law was declared, but party membership continued to represent a spectrum of views ranging from stalinist hardliners to progressive reformers.

As I will show, which of these views dominated at any given moment depended on the time and place. Overall, the party had no master plan for how to address the crises of the 1980s, how to define Polish culture, or its policy on rock music. The closest thing to such a plan, the IX Extraordinary Congress, was so open-ended that almost any course of action could be justified. For instance, hardliners opposed to rock managed to briefly dominate the discussion for a brief period in 1984 after popular outcry over rock at the Opole festival, but this coalition was short lived. A second, progressive current of thought within central party circles emphasized individual and public preference, and demanded a tolerance for it – in short, a respect for “choice” among citizens of the PRL. This marked a departure from the Leninist understanding of the party as a vanguard, determining and responding to what it understood as the needs of its constituents. This change both resulted from and contributed a growing concern about the party’s abysmal unpopularity in the 1980s. However, this idea never found full acceptance either.

Over the 1980s, the distance between these positions grew, in part through the debate over rock. As rock became ubiquitous, it forced party members to line up and take sides, dividing reformist and stalinist factions within the party. This division foregrounded differing opinions within the party – not just about rock, but about the Polish nation, its youth, its culture, Polish socialism, and its direction for the future.

This chapter will look at the Polish communist party’s policy and debates primarily in the two realms that most closely tied in with policy on rock music: youth and

culture. For the reasons above, I have attempted to carefully distinguish between groups within the party – particular local committees, the central committee, or the Division of Culture, for instance – to avoid pushing this generalization unduly far. At the same time, the conceptual unity of the party in the eyes of many Poles (inside and outside the party) is also important to keep in mind in understanding 1980s Polish politics. Before moving on to the 1980s, though, we will begin with a brief survey of ideas and debates within the party in previous decades.

History of the PZPR on Youth and Culture

In the introductory chapter, I briefly outlined the range of ideas about youth and culture among cultural and social critics in 1980s Poland, and interpretations of how rock might fit into those frameworks. The views of the party members who debated how to interpret rock were similarly diverse. There was no preordained policy for dealing with rock. Instead, voices within the party vied for dominance in how to interpret rock as they debated some of the key questions of the decade on matters like Polish culture, youth, and the nation.

How party members interpreted rock was shaped by the range of ideas and language that were accepted and understood in party circles – that is, the “sphere of discourse” of the PZPR in 1980.¹⁸² A range of ways of thinking and speaking about rock were comprehensible and available to a party official (for instance, “rock is a valuable form of youth culture” and “rock is a form of capitalist decadence and a threat to socialism”). Others, however, were not (such as “rock is awesome” or “rock is an authentic alternative to artificial communist culture”).¹⁸³ The range of possible positions was not ready-made or laid out in socialist doctrine. Rather, the discursive sphere about rock (and youth and culture) constantly shifted and reformulated over the 1980s, with Marxism and state socialism as only a portion of the sources, alongside positivism and liberalism, nationalism, and enlightenment humanism.

¹⁸² See my discussion of the concept of “discourse” in the introduction for details on the history of this term.

¹⁸³ This is not to say that everyone operating within this discursive sphere agreed; just that they adopted a common language and set of assumptions necessary to debate each other. For instance, while any Polish communist in 1980 could understand the phrase “rock promotes youth culture,” they could (and did) disagree vehemently as to whether it was true.

In this section, I will examine the evolution of discourse in the PZPR in these areas from its foundation in 1948 to three decades later, when the first MMG concert took place in 1978.¹⁸⁴ By the time our story starts in the late 1970s, party doctrine was substantially different from what it had been in the early 1950s, and certainly from the stalinist or Leninist Soviet Union, as well as classical Marxism. Here I will give only a brief overview, focusing particular attention on the two central areas of party policy that most closely affected its position on rock – the spheres of culture and youth.

To begin with, even classical Marxism leaves a considerable amount of flexibility in interpreting culture; this theoretical flexibility combined with shifting political imperatives to encourage the development of variety of standpoints on culture in the PZPR over its time in power. After the brief period of flexibility immediately after World War Two, in 1948-1949 the party adopted a cultural policy resembling the stalinist model from the Soviet Union, which held socialist realism as the official form of Polish socialist culture.¹⁸⁵ Stalin's dictum, "National in form, socialist in content," was the guideline for this interpretation of culture; a classic example in Warsaw is the Palace of Culture and Science, which was modeled after similar buildings in the Soviet Union, but was embellished by crenellations deemed "Polish" around its top.

By the mid 1950s, the stalinist model gave way to a cultural paradigm more open to elements of Polish culture (in content as well as form), provided they were found to be compatible with socialism. This shift accompanied the 1956 return of Polish communist Władysław Gomułka, who represented the possibility of a "Polish road to socialism." This change in direction was also significant since it inspired the replacement of stalinists – those party members most committed to taking the path of following the socialist

¹⁸⁴ In comparison to the Solidarity period and World War Two, the first three decades of Polish communism have received relatively little treatment in the English language. Barbara Falk, *The Dilemmas of Dissidence in East-Central Europe: Citizen Intellectuals and Philosopher Kings* (New York, 2003) offers a useful overview. In Polish, see Antoni Dudek, *Ślady PeeReLu: Ludzie, Wydarzenia, Mechanizmy* (Kraków, 2000) and Andrzej Paczkowski, *Pół wieku dziejów Polski 1939 - 1989* (Warszawa, 2005). While the organs of the state (such as the Ministry of Culture and Art, which is particularly relevant here) were officially distinct from the party, the supremacy of the party was an axiom of communist systems, and in practice, state bodies often met alongside their party counterparts, and the former often took instructions (and rebuke) from the latter.

¹⁸⁵ The communist party in the Soviet Union followed a similar course as it sought to define socialist culture over the first decades of its existence, ranging from futurism and the avant-garde to proletarian / workers' culture to neoclassicism to socialist realism. Contrary to its deceptive name, Socialist Realism was not particularly socialist, and was certainly not realism. Rather, it endeavored to show life as it one day would be under socialism – that is, it depicted the present as an idealized socialist future.

experiment in the Soviet Union – in party leadership with new members that often considered themselves both communists and Polish patriots. This change was equally significant in the cultural sphere because it introduced an element of Polish patriotism, or even nationalism, in considering cultural matters. Further, it reopened the door to some cultural influences from prewar Poland, which were temporarily suppressed in the stalinist era.¹⁸⁶

Across both of these periods, education and the dissemination (*upowszechnianie*) of culture were emphasized as a way of elevating the superstructure and creating a bright socialist future.¹⁸⁷ In these years, the state and party built schools, theaters, museums, and cinemas, and created a network of houses of culture (*dom kultury*) whose goal was fulfilling the socialist promise of creating an educated, cultured socialist Pole – as well as the more practical goal of creating the modern educated work force that Marx presumed socialism required.¹⁸⁸ The party, in turn, based its authority to rule in part on its ability to accomplish this task.

In this sense, many of the ideas on culture prominent in governing circles fit with an Arnoldian framework as much as they did with a Marxist one. As I discussed in the introduction, this interpretation focuses on culture as the best things that have been thought and said, and values it for its possibility of uplifting the masses rather than as a superstructure that would flow automatically from a given base. At the same time, party cultural policy also contained a populist element – an encouragement of mass participation in the form of amateur and folk art, regardless of conventional aesthetic value, or rather amending aesthetic value to include folk culture.

In other words, many of the ideas of culture within the party coincided with the diversity of approaches to culture among cultural elites in Polish society described in the introduction. This *mélange* of sources – bourgeois aesthetics, populism, public education, hope for a socialist future, and ideas about a new man, and a positivist value of work – provided a wide range of possible cultural worldviews that might be acceptable for a

¹⁸⁶ The links between elements of PZPR ideology and prewar political parties, like the nationalist Endecja and the socialist but patriotic PPS, would make a fascinating topic for study.

¹⁸⁷ Moshe Lewin, *The Making of the Soviet System : Essays in the Social History of Interwar Russia* (New York, 1985) offers an interesting parallel, arguing that stalinism can be understood as a sort of reverse-Marxism, as Stalin attempted to alter the material base by forcibly shifting the superstructure.

¹⁸⁸ Besides socialism, links to Polish positivism and organic work at the bases can be discerned here.

good communist to hold. For this reason, party members frequently disagreed on key decisions about policy on culture. At any given time, depending on the immediate political context, one aspect of this conglomeration of views might dominate, while at another, the same aspect might be pushed aside and replaced by concern for another. For instance, in one situation, culture's origin in Polish folk practice might be privileged in party circles, while in another, high aesthetic concerns might dominate.

This diversity in origins and approaches to culture carried over to policy on music. Over all of the fluctuations in cultural policy over the course of the PRL, the party never developed an official stance toward music.¹⁸⁹ The closest they came to universal agreement was on specifics. For instance, Chopin (who was both Polish and deemed “high culture”) was universally praised in 1980, followed by other types of “serious music” (*muzyka poważna*, or what we usually call “classical” in English), and then folk music. As noted in the previous chapter, the status of *muzyka rozrywkowa*, or “recreational music” was less certain. The wide range of cultural paradigms that comprised the party's cultural policy made for a wide range of possibilities. For instance, the populist aspect, rooted in peasant politics of the first half of the 20th century as well as elements of socialist worker culture might have made amateur music the highest musical value, whether in the form of folk bands or factory jazz ensembles. Alternately, the Arnoldian emphasis on uplifting the masses and “sweetness and light” might have put more value on trained musicians and composers. For many critics and authorities, both of these qualities were valued. In any case, no lasting decision was ever reached, leaving the question of what constituted legitimate musical culture open for debate well into the 1980s.

Returning to our brief history, in the late 1960s, social unrest pressured Gomułka to step aside for a new leader. In 1970, Edward Gierek took Poland in a new direction. Sensing that an ideological basis for authority was no longer viable, Gierek shifted the party from a model of authority based on its ability to lead Poland to socialism ideologically to a more practical, material model, in terms of its ability to provide goods

¹⁸⁹ Even the close following of Soviet policy in the stalinist years offered little guidance: the Soviet Union also never managed to work out a coherent policy toward music. See Starr, *Red and Hot*.

to its people.¹⁹⁰ Under this model, Marxism played an increasingly superficial role in decision making. For the most part, it was referenced in connection with goals of social justice and equality, and of differentiating the Eastern bloc from the capitalist west; more rarely was it utilized as a fundamental concept for organizing the country. Likewise, culture continued to be important, but was less critical to the party's concerns, since it was no longer directly linked to their authority to govern. By the time our story begins in the late 1970s, however, it had become clear that Poland's weak economy could no longer sustain the material goods-based socialism advocated by Gierek, leaving the source of party authority in the future as a critical problem that would have to be addressed. Rock rose to prominence at precisely this moment – as the communist party sought a new basis for authority.

Culture was not the sole determinate of party debates about rock, however. In fact, both in the 1960s and the 1980s, rock was often treated primarily as a youth issue, and only secondarily as a matter of culture.¹⁹¹ Party discourse was shaped by a historic link between socialism and youth. Even by the time the first wave of Bolsheviks had grey hair, communist propaganda affirmed the importance of youth to the Socialist vision. In this respect Poland was no different, with youth represented as the force leading Poland to a bright socialist future. Well into the 1980s, the slogan that youth were the future of Socialist Poland was voiced at party meetings and repeated liberally in the press. In addition, the effect of the utter destruction of World War Two on Poland made the Polish population was demographically younger than the rest of Europe – a fact that was continually referenced by voices in party leadership.

At the VII Plenum of the Central Committee of the PZPR in 1972, the party registered its first resolution on the upbringing of youth, which included a long-term plan

¹⁹⁰ By 1970, the stalinist model had already been crushed by Khrushchev's secret speech, and the idea of reformed socialism was badly damaged by the forceful suppression of the Prague Spring. The example of Gierek's shift in models of authority demonstrates the flexibility of the concept of hegemony. While some might argue that this move constituted a loss of hegemony, it could also be interpreted as a shift to model of authority based on providing material goods (which proved the PZPR to be a just, legitimate ruling body). Similar arguments have been made for the Soviet Union, which shifted from an ideological model under Stalin to a material provider model by the Brezhnev period.

¹⁹¹ Party documents reflect this uncertainty of categorization: secretaries were reluctant to include discussions of rock under the heading "music," which was reserved for "serious" musicians and composers. Instead, they preferred to address it as a matter pertaining to youth or the Department of Theater and Estrada.

for developing the country, outlined youth perspectives and desires, organized efforts to resolve problems affecting the lives of young people and intensifying work in political upbringing, and worked out a uniform program of socialist upbringing in the realm of education.¹⁹² These resolutions shaped official policy toward youth for nearly a decade, and were where the party turned for guidance when it reiterated and reformulated its youth policy when it ran into difficulty in the late 1970s.¹⁹³ By 1980, the aging party felt contact with Polish youth growing increasingly difficult just as it was increasingly critical.

As its chief liaison to Polish youth, the party relied on several youth organizations, with one for students (the ZSP, or SZSP), one for school children (the scouting union, the ZHP), one for young workers (the ZSMP), and a fourth for village youth (the ZMW). These organizations stood in an ambiguous relationship to the party (just as they did with the rock scene, as we saw in the previous chapter). On one hand, they were ostensibly autonomous, and members were not required to join the party.¹⁹⁴ On the other, the organizations were required to include a statement about the leading role of the PZPR in their charters, and were widely seen by critics and supporters alike as the launching ground for a political career in the party.¹⁹⁵ Where they fell on the spectrum between autonomy and subordination to the party, however, was itself subject to constant debate in political circles.

¹⁹² Wydział Organizacji Społecznych, Sportu i Turystyki, "Stan realizacji Uchwał VII Plenum KC," 1977, 1354 PZPR KC w Warszawie Pion Środowiskowy, XL/2, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw, Poland.

¹⁹³ Wydział Organizacji Społecznych, Sportu i Turystyki, "Ocena realizacji Uchwały VII Plenum KC PZPR z 1972 r. /plan realizacji tematu/," 1980, 1354 PZPR KC w Warszawie Pion Środowiskowy, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw, Poland; Wydział Organizacji Społecznych, Sportu i Turystyki, "Ramowe założenia problematyki VII Plenum KC w sprawach młodzieży (materiał roboczy)," 1976, 1354 PZPR KC w Warszawie Pion Środowiskowy, XL/2, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw, Poland; Wydział Organizacji Społecznych, Sportu i Turystyki, "Stan realizacji Uchwał VII Plenum KC," 1977.

¹⁹⁴ Party membership statistics varied by organization, from a low of about 3% of the Student Union's 254,000 members, to a high of about 20% of the Workers' Union's over 2 million members in 1977. All together, the percentage of young Poles (age 15-30) in one organization or another in 1978 was estimated at 23%. Komitet Wykonawczy Rady Głównej FSZMP, "Kierunki Działania," October 1977, 1354 PZPR KC w Warszawie Pion Środowiskowy, XL/132, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw, Poland.

¹⁹⁵ In the words of the party, "recommending members is one of the highest forms of SZMP (Socialist Union of Polish Youth) participation in realizing the party program." Komisja Organizacyjna KW PZPR w Jeleniej Gorze, "Ocena: Pracy kol ZSMP posiadających prawo do wydawania swoim członkom opinii polecających do partii," June 1978, 1354 PZPR KC w Warszawie Pion Środowiskowy, XL/170, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw, Poland.

Three Crises and the Return to Youth and Culture

Youth and culture had both been important issues in the PRL since its beginning. However, the emphasis on material abundance in the Gierek era had relegated both of these issues to secondary importance. A series of three crises in the late 1970s and early 1980s restored these issues to the forefront of attention. The resulting attention on youth and culture created a space in which rock could flourish.

The first crisis took place in 1976. By the late 1970s, Poland's dire financial situation made it clear that the years of purchasing authority with material abundance had come to an end. The obvious solution to the economic crisis was a raise in prices, but this solution was shown to be untenable when price increases provoked nationwide strikes in 1976. In the absence of material goods to provide the population, it was not clear where the party would turn as a base for authority. Rather than working out an all-encompassing program, a series of temporary provisions were made to assuage the crisis.

First, youth received special attention in the wake of the strikes, as young workers and students were among the most volatile social milieus. The most immediate and most controversial change was the 1976 attempt to take closer control over youth by reorganizing the broad socialist youth movement under the FSZMP (Federation of Socialist Unions of Polish Youth). This body – deemed the new enduring model for the youth movement – was intended to address “the current situation among youth” and respond to the needs of the current stage of building socialism by deepening the process of integration, strengthen youth unions, continue the Marxist-Leninist character of the Polish youth movement, and acknowledge the leading role of the PZPR.¹⁹⁶ The socialist character of the organizations was to be reaffirmed through the addition of the adjective “socialist” (*socjalistyczny*) to the names of the unions – i.e., the Union of Village Youth was to become the Socialist Union of Village Youth.¹⁹⁷

The awkwardness of this attempt to balance a heavy-handed takeover while ostensibly maintaining the autonomy of youth organizations is captured by the paradoxical statements by the division: it declared that “party leadership of the youth

¹⁹⁶ Wydział Organizacji Społecznych, Sportu i Turystyki, “Stan realizacji Uchwał VII Plenum KC,” 1977.

¹⁹⁷ Wydział Organizacji Społecznych, Sportu i Turystyki, “Ramowe założenia problematyki VII Plenum KC w sprawach młodzieży (materiał roboczy),” 1976.

movement should strengthen and develop the ideo-political autonomy (*samodzielność*) of youth unions.”¹⁹⁸ Curiously, its stated purpose was to establish both “the ideo-political leadership of the party over the youth movement” and also “the organizational independence of the youth movement.”¹⁹⁹ This dual-pronged approach, combining discipline with privilege, would turn up frequently over the next decade in youth policy.

In 1977, the party’s Central Committee created the Division of Social Organizations, Sport, and Tourism (Wydział Organizacji Społecznych, Sportu i Turystyki), which was given the task of handling party policy toward youth.²⁰⁰ This committee looked back to the resolutions of the 1975 VII Plenum of the Central Committee for guidance on youth policy, while also extending and elaborating its goals. One goal was resolving what it considered the most critical problems faced by youth – ensuring full employment, increasing pay, school reform, higher stipends, assisting youth in adapting to a working family environment, caring for young families, and improving access to sport and tourism. It also intended to increase youth activity inside the party and encourage the resolution of problems through party means rather than oppositional activity. A lengthy list of key steps to be taken included the following:

promoting election campaigns, a series of sponsored talks between youth and the party entitled “the party speaks with Youth,” creating more organizations concerned with youth issues, to ensure a uniform educational system, expanding influence of the party on youth outside of official organizations, ensuring the ideological upbringing of youth in a socialist lifestyle, including emphasizing the distinction between socialism and capitalism and materialist analysis, avoiding recklessness in relations with the church, and work with the young cultural movement, especially among students influenced by antisocialist tendencies in cabaret and *estrada*, rehabilitation of political opponents, and finally, the seldom mentioned problems of youth discipline, delinquency, negative attitudes, crime, the hippie movement, drugs, and *gitowcy*.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ I thank Włodzimierz Janowski at the Archiwum Akt Nowych for a useful summary of the Central Committee’s complex array of committees and divisions devoted to youth in the late 1970s and 1980s.

²⁰¹ Wydział Organizacji Społecznych, Sportu i Turystyki, “Stan realizacji Uchwał VII Plenum KC,” 1977. *Gitowcy* refers to young delinquents characterized by a propensity for violence that were identified as hanging around the apartment blocks characteristic of late socialist Poland.

Later meetings added to this list the ideas of raising youth through work, participation in socialist democracy, organizing free time.²⁰² In sum, the tack taken toward youth was seeking youth cooperation through the time-tried tactic of combing of allure and incentive with supervision and discipline.

It comes as little surprise that the Central Committee began to devote more attention than usual to youth as it struggled to maintain its control over the situation in the late 1970s, since youth were among the more likely candidates for strikes or other forms of disorder. However, the statement above also hints at the concerns about culture among youth: hippies are mentioned alongside criminals and delinquents, while cabaret and *estrada* are mentioned beside oppositional politics. This rejuvenated consideration of culture – historically a concern in socialist states, but relatively neglected in Poland in the 1970s – increased over the late 1970s and into the 1980s. The Division of Culture, for instance, noted that “symbolism is especially meaningful to the young generation,” necessitating a deeper emphasis on cultural matters, as the following statements suggest:

Special focus is to be given to ceremonial events like the distribution of identification cards, military service, and singing the Polish hymn at school and youth activities. New attention is to be given to ideological upbringing of youth, although with differentiation based on milieu, age, and ability. In the mass media, the new hero is to demonstrate values such as thoughtfulness, creative passion, activeness, satisfaction in work well done, and active participation in the Polish race with time.

The postulate of a fuller ideological influence on youth, better satisfaction of its abilities and interests requires new structures of the youth press, radio, and TV. The concept of the youth press must be formulated from the point of view of the fullest function of integrating the young generation. This requires a change in the formulation of organization of programs directed at youth on Polish Radio and TV, and also looking to the whole of TV programming from the point of view of raising the young generation.

In the sphere of culture, it is important to create defined preferences/rewards for creators concerned ideologically and artistically with the worthwhile problem of upbringing

²⁰² Wydział Organizacji Społecznych, Sportu i Turystyki, “Ocena realizacji Uchwały VII Plenum KC PZPR z 1972 r. /plan realizacji tematu/,” 1980.

the young generation. The youth movement should have great influence on the program and content of cultural work, and also have direct care with various cultural-upbringing agencies.²⁰³

The newly organized central youth organization dutifully took up this call. In 1978, the Main Council of the FSZMP wrote that it was taking up the goal of increasing its presence in the sphere of culture. "Culture," the council wrote, "stands today, to a greater degree than in previous years, in a field of fierce ideological battle." This battle necessitated three moves:

A. further enriching our program in the area of disseminating the goods of socialist culture and caring for the development of the amateur cultural movement.

B. more intense political work in the young artistic milieu.

C. cooperation of the [socialist] youth movement in preparing members of the organization for participation in culture by nurturing an interest in culture and active participation in the creation of cultural goods.²⁰⁴

The council also affirmed a lengthy list of cultural needs, which included the following objectives:

- study the cultural aspirations and abilities of youth,
- identify the state of the cultural base and cultural agencies
- determine to what degree they serve youth needs
- increase activity in disseminating culture in the village
- create youth councils in cultural agencies
- participate more actively in the programming of contents of the amateur artistic movement
- assist young artists with their professional and social problems

²⁰³ Wydział Organizacji Społecznych, Sportu i Turystyki, "Ramowe Założenia problematyki VII Plenum KC w sprawach młodzieży (material roboczy)," 1976.

²⁰⁴ Rada Główna Federacji Socjalistycznych Związków Młodzieży Polskiej, "Umacnianie Organizacyjne Ruchu Młodzieżowego," 1978, 1354 PZPR KC w Warszawie Pion Środowiskowy, XL/133, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw, Poland.

- develop patronage for young artists, exhibits, workshops, and symposia
- encourage artists deriving their inspiration from socialism
- develop a system of rewards for youth that rewards the most talented artists
- eliminate the accidental nature of success and the influence of individuals with ideas foreign to socialist ideological criteria
- create a system of preference for youth dealing with important problems from our ideological perspective
- popularize the goods of socialist culture
- develop the aesthetic sensitivity of youth²⁰⁵

A few observations can be made from these objectives. First and most obviously, youth culture had once again become an important concern in the late 1970s. Second, even within this single document, the diverse cultural models that the council was drawing from can be discerned. An awkward tension exists in the document between the populist model of promoting and assisting all young artists, the Arnoldian model of promoting “the most talented artists,” or the stalinist model of promoting those whose art exemplifies socialist cultural politics. These principles left considerable latitude in interpreting exactly what kind of culture and what kind of artist was to be promoted.

In the late 1970s, then, culture and youth had already found their way into the concern of fairly high-ranking bodies (a division of the party’s Central Committee and the Head Council of the Federation of Socialist Youth Organizations). In 1980, these concerns reached the party at large: at the VII Party Congress in February, two of the five resolutions dealt specifically with youth and culture – number two on the “education and upbringing of the young generation” and number three on the “development of science, culture, and the mass media.” The main objectives included:

- developing the knowledge, ability, career skills, and culture of youth is among most important duties-goal of spreading art to people, using it to inspire in them ideas of

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

socialist humanist development and enhancing the faith of people in their work

-enhancing creative abilities of young generation

-spreading the best, most progressive ideas of national culture

-expanding the material base for culture- printing, etc, especially for less developed areas

-protecting national culture from threats²⁰⁶

Culture in this model had a wider definition than, for instance, in the stalinist era – in addition to being socialist, it also had room for national (“protecting national culture”), positivist (“enhancing the faith of people in their work”) and humanist (“socialist humanist development”) aspects.

The strikes of 1976 had prompted some of the initial changes in the direction of youth and culture. These outbreaks of unrest were relatively manageable, though, compared to the strikes led by the Solidarity movement in 1980. In August that year, amidst a series of strikes provoked immediately by price increases, attention focused on the Lenin shipyard in Gdańsk. There, the strike committee presented a list of 21 demands ranging from pay increases to media access to a memorial to workers killed in 1970 uprisings. In November, the organization earned status as a legalized labor union (NSZZ Solidarność).²⁰⁷

It is difficult to overstate the impact of Solidarity on Poland in 1980. Officially, it was a trade union, but this does not come close to capturing the scope of the movement, in its objectives, its membership, or its social support across Poland. For years after, the party simply referred to Solidarity’s strikes with the euphemism “the August events,” the “August crisis,” or simply “the crisis.” The strikes left party leaders absolutely dumbfounded. For decades, they had billed the PZPR as the “party of the workers.” Now, the workers were clearly and vocally rejecting their claim to authority. A 1982 report

²⁰⁶ “VII Zjazd PZPR,” *Trybuna Ludu*, February 20, 1980, 5-7.

²⁰⁷ R.J. Crampton, *Eastern Europe in the Twentieth Century* (New York, 1994) offers a concise history of the movement.

written for internal use captures what for party leadership must have seemed like a socialist realist dream turned into a horrible nightmare.

We saw rise in activism, a desire for cooperation in group and social matters, a rise in the sense of connection within particular social groups, and a feeling of solidarity (*solidarności*) among working people. This feeling of solidarity was to a decided degree directed against the government, which was seen often as a bad employer and as an exploiter. ... they [Solidarity] used the idea of socialism against the practice of socialism.²⁰⁸

How could the party possibly respond to such an attack? The most cynical option (and not one unfamiliar to the party in Poland and elsewhere) would have been to deny that Solidarity represented the workers, and instead suggest that the movement was the work of imperialist agitators from abroad, or something of the sort. But this was not the dominant response, at least not immediately – perhaps in part because many party members were also members of Solidarity. Instead, the party removed its First Secretary, Edward Gierek, then conducted a series of surveys and prepared for a meeting that would set Poland back on the proper course – the IX Nadzwyczajny Zjazd (IX Extraordinary Congress).

The congress was the first ever “extraordinary” meeting of the party. Its name was not accidental: the committee responsible for outlining the program of the congress began by observing that it was “no longer possible to continue present course of ruling.” The “crisis,” they determined, developed as the result bad governing, particularly of the economy, and from a series of contradictions between reality and expectation based on ideology and propaganda, including:

- between consumerist expectations and stagnation or even regression in work productivity and the desire to avoid this conflict through the inflationary raising of earnings

- between modernizing and social aspirations and the lack of structural foundations and sufficient means for improving work and life

²⁰⁸ Instytut Badan nad Młodzieżą, “Kryzys sierpniowy a Polski ruch młodzieżowy: Przyczynek do raportu o stanie organizacji młodzieżowych w latach 1980-1981,” June 1982, 1354 PZPR KC w Warszawie Pion Środowiskowy, XLII/125, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw, Poland.

-between the officially voiced ideology of social justice and quickly growing differentiations in pay and earnings among the privileged cadres directing the economy

-between the moral principles of socialism and their being broken in practice at various levels of the government and in many social milieus

-between publicized pay for youth and underestimation in practice of necessary conditions of their life and especially for the possibility of starting a family

-between the long voiced thesis about the leading role of the working class and the actual worsening of standing to work crews, and the increasing deterioration of worker self-government²⁰⁹

Also contributing, the commission noted, were the worsening economic situation and a “lack of trust in government, created by the 1970s propaganda of success, and the “carefree and unpunished demoralization of a portion of the leading cadres.”

The strikes of 1980, the commission concluded, were the result of these problems. At first, the strikes were mainly about money, but this “changed over time.” The party, the commission noted, was in favor of reaching agreement, but this was made difficult by continued strikes, anarchy, and chaos. As for Solidarity, the commission affirmed that trade unions in general were a “key component of socialist working life.” Solidarity had “multiple viewpoints and motivations; a few cells of Solidarity have been penetrated by the operations of opponents of socialism.” Even so, they added, “We are convinced that the constructive and responsible bulk of Solidarity ... will oppose this dangerous tendency and defeat plans for developing the union into an oppositional political power.”²¹⁰

From this report, a few observations are in order. First, while the reasons for the crisis are expressed in a particularly Hegelian way – as “contradictions” – they are also thought-out, plausible explanations (rather than mere excuses, like blaming capitalist

²⁰⁹ PZPR, Komisja Zjazdowa, “Założenia programowe rozwoju socjalistycznej demokracji, umacniania przewodniej roli PZPR w budownictwie socjalistycznym i stabilizacji sytuacji społeczno-gospodarczej kraju,” March 1981, 1354 PZPR KC w Warszawie Pion Środowiskowy, XL/1, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw, Poland.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

saboteurs and agitators). Moreover, while Solidarity – penetrated as it was by a few “extremists” – was a source of disorder, the commission placed a large share of the blame on the party and “deformations” in its policy. At the same time, as one would expect, the commission stops well short of blaming the crisis on anything inherent to the system: it was not socialism at fault, but rather, a failure to live up to it.

The conclusion was that the system needed far-reaching reforms – in the economy and in leadership, but also in policy on youth and culture. The commission directed considerable attention on “the generation of youth,” noting that more than half of Poland’s population was under 29, and that this generation felt the deformations of the 1970s especially acutely. This, the commission suggested, was what pushed young Poles to participate in strikes and other August events.

Indeed, there was good cause for concern: prior to the formulation of the program for the IX Extraordinary Congress, the Division of Social Organizations, Sport, and Tourism determined that only 3.5 percent of youth surveyed in Warsaw survey at end of November said they saw party as an institution positively influencing the current situation in the country (compared to nearly 50 percent who saw Solidarity this way). 31 percent saw the party as destabilizing the country (compared to 3 percent for Solidarity). Youth distrusted the mass media – with only 1.5 percent fully trusting information about the domestic situation. 16.5 percent blamed the former party secretary for problems, but 45 percent blamed the whole party apparatus, not just individuals. In this context, radical reform in the party made sense from the perspective of public opinion. Yet, 66 percent of youth believed that the apparatus made reform more difficult.²¹¹

Nor were youth unions helpful in the situation. Youth unions were seen by their supporters and opponents alike as stepping stones to a career in the party. This was particularly true starting in the mid 1970s, when the party brought youth organizations closer under its control under the FSZMP. Before 1980, the unions maintained respectable membership numbers, since no real alternative organizations existed, particularly for youth interested in a political career. When Solidarity arose in August of 1980, however, it offered precisely this alternative. Almost immediately, membership in

²¹¹ Wydział Organizacji Społecznych, Sportu i Turystyki, “Tezy do wystąpienia nt: Młodzieży,” 1981.

youth organizations dropped dramatically. The Central Committee's Group on Youth Matters documented the staggering statistics (Figure 3):

	1979	1980	1981
ZSMP	2,591,178	1,993,024 (23% drop from 1979)	1,471,447 (43% drop from 1979)
ZHP	3,442,347	3,149,150 (8.5% drop from 1979)	1,890,740 (45% drop from 1979)
SZSP	242,683	228,215 (6% drop from 1979)	116,000 (52% drop from 1979)

Figure 3. Membership of Socialist Youth Organizations by date. Zespół ds Młodzieży KC PZPR, "Ocena sytuacji politycznej w socjalistycznych związkach młodzieży - wpływ organizacji młodzieżowych na postawy i zachowanie młodzieży," December 1983, 1354 Wydział Kultury PZPR, 761, 908/141, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw, Poland.

In two years, each of the unions above lost roughly half of its membership. One might expect that these falling numbers would leave the unions relatively pro-party, since youth attracted to Solidarity would be the most likely to leave. In fact, just the opposite took place. By late 1981, the Central Committee's Youth Commission estimated that an amazing 90% of workers belonging to the ZSMP also belonged to Solidarity.²¹² The commission also noted with some surprise that the members of the union apparently saw no contradiction between being in both organizations – a surprise likely shared by many scholars today, who tend to see Solidarity and the party as mutually exclusive, evidence to the contrary notwithstanding. In fact, the ZSMP – the union dedicated to young workers – had both the *highest* percentage of Solidarity members and the *lowest* percentage of decrease in membership during the crisis.²¹³

The shrinking youth unions radicalized dramatically over late 1980 and 1981 – perhaps in part to prevent additional hemorrhaging of members in face of the overwhelming popularity of Solidarity. Using the FSZMP newspaper, *Sztandar Młodych*,

²¹² Komisja Młodzieżowa KC PZPR, "Aktualna sytuacja społeczno-polityczna w środowisku młodej klasy robotniczej i ZSMP," September 29, 1981, 1354 PZPR KC w Warszawie Pion Środowiskowy, XL/125, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw, Poland.

²¹³ Unfortunately I don't have the space to explore this further here, but this data suggests to me that even in late 1981, Solidarity was not as much an alternative to socialism as an effort to reform it, at least for some of its members.

as its mouthpiece, the ZSMP leadership called for a series of reforms in the organization over late 1980 and 1981. Early texts worked to square party directives with the impulse for reform; in December of 1980, for instance, the union's Presidium wrote that an "authentically young and open youth movement must direct the young generation, ensuring its unity." The article goes on to assure that this unity does not mean demanding uniformity, but rather, "unity amidst variation," and "programmatic pluralism."²¹⁴ This sort of linguistic gymnastics became more difficult over the next months. In February, the leadership published the following:

The ZSMP is fighting for its existence. ...our standing with party organizations must henceforth be characterized by partnership. From the party we expect wise advice and not imperatives, commands and imposing of its own will. Because it is also their fault that the ZSMP was an organization without its own opinion... serving as an organization best directed at saving production plans and collecting people for work. So party organizations, the directors of institutions, and trade unions must start to earn the trust of youth.²¹⁵

At its third congress in April of 1981, the ZSMP elected a new, radical leadership, which made the union's position on Solidarity abundantly clear:

We need to outline our standings to the labor movement. Speaking of the largest trade union, Solidarity, we want to clearly state – in our fundamental mass, our social, real goals – it is our union. The decided majority of our members belong to it. It captured our trust with its uncompromising battle against bureaucratism and hypocrisy, against mistakes in social and economic politics, and in defense of human and worker self-worth.²¹⁶

First, let's pause to consider the weight of this statement championing Solidarity coming from the leadership of a socialist youth organization – ostensibly the training grounds for the next generation of party leaders. Yet, for all its efforts, the union's radicalization did not prevent its loss of much of its membership, or even raise its

²¹⁴ Prezydium ZG ZSMP, "Młode pokolenie - szansa procesu odnowy (skrót referatu Prezydium ZG ZSMP)," *Sztandar Młodych*, December 9, 1980.

²¹⁵ VII Plenum ZG ZSMP, "'Cegielszczacy" o odnowie w ZSMP," *Sztandar Młodych*, February 16, 1981.

²¹⁶ Zarząd Główny ZSMP, "Chcemy takiej prac, która będzie radością tworzenia, a nie trudem zarobkowania (skrót referatu Zarządu Głównego ZSMP)," *Sztandar Młodych*, April 24, 1981.

standing much in the eyes of Polish youth (in a 1984 survey, the ZSMP was viewed positively by 32.8% of youth, and negatively by 47%).²¹⁷

The significance of these statistics was not lost on party leadership: for perhaps the first time, authorities formally acknowledged widespread dissatisfaction with the centrally-controlled FSZMP, noting that youth “feel the organization is a façade.”²¹⁸ In short, they determined that “among the young generation, there has been the most violent explosion of dissatisfaction, frustration, and criticism; the greatest ideological and political ferment, confusion, and confrontation endures in precisely this part of society.”²¹⁹

Amidst this disturbing situation, the Congress Commission called for extensive work in the sphere of youth. This included a range of economic initiatives to be taken to improve living conditions, particularly of young workers. It also, however, engaged the more ideological aspects of doctrine on youth. The commission criticized the previous treatment of youth as an “object to be educated.” Instead, the party needed to create policy so that people of the young generation could independently, actively participate in creating their own fates and futures. As for youth organizations, the commission mimicked the objections voiced by the ZSMP shortly before, writing,

The party is critical of the hitherto means of fulfilling its role toward the youth movement. In work with youth, there has been too much formalism and mentorship, and too little authentic dialogue and solution of problems facing the young generation, too little openness to the initiative and energy of young people. The youth movement must have the right to independent activity and pursuits.

Further, they added, one of the most important goals was earning back the trust of Polish youth, since their active participation in social and political life was essential to overcoming the crisis.²²⁰

²¹⁷ Instytut Śląski w Opolu, “Wybrane elementy świadomości politycznej młodzieży szkolnej,” 1984, 1354 PZPR KC w Warszawie Pion Środowiskowy, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw, Poland.

²¹⁸ Wydział Organizacji Społecznych, Sportu i Turystyki, “Tezy do wystąpienia nt: Młodzieży,” 1981.

²¹⁹ Wydział Organizacji Społecznych, Sportu i Turystyki KC, “Informacja o wybranych problemach młodego pokolenia, sytuacji w ruchu młodzieżowym i zadaniach partii,” January 1981, 1354 PZPR KC w Warszawie Pion Środowiskowy, XL/135, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw, Poland.

²²⁰ PZPR, Komisja Zjazdowa, “Założenia programowe rozwoju socjalistycznej demokracji, umacniania przewodniej roli PZPR w budownictwie socjalistycznym i stabilizacji sytuacji społeczno-gospodarczej kraju,” March 1981.

As for culture, the trend of the increasing importance resting on the party's status as a cultural provider and authority and that of the broadening of the definition of what qualified as "culture" continued. The commission acknowledged some of the accusations presented by the striking Solidarity workers the year before. In past years, they conceded, a disproportion had formed between the "spiritual (*duchowy*) needs of society" and the possibility of their fulfillment as the budget for developing culture decreased, and the dissemination of art and its influence on the spiritual values of the nation regressed. However, the commission now recognized,

culture, education, and science are both the goal and the strength for the development of socialism. They are goals in themselves when their realization means the formation of superior spiritual value of man, and are simultaneously forces contributing to the realization of that goal.²²¹

One of the objectives of the IX Party Congress, then, was shifting its basis for legitimacy from the model of providing of goods to the model of defending, disseminating, and supporting Polish culture. The commission acknowledged that in the past, the party had mistakenly taken an instrumental, political approach culture, slowing its development and decreasing the participation of the creative milieu in the socialist transformations of society. In the future, they promised the party would:

firmly act for the creation of a proper creative atmosphere, widen and deepen the role of the artistic and scientific milieus in the development of the country in increasing the material wealth of Poland, in the spiritual development of citizens, in realizing the basic values of socialism...

The commission also indicated a greater openness to a wider range of ideological and artistic approaches than previously. They observed,

A work of art must be rated by its basic ideological-artistic values. The development of art is not possible without ideological and artistic confrontation and diverse forms of workmanship. Different ideological-artistic directions will be verified through mutual confrontation and confrontation with public opinion.

²²¹ Ibid.

Lest we be fooled by this unexpected paraphrase of liberal theorist John Stuart Mill – that the value of ideas should be determined by open confrontation with public opinion – the commission puts its own twist on it:

The politics of disseminating works of art must be conducted according the principle of broad tolerance, the border of which is defined as the interest of society and the socialist state. In the frame of these general principles, the party will realize a politics of preference for creation engaged with socialism and the realization of the party program.²²²

Even if this call for tolerance was limited to the “interest of society and the socialist state,” though, the call for “tolerance” and “confrontation with public opinion” are significant conceptual innovations. Following the Leninist tradition, the party’s approach to rule was in promoting that policy which fit the “true” needs of its constituents – workers, and also peasants – and not necessarily what they themselves wanted or thought they needed. This statement, however, suggests that a range of choice and public opinion should be taken into account, although again, within the bounds of socialism. As we will see, this acceptance of individual choice rather than prescribed-from-above needs became one of several arguments not only for tolerating rock, but for a wider acknowledgment of popular opinion. This, in turn, was connected to a growing concern for the party’s own lack of popular appeal.

This concept of choice coexisted awkwardly with another key component in debates about culture – the concept of ideological-artistic (*ideowo-artystyczny*) value. On one hand, individual and public choice should be respected (indeed, this is where the Congress Commission suggested the party had gone wrong in the past). On the other hand, this concept suggested that value could be assessed objectively, regardless of popular opinion. Further, the term itself hints at the complexity of the relationship between ideological content and artistic form. The two concepts – ideological value and artistic value – were theoretically separable. For instance, with rock, the state’s censorship organs were concerned exclusively with content, in the form of song lyrics. For censors, finding passages that “threatened the interest of the Polish state” in textual form was routine; finding a sound that did this was much trickier terrain. Of the years of

²²² Ibid.

ensorship reports I examined, I did not find a single one that mentioned the way a band sounded. On the other hand, in most situations the two concepts were deeply intertwined in deciding how rock should be evaluated. As rock rose in popularity over the next years, internal party debates about its proliferation were at least as concerned with its “low artistic level” as its ideological content. This was also true of the press, where rock’s critics and advocates alike were deeply concerned with aesthetics in determining the value of the music. For the music industry as well, the subject matter dealt with by lyrics (outside of passing censorship) was no more a concern than musical style and the technical abilities of performers in determining a studio or press’s “repertory politics” (*polityka repertuarowa*).

The IX Extraordinary Congress was tremendously important in shaping policy toward youth and culture – and thus in creating the framework by which voices within the party would seek to interpret punk rock as it gained in popularity over the next years. The economic crisis and Solidarity movement deeply shocked party leadership and convinced it that major reforms were needed. At the same time, however, the IX Congress was deeply ambiguous. For all of the declarations of the need to regain the trust of youth, to serve authentic youth interests, and to allow youth unions to establish their own goals and ways of operating, the assumption that youth must be a “united front,” with a strong influence from the party continued to coexist alongside these reformatory impulses – often within the same documents.²²³ Analogously, promises to reform culture, promote tolerance and celebrate diversity went alongside worn-out phrases about culture serving the interest of the nation and socialism.

A first inclination might be to assume that one of these trends is genuine and the other false – that is, the party was nodding in the direction of Solidarity while sticking to its previous policy, or alternately, that it was nodding in the direction of party hardliners and the Soviet Union while changing its previous policy.²²⁴ However, at least in terms of

²²³ Wydział Organizacji Społecznych, Sportu i Turystyki, “Zagajenia rozszerzone tezy / do dyskusji w zespole problemowym IX Zjazdu,” 1981, 1354 PZPR KC w Warszawie Pion Środowiskowy, XL/125, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw, Poland; Wydział Organizacji Społecznych, Sportu i Turystyki KC, “Informacja o wybranych problemach młodego pokolenia, sytuacji w ruchu młodzieżowym i zadaniach partii,” January 1981.

²²⁴ It is certainly true that different members of the party fell on different points of the spectrum. While this is important to remember, it is more difficult (and less critical for my purposes) to determine in a

its response to rock, the party's subsequent actions and policies suggest that both of these impulses – reformist and the conservative – were quite real. At the very least, this ambiguity at the center opened up a range of possibilities for dealing with rock that would not have existed only a few years previously.

The party was developing an acute and relatively complex interest in youth culture just as rock was beginning to enter mainstream public awareness. The possibilities for how rock would be interpreted were still open, however: to cite some of the language above, for instance, it might be seen as a part of culture to be developed, a way of reaching out to youth, or alternately, as a foreign threat to national culture and to the humanist development of youth. Still, the majority of party members remained mostly ignorant of (and uninterested in) rock, and rock fans and musicians were unaware of (and uninterested in) any change in official policy. In part, this was because rock could be dismissed as marginal, or at least as mere *rozrywka* – that is, entertainment with little to do with concerns about culture. As rock grew in popularity, however, it would eventually attract the attention of central authorities.

One of the first times the Central Committee found it necessary to direct its attention to the new wave of rock took place when an article by a young sociologist, Jerzy Wertenstein-Żuławski made its way to the Cultural Division of the PZPR Central Committee in early 1981.²²⁵ In the article, entitled “Social aspects of rock music: the meaning of youth culture in society,” Wertenstein-Żuławski gives a sociological approach to rock as a youth movement. Fascinatingly, after tracing rock and roll to the US in the 1950s at the intersection of black and white culture, he discusses the rise of punk rock in the 1970s as a rebellion against the capitalist recording industry and a musical return of rock to its simpler folk roots – to “muzyka ludowa.”

Whether it was a conscious effort or not, this was exactly the kind of interpretation of punk that might find it some sympathy in the Central Committee (at least until it actually listened to the music). His treatment of rock once it enters Poland brings him into trickier territory, however. First, he must deal with why a musical form that is

Kremlinological fashion who said or thought what. A range of opinions coexisted, leading to a wide range of possibilities, as we will see.

²²⁵ Jerzy Wertenstein-Żuławski, “Społeczne aspekty muzyki rockowej: znaczenie kultury młodzieżowej w społeczeństwie,” February 1981, 1354 Wydział Kultury PZPR, 315, 889/50, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw, Poland.

protesting capitalist industry conditions could exist in Poland, and what it would mean – a challenge faced by a number of journalists over the 1980s. Second, he addresses rock’s being “sharply attacked” and encumbered by “limits of an administrative nature.” Most damaging to rock, however, is the lack of a social base for punk rock in Poland, due to the paternalistic standing of Polish society to youth and – most controversially, as the penciled-in underlining in the document attests – the “less democratic” nature of Polish society compared to the United States and England.

The response from the Division of Culture is brief, but fascinating. Not surprisingly, despite the paper’s “interesting account of rock’s history,” the Division takes particular issue with Wertenstein-Żuławski’s assertion that US society is more democratic than Polish society. This is not true, they contend, since, in fact, the US establishment showed its undemocratic tendencies by opposing rock, (as Wertenstein-Żuławski himself demonstrated, they note). Interestingly, then, they implicitly accept the assumption that suppressing rock is undemocratic. Moreover, they approved of a printing of 400 copies of the Wertenstein- Żuławski’s work once its “political errors” were corrected.

Of course, this is far short of a programmatic statement of policy on rock. Despite all of the discussion taking place on youth and culture over the previous years, the Division of Culture still had nothing like a definitive position on rock in 1981. If a member of the Central Committee was uncertain where to stand, one can only imagine the position of the Ministry of Culture and Art, a small town’s house of culture director, or the directors at the radio station.

By the end of 1981, the central organs of the state also started to take notice of rock. As rock gained a few sponsorships at the low and mid-levels of the industry – that is, at student clubs, houses of culture and among various concert agencies, their overseers continued to be uncertain about how to treat the phenomenon. Reporting on the 1980/81 cultural season, the Department of Theater and Estrada noted that overall the year was dismal – in the midst of the economic crisis, the efforts to save money by offering inexpensive forms of entertainment had backfired. Compared to 1979, profits decreased by an incredible 50 percent, due to problems training new performers, industrial difficulties, and the irrational structure of the entertainment industry. As a result, it noted,

especially among youth and in villages, *estrada* revealed all of its weaknesses and shortcomings... Evidence of this were not only incompetence and empty spaces in *estrada*, but also the spontaneously developing individuals, bands, and tendencies in rock music such as Krzak, Maanam, and Perfect. Inspired by west European music, they created an original style of Polish youth music, although it has not been able to find sponsorship or creative continuation in the various forms and programs offered by the entertainment industry. Thus, a lack of a general concept of entertainment connected in a harmful feedback loop with the breakdown of the creative milieu. The disintegration of the organizational and artistic program of *estrada* became a factor postponing and hindering reform in that area.²²⁶

In this somewhat confusing account, rock is mainly a symptom of existing problems. As “an original style of Polish youth music,” rock is not wholly bad, but it indicates something breaking down in *estrada*. As a symptom rather than a cause, rock did not yet have to be directly addressed; the industry had done little to promote it, and reforms would presumably take care of weaknesses in *estrada* before it could get out of hand. Or so it seemed to the Department of Theater and Estrada, which had not imagined that four days later, all music and theater performances would be interrupted by martial law.

The third and final crisis that helped set up the conditions for rock took place on December 13, 1981, with the declaration of martial law. The causes leading up to martial law are highly controversial, but here we only need to be concerned with aspects connected to the Polish rock scene.²²⁷ Along with international factors – namely the threat of a Soviet invasion – domestic events in 1980 and 1981 prompted the declaration of martial law. As I noted above, Solidarity’s strikes deeply shocked the party. Yet, while some hardliners may have thought of a military crackdown in late 1980, the majority opinion initially sought compromise. As we saw above, this policy continued to the IX

²²⁶ MKiS: Department Teatru i Estrady, “Próba oceny sezonu 1980/81 w teatrach dramatycznych, lalkowych i na estradach,” December 9, 1981, 1354 Wydział Kultury PZPR, 286, 889/21, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw, Poland.

²²⁷ Memories of the communist era are still fresh, and martial law is one of the most hotly debated topics. On one side, it is portrayed as a dictatorial move to silence peaceful opposition with military force. On the other, it is portrayed as a cool-headed effort to avoid a bloody Soviet invasion, saving many Polish lives. This debate is less significant for the purposes of this dissertation, which is concerned with its effects on the rock scene.

Extraordinary Congress in the summer of 1981, which strove to maintain party authority while responding to accusations and even meeting basic demands voiced by Solidarity.

By a few months after the congress, however, the party's Central Committee was beginning to express doubts about the conciliatory position of the Congress. At the IV Plenum in October of 1981, the Central Committee noted, "despite the IX Extraordinary Congress, which worked out a program for getting out of the crisis, developing socialist democracy, reforming the economy and pursuing social understanding along constitutional lines, we still find ourselves in one." This, they argued, was because "opponents of socialism initiated brutal attacks on the party, making its program impossible to realize." While they were not suggesting that the party abandon the program of the congress, they cited a need to reevaluate the means of realizing its objectives in order to fight off "counterrevolutionary powers and international forces fighting against socialism." Ominously, they accused,

Solidarity broke the social agreement, taking on the role of superior power over all, dictating its will to society, the Sejm and government, and social organizations and institutions. In this manner the leadership of Solidarity chose the road contrary to the interests of the nation and state, and above all the interests of the working class.²²⁸

Unlike only a few months earlier, the party's highest circles were no longer able to see Solidarity as protesting a failure of Poland to live up to the promises of socialism. Instead, they believed it was beginning to threaten socialist Poland itself. In party parlance, these words – particularly "contrary to the interests of the nation and the state" – were a license for forceful suppression. As a more concrete sign of this threat, the Central Committee replaced Stanisław Kania with General Wojciech Jaruzelski as First Secretary of the PZPR. Even before martial law the party was setting the stage for a showdown with Solidarity.

However, there was still the possibility for averting direct conflict. The Plenum realized that "negotiation of an agreement between the government and unions are necessary for the constructive resolution of problems," adding that "the front of national agreement and cooperation is open to anyone who is not an enemy of socialism and

²²⁸ KC PZPR, "Uchwała IV Plenum KC PZPR," October 1981, 1354 Wydział Kultury PZPR, 1637, 982/43, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw, Poland.

wishes to save the fatherland.”²²⁹ In order to fit this qualification, the Central Committee made a series of demands on Solidarity’s leadership, insisting that the organization honor the constitution and public order, separate itself from the actions of enemies of socialism, immediately cease strikes, form a constructive relationship to the government program for getting out of the crisis, recognize Poland’s union with socialist contraries and stand against the anti-soviet campaign, and respect the requirements for security of the state. For its part, the Central Committee acknowledged continued economic problems facing youth, and agreed to focus its next meeting on youth problems.

For its part, Solidarity continued to enjoy widespread popularity. At its congress in September, radical calls for ending the *nomenklatura* system, new books on Polish history, and spreading Solidarity to other countries in the Eastern Bloc arose opposite calls for moderation by the organization’s leader, Lech Wałęsa.²³⁰ As a conflict between the new leadership and Solidarity seemed imminent, on December 13th, Jaruzelski declared martial law, banned the labor movement, and arrested its leaders.

With the declaration of martial law, the music industry, the press, and the rock scene were all put on hold. As the first paragraphs of the introduction to this dissertation suggest, martial law was a shock to Poland’s population. It was also a shock to most of the PZPR: the plans for martial law were kept secret to all but a few key players organized around General Wojciech Jaruzelski, Poland’s prime minister and the First Secretary of the PRL, in the Military Committee for Saving the Nation (*Wojskowa Rada Ocalenia Narodowego*). Still, despite the military character of the seizure, its purpose was not to “supersede constitutional organs of government,” but rather to “restore order so they could fulfill their purposes.”²³¹ In other words – as the placement of the First Secretary of the PZPR at the head of the Military Committee hints – the PZPR was to maintain its leading role in the PRL.

Just as Solidarity had affected Poland far beyond what might be expected of a labor movement, its suppression carried significance far beyond the labor union itself. The new rules under martial law contained a ban on gatherings, including entertainment, except for church, without prior local government approval; publications or public art

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ Crampton, *Eastern Europe in the Twentieth Century*, 373-374.

²³¹ “Przemówienie gen. armii W. Jaruzelskiego,” *Trybuna Ludu*, December 13, 1981.

works; and strikes. It also mandated identity cards and possible military service. The hours of 10:00 PM to 6:00 AM were declared “military hours,” during which people could not appear in public places. Freedom of speech and the press were limited, with a ban on the publication of books, historic works of art, written or recorded texts, and periodicals other than the official *Trybuna Ludu* and a few other official publications. Breaking these rules would result in 5-10 years in prison.²³²

However, fear and oppression is not the entirety of the story. Even with martial law – a demonstration that authorities could rely on force for its power if necessary – the party continued to be concerned with many of the objectives of the IX Extraordinary Congress. This is somewhat surprising; martial law, after all, might be read as a clear indicator that the party’s attempt to establish authority based on an ideological model had failed. Rather than authority, it had to resort to force. However, the party – or at least the majority of its Division of Culture – was not content to rule solely as a military dictatorship. Rather, it used martial law exactly how it said it would – it dispensed with Solidarity, then returned to the ongoing task of trying to get people to support the system again. In the months after martial law, several bodies of the party and the state devoted an unprecedented amount of time to pursuing policy on culture, as well as making key decisions on youth.

The first of these meetings took place only a month after the initiation of martial law, under the direction of the Central Committee of the PZPR, under the title “Basic Problems and Projects of Decisions in the Area of Culture.” The first proposition was not surprising. Having just suppressed its greatest challenge in Solidarity, the meeting of party and state cultural officials rejected the position taken by a Cultural Congress in Warsaw that had called for the party and state to foster the development of culture without input in cultural politics. This idea, they charged, was an attack on party authority similar to Solidarity. Instead, they argued, the state and Ministry of Culture should take greater care to ensure the condition of “universal culture” and participation in it by broad strata of workers, peasants, and “particularly the young generation.” This, they insisted, was “one of the most important propositions defining cultural politics in recent years.” It included:

²³² Ibid.

-decidedly strengthening the material base for the development of culture and its democratic, universal character, including the filling of holes where culture was once sponsored by trade unions – meaning a 3-4 billion złoty addition to the 10 billion złoty cultural budget.

-improving the material situation of workers of cultural institutions in order to ensure the inflow of well educated and worthy cadres and stopping the outflow of cultural workers to better paid positions.

-a program for integrating education and culture, working together at schools and youth cultural agencies.

Further, it added,

-all of the disorder and anarchy suggests the weak condition of state/national culture (*kultura państwowa*).

-one of the great tasks for educating the young generation must be opening a new second age of positivist work. The ideological motive of this work must be built above all by just, moral society, but also a socialist one...

-these notes are not only of a general character, but apply to actual film, theater, and publications. This means maintaining and creating an ambitious program of repertoire, which, serving classical and contemporary Polish and world dramatic literature deals once again with great problems of society and the individual, the age-old problem of the morality of man, pushed out by theater publicists that are weak artistically and negativistic politically.²³³

The program also called for the creation of two bodies. The National Cultural Fund (Narodowa Fundusz Kultury) was to fund culture, beginning at 5 billion złoty with an eventual goal of 10 billion złoty annually, partially taken from the national budget, and partially from earnings of cultural industries. The National Cultural Council (Narodowa Rada Kultury) was to establish the principles of cultural politics and evaluate their realization.

²³³ Jozef Tejchma , “Podstawowe problemy i projekty decyzji w dziedzinie kultury,” January 19, 1982, 1354 Wydział Kultury PZPR, 1189, 932/2, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw, Poland.

A few observations are possible at this point. First, culture continues to be a concern at high levels of the government, even with the declaration of martial law – even to the point of increasing spending on culture by 30-50% of an extremely tight budget of a country undergoing an economic and political crisis. Indeed, the document blames the crisis itself in part on “the weak condition of state/national culture.” Second, political concerns continue to coexist with aesthetic requirements. Finally, a broader concept of culture, tied to efforts to democratize culture in the IX Congress the year before continued to coexist with another more narrow understanding of culture, more reminiscent of the stalinist era (or positivism, as the speaker chose to see it). This culture was to be “universal” and deal with questions about human morality and society and the individual, but also socialist, and directed at motivating positivist work. And perhaps the greatest challenge of all, it had to attract widespread youth participation.

Shortly after these meetings, the Central Committee’s Division of Culture worked out its “Long-term Plan for party Activity on the Matter of Culture.” Perhaps because this plan was formulated exclusively by the party (the discussion two months before, noted in the preceding paragraphs, included members of the MKiS, an organ of the state), and because the declaration of martial law temporarily placed hard-liners within the party in a position of strength, it took a sharper tone. This document called for a return to a “class oriented” cultural program – which was specifically opposed to the “particular interests of the professional elite – and above all the interests promoted by the extremist powers of Solidarity.” This demanded a program of enhancing both the amount of culture available, and also its ideological quality. Even while calling for a return to a “class oriented” program, though, the plan was not purely Marxist. The document rated as especially important “the presence of works that carry value for building socialist culture – that is, a passion for truth, social justice, comfortable work, tolerance, and respect for the personhood (*osobowość*) of man as the foundation of humanistic interpersonal relations.” The reference to personhood is particularly significant since Personalism and the concept of *osobowość* was closely associated in Poland with Pope John Paul II – an unexpected reference (at least with positive connotations) in party documents. Also deemed necessary was an “openness to new, original artistic propositions” which meant a politics

of choosing based on “what is valuable for intellectual development and building a thoughtful, moral social base.”²³⁴

Like the previous meeting, this plan called for a combination of these higher goals with the more practical need to “stimulate productive work.” It also encountered tensions when turning specifically to youth culture. “Special attention” was required in fulfilling the needs and developing the cultural aspirations of the young generation. This meant that “artistic institutions and cultural agencies must make every effort to increase and make more attractive cultural offerings addressed to the young generation...” The final sentence dealing with youth captures this awkward dual imperative of culture being both ideologically correct and also chosen by youth: a preference was supposed to be displayed for “values of national culture and universal culture that comprise the indispensable canon for the correct educational path of the young generation” as well as “the foundation of independent, active participation in culture.”

As this tension suggests, despite the heightened rhetoric of the plan and its proclaimed return to a class-based model of culture, the basic aspects of the program is not far from that proposed two months earlier. Even when it calls for a “return to a class oriented model of culture,” which reads as a nod toward more hard-line members of the party, it goes on to describe this model as concerned with the more universal values of truth, justice, tolerance, concern for individual personhood, and also “openness to new, original artistic propositions.”

The program makes no reference to rock – although it does call for an increase in the production of records – and once again, the possibilities for how the music would fit into the plan are ambiguous. It was unlikely that punk rock could be seen as a stimulator of positivist work or part of a class-based understanding of culture – although rock was certainly more popular among young workers than the “serious music” celebrated by the party. Whether rock had anything to say about universal culture or the value of the individual and his place in society was more debatable – after all, sociological accounts of punk rock that were beginning to arise in Poland at this moment suggested that the movement should be understood as a commentary on social crisis. No one, however,

²³⁴ Wydział Kultury KC PZPR, “Program długofalowych działań partii na rzecz rozwoju kultury narodowej,” March 1982, 1354 Wydział Kultury PZPR, 1176, 924/201, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw, Poland.

could contest rock's ability to attract "independent, active participation" of youth in culture. In short, how the directives might apply to rock was once more ambiguous. The central party organs gave principles and guidelines, but not specific instructions as to how to fulfill them.

By mid 1982, though, groups within the party were not the only bodies making pronouncements on culture. Just weeks after the Division of Culture presented its long-term plan, the Sejm held its first ever meeting entirely devoted to culture.²³⁵ Yet, if there was little sense of a coherent party plan on culture, the Sejm's formulation was even more open-ended. The Sejm concluded that culture was "the terrain of a historic national experience," and as such, it was diverse, including "the most valuable parts of *szlachta* [noble] culture, the old intelligentsia, and most importantly of workers and peasants" as well as international influences from Latin Culture, the Italian Renaissance, and Western Europe. Even so, the Sejm assured that it did not accept everything, but only what was "best for socialism." On one hand, culture required freedom in order for science and culture to develop properly, and the individual was deemed able to realize his own freedom through culture, but on the other hand, this freedom was limited by the good of the people, of Poland, and of socialism.

The Sejm's decision to devote an entire session to culture was astounding, but nearly as unusual was the decision of the PZPR's Central Committee to devote its IX Plenum, taking place just one month before the Jarocin festival, in July of 1982, exclusively to the matter of Poland's youth. This was taken as so unusual, in fact, that a participant in the plenum frankly told a youth periodical that older Poles were somewhat disturbed by all of the focus on youth among party leadership.²³⁶

The discussion and decisions made followed in the vein of what I have discussed already; the introduction speech to the plenum given by Jaruzelski, entitled "With Youth and in Concern for Youth" explained that the plenum was intended to continue fulfilling youth policy as per the IX Extraordinary Congress.²³⁷ Or, to use the summary provided by the Group on Youth Matters:

²³⁵ "Doniosła ranga kultury i nauki w życiu narodu," *Trybuna Ludu*, May 5, 1982.

²³⁶ Kazimierz Treger and Marek Truszkowski, "Partia musi wygrać," *Sztandar Młodych*, February 25, 1983.

²³⁷ KC PZPR, Jaruzelski, "IX Plenarne Posiedzenie KC PZPR," *Życie Warszawy*, July 26, 1982.

Among many ideas expressed, the most dominant position was that there exists the possibility for working out party politics in standing to youth directed according to the instructions of the IX Congress and that exiting the crisis depends in a significant, if not a decided measure depends on youth.²³⁸

In October of that year the Minister of Culture and Art appeared on television to present his own views on culture. He announced, “We have been, and always will be a country of cultural openness.” He promised that the state would not “organize boycotts of art or bands” and insisted that developing culture was only possible with a great deal of social participation.” Moreover, this culture should “show different world views,” and that it should “include all those who see themselves with the Poles.”²³⁹

Policy and Rock

These were not empty words. While the range of interpretations was wide, leaving many possible outcomes, the diverse assortment of statements coming from the party about youth and culture carried important consequences for the music industry and rock scene in the first months after martial law was declared. At least some interpreted the directives as allowing rock – or chose to interpret it that way, much as some student unions and houses of culture had before martial law. Recall that it was only weeks after martial law that the first rock concerts took place in Warsaw under the title “Rock Bloc.”

Further, as I noted in the second chapter, this was precisely the moment that the third program of state radio was reoriented toward youth. The new program formula called for education and “political, social, and cultural awareness” among youth – precisely what many voices in the party had been calling for. Its programming was also designed to attract youth participation, another important goal, although one that could be at odds with the first. In one sentence, organizers sought to reconcile these objectives: “[the program] will be concerned primarily with positive attitudes of youth manifesting in

²³⁸ Zespół ds Młodzieży KC PZPR, “Informacja o realizacji Uchwały IX Plenum KC PZPR,” June 1983, 1354 PZPR KC w Warszawie Pion Środowiskowy, XLIII/7, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw, Poland.

²³⁹ “Perspektywy Polskiej Kultury,” *Trybuna Ludu*, October 23, 1982.

various aspects of life, while also remembering that a portion of youth keeps a certain distance from them.”²⁴⁰

Both of these phenomena – the allowing of a series of rock concerts while most cultural events were banned, and the reorientation of the entire third radio program to attract a teenaged audience – contradict the dominant perception of martial law as a time of conservative socialist restoration. They did, however, fit with many of the aspects of party debates going on around culture. Even if the statements coming from central authorities did not explicitly endorse rock, they did provide grounds on which others could. What allowed for this tolerant approach to culture against the backdrop of a political crackdown?

One possible explanation is a variant on the “bread and circuses” model.²⁴¹ If the economic downturn of the late 1970s had put an end to the government’s ability to provide to adequate amounts material goods (bread), the 1980s might be seen as an effort to increase access to distracting, placating entertainment (circuses). In fact, this is a more cynical version of my argument that the party was shifting from a model of authority based on providing material goods to cultural and ideologically based authority. The difference is that the “circuses” of this second model are a distraction, where I have argued that culture was an actual concern among party members as a possible basis for a legitimate government.

These models need not be mutually exclusive. Certainly party leaders were concerned with how youth spent their free time, and would prefer them dancing at a rock concert to, say, setting fire to party headquarters (although perhaps not by much for culturally conservative members of the party). It is certainly likely that amidst the concerns the party was dealing with in 1982, many of its members were worried about how youth would manage their frustration and anger at the party and particularly martial law. I am seen no evidence, however, to suggest that all of the talk about youth and

²⁴⁰ Zespół ds Młodzieży KC PZPR, “Program III Polskiego Radia,” 1984.

²⁴¹ The phrase comes from studies of ancient Rome, but has been applied to the Soviet Union in Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley, 1997).

culture was simply a smokescreen for a master plan to diffuse rebellion through the sound waves of rock.²⁴²

The variant of the “circus” model sometimes applied to Polish rock and its relationship with the state is the “safety valve” (*wentyl bezpieczeństwa*) theory. That is, the suggestion that the party used rock as a metaphorical safety valve to release the pressure of youth discontent in order to prevent a more meaningful act of rebellion. Interestingly, I have never seen the term show up in party or state documents. The concept of managing youth free time turns up occasionally, but certainly not in the form of a concerted strategy with rock as one of its methods. Where the idea does turn up frequently, however, is in the Polish rock scene.²⁴³ I will try to demonstrate that the prominence of this theory has more to say about the conditions of the Polish rock scene (shaped to a large degree by the party, to be sure) than it does about party policy.

Further, there are multiple reasons members of the party might have allowed rock that are more concrete and more specific to Poland in the 1980s. First of all, as I have shown, in many ways, it did actually fit with elements of party ideology going back to the IX Extraordinary Congress and beyond. Party members across the spectrum could agree on the need to disseminate culture, particularly among youth, as well as earning the trust of youth. Successful proposals for events submitted by local officials to central authorities defined rock in precisely this way. This political justification was crucial: otherwise, they would never have been considered, particularly just weeks after tanks were rolled into Warsaw during martial law.

Other factors were at work as well, however. Martial law left the music and cultural industry in a difficult position. As theaters and concert venues reopened in the months after martial law was declared, the recording industry, the myriad concert agencies, radio, and television were expected to return to the task of disseminating culture, particularly among youth, as the early conferences on culture after martial law

²⁴² I am not trying to argue here that the party’s plans on youth and culture are genuine and thus laudable. Certainly much of the language of the programs is repetitive, uncreative, and wooden rather than passionate and heartfelt. Nonetheless, these words were significant and had real consequences.

²⁴³ Curiously, this concept is particularly prominent among many of the punk bands looking back today on their performances in the 1980s; it has been voiced by Brylewski, members of Dezeter, Muniak Staszczuk of T. Love, and others. On the other side, people like Jarocin’s Chelstowski and many fans have dismissed this idea. Lizut, *Punk Rock Later*; Jacek Krzeminski, “Bunt kontrolowany,” *Rzeczpospolita*, August 11, 2000

attest. This was especially urgent since Solidarity had been responsible for organizing and funding many cultural events. Empty spaces where Solidarity cultural initiatives had once existed constantly threatened to challenge the party's ability to present itself as Poland's legitimate cultural authority.

Yet, the music industry found filling these spaces exceptionally difficult. Finances were always a matter of concern given the dire economic situation, and the sudden removal of Solidarity patronage made matters more difficult still. An even greater problem arose, however. Many performers had supported the labor movement – a fact that concerned authorities once the movement was banned and they hoped to get the cultural sphere back on track. Shortly after martial law, the Division of Culture sent out a request to the provincial party centers requesting information on the status of the cultural milieu. By mid 1982, reports from the provinces began to come in, and the news was discouraging. While reports were diverse (a few described widespread oppositional activity while others claimed nothing to report), many noted boycotts among Solidarity sympathizers in the cultural sphere. Krakow, for instance, reported:

[There is a] refusal among a part of the creative milieu to recognize the necessity of martial law. The effect of this is a boycott by the milieu of actors of TV and radio, a so-called 'internal emigration' of cultural creators, and a refusal to participate in events under state patronage, *especially among artists but also musicians.*²⁴⁴

The responses to this challenge were limited. Financial incentive for participation was not an option due to strict regulations, and more practically, the dire condition of the budget. Training new professional performers was unfeasible for the same reason, as well as time constraints. However, in the face of this dearth of performers, there was a growing number of young musicians who were interested in performing for wider audiences: amateur rock bands.²⁴⁵ Under better conditions, the conservative cultural

²⁴⁴ Wydział Kultury KK PZPR (Kraków), "Stan i rozmieszczenie sił Partii w środowisku kultury Krakowa," July 1982, 1354 Wydział Kultury PZPR, 936, 923/65, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Wasaw, Poland. Emphasis in original.

²⁴⁵ The question arises of whether rock bands might have been interpreted as "scabs" for replacing the Solidarity supporters boycotting the industry. I have found no evidence of such a sentiment, perhaps because attacking scabs would have been a show of support to Solidarity – a highly risky proposition amidst Martial Law – or perhaps simply because Solidarity members were not often particularly interested

gatekeepers of the music industry limited the access of this group to its facilities. Only the most polished, conventionally talented bands were offered recordings, and many agencies and concert venues were nearly as restrictive. In the new situation following martial law, however, the choice was often between filling a slot in a show with a rock band, or leaving it empty. For an industry official familiar with the party's latest pronouncements on spreading culture and appealing to youth, the former often seemed like a wiser choice than the latter.

Finally, martial law pushed party leadership to confront what must have been obvious to outside onlookers for years: it was remarkably unpopular and its authority to rule had dwindled to the point of requiring military force to maintain power. After martial law, the party commissioned a number of surveys measuring its popularity among segments of the population. In the Soviet context, the argument has been made that surveillance served as a replacement for democratic voting in discerning public opinions; in the PRL, the party relied extensively on information gleaned from surveys as well. The results were disturbing. A 1983 survey among college students and school pupils in Gdańsk showed the following (Figure 4):

in what rock bands were doing. Interestingly, when Solidarity circulated lists of its unofficial awards for culture while the movement was underground, they never included any rock bands.

Question	Agree (pupils)	Agree (students)	Disagree (pupils)	Disagree (students)
The economy would function better if businesses were privately owned	59.8	70.4	18.1	10.3
Everyone can live together in our country without changes in the system	13.2	5.7	74.0	82.6
The system we have now in Poland is nothing like Marx's socialism	56.7	62.0	14.5	10.9
Poland needs to return to capitalism	17.3	10.3	56.0	59.2
We should try to create Polish socialism	59.4	63.0	17.0	15.2
Efforts at changing the political system won't work because it's unreformable	40.2	53.5	28.0	27.4
The current political system is good in principle; what is bad is the fault of a few dishonest people in high places	79.5	36.4	10.1	46.7
There should be a few political parties with different ideologies representing different social groups in Poland	79.5	92.9	10.1	2.2
The current system should give up power	16.0	17.1	56.2	45.1
It is best when there is only one party	7.3	2.4	79.8	91.0
Poles aren't divided into party members and non, but a "red bourgeoisie" and the rest of the nation	47.1	55.2	25.2	19.6
If there were an opposition party, thousands would join regardless of its ideology	32.1	56.5	40.7	24.7

Figure 4. Survey of Gdańsk school pupils and students, in percentages. Komitet Wojewódzki PZPR, "Ośrodek informacji, analiz i programowanie pracy partyjnej w Gdańsku: Postawy polityczno-Społeczne i światopogląd młodzieży /raport z badań socjologicznych/," June 1983, 1354 PZPR KC w Warszawie Pion Środowiskowy, XLIII/26, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw, Poland.

Another survey asked Gdańsk Polytechnic what the system "we currently have in Poland" was in their opinion, then offered several choices as well as a place to write in their own response. They answered as follows:

1. Real socialism as it should be (1.1%)
2. A certain form of socialism not entirely in agreement with its principles (34.2%)
3. It has nothing in common with socialism (28.8%)
4. I would describe it with other words (29.3%)

Regarding the last response, the report noted, some answers written in were “little in common,” “it’s simply a mess,” “fascism,” “a blind dictatorship directed from Moscow,” “government of cliques,” “a police system,” “feudalism,” and “a party-military dictatorship.”²⁴⁶

The bold frankness of these questions is astounding (to say nothing of the answers). The surveys even provided a blank space so students could write exactly what they thought about the current situation. Of course, the results of these surveys were kept secret, and used only internally. Nonetheless, this information meant that the party knew how abysmally unpopular it was. Further still, many of its members wanted to change this. This was part of the reason for the focus on youth at the IX Plenum in 1982: some likely hoped that by offering more favorable living and working conditions for young Poles, they could reverse some of the negative feelings.

In 1983, a pamphlet entitled “Youth ask: The chances for youth” made an attempt to pursue this objective.²⁴⁷ Besides listing the various endeavors to ease the situation of youth in finding employment, getting promotions, and securing an apartment, it provocatively asks whether the IX Plenum was an attempt to “buy youth.” Of course, the answer was negative, but that the question was even asked suggests a new level of awareness by party leaders of their own unpopularity. It also demonstrates a desire to engage with the kind of criticism many youth might actually associate with it, as opposed to the standard “failure to live up to the promises of socialism” line that was typically cited as the main objection to the party among youth.

At roughly the same time, the Central Committee became aware of similar negative feelings regarding socialist youth unions. One extensive report completed in

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ Renata Leska, “Młodzi pytają: Szanse Młodych” (Warszawa, 1983).

1982 observed with disappointment that most youth had the feeling that socialist youth unions were run by bureaucrats and careerists. The report also gave a critical evaluation of the party's continued insistence that youth organizations present a unified ideological front, rather than accommodating differences in youth. Part of the reason for this unpopularity, it suggested, was the creation of the central body connecting unions to the party, the FSZMP. Instead of a genuine youth union with connections to socialism and PZPR, the FSZMP had become a one-way "transmission belt" issuing orders from the PZPR to youth.²⁴⁸

Among the resolutions of the IX Plenum also was the decision to create a group under the central committee to be devoted to youth matters. In the context of the remarkable unpopularity of the party among youth, the Group on Youth Matters (*Zespół do spraw młodych*) examined the situation in socialist youth unions, which they saw as one of the possible means by which youth and the party could be reconciled. However, there were obstacles in this path as well. First of all, the membership of these organizations had fallen dramatically with the rise of Solidarity, and had only slightly risen in the wake of martial law. Even more remarkably, though, they acknowledged,

A large portion of youth rate the party negatively and even the fact of belonging to the PZPR. The belief that members of the party mainly look after their own interests, and the party eases their achievement dominates (3/4 of surveyed opinions).²⁴⁹

These opinions were confirmed by a 1984 survey among school aged youth. Among those surveyed, only 32.8 percent of youth said they viewed the ZSMP positively, in comparison to 47 percent that saw it negatively. The Scouting Union, ZHP, fared considerably better, with some 60 percent seeing the organization favorably.²⁵⁰ When asked why they thought so little of the unions, the majority response was the

²⁴⁸ Instytut Badan nad Młodzieżą, "Kryzys sierpniowy a Polski ruch młodzieżowy: Przyczynek do raportu o stanie organizacji młodzieżowych w latach 1980-1981," June 1982. This report by the Institute for Research on Youth was addressed to the Director of the Social-Professional Division of the Central Committee of the PZPR.

²⁴⁹ Zespół ds Młodzieży KC PZPR, "Ocena sytuacji politycznej w socjalistycznych związkach młodzieży - wpływ organizacji młodzieżowych na postawy i zachowanie młodzieży," December 1983.

²⁵⁰ Instytut Śląski w Opolu, "Wybrane elementy świadomości politycznej młodzieży szkolnej," 1984.

impression that it operated under the direction of the PZPR.²⁵¹ The bold conclusion drawn by the institute conducting the survey was, “the PZPR’s almost entire lack of trust among youth ... is a factor automatically lowering the prestige of the ZSMP.” Youth did appreciate one aspect of the ZSMP, however: 82% said the main reason it would be worthwhile to join the ZSMP was for the events that it sponsored. As we have seen, among these (along with camps and other activities) were rock festivals. In fact, on at least one occasion, the local ZSMP sponsored a beauty contest at the Jarocin festival. Perhaps the organization imagined that rock and roll and scantily clad young women could not attract Polish youth, nothing could.

Remarkably, the survey of youth membership in groups also included groups of a different nature entirely. Alongside organizations like the ZSMP and ZHP, it asked school children about belonging to the “punk youth movement.” Surveyors found that it was marginal – even more so than the ZSMP (9.3% belonged to the ZSMP, while only 1.5% claimed belonging (*członkostwo*) to the punks). However, the surveyors were more disturbed by the fact that despite this marginality, punk had a relatively greater level of acceptance among youth (for every actual punk, there were 16.8 youths that professed to “accept” the movement, while there were only 3.4 that accepted the ZSMP for each of its members).²⁵²

In short, after martial law, the party was deeply unpopular among youth, and its leadership knew it. Even worse, the organizations designed to promote the party among youth were also tainted by their association with the party. In contrast, the party had evidence that rock was particularly popular. In this context, the annual report given at the end of 1982 by the Department of Theater and Estrada – itself an intermediary between the entertainment industry and the party – to the Division of Culture took a more balanced approach to rock. The committee noted, “a disturbing phenomenon in the discussed period was the expansion of rock and its dominance over other forms of artistic activity on the stage.” However, it continued,

Youth are genuinely interested in rock. Many youth milieus identify with its specific contents and style. Thus it

²⁵¹ 60% said this – which is not surprising, considering 41% of those surveyed said they had absolutely no (“0%”) trust in the PZPR. 19% said they trusted the party 20%, 13% trusted the party 50%, 7% trusted it 70%, and only 4% trusted it 100%.

²⁵² Ibid.

would be harmful to limit access to this type of concert, event, and recording “from high” (*odgorne*). Yet doubts are also raised by the particular exposure of rock while moving away from the development of other forms of performance as well as the promotion of rock recordings and events on a low or even unprofessional performance and repertoire level. At the stage of program creation, it would be worth recognizing the special place of recordings, events and bands that confirm their output and place in rock creativity, such as “Combi” (*sic*), “Maanam,” “TSA,” and “Krzak.” However, the repertoire and presentations of new groups should be an object of continued observation and evaluation [to see] whose individuality and tendencies merit promotion.²⁵³

Rock had finally made enough of a presence that the state officials overseeing the industry were familiar with the assets and liabilities of individual bands (even if they were still shaky on the spelling). Moreover, striking out against rock was the last thing the party needed to do in the face of its already dismal reputation among youth. However, since cultural considerations were still of paramount concern, finding a way to make it fit party cultural objectives was necessary. Somehow, the need to allow youth to choose and the need to differentiate good and bad culture had to be reconciled.

In this case, the Department took the path of differentiating between “good” and “bad” rock rather than accepting or rejecting it wholesale. This evaluation was determined by a combination of purely aesthetic and political factors, according to the standard of a “high performance and repertoire level” – similar to the ideological-artistic formula outlined by the party. This meant that bands like Maanam, Kombi and TSA could fit with state objectives, while others could not. As we will see, such a determination was also of key importance to rock fans, although for very different reasons.

The Cultural Commission of the party’s Central Committee similarly worked to square the imperatives of popularizing the party among youth and maintaining its cultural policy. Shortly after the meeting of the Narodowa Rada Kultury at the beginning of 1983, the ideas of its chair about youth and culture inspired a “new socialist model of

²⁵³ MKiS: Department Teatru i Estrady, “Sezon artystyczny 1981/82 w Teatrach i na Estradzie,” late 1982, 1354 Wydział Kultury PZPR, 438, 891/56, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw, Poland.

upbringing through art” (*wychowanie przez sztukę*). The fundamental principle of this concept, as the Central Committee’s cultural commission understood it, was “the emphasis on the diverse values of art impacting the whole personality [*osobowość*] of a person, and not only the sphere of his aesthetic sensitivities.”²⁵⁴ Of course, this idea was not particularly new: it fit with the older stalinist model of culture that had been largely abandoned in the 1970s, the Arnoldian idea of culture as a source of uplift, and also with Pope John Paul II’s support for developing personhood. It also fit in perfectly with the more general return of the PZPR’s focus on culture at the end of that decade and in the 1980s. This policy meant integrating art and culture into the life of young Poles, “both inside and out of school.” It even meant that “teachers are less necessary than the presence of a live, authentic artistic phenomenon invoking feeling, interest, emotion, that must be realized as a process of direct contact with works of art and not through information about it.”

This program solidified the ideas that were already circulating in party discussions about youth and culture; it affirmed the importance of culture, and particularly active participation. This is all well and good, but these kinds of statements had been made before. This time, however, they followed up with a more practical look at implementation. In an ideal world, the party would provide youth with Chopin, and they would gladly listen and consequently be transformed into hard-working, politically engaged communists and Polish citizens. However, the commission noted,

Recent sociological research shows unfavorable information. Youth expressly prefer the so-called third circuit (*trzeci obieg*) – that is, mass culture – to direct contact with art, and do not possess the inclination for reading or a great interest for creative engagement in artistic activity. However, there is an interest in propositions directed to them, such as press series from youth literature and musical programs from the circle of youth music (*muzyka młodzieżowa*) on radio and TV, as well as periodicals. *This places creators and realizers of programs and presses in tremendous responsibility for the ideological-educational, cultural creation function of these media.*²⁵⁵

²⁵⁴ Komisja Kultury KC PZPR, “Założenia do programu aktywizacji kulturalnej dzieci i młodzieży,” 1983, 1354 Wydział Kultury PZPR, 943, 923/72, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw, Poland.

²⁵⁵ Ibid. Emphasis in original.

The author of these words was right: youth did overwhelmingly prefer youth programs on the radio, as the directors learned the next year in a survey entitled “Music on the Trójka.”²⁵⁶ In the face of youth’s lack of interest in Chopin, then, “youth music” – at this time a euphemism for rock – could be interpreted as a surrogate vehicle for bringing culture to youth.

There is evidence that the Central Committee accepted aspects of this approach to rock, as shown in one document from 1983. As more and more concert agencies promoted rock, record companies pressed rock, and local authorities organized rock concerts, the Central Committee’s Division of Culture called for increased effort in promoting music:

The last year did not rectify the scope and quality of the presence of music in society, its real function among the wide stratum of working people. The party and state administration did little in this area, trade unions did not undertake it in their practical activity, and wider creative unions did not take interest in it. The dissemination of music, especially among the working class and children and youth must now become a fundamental direction of party work in this area of art, the most important area of social organs.

This included:

1. Clear changes in who is addressed by musical agencies, especially by those operating in smaller area – their right for their further existence should be connected to their intense activity dissemination music, particularly in connection with schools
2. Develop every movement of music lovers, including unions, musical agencies, and independent.
3. Enacting a mandatory musical education in elementary and middle school programs...
4. Considerably speeding up the building of the new record press of Polskie Nagrania.

²⁵⁶ Zespół ds Młodzieży KC PZPR, “Program III Polskiego Radia,” 1984.

5. Creating a second specialized musical periodical, besides *Ruch Muzyczny*, with a more popular profile, in connection to matters of music in the mass media.
6. Correcting the program of radio and television, in connection to its mass education function for eliminating gaps in music...
7. Creating another music press... with the function of teaching and popularizing.
8. Intensification of activity of dissemination by creative unions...
9. Greater care for the development of successful forms of amateur musicality, especially in working milieus.
10. Building musical schools of all strata, including musical camps, for promoting and supporting young talents.²⁵⁷

While the use of the term “*muzyka*” rather than “*rozrywka*” indicates that the document was focusing on music in an artistic rather than recreational sense, it also makes clear that it is not just talking about classical music. The fifth point calls for a popular musical periodical – perhaps just the sort the United Entertainment Industries came up with in *Forum Rozrywki*, which featured scholarly articles on Polish rock bands like Maanam. As for young talents, the highest profile event of this type was the All-Poland tournament of young talents, which, by 1983, had a heavy rock presence that included bands like Dezerter (hardcore punk) and Bakszysz (reggae). In short, the Division of Culture was calling for promoting music in every way. It did not explicitly endorse rock, but it laid some of the groundwork for its success.

To summarize, after martial law, the party was abysmally unpopular, and it knew it. In this environment, youth organizations had incentive to find activities to attract youth without emphasizing their party connections, and the PZPR had incentive to accept or even support activities that were popular among youth, provided they could be squared with its ideological program. As we saw above, it became possible to interpret rock as having this potential. This is not to say that everyone in the party wanted to cynically use

²⁵⁷ Wydział Kultury KC PZPR, “Muzyka,” 1983, 1354 Wydział Kultury KC PZPR, 23, 897/88, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw, Poland.

rock to buy positive feelings from youth. Some party members certainly liked rock and wanted to see it developed in Poland: for them, its popularity among youth was an excellent argument they could make for the party accepting or even promoting it in some forms. Other party members continued to detest the music, but found themselves isolated since the majority was unwilling to add another reason to the list of causes of their unpopularity among youth.

Central and Local: Principals and Agents

By 1982, it was clear that youth and culture merited the close attention by a wide range of workers of the party and the state. Despite all of these theoretical guidelines on these issues, the party still offered no specific instructions explaining whether rock fit with its models of youth and cultural policy. Workers in the music industry and local politicians did not have this option, however. With rock's increasing ubiquity, they started to face choices: either they would have to accept the music, ignore it, or work to suppress it. Their decision on how to treat rock was shaped by directives coming from the political center, but a considerable amount of local initiative and interpretation was necessary.

Rock provides an interesting opportunity to look at the principal-agent dilemma in late socialist Poland. According to this concept, a tension exists between the principal (the person or group that provides directives) and agents (those who carry them out) since the former requires the cooperation of the latter. That is, the agents can always use the authority delegated by the principal to achieve their own objectives rather than those assigned to them. What this scenario usually assumes, however, is that it is clear to both the principal and the agent what following the directive would entail in the first place.

In the case of communist Poland, it is not certain that either the principal or the agent knew what the mandated approach to rock would look like. There is no indication that the principals in central party organs had established a position on rock (although individual members certainly had their own opinions). For agents, the matter was certainly unclear: party directives provided a wide enough range of interpretation to accommodate a variety of standpoints toward rock. Beyond deciding whether to follow party directives, then, agents had to go to some length to figure out what they meant.

As theoretical programs on youth in culture were being hammered out in Warsaw shortly after martial law, some distance away, the Executive Committee of the PZPR of the City and Community of Jarocin (Egzekutywa Komitet Miasta-Gmina PZPR w Jarocinie) deliberated the decidedly more concrete matter of whether to allow the rock festival to take place that year. The question was broached at the executive meeting on February 18, 1982 – roughly two months after martial law was declared, and well before cultural life had returned to normal. During the meeting, the local party secretary presented the calendar of cultural events for the year. The festival’s presence on the calendar was immediately controversial: the local police (Milicja Obywatelska, or MO) commander commented, “The Review of Music of the Young Generation, which by the way attracts various types of scum, is a threat to the safety of the city. The police do not have the necessary means to secure the event.”²⁵⁸

In the context of martial law, it would not at all be surprising for a comment like this from the person in charge of maintaining order to end any consideration of carrying out the festival altogether. Nonetheless, a member of the committee suggested suspending debate on the matter until the next week’s meeting, when the town mayor and the local house of culture director would be present. Even so, two committee members spoke out at the meeting, demonstrating how controversial the topic was. One speaker expressed disapproval of the organization of the event, since it was “a bad example for youth.” Another speaker – the leader of the local ZSMP youth union – suggested that “the youth musical event should remain in Jarocin despite many aspects of the matter.”²⁵⁹

Initially, it might be surprising to see a leader of a youth union – often seen by young Poles as careerists, opportunists, and party stooges – to take the position of defending a rock festival. In some ways, though, taking this position made perfect sense. First, the reputation of youth unions notwithstanding, their strong support for Solidarity in 1980-1981 demonstrates that many youth union members had open, reformist views of socialism that allowed room for events like rock concerts that would have been repugnant to hardliners (although the experience of martial law may have made some members

²⁵⁸ Egzekutywa KMiG PZPR w Jarocinie, “Protokol nr 23/82: Posiedzenie Egzekutywy KMiG PZPR w Jarocinie z dnia 18.2.1982,” February 18, 1982, 868 Komitet Miasto i Gmina PZPR w Jarocinie, 30, Archiwum Panstwowe w Kaliszu, Kalisz, Poland

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

reconsider their bold positions). Even further, though, the decision to support rock made sense in light of the tremendously negative attitudes of Polish youth toward the unions and the dramatic decline in their membership. Unions were desperate increase their popularity among youth, and youth generally were fond of punk and rock.

The next week, the debate in the Executive Committee continued in greater depth, as proposed. The title under which the discussion fell was “Rating the scope and form of undertaking action on the matter of developing culture in the city and community and the program for 1982.” In other words, the festival was discussed in the context of a wider debate going on at higher levels of the party about culture. This time the debate began with a proposal to withdraw from the 1982 Rhythm of Youth Festival (one of the names used for the festival in 1982). Responses again were sharply divided. On one side, speakers argued for the continuation of the event on cultural grounds. One noted the empty space left in the field of culture after martial law: “unions [i.e., Solidarity] were concerned with culture, and what now? What is the solution for those involved with that formation?” These matters were especially important given the lack of themes dealing with youth at the local house of culture, another argued. The house of culture director simply noted that his organization and local youth were in favor of the festival. But the argument was put in strongest terms by the ZSMP leader, who combined concern about culture with the need to reach out to youth, cautioning against the party “playing the role of the grand inquisitor” by forbidding the festival, and warning that cancelling the festival meant that the party would be “resigning from the role of developing culture.”²⁶⁰

The ZSMP leader’s argument was particularly strong because the party’s commitment to culture and youth had been trumpeted for the past few years, as we have seen. By supporting the festival in these terms, he made his position difficult to assail. Rather than challenging the premise of the argument in support of the festival, its opponents disputed the character of the festival itself. One speaker accepted the need for cultural events, but opposed the type of festival that was being proposed, instead suggesting the event return to “old-fashioned music” (*muzyka dawna*). Others denied that the festival was a question of culture at all. One boldly claimed that it was “not a matter

²⁶⁰ Egzekutywa KMiG PZPR w Jarocinie, “Protokol nr 24/82r.,” February 25, 1982, 868 Komitet Miasto i Gmina PZPR w Jarocinie, 30, Archiwum Panstwowe w Kaliszu, Kalisz, Poland

of music, but of the demoralization of society.” Needless to say, the police commander agreed, reaffirming his suggestion that the festival not be organized “this year, or in the future.”

At the end of this intense debate, the city’s leader presented his viewpoint. In addition to affirming the goal of the house of culture in activating artistic and cultural life and the role of schools in protecting culture, he announced that he was in favor of organizing the youth music festival in order “to not harm Jarocin’s youth.” With that, Jarocin’s party leader called the discussion to an end, suggesting that they return to the matter the next week.

They never did. Opponents of the festival at the local evidently lacked the support necessary to remove the festival from the cultural calendar. Without direct orders on the matter, the members of the Jarocin executive committee were left to make the decision based on their understanding of party policy in combination with their own preferences. Still, in order to proceed with the event, the committee needed approval at the regional level. Over the next months, the festival’s opponents and supporters alike were left to await the decision. Adding to the complexity of the matter, these intervening months were filled with controversy over just the topics that surrounded the debate about Jarocin.

As late as June, the fate of the festival was still uncertain. In fact, the town’s leader was quite pessimistic: when the local ZSMP representative again proposed to organize the festival, possibly even in a different form from previous years, the mayor responded, “There is not a climate for organizing the Rhythms festival this year... Organizing the Wielkopolski Rhythms of Youth will depend on the regional commander of the MO [citizens’ militia, or the police].”²⁶¹ His pessimism was understandable; if the local police commander was any representative of the sentiment of his superiors at the regional level, there was little chance they would approve of the event.

Yet, against all odds, approval was given shortly before the festival. Robakowski later recalled simply receiving a note reading, “Do it” a mere two weeks before the event was scheduled to take place.²⁶² In turn, Robakowski ensured that the festival was billed

²⁶¹ Egzekutywa KMiG PZPR w Jarocinie, “Protokol nr 37/82r.,” June 3, 1982, 868 Komitet Miasto i Gmina PZPR w Jarocinie, 30, Archiwum Panstwowe w Kaliszu, Kalisz, Poland

²⁶² Krzeminski, “Bunt kontrolowany.” I was unable to find any evidence of discussion of the matter at the Wojewód level, either in the executive committee, the secretariat, or the plenum. Most likely, it was

as consistent with the party's directives on youth and culture, although he did so in his own way. Offering his thoughts on the festival and the city's role in organizing it for the press, he observed,

We have a remarkable cultural base... and above all an amphitheater... We decided to do something to bring it to life. I don't like small things. Small things are for average people. The Greater Poland Rhythm of Youth Festival in Jarocin [the previous festival in Jarocin, before MMG], presenting performers like Frąckowiak, Pronko, and Banaszak for the tenth time was already withering... It was necessary to give the event some impetus. At first bringing the rock movement under our wings created some unrest... it shocked society. And whatever happens in Jarocin, I am responsible for. On the other hand, I did not want to be the cause of stagnation in youth music. I thus had to accommodate youth interests with the calmness of older people. And it turns out I did a good job. Young people dress more stylishly, and older people are more tolerant... An indication of the trust and satisfaction of the higher authorities is that regional government secured pork for this year for participants.²⁶³

First of all, the Robakowski's enthusiastic (if not bombastic), irreverent personality comes through here. At least as he presents the matter, a more timid mayor might have lacked the gumption to push the festival through. Personal preference plays a part as well – Robakowski has no sentimental attachment to the “withering” mainstream *estrada* acts of the time. Thus, we can see how the personality and preference of the agent comes into play in deciding how to handle the influx of rock.

At the same time, though, the mayor's description is filled with references to contemporary discourse on rock and party ideals. His description about using the city's cultural base to bring culture to life, and accommodating the needs of youth and older Poles both fit comfortably in discussions about the needs of Poland in the official press. His reluctance to “be the cause of stagnation in youth music” resonates with party statements calling for promoting culture and encouraging youth participation. Robakowski either believes that holding the festival fits with the plans of “higher

decided by a small group of people, or perhaps just the regional police chief, informally and behind closed doors.

²⁶³ Urszula Bielous, “Woodstock w Jarocinie,” *Polityka*, no. 29, 1982, 11.

authorities,” or he is able to use the ambiguity in their instructions to make it sound like he is. After all, surely higher authorities would never provide pork – a valuable commodity in times of crisis – for an event that did not fit with their policies.

Local authorities in other towns and villages sometimes offered similar interpretations of rock. In 1983, the Secretary of the PZPR in the county of Świebodziń wrote a letter to the regional division of culture requesting a bus for the local house of culture. His justification for this special allocation reads,

The Świebodziń House of Culture presents its amateur musical bands on the terrain of the Zielonogorski region unusually frequently. Among the forefront of the achievements of these bands are eighth and sixth place at the All-Poland Review of Music of the Young Generation in Jarocin, two television performances of the group “System” from the House of Culture, winning the regional Tournament of Young Talents, and the Review of Musical Groups “Musical Estrada.”²⁶⁴

At a time of intense focus on youth and culture, this local party secretary believed that participation in Jarocin and other musical events was not just acceptable, but grounds for special consideration by party authorities – perhaps even meriting being granted a bus.

These views were not far from the interpretation of rock voiced at an organizational meeting for the Opole festival (Poland’s most prestigious song festival), chaired by a high-ranking representative of the state – the Vice Minister of Culture and Art. Amidst the debate about youth and ideas about a crisis in culture, the committee looked hopefully at rock music. The committee lamented that the sad state of the national budget and the boycott by many performers would make the festival impossible for 1982. On a bright note, though, it suggested that as a substitute, an event might be created in correlation with the Jarocin festival. While the idea never came to fruition, the mere idea of linking a prestigious cultural tradition like Opole to an amateur rock festival suggests that some industry and state officials – in this case, even the upper echelon – considered

²⁶⁴ Sekretarz KW-G PZPR w Świebodzinie, Mirosław Algierski, “Opinia o pracy Świebodzinskiego Domu Kultury w Świebodzinie,” May 1983, 1354 Wydział Kultury PZPR, 489, 897/44, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw, Poland.

rock music a possible source of cultural value, consonant with official policy on youth and culture.²⁶⁵

In this environment, the regional government's division of culture and art in Katowice even devised its own alternative to the MMG in July of 1982. The report written for central authorities described the growth of rock as presenting an opportunity to offer a cultural event and engage with youth in the difficult situation after martial law. Beyond merely accepting rock, it proudly reported on the plans of Estrada Śląsk, the regional concert agency, to create what it hoped would be its own version of MMG. In a report on cultural activity for the previous and current year, the regional Division of Culture wrote,

To rate the artistic season of 1981/82 of Estrada Śląsk, despite difficult conditions, the principles formulated in the program of artistic action... were fulfilled. The break in activity by martial law limited very important events... In the area of self-production, initiatives worked for long-term cooperation with rock bands and transforming them into the Poland-wide Federation of Rock Music through Estrada Śląsk.

Thus, its plans for the next year under the category "Activity directed at Youth" included:

1. The Federation of Rock Music – an initiative directed at including under Estrada Śląska all rock musicians on the territory of the country and consolidating artistic and ideological sponsorship over that movement.

In agreement with establishments up to now, the initiative will create the possibility of assembling a dialogue with very wide groups of youth interested in rock music. In the auspices of the Federation of Rock Music, we anticipate the following events:

a. A promotional concert directed at utilizing new bands and musicians practicing the rock style.

b. Record premiers for bands in the Federation

²⁶⁵ Jacek Korczakowski, "Notatka z narady w sprawie XX Festiwalu Polskiej Piosenki w dniu 13 lipca 1982," July 1982, 1354 Wydział Kultury PZPR, 396, 891/14, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw, Poland.

c. Rockowisko – a multi-staged event and road narrowing to the celebratory presentation of rock achievements of that year.²⁶⁶

On one hand, this initiative could be seen as an attempt to take closer control over rock by organizing it into a single movement – analogous to assembling youth unions into the FSZMP. Even so, it marked a sense that local party organizations could work with rock to achieve political objectives. Katowice’s efforts in this respect were not an isolated phenomenon: by early 1983, Warsaw’s own agency, Stołeczna Estrada, had a division to focus on rock under the title “Rock Estrada.”²⁶⁷

In the same period, Pagart – the agency responsible for dealing with importing and exporting bands – also expanded its rock profile. In October of 1982, Pagart organized a series of rock concerts. While the organization of a rock concert was not itself new, the band that was performing – The Budgie – was a pioneering heavy metal act whose music was heavier and more aggressive than most of the Western rock bands that toured Poland. In fact, a tour of the group in Poland had been proposed multiple times and failed in previous years. In 1982, however, the tour finally took place in a series of fifteen concerts around Poland.

While the final concert was cancelled due to technical problems (prompting a storm of criticism of the agency’s incompetence in the press), Pagart deemed the tour a success in its report to its overseer, the Division of Cooperation Abroad of the Ministry of Culture and Art. The reasons for success were, first of all, its total of 94,000 viewers (which translated into impressive earnings). Just as critically, a lack of incidents of “hooliganism” or “political provocation” was also mentioned. Subtler considerations were also offered for the concert, however: when the report was forwarded to the party, either Pagart or the Ministry of Culture itself included a number of clippings from the Polish press. The phrases that were highlighted contrasted with the typical pencil marks of censors: the phrases that caught the reader’s attention were those expressing gratefulness to the agency (and through it, the state) for allowing the concert to take place. For instance, among highlighted passages were:

²⁶⁶ Wydział Kultury i Sztuki Urzędu Wojewódzkiego w Katowicach, “Zamierzenia repertuarowe profesjonalnych instytucji artystycznych woj. katowickiego na sezon 1982/1983 wraz z oceną sezonu 1981/82.,” July 1982, 1354 Wydział Kultury PZPR, 388, 891/6, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw, Poland.

²⁶⁷ “Dyrektor stołecznej estrady o planach artystycznych,” *Życie Warszawy*, March 1, 1983.

-The arrival of Budgie inspired joy in hard rock fans.

-The crowd jumped and raised its hands in an enthusiastic gesture.

-They arrived, expected by the Polish audience for 10 years. They arrived to the country in which they have more fans than their home in Wales: the most heart-felt, liveliest, such as they could only dream of.

-The band was greeted by a crowd of loyal fans with posters and collections of records waiting on autographs... Because it was the first example of the “artistic stabilization” in martial law in our country, it is worth looking behind the scenes of these performances.

-The idea of employing Dr. Tomasz Tluczkiewicz as the host of the concerts seems excellent to me, although I do not imagine that he will direct another similar one... but it seems that he feels the music and knows it, and that’s not bad. Well done, Doctor!

-The arrival of Budgie and their appearances in Poland showed everyone where our musical firms and institutions stand: some got boring, others show success. I will be happy if from this fact or reviews some wise manager comes to conclusions that – I hope – are realized in the near future.²⁶⁸

Passages complaining about the cancelled final concert went unmarked by the highlighter, of course.

The selection of these passages and the accompanying note suggest that promoting culture and attracting youth were not the only topics Pagart and the Ministry of Culture and Art thought the party would be interested in hearing about: the focus here was on the gratitude of rock fans to the industry (and thus the state), and on the scale of the turn out (and thus income). This was probably because imported bands could be seen as a more ephemeral presence, and thus could be utilized for immediately practical reasons like public opinion and economic gain.

²⁶⁸ MKiS DWKZ, Gl. Specjalista A Kierkuc, “Informacja pobycie w Polsce zespołu muzycznego the Budgie z Wielkiej Brytanii,” October 1982, 1354 Wydział Kultury PZPR, 440, 891/58, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw, Poland.

The domestic rock scene required more ideological justification, however. While economics and industry conditions were also important in rock's expansion in all of the ways discussed above, party policy could not be ignored. The continued focus on youth and culture by the party and its controversy in the press made rock's expansion a plausible, but ever-tricky political proposition. Where actions to allow or facilitate rock drew on aspects of the multi-faceted discourse on rock that fit with party policy, negative reactions responded to positions that emphasized its incompatibility with official objectives.

Above, I focus on the positive experiences, which generated more attention and paperwork. However, there were at least as many negative responses to rock. These responses occurred every day – a record label would refuse to make a record for a rock band, a radio presenter would choose something safer to play, an *estrada* agency would refuse to book a band for a concert, an MKiS Committee would refuse to give a band artistic verification. Censorship and bans, while more visible in the archives, were only a small fraction of ways authorities could interfere with rock. Compared to a ban or censorship, these mundane decisions generated a lot less paper work. Declining to promote rock did not require the explanation that accepting it did.

The Party Responds

The examples above all show how the wide range of general directives on youth and culture coming from central party groups – and assumptions about the objectives and desires of central authorities – were translated into concrete actions by local politicians and industry decision makers. Of course, other factors were important in decision making – the economic and industry conditions of martial law and the growing popularity among youth – but any response to promote rock (with the partial exception of tours by foreign bands) required that it be justified in terms of party politics. Industry and state officials became adept at doing this, and in doing so, they show us the range of possible interpretations of rock.

As rock grew in popularity, however, its sound waves reached ever greater numbers of people, including those who had until then managed to avoid rock (and the debate over it). Opponents of rock in the press and from local party officials questioned

whether rock was acceptable to socialism or the Polish nation, and challenged central party authorities to take action to stop or limit its proliferation. These objections – particularly in the midst of a crisis in authority – made it difficult to continue on the course of issuing vague directives on youth and culture, leaving the practical, day-to-day decisions on rock up to local agents. They would have to respond more directly, one way or the other.

In mid 1984, a delegate at a party conference rose to voice his objections to “anti-educational” (*antywychowawczy*) contents in “youth vocal compositions,” – a euphemism for rock – and demand their suppression by state censorship organs.²⁶⁹ Another delegate from another region at the same conference called for “saving and developing the amateur cultural movement” by “limiting the places and antenna time set aside for doubtful quality programs of ‘youth music.’”²⁷⁰

At first these kinds of objections were marginalized. In both of these cases, the offended politician was from outside the political center, demanding that central organs take up an offensive against rock. This suggests that even as many politicians and industry officials were able to interpret party directives as a go-ahead for a festival or record deal, others still saw room for their objections against rock. As I noted, many party authorities were loath to destroy any kind of good will among a young audience with a display of force. In the case of the objections noted above, the censor at the Main Office of Control of the Press, Publication, and Entertainment (Główny Urząd Kontroli Prasy, Publikacji i Widowisk, or GUKPPiW) defended the organization’s leniency toward rock with a lecture on the limitations of censorship: “In the area of defending proper behavior, organs of control are licensed mainly to eliminate contents propagating alcoholism, drug use, violence, and pornography.”²⁷¹ In the latter case, the radio responded by noting defensively that it carried many valuable programs of worker poetry, folk dance and other laudable socialist art forms, but had to “respond to the tastes of all types of listeners,” a typical response used to meet criticism from all quarters. It also noted that “youth music”

²⁶⁹ Stanisław Kosicki, Główny Urząd Kontroli Publikacji i Widowisk, “Zgłoszenie Z Gruszeckiego do młodzieżowych utworów wokalnych,” May 1984, 1354 Wydział Kultury PZPR, 976, 923/105, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw, Poland.

²⁷⁰ Zespół Polskiego Radia, “Polskie Radio,” May 1984, 1354 Wydział Kultury PZPR, 1271, 947/60, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw, Poland.

²⁷¹ Kosicki, “Zgłoszenie Z Gruszeckiego do młodzieżowych utworów wokalnych.”

was performed mainly by amateur bands, so critics would be quite misguided to limit its time for the sake promoting other amateur performance. In other words, the radio argued that rock was the very “amateur cultural movement” that the conservative critic of rock claimed to value in his attack on rock.

This second objection signaled the difficult balance for those who interpreted rock as consonant with the party’s vision of socialism, the Polish nation, and culture. If rock’s defenders could argue that the music success symbolized a flourishing amateur culture – a goal supported by the party – its opponents could turn the argument around and argue that rock was, in fact, inhibiting the development of amateur culture by monopolizing airwaves and other resources. This latter argument grew more influential as rock’s profile increased. These debates were taking place in 1983 and 1984 – precisely the moment of rock’s most dramatic, rapid rise in popularity. As we will see in the next section, this rise was accompanied with increasingly strident critiques in the press of rock’s commercialism.

These arguments made it ever more difficult to defend rock as a surrogate amateur cultural movement, closing off that route to reconciling it with party objectives. The broad, ambiguous ideas about youth and culture made it relatively easy to accommodate rock in 1982 and 1983, but as it reached wider portions of society (many of whom had no interest in hearing rock), it was increasingly likely to be interpreted as objectionable. With greater frequency, rock was portrayed not as culture, but as the negation of it. It would not educate youth or improve their interpersonal relations; rather it would make them antisocial.

The first clear response from central authorities to this growing negative sentiment toward rock followed the outburst of criticism in the press after Opole in 1984 – the year in which rock first made an appearance as part of the main, competition portion of the festival. The Central Committee’s Division of Culture noted:

The 21st Statewide Festival of Polish Song in Opole was a phenomenon of the critical state ruling for years in this sphere of recreation. It asserted the ruthless domination of “rock” over other types of song, and the lack of artistic song. The majority of songs were characterized by a low musical level, little cultured performance, and a level of texts devoid of literary values. The characteristic goal of a

decided portion of compositions was the expression of moods of apathy, doubt in the sense of action, and rebellion against the situation of man in the social system. A few of them even contained unambiguous allusions of a political nature.²⁷²

In clear, forceful language, the Division of Culture locates its precise position on how rock fit into the directives on youth and culture it had been formulating over the previous years: it takes the side of those who had argued that the music was not culture, but in fact the antithesis of it. Rock was found to be not just culturally lacking; it also expressed apathy and doubt of the sense of social action. This meant it was also damaging to youth, among whom apathy was a primary problem. Unambiguous political allusions completed the picture of rock's new threat.

Despite these powerful objections, however, the Division indicated that the festival was a success in some aspects. First, it provided "another example of openness in cultural politics of the party and government" – that is, some desperately needed good publicity for the party amidst the stratum most hostile to it. Further, they claimed that the festival attracted a good deal of interest and "played a certain role in relaxing the social mood." Even this aspect was becoming threatened, however: the main acts in the festival were now provocative "rock" performances rather than relaxing "*rozrywka*." Significantly, this is the first time I have noticed the use of the word "rock" (albeit in quotations) rather than "youth music" or the even more general "recreational music" by the central party apparatus.

In the same report, special commendation went out to the ZSMP youth union, which hosted a concert for debuting acts (which in 1984 was no longer the refuge for rock that it might have been just a couple of years earlier). Thus, the Division of Culture was still concerned with youth and culture; it just began to publicly dispute whether rock served this goal. Even more ominous, though, the Division noted the changes beginning to occur in the rock scene, seeking to take advantage of the internal dynamics of the rock world: "A few bands, until now very popular, such as Lady Punk (*sic*) and Oddział Zamknięty were coldly received by the public. This should have positive results for

²⁷² Wydział Kultury KC PZPR, "Ocena Krajowego Festiwalu Polskiej Piosenki "Opole 1984,"" July 1984.

programming in the future.”²⁷³ In order to make sure it did, they issued a list of directives for the future:

1. The Festival of Polish Song in Opole, the largest event in this area of recreation, cannot passively register the state of events in a given sphere. It can only develop as an event capable of preference for defined, valuable ideologically and artistically types of song. This is to be achieved even at the cost of greater financial investments.
2. The Division of Culture of the Central Committee and the Ministry of Culture and Art together will rate the current state of recreation in Poland and introduce a program for developing that area.
3. The directors of Polish Radio and TV must affect a change in the proportion between particular types of recreational music, to the benefit of song that is valuable ideologically and artistically, properly associating recreational functions with its directives. In this purpose, it is founded to overcome the monopoly of presenters until now, decreasing the frequency over time of programs of the type of the “hits list.”
4. Programming principles must be subordinated to the activity of artistic councils. We must ensure greater activity of cultural activists and proven executors of socialist cultural politics.
5. We must find a new formula for festival concerts in the model of the concert of debuts...
6. It is necessary to undertake programming preparations of the festival earlier, including earlier submitting texts and programming concepts to censorship organs.
7. It is necessary to bring out the consequences against individuals guilty of violating laws about censorship...²⁷⁴

These directives suggested that the wide range of interpretation that had been possible in dealing with rock the past would be narrowed significantly. Moreover, the

²⁷³ Wydział Kultury KC PZPR, Władz Opolskich, MKiS, ZSMP, “Ocena Przebiegu XXI Krajowego festiwalu Polskiej Piosenki - Opole '84,” July 1984, 1354 Wydział Kultury PZPR, 685, 908/65, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw, Poland.

²⁷⁴ Wydział Kultury KC PZPR, “Ocena Krajowego Festiwalu Polskiej Piosenki "Opole 1984,”” July 1984.

Division of Culture confirmed its willingness to pay for it financially. As the Cultural Commission of the Central Committee had noted just the previous month, “it’s pointed out over and over that the record industry is a profitable industry, but it’s not just a matter of profit. It’s a matter of defense of our culture.”²⁷⁵

In this environment of much stricter attention on rock, the Jarocin festival finally came to the attention of central authorities that year. While the festival was not extensively covered by the mainstream Polish press, the Division of Culture received a report of Associated Press coverage of the festival. A series of blue underlines in the document, reproduced here, shows exactly what the party’s cultural authorities found significant about the event they had been content to ignore in previous years:

The 19 year-old guitarist from the rock band with the name “Moskwa” spewed songs while a thousand teenaged fans danced in unbridled madness. “Propaganda smears me. Propaganda horrifies me. Truth remains in the background. I prefer the words of the enemy.” The song, entitled “Everything rots” was something of a hymn of the four-day festival of Polish rock that finished Saturday evening...

Almost 19 thousand young Poles pitched tents... in order to revel in four days of music that is a symbol of Polish youth today like the Woodstock festival was for American youth in 1969. “Music of Western bands was about love, about what people had in their souls,” said the concert’s promoter, Walter Chelstowski. “Our songs are directed at the outside – they are against.” ... The music of 60 bands taking part in the display; bands never heard on the programs of state radio, was amplified to a deafening level through two 9 meter speaker towers, from which reverberate a decidedly less harmonious version of life in Poland than the socialist version.

When bands played, thousands of young people danced, fell, drank, and dispersed around the soccer field that holds the stage; just like in the West, police patrols are easily visible, with an eye on those who abuse drugs and alcohol. “It’s not easy to create this much freedom in such an unfree country,” said one of the concert organizers.

...

²⁷⁵ Komisja Kultury KC PZPR, “Materiały z posiedzenia Komisji Kultury KC PZPR,” June 11, 1984, 1354 Wydział Kultury PZPR, 746, 908/125, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw, Poland.

The most popularity at the festival was enjoyed by the band Siekiera. “Bands sing mainly about destruction because destruction means freedom” said the bass guitarist, Tomasz Adamski, 21 years old.²⁷⁶

Interestingly, the reviewer was not overly concerned with Poland being compared to the capitalist West: these passages remain unmarked. In fact, he or she may well have thought the comparison of Polish security to the western police mitigated more critical passages about Poland’s lack of freedom. It is also significant that the name of young bass guitarist of Siekiera is not underlined, but name of the festival’s director, Chelstowski, is – as if the rebellion of young Poles was a regrettable fact, but its facilitation by a connected adult professional was impermissible. Indeed, Chelstowski’s cited comment that the songs are “directed outside” and “against” was a bold statement considering many defenders of rock were eager to hide its political undertones in descriptions of it being about personal emotions, or even further removed, aesthetics, as we will see in the fifth chapter. Chelstowski may not have been so frank with a domestic reporter, although he was surely aware that the western press was regularly scanned by authorities.

The majority of the underlinings are the most obviously political statements – comments about Poland being unfree, or a band named “Moskwa” (“Moscow”). They also indicate a growing interest by the government on a sociological treatment of rock and youth subcultures, which had been appearing in the press. These accounts looked to behavior and song lyrics to understand the disaffection of Polish youth – for instance, the idea that “destruction means freedom” or the fact that a song called “Everything rots” could be the hymn of the festival. Also of note, of course, was the fact that this took place in front of 19,000 of the young Poles the party was so concerned about. After Jarocin in 1984, the controversy over rock that had filled the press over the previous months finally reached the Central Committee: the new rock music that young people were so fond of was not only ideologically and artistically questionable, it was also connected to a subculture of disaffected youth.

²⁷⁶ “Associated Press o festiwalu muzyki rockowej w Jarocinie,” August 1984, 1354 Wydział Kultury PZPR, 684, 908/64, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw, Poland.

Accordingly, the Central Committee's Group on Youth Matters took up the question of rock and youth subcultures as well. In a report entitled "Information on phenomena of social pathology among youth," the group outlined the major pathologies affecting youth at the time: drugs, alcohol, prostitution, crime, suicide, and finally, the "growing problem of cultural contestation" (*kontestacja kulturowa*).²⁷⁷ In its report, the Group focused most closely on the "current problem of so-called Youth Subculture (*tzw. Młodzieżowy podkultury*), the most extravagant manifestations of which are perturbing public opinion." These manifestations, it noted, were widely distributed among youth as a "manner of dressing, music, and declared and manifest attitudes," including "the PUNK movement" (*ruch PUNK*), "the POPPER movement," and "the HIPPIE movement."

Besides describing the style of dress of each movement – punks were typically dressed unfashionably, with colored hair, Mohawks, and safety pins in their clothes and body, while poppers were elegantly dressed – it briefly described its basic characteristics and slogans of each group. Punks favored anarchism, arrogance, aggressive and shocking behavior, mocking of "normal citizens" [quotation marks in original], social nihilism and extreme egocentrism. Its slogans [written in English and in Polish translation] were "no future" and "hate and war." And, of course, they were "fanatics of rock music and its singers." Poppers and Hippies differed somewhat – the former were reportedly obsessed with material consumption, were against ideology, and hated punks, while the latter protested modern civilization, war, aggression, social inequality, racism, and longed for a creation of new culture and returning to nature and a fascination with "beat" music (a reference to 1960s rock, often called "big beat" in Poland).

As we will see in the next chapter, many of these concepts were circulating in the sociological journalism that had grown increasingly prominent in dealing with rock. Here, though, besides offering a means of identifying and understanding those subcultures, they used sociological language to seek out subcultures and to find a way of "preventing and eliminating" them. The methods of doing so were not particularly sinister: the group called for ensuring greater care in upbringing, stronger roles in family and school, ensuring steady work, and focusing more on argument rather than repression

²⁷⁷ Zespół ds Młodzieży KC PZPR, "Informacja o zjawiskach patologii społecznej wśród młodzieży," August 1984, 1354 Wydział Kultury PZPR, 761, 908/141, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw, Poland.

in pedagogy. This was in part because the group had been formed after the IX Plenum, when the party was trying to reform its approach to youth and thus contained many relatively young, forward thinking members. Even so, the idea – voiced from central party organs – that punk was a phenomenon to be eliminated gave a mandate to those who had been calling for the suppression of rock and its fans for the past years.

These objections carried over to television and radio as well. In 1985, the party Group on Matters of Disseminating Culture complained of:

the elimination from radio and television nearly every type of creativity aside from rock. The radio is surrendering to the commercial model of pop music of Anglo-Saxon countries at the cost of presentations of celebrated cultural creators from socialist countries and Polish literary and cabaret song. The dissemination of rock music is in many cases against the basic function of culture in a socialist country; it harms basic requirements of literary and language culture, etc.”²⁷⁸

In June that year, the Division of Culture took a similar stance, criticizing the television for blindly buying “popular beat and rock music” and failing to eliminate

those bands and lyrics that – and this is not entirely a rarity in young recreation today – promote trash and doubtful quality “ideology,” for example a “punk” lifestyle and being, hopeless artistic quality and “word formation” – compositions or entire bands of youth music are outdoing themselves in eccentricity and in – unfortunately – textual stupidity.

While they continued to support the idea of the Third Program as a program “for youth and about youth” on the radio, they called for a return to its past of experimentation and coverage of cabaret and literature, as well as promoting new acts.²⁷⁹

Most obviously, these were calls to reduce the presence of rock on the official airwaves. It is also worth briefly making a secondary observation, however. While the self-righteous tone and love for classical music sets them apart, the criticism of the monotony of rock and its commercial aspects contained in these passages shared some

²⁷⁸ Zespół partyjny do sprawy Upowszechniania Kultury, “Kultura w radio i telewizji /Uwagi dotyczące centralnych programów PR i TV/,” 1985, 1354 Wydział Kultury PZPR, 924/33, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw, Poland.

²⁷⁹ Wydział Kultury KC PZPR, “Kultura w Radiu i Telewizji /Uwagi dotyczące centralnych PR i TV,” June 1985, 1354 Wydział Kultury PZPR, 1701, 982/47, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw, Poland.

similarity with many objections circulating in the rock scene, as we will see in the fifth chapter – an unusual but potent alliance against mainstream rock bands.

This coalescence of negative sentiment toward rock carried over into the policy for Opole in 1985. At the end of 1984, the Division of Culture met with representatives from the state and various cultural committees to outline the principles for planning the festival season of 1985. The Division continued to assert the importance of festivals, and even called for greater media attention on them. However, it also addressed the principles of forming organizational committees, artistic councils, and jury, asserting,

[There is a] need for greater political responsibility from the organizers and regional party groups.” The repertoire must be qualified in a greater amount of time in advance, its verification must be undertaken in terms of merit and workmanship, and when possible and in cases of doubt, additional verification from control authorities.²⁸⁰

Not surprisingly, this would amount to a drastic change in the festival format from the previous year. The initial plan for 1985 did not include rock bands in the contest, or even a rock concert in the vein of the festival in 1983.²⁸¹

For a few months in 1984, critical sentiment toward rock, arising from its growing profile and in particular out of dissatisfaction with the Opole festival, spurred a brief coalescence of anti-rock sentiment within the party. This was enough to issue several directives pushing for the music’s limitation. However, this consensus dissipated shortly thereafter. When confronted with the possibility of following through on the statements after the 1984 festival series and suppressing rock completely, the Division of Culture collectively backed down. Even the plan for Opole 1985 changed over the course of the year. Shortly before the festival, the state firm Tonpress decided to sponsor a concert under the title “Rock at Opole,” which would invite bands associated with the company and even offer a record contract to the winner. The Division of culture made no objections, and in fact declared the festival to be an artistic and political success.²⁸²

²⁸⁰ Wydział Kultury KC PZPR, “Notatka informacyjna,” December 1984, 1354 Wydział Kultury PZPR, 685, 908/65, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw, Poland.

²⁸¹ The Editors, “Rock w Opolu,” *Sztandar Młodych*, June 26, 1985.

²⁸² Wydział Kultury KC PZPR, “Ocena i wnioski wynikające z przebiegu festiwalu piosenki 1985,” September 24, 1985.

As in the past, efforts at suppression were balanced by tolerance for some types of rock. For instance, in January of 1985, as the ZSMP prepared for the Festival of Political Song in Berlin, they planned to have the bands Lombard, Republika, and Banda i Wanda represent Poland. These bands, however, refused to participate in the festival, although they were willing to play in the commercial post-festival concert. This sort of politically-charged posture had always attracted a strong response from authorities, but this time the matter went all the way up to the party's Central Committee. Besides reprimanding those involved (including the ZSMP secretary for not handling matters better and finding bands willing to cooperate further in advance), the Division of Culture announced it was "limiting the presentation on radio and television of compositions performed by Wanda (*sic*), Republika, and Lombard and forbidding their tours abroad up to the end of the first half of the year," as well as "conducting conversations with the bands" through regional party organs and artistic institutions connected to the band.²⁸³

In their place, however, the older rock band Budka Suflera and MMG band Kombi were invited to perform.²⁸⁴ Not only was the ZSMP approved to invite two rock bands (although admittedly more established bands than the pop-punk group Lombard and the new wave group Republika), but additionally, Kombi was rewarded for its efforts: the band received the Ministry of Culture's Stanisław Wyspiański Artistic Award for Youth later that year, the first time a rock band had ever achieved such an honor.²⁸⁵ In the announcement of the award, a member of the party's Politburo announced that it "underscored the contribution of youth in the development of national culture and ensured that we need not fear the unhelpful phenomenon of the so-called

²⁸³ A. Kaczmarek: Wydział Kultury PZPR KC, "Notatka Informacyjna," January 1985, 1354 Wydział Kultury PZPR, 1027, 924/49, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw, Poland. The actual effects of this proclamation are uncertain: Lombard managed to go on a tour in Holland just two months later. Both bands disappeared from the hits list after March 9th, a long but possible delay from the pronouncement in January, although this could also have been coincidental. In any case, Lombard returned to the hits list in May that year, and Republika in August – a long absence for one of the biggest rock bands in Poland, even considering its popularity was waning by 1985. To ascertain whether this was the result of a ban or not is difficult because bans from the radio were often accompanied by simultaneous bans in the press that prevented them from being discussed, presumably to mask the repressiveness of the state. More surprising, if the ban did indeed take effect, is that references have not turned up in interviews or writing about the bands since 1989.

²⁸⁴ Andrzej Kozłowski, Sekretarz ZG ZSMP, "Zarząd Główny Związku Socjalistycznej Młodzieży Polskiej prosi o wydanie zgody na wyjazd do NRD grup artystycznych "Budka Suflera" i "Combi" (*sic*) na światowy Festiwal Pieśni Politycznej w Berlinie," February 1985, 1354 Wydział Kultury PZPR, 1066, 924/87, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw, Poland.

²⁸⁵ *Magazyn Muzyczny - Jazz*, September-October 1985, 2.

generation gap.”²⁸⁶ This statement surely delighted those who had been promoting rock as a valid form of culture and entertainment for years. On the other hand, uncompromising rock bands and conservative cultural and political authorities were equally enraged, the former by what they would have detected as mainstream rock bands collaborating with the system, and the latter by what they saw as yet another sign of undifferentiated rock music eclipsing legitimate forms of Polish culture.

Understandably, these mixed messages brought considerable confusion when they arrived in the hands of lower level committees and local and regional authorities who were responsible for implementing them. In July of 1985, a committee responsible for the radio announced that it was taking up a firmer policy against rock, in the line of objections from the party from the previous year. Thus, it announced a plan to ensure a proper proportion of Polish and foreign “literary” compositions and music, and in comparison to the previous year, “reducing the presence of western commercial music...”²⁸⁷ As for domestic rock, it had a more comprehensive strategy. That year, the Committee on Matters of Radio and TV came up with a plan to eliminate all recordings from all non-state controlled record firms from the airwaves. This meant cutting the radio’s repertory virtually in half – and specifically, the half that was most connected to new rock music. This addressed complaints about commercialism by eliminating the record companies that linked their repertory decisions most directly to potential for profit. The strategy would have drastically reduced the presence of rock on the airwaves, since the majority of rock was recorded by private or émigré labels.

Yet, in late 1985, a wholesale ban was not what key influential voices among the party’s cultural decision makers wanted. The director of the Division of Culture personally wrote a letter to the director of the Committee on Matters of Radio and Television, noting “The Division of Culture of the Central Committee of the PZPR has gotten signals from artistic circles and journalists about a decision to eliminate compositions produced by émigré record companies from the airwaves” (the phrase “gotten signals” demonstrates the poor communications between government branches). He continued,

²⁸⁶ Marian Butrym, “Laureaci,” *Magazyn Muzyczny - Jazz*, November-December 1985.

²⁸⁷ “Kultury w Polskim Radiu i Telewizji,” July 1985, 1354 Wydział Kultury PZPR, 1701, 982/47, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw, Poland.

We approve of a system of preferring state firms and limiting connections to private firms, particularly in the area of activity of educational ideals. Nonetheless, the records and cassettes of private firms... contain a range of valuable compositions and performers that are included on the preferred list of the Ministry of Culture and Art. In this case it is proposed to create a working group to determine which compositions and performers should be broadcast on Polish radio and television.²⁸⁸

The director of Polish Radio then wrote to the Division of culture, asking for a list of approved recordings to be excluded from the ban. Amidst the confusion about what central policy was, he sought guidance as to what was actually expected of him.

The archival file that contains this letter includes a document advising the Division of Culture how to respond to the radio's request for guidance. The signature is illegible and no title is given, but judging by content and tone, it is probably the work of a higher-up or possibly a member of the Division who was assigned to study the project in more detail. In this analysis, the writer warns the Division not to attempt to assess the artistic value of the songs, since this would be absolving the radio committee of its responsibilities. Moreover, it argues, even if a particular song is of lower musical and textual quality, "its presentation would introduce an element of discussion about Polish recreational music. Instead of giving diplomas about "artisticness," it is necessary to introduce the recording, but enrich its presentation with reflexive criticism..." As an example of how to approach these types of recordings, he cites Polton's recent compilation of hardcore punk bands (the first of its kind), writing,

it seems to me that the longplay "Fala" is interesting exclusively from a sociological point of view, since the level of new wave bands is mediocre. Resigning from criticism is holding your head in the sand, an administrative cutting off of creative cultural discussion and unnecessary annoyance to the young audience who thinks that 'I don't count.'

²⁸⁸ Witold Nawrocki, Kierownik Wydziału Kultury KC PZPR, letter to Polish Radio," December 1985, 1354 Wydział Kultury PZPR, 1027, 924/49, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw, Poland.

Here we have John Stuart Mill once again poking his head into a communist party meeting with an argument for free expression, although the element of “reflexive criticism” should not be overlooked.

In addition, the note cites the party’s need to attract youth as a reason not to censor rock, even the most aggressive type. It also adds an element of practicality, noting that if a record appears in stores but is banned from radio, it will appear to be a “forbidden fruit,” which it adds, “always tastes the best.” Further,

...a programmatic line of radio and television music set by specialists ... and by bureaucrats creates the strange suspicion of a general intent to steer artistic programs through the use of demands and prohibitions. That this is a shortsighted and ineffective activity need not even be argued.

This again suggests a sense that party policy should account for, and respect, individual choice, even if this meant setting aside the preferences of “specialists” and “bureaucrats.” Besides ideological motivation, there was also a more practical political-social incentive for acknowledging audience choice: “Catholic centers provide excellent equipment and have no inhibitions in conducting activity among youth. I won’t even mention foreign radio stations.” If the party’s opponents were willing to court youth through rock music, the party perhaps ought to do so as well.

I have cited this report at such length because it marks such a decisive contrast to the negative approach that briefly dominated in the same circles just a year before, showing the range of opinion prevalent within party leadership. By the end of 1985, unlike the year before, the opinion in favor of rock won out. Evidently the argument convinced the director of the Division of Culture, who wrote back to the radio director warning that private firms filled an important role in musical culture, particularly given the limited production of state firms while the new Polskie Nagrania facility was under construction. Moreover, he added, “an embargo on program broadcasts creates an atmosphere of sensation and lends itself to the creation of false myths about the state’s cultural politics in the area of recreation.”²⁸⁹ Specifically included on the approved song list were compositions by Lombard and Lady Pank.

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

The range of ideas about rock, culture, youth, Poland, and socialism were diverse enough to allow a wide range of opinions to coexist even within the Division of Culture; the variation in the party as a whole, down to the regional and local level, were greater still. This is not so much to argue that the party was “ambivalent” as that it was expansive enough to house numerous, often conflicting points of view.

In fact, in 1986, as bands like Lombard, Republika, and Lady Pank were breaking up, a more favorable sentiment toward rock gained momentum in the Division of Culture. That year, the Division decided to alter the character of the Opole festival, making it “for ‘the millions’ and not for the so-called industry.”²⁹⁰ Of course, giving the festival a “mass character” or making it “for the millions” could have a widely varied meaning depending on what the character of the “mass” was determined to be. But this time, there was to be no confusion: the document specifically called for the inclusion of the winners of several of the television and Third Program hits lists, including Republika, TSA, and Lombard, as well as a couple of more traditional stage acts. This was a remarkable change from only a little more than a year before, when the same group had criticized the dominance of the hits list. The Division of Culture also planned a live television broadcast, moving the festival’s date to correspond to ideal television times.

At roughly the same time, the Division of Culture launched an extensive effort to reform the entertainment industry as a whole, acknowledging the criticisms that had been growing for years on all sides in the press. While the party had long been concerned about the general level of culture, particularly after the economic reforms, it now began to recognize a need for widespread, massive change in the entertainment industry, ranging from its organizational structure to regulations to its repertoire.

One of the moves to attempt to rescue the entertainment industry was appointing an “entertainment czar” who was given a wide jurisdiction in order to grant him the authority to overcome the difficulty of carrying out reforms across multiple departments, ministries, and firms. Another proposal called specifically for altering the Ministry of Culture and Art’s regulation number 34 (one of the chief regulations setting up the rigid verification system), and criticized the dependence of a performers pay solely on the

²⁹⁰ Wydział Kultury KC PZPR, “Notatka służbowa dot. Terminu organizacji Festiwalu Piosenki Polskiej w Opolu,” February 1986, 1354 Wydział Kultury PZPR, 1274, 947/64, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw, Poland.

number of performances, which it admitted led to exploitation of artists and interfered with their artistic development. This proposal also called for the formation of a group oriented toward the promotion of young talents, to be composed of representatives of youth unions, record industry, and the state. On the other hand, it called for the more rigorous application of censorship.²⁹¹

This was not done out of a particular love for rock; rather, it was because the conditions of the industry were so bad that they were negatively affecting all of musical culture. However, suppressing rock was no longer a goal; rather, it could be used as part of the effort to help out the young performers that all sides in the party had been so concerned about. In July, the Division of Culture went so far as to propose getting rid of the system of *stawki* – that is, pay-per-event according to the scale. In its place they proposed a system by which pay for artists would be determined according to artistic level according to the event organizer as well as by the earnings of the event.²⁹² The depth of reform should not be overstated: the instructions to the “entertainment czar,” the *pełnomocnik do spraw rozrywki*, who was responsible for coordinating reform between the various ministries and departments responsible for the industry continued to voice the need to balance profitability with artistic quality in much the way it had in previous years.²⁹³

However, in effect, this would have drastically altered the face of the entertainment industry. While the idea of pay according to “artistic level” remained, allowing this to be determined by the organizer would have opened the way to competition to lure the best, most profitable acts – in effect, connecting artists’ pay more closely to market demand. This, in turn, would make it possible for bands to perform fewer shows, allowing them to dedicate more time to composing new music and slowing the rate at which audiences tired of seeing the same bands constantly perform. While the instructions did not specifically address rock, it was certainly on the *pełnomocnik*’s

²⁹¹ A. Kaczmarek: Wydział Kultury PZPR KC, “Propozycje działań służących poprawie zaspakajania potrzeb społecznych w dziedzinie rozrywki,” 1985, 1354 Wydział Kultury PZPR, 1027, 924/49, 1354 Wydział Kultury PZPR, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw, Poland.

²⁹² Adam Kaczmarek: Wydział Kultury PZPR KC, “Notatka służbowa: ”działania na rzecz poprawy sytuacji w zakresie estrady i rozrywki masowej w polsce,”” July 1986, 1354 Wydział Kultury PZPR, 1326, 947/116, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw, Poland.

²⁹³ A. Kaczmarek: Wydział Kultury PZPR KC, “Rozrywka: Sztuka, przemysł, Rynek.”

agenda: one of the five members of the committee for reform was none other than Jacek Sylwin, one of the original organizers of MMG.²⁹⁴

Yet, for all of its efforts, the attempt at reforming the entertainment industry was largely unsuccessful. In June, with frustration detectable even through bureaucratic party language, the Division of Culture noted that all of the reforms it had attempted the previous year had gone unheeded: “Not only has the MKiS not begun any actions leading toward reform of mass recreation in agreement with our program, but it also has not created the basic conditions for work called for by the *pełnomocnik*.”²⁹⁵ Rather than the *pełnomocnik* forcing the unwieldy industry to change, the opposite took place: the *pełnomocnik* resigned that summer out of inability to affect any change whatsoever. As slow as the industry was to adapt to the changing market and popularity of rock, its enormous, complex bureaucracy also resisted changes from the political authorities governing Poland.

By 1986, the failure of rock was not something the party was jointly planning or even hoping for; in fact, some of its members had taken steps to support the young bands performing it. This is not to say that many members were entirely saddened by declines in rock concert attendance and record production: in March of 1986, just a month after calling for Lombard’s presence at Opole, the Division of Culture noted with some satisfaction,

In the span of last two years, a gradual decline in rock music has taken place. Of course, a range of new bands are appearing in the long term, particularly in the areas of punk and hard rock, but generally it is possible to note a gradual decline of this epoch in recreation. A portion of the bands – the leaders of the movement have broken up (Lombard, Maanam, Perfect), and a portion has gradually moved into the so-called musical middle (*muzyki śródka*), perfecting their musical skills. To a degree this is the effect of stimulation from the Division of Culture.²⁹⁶

²⁹⁴ Stanisław Nowotny, Pełnomocnik MKiS ds reformy rozrywki masowej, “reform rozrywki masowej,” February 1986, 1354 Wydział Kultury PZPR, 1325, 947/115, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw, Poland.

²⁹⁵ Adam Kaczmarek: Wydział Kultury PZPR KC, “Notatka służbowa dot. realizacji ustaleń sztabu Polityki Kulturalnej oraz wniosków Komisji Kultury KC w sprawie reformy rozrywki masowej w Polsce,” June 19, 1986.

²⁹⁶ A. Kaczmarek: Wydział Kultury PZPR KC, “Estrada i rozrywka masów / Problemy do materiału na Biuro Polityczne/,” March 1986, 1354 Wydział Kultury PZPR, 1325, 947/115, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw, Poland.

This statement is enigmatic. In general, it has a positive tone (after all, the Division of Culture is crediting itself in part for what it is describing), applied to the observations that first, mainstream rock bands are collapsing and second, that new rock bands are moving toward the mainstream. These are somewhat at odds, since the first seems to interpret mainstream rock bands as something to be rid of, while the second sees hope in the creation of new bands to take their places. It makes sense, however, if interpreted as indicating a hierarchy of preferences, with mainstream rock bands falling higher on the scale than rougher-edged, less polished bands. Equally noteworthy is the Division's taking credit for "stimulating" these changes. The most probable reading is that it applies to just the preceding sentence about the rising skill level of bands, although it might alternately be argued that the Division is taking credit for the reduction of rock's popularity as well. Either way, the comment suggests that by 1986 the Division did, in fact, see its directives about stimulating and disseminating culture as applying to rock (in other words, it had not simply been oblivious to rock or ignoring it).

The passage that follows is just as mysterious. The Division observes,

New talents are appearing that soon will become the forefront of Polish song. It's possible even to discuss an unprecedented wave of new celebrated *estrada* performers. Edyta Geppert, Michał Bajon, Agnieszka Fatyga. From the young generation: Mieczysław Szczęśniak, Danuta Błażejczyk. The talent and skill of the bands Lady Pank and Kombi, and soloists Halina Frąckowiak, Hanna Banaszak, and Ireneusz Dudka are developing interestingly.²⁹⁷

Moreover, these were distinguished from the few performers that the Division associated with the opposition (to be addressed in the next chapter), which had become marginal. Curiously, after noting with some satisfaction that bands like Maanam had broken up, the Division includes Lady Pank alongside standouts of Polish *estrada*, commenting favorably on that band's development. Finally, the discussion continues the trend started by the Division in planning the Opole festival in 1986 by including rock under the new category of "recreation of the masses" (*rozrywka masów*), which was the title of the discussion. This distinction ties rock to a decidedly socialist category, the masses of

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

average, ordinary people rather than making it the reserve of a particular social group or indicator of a social pathology.

Taking a slightly different approach, the party group for disseminating culture offered its own interpretation of rock in 1986. Despite party efforts to disseminate culture, the group noted that only 7.9% of youth went to classical concerts, and 16.8% listened to it at home. On the other hand, 73% listened to recreational music. Moreover, the most popular source of this was a youth music radio program on the Third Program, which an amazing 78.2% of youth reported listening to. The conclusion to be drawn, though, was ambiguous. The group noted,

At the beginning of the 1980s the spontaneous development of rock groups was noticed, reviving festivals and musical events. The number of youth involved in creating that type of music are estimated in the hundreds of thousands. Evaluations of the phenomenon however are varied.

Pedagogues disturbed by the movement concentrate their attention on its outside effects, which do not improve personality and interpersonal relations, the notable number of premiers and performances, the false understanding of profitability, the excessive publicity and especially “stardom” that leads to bringing up amateur bands in service of commercial agendas. On the other hand, a festival movement at a nation-wide level was organized. Such an organized cultural movement, despite its many merits, arouses much unrest. Stimulating cultural activity exclusively through festivals and competitions can conceal in itself a dangerous façade, a longing for success, a desire to show off oneself. The longing for success can overshadow the fundamental value of that educational process. It can even overshadow the image of actual participation in culture, the lack in cultural education of a decided portion of youth, fought in difficulties in procuring basic materials necessary for artistic creation.²⁹⁸

Despite its concentration on negative aspects of rock, this treatment is a long way from a categorical rejection of the music. In fact, its greatest objection to the music is its commercial aspect – an assessment that many fans of alternative bands shared. While this

²⁹⁸ Zespół partyjny do sprawy Upowszechniania Kultury, “Uczestnictwo Młodzieży w Kulturze, Warunki Dostępu do Dobr i Instytucji Kulturalnych,” 1986, 1354 Wydział Kultury PZPR, 1011, 924/33, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw, Poland.

too suggests ambiguity toward the value of rock in high places, the reasoning is different. While the Division of Culture's assessment suggested that the most amenable form of rock for party goals was the bands with the most mass appeal and the highest level of artistic ability, the party Group on Dissemination Culture sees its potential for amateur participation in culture as its greatest value, making commercial mainstream bands a liability rather than an asset.

These positions are particularly interesting to note since, as we will see in the next chapter, they were being pronounced precisely as punk rock was being discussed as high art in the scouting magazine *Na Przełaj*. Even among rock's supporters in the PZPR, this interpretation of rock as high culture was rare: instead, it was treated as a potential mass form of entertainment that could have a high level if properly stimulated or a genuine amateur cultural movement tainted by dangerous commercial leanings. But all of these perspectives share common values in youth creativity and culture. Moreover, they indicate that multiple party groups at high levels had started to find ways of fitting rock into these values, although still with significant reservations – just as lower level regional officials had done a few years earlier. Rather than fundamental differences in values, the differences between these approaches to rock were matters of interpretation – a matter that left much more room for flexibility, particularly over time.

Socialist youth unions took even greater steps to make rock – as well as the subcultures associated with it – fit with their vision of Polish socialism. By 1986, their this desire to appeal to young people developed to the point of actively courting punks. That year, the national directors of various youth organizations, including the ZMW, SZSP, and ZSMP, outlined their relationship to punks and other marginal youth in the youth magazine *Razem*. The article argued,

Who do youth organizations exist for? They exist for punks, skins, and hooligans. For them, and not against them. I can already hear the protests, that in socialist youth unions there is no place for social margins, that youth organizations are for the elite, that they should pursue the best, not the worst, and so on. If that were true, then socialist youth unions wouldn't make any sense.²⁹⁹

²⁹⁹ Paweł Wyrzykowski, "Sztuka Podrywania," *Razem*, April 6, 1986, 6.

In fact, the author added, youth unions admired certain qualities of punks. To those who lamented that representatives of socialist ideology was losing out to punks, he suggested that the question be phrased differently:

Why are they losing? Because they do not have as colorful or fascinating demeanor as their antagonist. It's not because they style their hair less effectively, but because they do not have in them passion; that passion is not evident in what they do.

The ZSMP director confirmed this position, lamenting that the organization lacked leaders, in part because they could not attract rebels. It was, he argued, “precisely this person, that does not agree to existing reality, who longs for change in their nearest and furthest surroundings who today is the quickest example [for change].” Of course, this meant risk, but “without risk,” he observed, “nothing can be gained.” The leader of the ZMW agreed, adding, “We have to meet more often with people who doubt, complain, have reservations.”³⁰⁰ With the support of rhetorical prowess, the leaders of youth unions were able to link punks and other marginal youth groups to the party’s effort at reform and its calls for active, involved youth.

Such was the status of rock in party circles in the summer of 1986 when the PZPR held its Tenth Congress. Unlike the previous meeting, there was nothing “extraordinary” this time: to a large measure, it repeated many of the basic principles of the previous congress, while adding a few newer concerns on issues like the environment. This included confirming progress in emerging from the political and economic crisis, continued justification of martial law, and moving forward to develop the economy (limiting inflation, fixing errors of 1970s policy), socialist democracy, improving living conditions (new housing), social and environmental health, and improving the international position of Poland. Of the eleven page summary of the resolutions, nearly two pages were devoted to educating youth and culture, including teaching youth, dissemination by producing books, film, and music, national language, “avoiding invasion of elements not in agreement with our socialist life,” “developing an engaged attitude toward socialist Poland among youth,” enhancing development of individual, Marxism-Leninism. In familiar dramatic language, it summarized:

³⁰⁰ Ibid.

Culture is both the content and the means of national life. It expands the range of the soul, develops humanistic ideals, source of inspiration, fosters ideas of progress and encourages a spirit of cooperation. Its currents mobilize a generation on behalf of democracy and justice, strengthens heart and minds of workers, fosters building of socialist fatherland.

-The cultural politics of the party serves socialist awareness, and in defense of national culture, serving to develop and spread cultural creation.

-Respecting the right to multiple forms of culture, the party simultaneously strives toward that which exhibits high humanistic values and ideology, enhances the status and upbringing of working class, and in the spirit of socialism.

-This means a dialogue with all currents not contradictory to socialism.³⁰¹

Even with the increased frequency of dealings with rock at the highest levels in 1986, it would not be likely to turn up at such a large scale event, which was more directed at making sweeping resolutions than dirtying oneself with talk of punk rock. After the brief flurry of concern about rock in 1984-1985, the party's congress reaffirmed its position of ambiguity, leaving considerable room for interpretation in how to apply the resolutions to rock. Was it a cultural "current not contrary to socialism," and thus meriting dialogue? Was it one of the "multiple forms of culture" that citizens had the right to? Or was it rather a threat to "humanist values and ideology" or worse, part of "anti-socialist culture" or the "diversions from abroad" that must be fought against? The fate of Polish rock once again hung in the balance between these two possibilities.

1987-1988: Incorporation?

It is tempting to characterize changing party policy on rock from 1984 to 1986 as confused: its move from issuing ambiguous directives, to suppressing rock, then to seemingly accepting it again make it appear that as a whole, it had no idea what it was doing. In some accounts, this type of interchange of lenience and repression is

³⁰¹ "X Zjazd PZPR," *Trybuna Ludu*, July 1986 (special publication).

characterized as a conscious strategy. This may have been true in specific instances (such as combining the ban on Republika and Lombard with an invitation for Budka Suflera to the festival in East Berlin). I have found no evidence of any overarching plan for dealing with rock, however.

Further, while policy on rock as a whole appears ambiguous and confused, it is somewhat misleading to say that “the party” or even the Division of Culture was uncertain how to interpret rock. Indeed, many party members claimed to know precisely rock was and what should be done with it, as we have seen. Which of these voices dominated changed with changing circumstances inside and outside the world of rock. However, there was enough uncertainty that no position dominated long enough to make a clear policy statement.

This began to change by the late 1980s. Rock remained controversial, but a majority opinion to coalesce on the side of those who called for working with rock. This occurred along with the changes I have described in the other chapters – changes in the rock scene itself, in how rock’s fans thought about the music, and in the political and social mood of the PRL. We will explore this shift by looking at a few key events that brought politicians’ attention to rock in 1987 and 1988. In each example, event organizers went to great lengths to make rock appear to fit with party ideals, and in each, central representatives confirmed their assessment. Rock became increasingly identified as politically acceptable in party circles, suggesting that the inclusive, open vision of Polish socialism, culture, and the nation held by party reformers had overtaken the stalinist, narrow nationalist, and traditionalist views of party hardliners.

In September of 1987, Perfect gave a concert in Warsaw as part of a series of reunion concerts that year. The event was approved by the MKiS the month before, but its coverage in the Western media, which treated the concert as an anti-government rally, gave authorities some cause for concern. The main points of contention were summarized as follows:

1. When the musicians came out on stage, the audience jumped and danced welcoming them, expressing in this manner an antigovernment mood.

2. the band received a ban on its performances with its controversial repertoire.

3. the band performed again out of desire for a policy of greater social openness.
4. Hołdys joked that the band could play because all of the government bureaucrats were in Moscow at the time.
5. The band, through agreement with the audience, sang “we want to beat the ZOMO” and added “Jaruzelski” to the song “Don’t be afraid of it.”³⁰²

In other words, the concert had been identified by some critics as a political protest. Wishing to avoid any negative repercussions, the director of the United Entertainment Industry, the large association under which much of the state entertainment industry was collected, sent a letter to government press spokesman Jerzy Urban rejecting all of these charges, noting “the concert was recorded by Polish Radio and Television, and every review of the documentation regarding these accusations attests to their falseness.” In addition, band leader Zbigniew Hołdys co-authored with the band’s manager a response denying the charges, writing,

In accordance with the requirements of regulations of the PRL the right of the band to practice its profession depends on the performance of its own compositions publicly – on radio, television, on records, and at concerts. The band does not concern itself with political activity and or provocation of antisocial behavior . . . It is not the fault of the band that there are people who one-sidedly, tendentiously, and selectively rate the concert or behave in a particular way. The concert was secure and order was maintained without any noted incidents.

The effort of Hołdys, the manager, and the music industry representatives behind the concert to ensure that the government did not interpret the concert as an oppositional event is not surprising; besides protecting their own well-being, they did not wish to give any cause for repression of rock. More remarkable, though, is that the included security

³⁰² Dyrektor Zjednoczonych Przedsiębiorstw Rozrywkowych, “Notatka służbowa dot. organizacji imprezy Perfect Day na stadionie X-lecia w dniu 12. IX .1987,” November 1987, 1354 Wydział Kultury PZPR, 1555, 960/129-1, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw, Poland. The ZOMO was the motorized division of the MO, the militia or police. It had a particularly strong reputation for its role in brutally suppressing protests and expressions of dissent. Adding “Jaruzelskiego” to the song “Nie bój się tego” would have changed the meaning from “don’t be afraid of it” to “don’t be afraid of that Jeruzelski.”

reports assessing the concert – probably either from the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MSW) or the MKiS – largely agreed with these assessments that the concert was benign. One report noted,

The band Perfect, as one of the best rock bands in Poland, created the chance for wide interest in the event, especially after the success and unusually positive references of concerts organized this year. According to details that I collected from organizers, workers, and many viewers, the concert, which included 25-28 thousand, was a complete organizational, technical, and substantive success, as the ratings of the press, radio and television can attest. It was undoubtedly a stage event the sort of which Warsaw has not had in a long time.

I did not encounter ratings of the performance discussing any kind of tendentious or provocative manner of behavior or interpretation of texts of songs by the public.

It then addressed some of the charges leveled against the concert:

However, the fact is that a group of young people, and also individuals, tried to distort the text of the song “Don’t be afraid of it all.” It was mixed, though, with the general applause for the song. In the tempo of the concert, the effort did not earn wider approval of the audience and in that case was not continued.

It was formulated that “all of the important people are in Moscow, so we can mess around here” was received as underscoring that all good performers are in Moscow, so the band Perfect can perform here. The exact sound of the text can be ascertained, since the whole event was registered by Polish television.

The costume that Holdys performed in (a black coat with a symbol on the back resembling the letter S [which might have been interpreted as a provocative reference to Solidarity]) has not aroused doubts at previous performances. Neither the style nor the lettering provokes improper associations.

Of the entire event, the only objection this report registered was that one of the opening bands performed two texts that had not been cleared by censors.

The second report largely agreed with the first, although it offered some of its own interpretations. It noted, first of all, that the texts performed by Perfect were accepted by the censorship organ. However, it added,

During the presentation of the composition “Don’t be afraid of it all” a few individuals and groups in the audience filled in the first verse with the surname of the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the PZPR. This scandalous excess was not audible on stage and many places in the bleachers due to the scale of amplification of the concert, and was quickly eliminated by the quick tempo of the concert. . . . Hołdys only made one political comment: “As you surely know in Moscow the “Days of Warsaw Culture” are going on. Everyone today is in Moscow, so we can appear here.” It was said calmly and met with little reaction. It was interpreted as a complaint that the band was not invited. It is difficult to agree with the interpretations from various enemy broadcasts.

1. The concert was not a secret, but was advertised in the mass media.
2. the number of security in the stadium eliminated the possibility of any revelry other than singing and dancing.

The outfit of Hołdys with the letter S on the back is commonly known for years as a letter its shape, color, etc. connected to the word “Superman.”

As a whole, both reports take up the cause of Perfect, supporting the argument that the concert was decidedly not a political provocation. In fact, the second report even identified the idea that the concert was political as propaganda by “enemy broadcasts” like Radio Free Europe. If any element of the event was objectionable, it was not the fault of Polish rock, but rather, “the needs of American propaganda,” which the report even speculated might have facilitated the audience’s antics in singing the name of Jaruzelski – implying that such behavior was not to be expected from ordinary Polish rock groups or their fans. Indeed, even organizers of the concert were surprised, it noted. The report concluded, “recreational events are much anticipated by a notable portion of youth, but give a chance for circles of western propaganda for using these events for political

diversion.” In other words, rock was good clean fun, if not for attempts by outsiders to distort it into something political.

The Perfect concert gives us a chance to see how bands, concert organizers, and even government representatives were responding to a major rock event once rock had become widespread in the second half of the decade. Another example goes even further, offering a peak into how central party organs interpreted these events. In the fall of 1987, the ZSP student union organized the 7th Festival of Student Culture of the PRL, the first such festival organized since before martial law in 1981. The program for the festival included several of the more controversial bands associated with the alternative music scene, including Deuter, Armia, T Love Alternative, Daab, and Kult. Perhaps expecting difficulties in getting approval for the event, the leadership of the ZSP wrote a detailed program outlining the “programmatically-organizational foundation” of the festival. Knowing the delicate situation of rock, the committee used language that ensured that the festival program would fit with party objectives. They wrote,

The tempo of developing socialist Poland depends on the informed activeness of the whole society. In this process, an important role is played by a broadly-understood participation in culture. The general humanistic preparation for life of the young generation, becoming the future of our country, depends on the level of participation in culture. Culture is omnipresent in our lives, building a world view, a hierarchy of values, helping make decisions, teaching, and educating. Participation in its creation and reception are important elements in the development of sensitivity and intellect, creation of personality, and building socialist attitudes.

It then got directly to the point, including a quotation from the Tenth Party Congress:

The ZSP wants to connect to the realization of the program of the Tenth party Congress of the PZPR through the VII Festival of Student Culture of the PRL. In support of the political and programmatic foundations resulting from its principle ideological premises, the ZSP, as an aware sponsor of student cultural activity, “thirsts to participate in creating a common front of disseminating culture in education, in higher studies, in the mass media, in work collectives, in activity of artistic institutions and in the social-cultural movement.”

Without ambiguity, then, the festival was to fit the party program. But how would punk bands specifically fit with the program? Without mentioning the particular performers (although the attached festival program included the names of bands), the document added,

Not resigning from the right to experimentation and mistakes of debuts, young creators participating in the realization of the festival are grouped under the realization of principles of the festival contained in the slogan “dialogue for the future.”

In a letter addressed to the director of the Central Committee’s Division of Culture, the ZSP’s director emphasized this title, adding,

I want to underscore that we are aware of many barriers will be encountered by the presentation of such a matter by the ZSP in the student artistic milieu especially among the academic cadres. There are also always many of those who believe that it is necessary “to do nothing” and to “boycott” activities of the “official” – as they call it – structure. We want, among other things, to demonstrate to the student body through the festival the irrationality and harmfulness of such a position. We must begin first through conversation in order to later think together about the future of the academic milieu and what role today’s students play in its creation.

The director then took the opportunity to emphasize that the event would strengthen the influence of the ZSP among students, and concluded by requesting financial assistance from the National Culture Fund.

The program and letter strike an artful balance between assuring that the festival fits the party program for culture on one hand, and subtly arguing for the need to appeal to students who are less inclined to accept “official structures.” Using the party’s own oft-invoked concept of a “dialogue,” it suggests that even culture that is not explicitly socialist can serve party objectives by popularizing the ZSP and bringing in students that might otherwise be tempted to boycott the activity. It also emphasizes ideas like choice, tolerance, and exposure to public opinion – concepts that had also been advanced at times in party leadership circles as I noted previously.

The strategy of using the party's own language to argue for the festival worked marvelously. The festival was not only allowed; the Division of Culture also commended the event for its presentation of the artistic work of students and connecting them to the development of national culture in fulfillment of the program of the Tenth Congress. It also added that "equalizing the disproportion in access to culture is one of the fundamental demands of social activity of students," so the event would facilitate the "cooperation of the whole academic society without regard to organizational affiliation." In other words, they commended the festival's effort to appeal not just to party supporters, but all spheres of academia through the "rich, diverse program of the Festival," which "included concerts of classical music, rock, jazz, student song, cabaret, student theater, film and literary seminars, exhibits, and galleries."

Yet, asking the Division of Culture to swallow performances by bands like Armia, Deuter, or T Love Alternative was bound to provoke concern among those with less inclusive ideas about Polish socialist culture. Along these lines, the Division of Culture added,

the artistic level, including performance and repertoire, were controversial. In the future it will be necessary to ensure that the best, most worthwhile ideological-artistic programs and bands be presented at events that are meaningful for nation-wide culture."

If the bands themselves left something to be desired, though, the concept was solid:

In the final concert under the title "One Atmosphere" student folklore groups, choirs, theater groups, and rock bands took place. The intention of organizers to return to the roots of Polish culture and folk traditions and connect those artists with fashionable youth rock music was on target.³⁰³

Concluding, they rated the VII Festival of Student Culture unambiguously as "the most important event in student culture in the past years," showing that "student culture is an integral part of national culture," and facilitating "integration and artistic enlivening in the academic milieu.

³⁰³ ZSP, "7 Festiwal Kultury Studentow PRL Final '87 Katowice," October 1987, 1354 Wydział Kultury PZPR, 1536, 960/118, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw, Poland.

Evidently, a majority of voices in the Central Committee's Division of Culture was now able to square even rock's more controversial performers with their own agenda for improving the party's image as well as its long standing goal of making culture accessible. Their ability to do so flowed in part from the interpretations offered by the organizers of rock events and more positive reports from representatives attending concerts, but they also suggest a growing sentiment openness to rock amidst central party organs themselves. Despite continued sporadic misgivings, large crowds singing together about standing up to the First Secretary of the PZPR could now be dismissed as marginal, and moreover, treating them as anti-socialist was tantamount to serving the interests of enemy propaganda. A concert that included hardcore punk bands could be seen as fulfilling the program of the Tenth Party Congress.

In a certain sense, this might be interpreted as a positive development for the rock scene. It meant that rather than working to suppress rock, the highest authorities were more likely than ever before to allow it to proliferate, or even work to promote it. Yet, the positive impact was limited. Acceptance by growing numbers of authorities did not mean that record companies could start to record and press new and interesting bands; even new management of the record firms did not provide the equipment and materials necessary for expanding record production. Nor could it fill seats at rock concerts whose audiences had been shrinking since 1985.

Even more damning, though, was the challenge this growing acceptance provided to rock's ability to operate as a sphere of alternative culture. With bands depending on fans who were highly attuned to spotting signs of cooperation with "the system," this could be just as damaging as a ban on performance. As I noted in the second chapter, by late 1987, the state radio's hits list was playing songs by nearly every band that considered itself alternative, including TZN XENNA, which had considered even the Jarocin festival to be too close to the state to merit attendance. For a rock scene obsessed with authenticity and independence, it was becoming difficult to find any means of distinguishing an "alternative" band from an "official" one.

In April of 1988, at the request of a Secretary of the Central Committee of the PZPR, a group under the direction of the Vice Director of the Division of Culture and including the Vice Minister of Culture, a secretary of the regional party in Kalisz, the first

secretary of the party in Jarocin, the mayor, the director of the cultural center and the ZSMP, and a representative from the Political-Organizational division of the KC PZPR met to prepare for the festival that year.³⁰⁴ After a discussion about “sociological issues, educational aspects, and social resonance” of the festival, the group decided,

The [Jarocin] festival should become the main place of searching for a form of presence of state patronage in the milieu of youth subcultures.

In connection to this, it is necessary to:

- maintain the amateur and self-financing character of the festival

- realize through its program defined educational goals

- ensure the proper preparation of organization cadres for the event and professional reliability in rating the artistic presentations of youth.

The presence of state patronage should be present in the following forms:

- selecting young talents and promoting winners (creative stipends, the possibility of artistic growth, radio and television programs, eventually the interest of record firms)

- improving social and sanitary conditions...

- refitting the city cultural center, ensuring the possibility of central training of the young organizers and animators of the festival

- raising the level of accompanying events – as the main means of influencing the ideological-educational – artistic workshops, spectacles, evenings of author creations, the appropriate organization of free time

- the reliable, skilled service of the event by the mass media.

³⁰⁴ Wydział Kultury KC PZPR, “Notatka na temat Festiwalu Muzyki Rockowej "Jarocin '88,"” April 1988, 1354 Wydział Kultury PZPR, 1799, 982/145, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw, Poland. I have not been able to find any response to the note sent in late 1987 asking for the first secretary’s response on Jarocin, but considering the position taken toward the festival in 1988, it is highly unlikely that the response was negative.

Regarding the last comment, the committee criticized the prior demonizing and sensationalizing in the media's presentation of the festival.

In 1988, the Jarocin festival was added to the Ministry of Culture and Art's official calendar of events for the first time.³⁰⁵ The result was not promising for the rock scene. Even with his politically neutral approach to the festival, Marcin Jacobson was left out of the organization effort. Also, for the first time, the winners of the previous year's competition – including Aurora, the band that had played a song that was not approved by censors the previous year – were refused entry as guest bands.³⁰⁶

Even so, rock was not “dead,” as many journalists, fans, and even bands had come to believe. Many bands and their fans continued to struggle to persist. Nor was Jarocin completely unrecognizable; the differences were subtle, and the addition of the festival to the MKiS calendar was not widely publicized. Besides, the scene had dealt with state encroachment for its whole existence, so there was no objective reason why this instance had to be decidedly different. Indeed, T. Love, Daab, and Klaus Mittfoch gave performances at Jarocin along with a few other professional bands; T Love's performance was particularly well received. As for amateur bands, one report noted that punk dominated the festival as it had in the past; an observation confirmed by the victory of the punk/new wave band Zielone Żabki for the audience choice.³⁰⁷

For his part, Winder insisted that the addition of the festival to the MKiS calendar had “practically no” effect on the festival's meaning, suggesting that the biggest difference from previous years was that it was now “based on the performances of unknown, young bands. It's a festival without stars.”³⁰⁸ It was a strange assessment to apply to a festival that had advertised itself precisely that way for nearly a decade.

³⁰⁵ Kierownik Wydziału Oświaty i Kultury KW PZPR w Kaliszu Andrzej Spychalski, “Informacja o przebiegu Festiwalu Muzyki Rockowej "Jarocin 88,"” August 1988, 1354 Wydział Kultury PZPR, 1799, 982/145, Archiwum Akt Nowych

³⁰⁶ Tomasz Polec, “Szefowie czuje se jak najemnik: Rozmowa z Marcinem Jacobsonem,” *Gazeta Młodych*, August 2, 1988. Available from <http://www.jarocin-festiwal.com/1988/gm61/gm88jaco.html>, accessed June 2009.

³⁰⁷ Janusz Jaroszczyk and Jerzy Szostak, “Rockowy Grajdoł,” *Gazeta Młodych*, August 16, 1988. Available from <http://www.jarocin-festiwal.com/1988/gm65/gm88graj.html>, accessed June 2009.

³⁰⁸ Janusz Jaroszczyk, “Szefowie: Jestem Muzykiem,” *Gazeta Młodych*, August 2, 1988. Available from <http://www.jarocin-festiwal.com/1988/gm61/gm88wind.html>, accessed June 2009.

Conclusion

Amidst the crises of the late 1970s and 1982, the party sought to rebuild its authority in part on its claim to disseminate and defend Polish culture, particularly among Poland's youth. This increased focus on youth and culture made rock a key contentious topic of debate among members of the PZPR. Bodies of central authorities like the party's Division of Culture and the state's Ministry of Culture never formulated an official plan for dealing with rock. Instead, they issued ad-hoc directives, occasionally changing their position dramatically and unexpectedly as the changing situation privileged some voices over others. This suggests a diversity of opinion in governing circles, as well as rock's ambiguous relationship to the wide range of cultural and political ideals common among party members. At the local level, this variety ensured that directives from the center were ambiguous enough to allow for considerable latitude in dealing with rock.

Some party members saw something in rock that could fit with their own reformist vision of socialist Poland. They recognized the incentives for incorporating rock into official events as well as a language for defending its inclusion to higher authorities. Rock was profitable for the state, tremendously popular among youth, and had a group of journalists and critics that were committed to defending its value as recreation and even as culture. The party, in contrast, was immensely unpopular among youth, particularly after martial law. Hand in hand with a developing sense in some party circles that the PZPR should acknowledge and tolerate public opinion and individual choice, this knowledge was both relevant and disturbing. For some open minded party members, a solution to all of these problems was to treat rock as a legitimate form of youth cultural activity. By this theory, in one motion, rock could become an asset rather than a threat, simultaneously fulfilling the promise to disseminate culture and respond to youth needs and popularizing the party among young people.

For hardliners in the party, though, rock appeared to be a security threat, a capitalist diversion and challenge to socialism, a contributing factor to antisocial behavior among youth, and an assault on Polish culture – all immensely serious charges for the party in the 1980s. From their perspective, it made sense to do what they could to suppress the music and limit its exposure. The safety of the state and the success of party

objectives depended on it. In other words, over the 1980s, rock emphasized and deepened a fracture line within the communist party that separated reformers and hardliners. This line demarcated differing visions not just about rock, but about the Polish nation, Polish socialism, and Polish youth and culture – all critical areas of discussion in the discourse of the party.

These differences were highly significant politically in 1980s Poland. First, they demonstrated that differences of opinion within the party were as pronounced as the differing visions between “the party” and “the opposition.” In the fifth chapter, we will see how questions about Poland’s youth and culture were also crucial to the opposition, which was similarly divided in its approach. Further, each faction in the party was willing to align with people outside the party who confirmed their own idea of rock – in youth organizations, in the press, in the rock scene, and even sometimes in the Church and the opposition.

This willingness to reach across party lines to groups with similar interpretations of Poland and its culture helped set up the climate for the roundtable agreements of 1989. The impulse to compromise did not come from nowhere: the sense of a need to work with individuals and groups outside the party and a need to respond to the desires and feelings of youth had been constantly voiced and debated within the party over the 1980s, in part through engagement with issues surrounding rock. In 1986, the youth unions that were intended to prepare the next generation of party leaders had announced that they were looking for rebels and individuals discontent with society to join their ranks and even serve as their leaders. In early 1988, some the party’s and government’s highest authorities had seen fit to make what had been a bastion of alternative culture a main site of contact with youth subcultures. Significantly, party youth officials Kwaśniewski and Leszek Miller were both among the party’s delegates to the roundtable talks.

Padraic Kenney has suggested that the round table talks seemed acceptable to the party to some degree because Solidarity activists seemed relatively rational and comprehensible compared to the diverse groups comprising youth alternative culture. Indeed, by the time of the talks, some important figures in the party were arguing that even these groups could be accommodated in the PRL. If punks were a viable, or even

valuable addition to socialist Poland, the more familiar, rational, pious nationalism of Solidarity was at least as easy a fit.

Chapter IV

Performing Rock

When rock returned to prominence at the end of the 1970s in the dual prongs of punk and MMG, its performers had to orient themselves amidst the complex combination of pressures arising from the music industry. Some bands sought to utilize every available means of reaching wide audiences with their music, through the radio, recordings, and live performances. Others distanced themselves from the music industry, viewing cooperation as a betrayal of their independence from the state. Of course, as we have seen, some form of cooperation was necessary if bands wanted the chance to play at all. A band's relationship to the industry was only one aspect its ongoing effort to define itself in the Polish rock scene, however. Bands also had to orient themselves to politics and the party, as well as toward their audience. Every decision a band made was placed into the context of the ongoing struggle between authenticity and acceptability.

In part, bands defined their relationship to these spheres – the industry, politics, and their audience – through concrete decisions like where they would play. For instance, a performance at the Jarocin festival carried very different meanings for politicians, fans, and industry executives alike than a performance at an international socialist youth festival, or even at Opole or on a radio broadcast. However, on a day-to-day basis, bands defined themselves through their sound, dress, and behavior, as well as what they chose to say, whether in interviews or in song lyrics. This is not to say that bands necessarily calculated their songs and image for a specific effect. However, in the context of 1980s Poland, every detail was tremendously important, and was mined for significance by fans, critics, and authorities alike.

Yet, the meanings of these signs were seldom straightforward. The range of possible interpretations for a punk rock song, a way of behaving on stage, or song lyric was wide. At the same time, though, the construction of meaning from signs is not random, and possibilities are not infinite. To use the language of Michael Denning,

adapted from semiotician Valentin Volosinov, the sounds, performances, and texts of rock are “multiaccentual.”³⁰⁹ A sound, lyric, or performance have many potential meanings; which one dominates depends on the other signs it is surrounded by, as well as the accent put upon it by the listener (itself determined by a range of external factors). This introduces the element of struggle at the level of listening as well as at the level of performance: since signs have a range of possible meanings, which predominates is contingent.

The listener (consumer) side of this equation will be discussed in the fifth chapter. Here, we will discuss how bands sought to orient themselves within the context of the rock scene of socialist Poland as it shifted over the course of the 1980s. When looking closely at some of the songs and performances of 1980s Polish rock, however, one should remember that rock was not typically intended to be studied in this manner. In fact, bands often mocked clumsy efforts to define and deconstruct their music. In one press conference, for instance, Perfect’s guitarist lambasted a journalist for an article suggesting one of the band’s songs, “Pepe Wróc,” had a “Spanish-influenced melody.” Punk bands often treated this type of scholastic approach to their music with still greater contempt. This tension is worth keeping in mind: few things are less like attending a punk concert than reading a textual deconstruction of its lyrics or a musicological rendering of its sound.

Even so, it would be a mistake to abandon these techniques. Fans, the state, and critics looked closely at these at all aspects of rock in deciding how to interpret the music and how to present it to the wider public in the press. Further, bands may not construct songs with textual analysis in mind, but they do often have a certain idea of what they want their music to do, and how they want it to be heard. Songs and performances are filled with audio, textual, and performative cues – or signs – that help them communicate their intentions to fans and hostile audiences alike. Moving from the performer to the listener introduces additional variables. Audience interpretation depends on a range of

³⁰⁹ Denning formulates the concept of multiaccentuality in *Mechanic Accents* (New York, 1987), suggesting that the mode of reading of a working class dime novel reader can be reconstructed to a degree by considering the mode of reading predominant in the 19th century working class. This is related to semiotician Valentin Volosinov’s theory of “polysemy,” which suggests that the meaning of signs is constructed in relationship to other signs.

factors including who is performing, who is listening, the time, place, what is happening in the press, and, of course, the specifics of performance.

Consider, for example, a “power chord” played on a distorted guitar – the first sound on Nirvana’s “Smells like teen spirit” is a good example. There are some objective factors that merit musicological description: it is comprised of the root note, the fifth, and the octave, giving it the versatility of working as a minor or major chord. This is likely indirectly related to the band’s choice of the particular chord, but that does not necessarily bring us closer to understanding what it is like to listen to it. In comparison to some of the other music popular at the time, however, it sounds powerful, rough, jagged, and simple.

From here, we go to the experience of the listener. These qualities – rough, jagged, powerful, simple sound – might be interpreted as defiant, angry, or expressing a similar emotion. This is not the only possibility, however. Imagine you are a heavy metal or hardcore punk fan – in this case, it might sound more like a commercially viable imitation of your own favorite band than an expression of anger. On the other hand, if you listen exclusively to baroque and classical period music, it might just sound confused, spastic, and irrational. The context of the performance is also significant. What if you were in an authoritarian state, and you heard it on a scratchy tape, recorded over a state-produced educational tape and handed to you clandestinely by an acquaintance? Or playing on the speakers in a basement or a lesser known club with a DJ known for his edgy tastes? Or in an arena? Or ten years later, at the university, as part of a class on music and rebellion.

This multiaccultural analysis can be applied to style as well. Appearance and behavior were both important, but their meaning was constantly contested and changed with time and place. The signs invoked by style sometimes reached across continents, making cross-cultural connections that constituted a key and often quite conscious aspect of Polish rock life – ranging from British Punk to black North American blues to Caribbean Reggae and Rastafarianism. These connections are crucial in grasping the meaning of a Polish band like Brygada Kryzys singing a song in English about a Jamaican herb, “Ganja.” Within the Polish rock scene, these international sharings – especially in punk and reggae – often were used as the basis for claims to authenticity,

that concept is both elusive and also critical for rock bands, who sought to avoid being tainted by incorporation into the range of acceptable socialist, Polish behavior. However, in other contexts, their meaning could be shifted to indicate completely different ideas, associated with “posing” (using a sign divorced from what it signifies – like wearing rebellious clothing without actually rebelling) or mere cluelessness.

While much remained the same in the political and cultural context over the 1980s (although some things did not – for instance, the arrival of semi-private record companies after martial law), how these conditions affected the rock scene shifted with time. Likewise, the tension between making one’s music accessible, acceptable, and available versus emphasizing its uncompromising, alternative status remained throughout the 1980s, but the way it played out changed over the decade, as did the characteristics associated with each category and the group of bands that fit in them.

In order to account for these shifts, I have broken up the 1980s into three periods and identified the major musical currents for each period. In the first, MMG’s (Music of the Young Generation) rock and underground punk formed two strands that were skillfully woven together by the end of 1980 by the young music professionals I discussed in the second chapter. The second period saw these punk-rock fusion bands rise to unparalleled popularity – and in response, the development of a new set of rigorously alternative bands in the genres of hardcore punk, reggae, and metal. The third period was characterized by the dissolution of the popular punk-rock bands from the previous years and the gradual movement of alternative bands to more mainstream outlets.

This overall pattern – the alternative bands of one period becoming the popular, mainstream bands of the next, before falling out of style in the end – is a familiar one: a similar pattern can often be discerned in rock scenes in capitalist countries. However, in the case of socialist Poland, the cycle was particularly problematic since the contrary pressures for and against cooperating with the music industry and reaching a larger audience versus maintaining one’s alternative character were especially intense.

MMG and Punk, 1978-1981

What I have identified as the first period of Polish rock began with the nearly contemporaneous development of “Music of the Young Generation” (MMG) and the first

introduction of punk to Poland in the late 1970s. These two strands began to overlap around 1980, when the MMG concert moved to Jarocin and included punk and punk/rock crossover bands, and when punk encountered its first wide scale promoter in Waldemar Rudziecki. It continues until 1982, when it first became possible to talk about something like a mainstream rock scene due to increased exposure on radio, television, traditional song festivals, and eventually even the record presses amidst martial law.

As I noted in the previous chapter, MMG was intended to create a rock market in the PRL. As such, it had to fit within the political requirements of the industry and the state/party, but push those boundaries enough to interest young potential fans. In the previous chapter, I showed how MMG's creators designed their statements to fans and to authorities to balance these objectives. Here, I will indicate how the bands' music performed a similar task.

We will start with a couple of songs from a compilation under the title *Muzyka Młoda Generacji*, released after the bands' first major performance at Pop Session in Sopot in 1978. First, we will look at Kombi's "Pieniądze" (Money) **[Track 03]**.³¹⁰ First of all, as a studio recording, this track is probably more polished sounding than the band was at the festival and other performances, and also less amplified. Further, it lacks the visual cues of a rock performance – a crucial element in determining how a song came across to audience members, as we will see. However, we can still tell a lot from the recording. Within Kombi's repertoire, this song is closer than most to straight-up rock and roll; the band's other popular songs at the time share more similarities with jazz fusion and disco/funk. Even in this brief sample, we can hear an overdriven guitar playing characteristic rock riffs to a typical rock drum beat with the cymbal marking out the moderate, 4/4 tempo. The vocals – a bit of a rarity in Kombi songs, which were instrumentally focused – are practiced, in time and in tune, but give just a hint of idiosyncrasy, with the singer interspersing an occasional rapid vibrato and a barely perceptible register-break at the end of each line (to me the most direct comparison is a toned-down David Byrne of the Talking Heads).

³¹⁰ *Muzyka Młoda Generacji* (Wifon NK-516, 1979).

Now, let's look at Exodus' "Oda do nadzieja" (Ode to Hope) **[Track 04]**.³¹¹ Unfortunately, this brief clip cannot capture the epic scope of the song, which lasts fifteen minutes. It opens with a "space-age" sounding synthesizer introduction overlaid by an eastern-influenced vocal cry. Over the song's course, it changes tempos, melodies, and even time signatures several times. Even so, the presence of the electric guitar and the drums make it identifiable as rock, particularly in the hard-rocking midsection I have included in the brief selection here. Before that, however, note the arpeggiating synthesizer, reminiscent of a classical composition; the reference to the classical poetic form (the "ode") in the song's title affirms this association. As a whole, the piece highlights the various fusions possible with rock, particularly "symphonic" and "jazz."

These interpretations strive to answer the question, "How does it sound?" Of course, describing sound in words is necessarily limited from the start (the aphorism that "writing about music is like dancing about architecture" comes to mind).³¹² At its best, text can mark interesting points to listen to and offer suggestive comparisons. The brief clips I have included strive to remedy this difficulty partially (within the scope of "fair use" in copyright regulations), but even so, an additional layer separates what we hear from what it was like listening to the music as a Polish audience member. While the music *sounds* the same now (with the exception of remastering and changes in playback equipment technology – a significant caveat since whether something sounded "polished" or not was deeply significant to a Polish audience), we cannot *hear* it the same way the Polish audience attending the concert in 1978 would have.

To get a bit closer to the context of a contemporary Polish audience, let's compare the selections from Kombi and Exodus we just heard to some of the more typical popular music in Poland at the time. Our first sample is Jerzy Połomski. Połomski (b.1933) is a typical example of the *estrada* tradition. Although he represented the older generation of performers (he had hits dating back into the early 1960s), his 1977 album *Z tobą świat nie ma wad* was very popular when MMG arrived on the scene.

³¹¹ Ibid.

³¹² The phrase has been attributed to various sources, including Elvis Costello and Frank Zappa. Curiously, my own experience as the spouse of a modern dancer and choreographer has shown me that dancing about architecture can, in fact, be an engaging and evocative practice.

Listening to “Z tobą świat nie ma wad” (With You, the World has no Faults) **[Track 05]**, the difference in instrumentation from MMG is immediately noticeable, with not just a brass section, but also strings and even conga drums.³¹³ Połomski’s vocals are polished to a brilliant shine, complemented by ample reverb; you can almost hear him smiling as he sings. The song does share some distant similarities with rock, however: the drums are beating out 4/4 here too.

Now we’ll look at a more contemporary performer, from the younger, post-war generation of *estrada* performers. Like some of her peers, Urszula Sipińska (b. 1947) updated the sound of *estrada* on her 1975 album *Zabaw się w mój świat*. “Wołaniem, wołam Cię” (I Am Calling You) **[Track 06]** includes a piano and sizeable backing choir, but the bass guitar line is as soulful as it is polished, and the drums could be straight from a rock song.³¹⁴ If you listen hard, you can hear electric guitar as well, although it is further in the background than in most rock. The song’s proximity to gospel and soul – which works well with Sipińska’s unusually strong voice – also give a link to rock, since both share roots in black American blues

After these comparisons, we come back to the MMG. There are significant differences, most particularly in vocal delivery, where Kombi’s vocals are more casual and idiosyncratic, and in instrumentation, which is relatively simple in the MMG tracks, with the electric guitar prominently featured. Both of these characteristics made the music more immediate, fresh, and exciting – and equally importantly, less composed and posturing – for Polish youth. When added to other factors, such as the dress and behavior of performers on stage and the fact that the rock bands of MMG composed and performed the songs themselves helped make it even more readily distinguishable from *estrada*.

At the same time, the differences between the genres are not overwhelming, at least not sonically. Both Kombi and Exodus played carefully constructed music with the skill of professionals. Moreover, their music was a particular type of rock, often referred to as “progressive” or “prog” rock, which experimented with other genres, particularly jazz and classical music, transforming rock into a form considerably more complex than

³¹³ *Z tobą świat nie ma wad* (Polskie Nagrania/Muza SX-1439, 1977).

³¹⁴ *Zabaw się w mój świat* (Pronit SXL-1094, 1975).

its antecedents in rockabilly and the blues. This brought rock closer to the kind of professional music Poles were used to hearing – and that critics were used to rating. The Music of the Young Generation concert might have been exciting, new, and different, but it was not wholly foreign to most audience members. As I will show, this choice by the organizers of MMG was not an accident: prog rock was not the only kind of rock that existed in Poland in 1978.

Where MMG might be characterized as a studied attempt to push the boundaries of what was acceptable in socialist Poland in order to attract young fans, punk ignored those boundaries or even sought to defy them. MMG sought to engage with dominant entertainment on its own terms by choosing the most professional sounding, musically accomplished bands playing carefully constructed and orchestrated music; punk set up its own discursive framework. Some of these key characteristics can be heard in the music of Walek Dzedzej, often identified (in the 1980s and today) by punk fans as the Poland’s proto-punk pioneer.

“Nie Jestem tym czym ty” (I’m not what you are) [**Track 07**] features just Dzedzej’s voice, a harmonica and an acoustic guitar, and is recorded from a live performance at the student club Żak in Gdańsk in 1977.³¹⁵ The influence of Bob Dylan can be discerned immediately, although Dzedzej’s delivery makes Dylan sound like a professionally-trained vocalist in comparison – no easy task. Besides the rough qualities of the voice, Dzedzej makes his breaths audible in the microphone, making the performance more human than the clinical, sterile sound of the studio. His pronunciation emphasizes texture over melody; his singing of the word “ty” (meaning “you”) turns his usual nasal timbre more guttural. From instrumentation to vocal performance to composition (the song mainly alternates between two chords), the music is far from both *estrada* and the progressive rock of MMG

Dzedzej’s texts became a symbol of punk for years to come. This was not so much for their expressiveness; rather, it was their simple directness, a key characteristic of punk. One version of the song sampled above, for instance, included the following stanza:

Nie jestem mały

I am not small

³¹⁵ *Victim of a Safety Pin: Polski Punk Underground 1977-82* (Supreme Echo).

nie jestem duży	I am not big
nie jestem mądry	I am not wise
nie jestem głupi	I am not stupid
nie jestem w ZMS-ie	I am not in the ZMS
nie jestem w KOR-ze	I am not in KOR
nie jestem w Partii	I am not in the party
nie jestem, kurwa, niczym	Shit, I am not anyone ³¹⁶

Significantly, these lyrics are not the same as those performed in the recording included above. This is characteristic of punk's emphasis on authenticity and immediacy in expression: why should someone sing the same thing every time? This particular variant captured special attention from those interested in punk, however, and was cited in periodicals multiple times over the next decade. Dzedzej's dissociation from the ZMS (the Union of Socialist Youth) and the party is not surprising, considering punk's contempt for authority. KOR, on the other hand, was the Workers' Defense Committee, an organization closely associated with Solidarity in the years to come. As this suggests, the relationship between punk and Solidarity was a tense one; I will cover this topic in detail in the fifth chapter.

By 1979, punk had expanded its influence in Poland. Besides Dzedzej's brief tour as the Walek Dzedzej Pank Bend, traces of punk had already begun to trickle into Poland in other forms. Tomasz Budzyński, later to become an important punk vocalist, recalls his first contact with punk listening to recordings (sent from a contact in Britain) of the Ramones, the Stranglers and the Sex Pistols with groups of friends. Eugeniusz "Siczka" Olejarczyk, later in the punk band KSU, lived far from the early punk epicenters of Gdańsk and Warsaw and first heard punk through a Radio Free Europe transmission.³¹⁷ Robert Brylewski – who was to become a huge figure in Polish punk over the entire 1980s – first learned about punk from the Polish newspaper *Życie Warszawy*; he recalls using its scathing report on the degeneracy of British punks as an instruction manual for how to become one himself.³¹⁸

³¹⁶ Dąbrowska, "Dzieci śmieci."

³¹⁷ Lizut, *Punk Rock Later*. Olejarczyk recalls an amazing story about how he and his bandmates wrote a letter to the station, which they had a family member abroad send. Amazingly, a few months later, the station referenced the letter from their village – Ustrzyki Dolne – and fulfilled the request. Unfortunately, everyone in the town immediately knew who must have sent the letter. Local authorities were not pleased.

³¹⁸ Ibid.

With these influences, punk bands began to form in Poland, centered in Warsaw and Gdańsk. Among the first of these was the band Deadlock from Gdańsk, active by early 1979. The band's drummer, Jacek "Luter" Lenartowicz went on to publish one of the first underground fanzines, entitled *Pasażer* (Passenger), and became a prominent personality in Polish rock over the next decade.

At roughly the same time, the band Kryzys was forming in Warsaw, with Robert Brylewski as its lead guitar and vocalist. In 1979, Luter left Deadlock and joined Lipiński to form Tilt. Later that year, the band performed its first concert in impresario Henryk Gajewski's club, Remont. One of Tilt's key members, Tomasz Lipiński, briefly an art student (like many punks, in Britain and Poland alike) before he dropped out, had met Gajewski the year before. These bands, working with Gajewski and Piotr Rypson, who served as a manager and co-editor of a fanzine with Gajewski, made up the Warsaw punk scene in the late 1970s. Lipiński later recalled his experience at some of the band's early performances:

"We were like the antithesis of music next to them [mainstream musical acts]. When we came on stage, everyone sat in their chairs, like they were going to watch a match and be entertained. We gave them energy – by the third song, everyone was out of their chairs, going crazy. Two uncompromising brothers came after the concert and demanded pins in their ears. And I did it. It was similar at other concerts."³¹⁹

We don't have to take his word for it, though: a few recordings from contemporary concerts by the bands give a sense of this excitement and energy.

When listening to Kryzys' "Nie jest zły" (It's not bad) **[Track 08]**, the song's production is likely the first thing you will notice.³²⁰ The vocals are difficult to make out, and are decidedly secondary to the music. What you can hear is the vocalist's nasal, bratty delivery, which is more rhythmic than melodic. The vocals are backed by heavy drums and simple guitar riffs. Deadlock's "Am I victim of safety pin" is also from a bootleg production, although it has been remastered for better sound quality **[Track**

³¹⁹ Ibid., 52-53.

³²⁰ The track is taken from bootleg recording labelled *Jesień '79* (Fall '79). Found at: <http://www.pawnhearts.eu.org/~gregland/w-matni/pioro/mp3/>, accessed June 2009.

09].³²¹ Like the previous track, it features drums, simple guitar and bass. Interestingly, the lyrics are in English, linking it to its roots in English punk. The entire song uses only 3 notes, and mostly one – a testament to punk’s simplicity and directness. Rather than melody, it emphasizes texture and rhythm. Likewise, the vocals are closer to shouting than singing – it’s not quite a yell, but not a speaking voice either. The reference to the safety pin affirms the song’s connection to punk through style; punks often employed safety pins in clothing and skin piercing alike. At the same time, the title mocks some of the sociologically-minded journalism that fretted over youth subcultures, as we will see in the fifth chapter. Also, the tempo is slightly faster, making it more difficult to dance to in a conventional manner. This was often intentional: punk rock was not meant to be recreational music. Over time, punks came up with their own dance, suited to the music, referred to as the “pogo” for its vertical jumping motion.

Both songs are punk in same vein as the UK’s Sex Pistols, as a sample of the 1977 classic “Anarchy in the UK” demonstrates **[Track 10]**.³²² While the Sex Pistols’ production is decidedly better, the song features similarly simple, overdriven guitar chords. The vocals are sneering and nasal. Musically, these songs are simple but direct, even offensively so.

This music was not just different from *poważna* and *estrada*; it was also different from older Polish rock and roll and the prog rock of the MMG. Its sound alone asserted its independence from the cultural and social values of authorities, whether they were parents, school teachers, or the party. Punk’s simplicity was a practical value since it allowed almost anyone, regardless of formal training, to create music.

This was also part of punk’s theoretical value, however. The way the bands played – simple, direct, and energetic – was not just a convenience, but also a statement, at least for some. Gajewski’s own outlook on the music and its values are evident in a story he related in one of punk’s early underground fanzines. Gajewski recalled that he had asked a musical friend if the music was energetic. The friend said yes, but that the band needed to “learn to play.” Gajewski clarified this misunderstanding: “it’s harder to

³²¹ The remaster is from *Ambicja* (Manufaktura Legenda), available from the record label W Moich Oczach (www.wmoichoczach.com.pl).

³²² *Never Mind the Bullocks Here’s the Sex Pistols* (Warner BSK-3147, 1977).

play badly. To play well, you just follow rules. To play badly, you need to create every second of every song.”³²³

As the bands sampled above indicate, Gdańsk and Warsaw were the early centers of punk. However, they were not the only places the music could be found. KSU, for instance, hailed from the border region of eastern Poland, a small town called Ustrzyki Dolne. Far from impresarios and access to punk records, the band found its contact with punk through a rare broadcast of the music on Radio Free Europe. Consequently, while KSU was well received in Warsaw’s punk circles, it developed in a slightly different vein, giving an interesting example of the flexibility of punk’s meaning outside its urban centers.

Rather than the avant-garde, absurdist countercultural sensibilities of punk in Warsaw, KSU expressed its rebellion against authority in its own local context. Band member Eugeniusz "Siczka" Olejarczyk indicated that one of KSU’s main conflicts was with the town’s ZHP (the official state scouting union). The organization focused on the area due to its proximity to the Ukrainian border in order to reinforce its character as a Polish town. KSU and other punks saw the organization as “part of the regime” and its propaganda. In response, it took up a model suitable to challenging it, joining with a few other local youths in creating the semi-serious “Free Republic of the Bieszczady” (named for the region in which the town was located), deemed by the secret police to be a Ukrainian separatist movement. The nationalist aspect of the band was played out only half seriously – for instance, the band made up theories that its name stood for “Komitet Samoistnej Ukrainy” (Committee for an Autonomous Ukraine), but also for “Kurwa Sami Ukraińcy” (Ukrainians Screw Themselves) and “Każdy Się Upije” (Everyone Gets drunk). Siczka denied that the organization was nationalist since it believed Poles and Ukrainians should live together peacefully. However, it certainly shifted punk’s rebellion in a nationally-defined direction rather than the aesthetic framework of Warsaw punk.³²⁴

The band’s main interest, though, was music, and here it fit with the urban punk groups perfectly. In 1980, KSU played alongside some of the punk bands from Warsaw and Gdańsk at the Kołobrzeg New Wave festival. The previous chapter addressed the

³²³ Gajewski, “Punk.”

³²⁴ Lizut, *Punk Rock Later*.

concert in terms of its organizer, Andrzej “Amok” Turczynowicz and its sponsorship by a socialist youth club. Here, we will look closer at the performances themselves.

Even before the festival started, an audience member would have anticipated its content. First, its location in Kołobrzeg would have immediately caught the attention of anyone familiar with the annual music festival lineup: the city was the location of the annual Festiwal Piosenki Żołnierskiej (Festival of Military Songs). The contrast between one of the most conservative, officially-favored form of music (the PZPR’s Division of Culture labeled it a “political festival”) and punk, among the most controversial, set up a clash in aesthetic and ideological values.

The term *nowa fala* (literally, “new wave”) in the festival’s title also identified it as something new and different – although the term “punk” would have achieved this purpose as well. The bands that performed – Deadlock, Tilt, KSU, Poland, Fornit, and others – were certainly punk bands by any reasonable definition of the term. Most likely, “*nowa fala*” was substituted due to punk’s more controversial status (a few negative accounts of the phenomenon in Britain had already appeared in the press) in order to increase the festival’s chances of being allowed by the authorities, much as “big beat” and later “Muzyka Młodej Generacji” had been used in place of “rock” to avoid unnecessary controversy. In the years that followed, “*nowa fala*” was frequently used as a synonym for punk by the press, the government, and by fans and performers of the music alike.³²⁵

Performing together at the new wave festival in Kołobrzeg, the bands left a legacy for years to come (Figure 5).³²⁶ These recordings from the performances indicate not just how the bands sounded, but also suggest what a live show was like beyond the sounds of the music. Experiencing punk was not just about calmly listening; it involved an

³²⁵ To make matters still more confusing, “new wave” has a deceptively similar meaning in the US and Britain, where it refers to the music that came on the heels of punk, which Greil Marcus has argued adopted many of punk’s stylistic elements, but mostly abandoned its ideology, rendering it more suitable for mass consumption. In Poland in the early 1980s, “*nowa fala*” rarely carried these connotations, and instead was understood as a synonym for punk. This changed slightly by the mid and late 1980s, when the term started to be used by some journalists to denote bands in the second wave of punk from roughly 1982-1984, as distinguished from the first wave, discussed in this chapter (which was not, in this later usage, actually *nowa fala*).

³²⁶ Andrzej Turczynowicz, Biuletyn, I Ogólnopolski Przegląd Zespołów Rockowej „Nowej Fali,” Kołobrzeg 1980. Available at <http://www.mitologie.pl/michasz/main.php>, accessed 1/2009.

exchange between the audience and the performer, sometimes quite literally in the form of a verbal exchange, or just trading shouts.

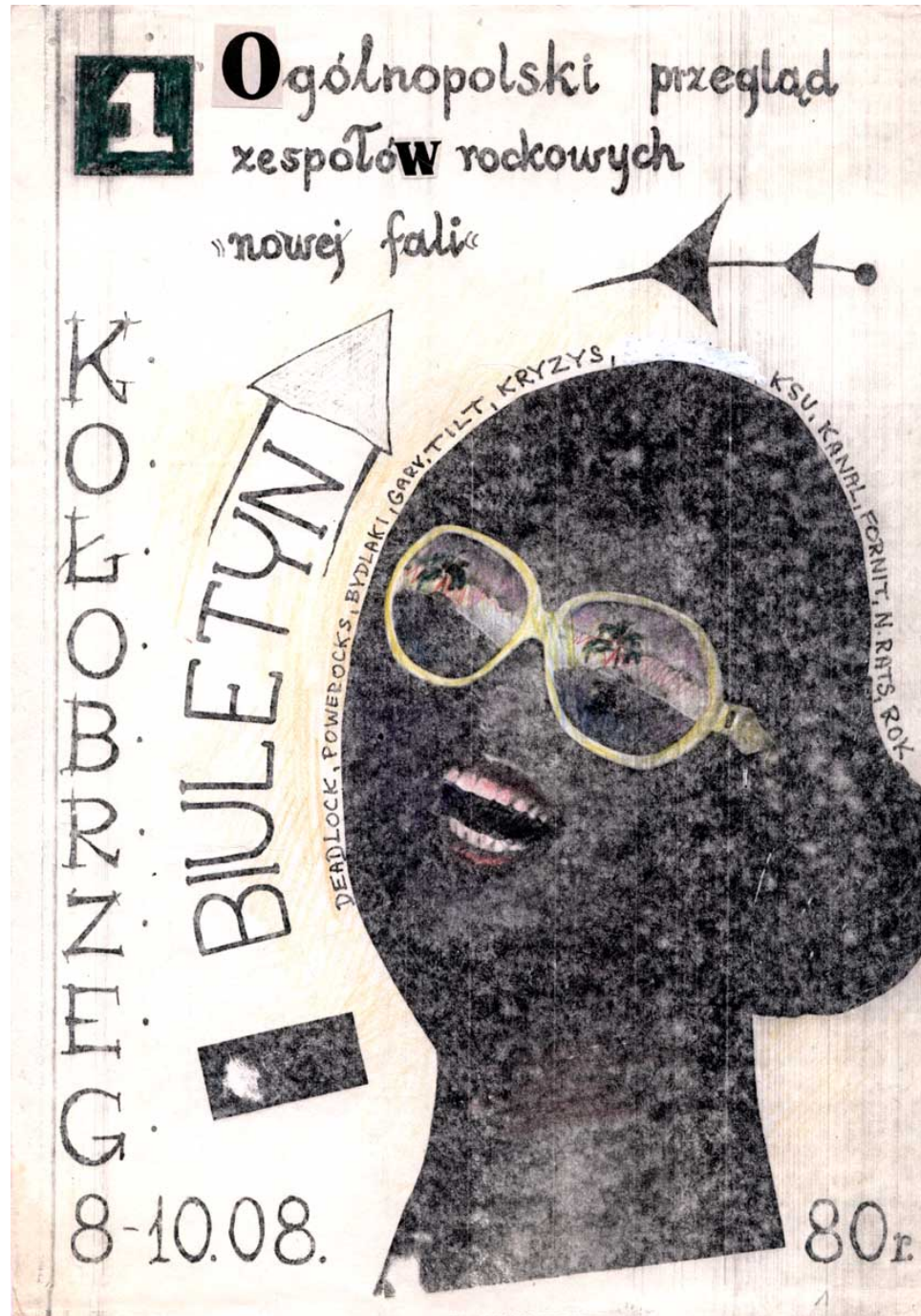


Figure 5. Andrzej Turczynowicz, “Biuletyn, I Ogólnopolski Przegląd Zespołów Rockowej „Nowej Fali,”” 1980.

KSU “Nocą” (At night) **[Track 11]** gives a hint of what it might have been like to attend a punk concert.³²⁷ Even with just the audio track, one can hear evidence of the excitement and atmosphere of interaction, with fans calling out for songs and exchanging banter with performers. This made going to a punk performance much more interactive than getting a seat at a professional *estrada* show. The song begins with a ripping guitar riff. Again, the vocals are nearly monotone, emphasizing rhythm and texture rather than any sort of melody, the main focus of *estrada*.

“Armagedon” **[Track 12]** offers a chance to hear Kryzys perform a new song in their repertoire, with a year of practice beyond that featured in the recording cited previously.³²⁸ The band is still very guitar-dominated, featuring simple chords. However, its vocals are more melodic here. The song might even be described as having “hooks” – melodic phrases that are easily digested and remembered by listeners – a feature linked to pop songs more than punk. The song’s structure is more complex here as well, including instrumental breaks. It still fit well into the context of the new wave festival, although in retrospect, the band’s growing approximation to popular music might be read as a hint of things to come.

The Kołobrzeg New Wave Festival was a remarkable achievement for punk, and is remembered fondly to today. Yet, even as the festival was taking place, Henryk Gajewski was skeptical about the music’s potential to continue its existence in the PRL. In September of 1980, in his self-published periodically tellingly named *Post*, Henryk Gajewski wrote,

New wave [*nowa fala*] doesn’t exist in Poland. Contrary to the crazy opinion, MMG is NOT it. New wave = fornit, nocny szczury, ksu, poerok, atak, deadlock, kryzys, kanal, tilt, and others that we don’t hear about anymore. Music must be for us by us – our music – not something somebody hands to us from on high. New music is going to die in Poland – it doesn’t have a chance. Instead, music imitating the old kind will have success – like exodus, krzak, mchy, and citrusy. Energy is silenced in 1980.³²⁹

³²⁷ From I Festiwał Nowa Fala, Kołobrzeg, 1980. The recording is from a bootleg tape, found at: <http://www.pawnhearts.eu.org/~gregland/w-matni/pioro/mp3/>, accessed 6/2009

³²⁸ Ibid.

³²⁹ Henryk Gajewski and Piotr Rypson, *Post*, September 10, 1980. This is especially interesting since Nocny Szczury – one of the mentioned “true” new wave bands – had performed at the MMG festival in Jarocin just weeks before.

In other words, in his eyes, by 1980 punk was being pushed out by the MMG bands discussed above.

To be sure, Gajewski did not blame MMG alone for the end of punk. A good deal of responsibility was also on conditions in the industry (noted in the previous chapter), as well as limitations from local and regional government authorities (to be discussed in the next chapter). Punk bands in particular faced difficulties in making a lasting presence. First, appropriate to their emphasis on spontaneity and immediacy, punk bands were notoriously short-lived. The punk scene demanded a short sprint of fresh, energetic, spontaneous expression rather than an enduring productive artistic career. It was not uncommon for a band to give two or three concerts and then dissolve. When Tilt and Kryzys had been around for nearly two years in the late 1980s, they were already well past their expected lifespan.

In Poland, however, these problems were compounded by a combination of prohibitively high equipment costs and political/industry conditions that prevented punk bands from achieving financial viability. Most bands simply could not afford to pay for equipment and costs of living in the long term. In terms of relationship to the music industry, punk failed on both fronts of the profitability/politics balance. The music was still in its early stages, and while it elicited tremendous enthusiasm among its fans, that group was too small to guarantee mass sales as the industry required. Musically, as the samples above demonstrate, it was as far from the cultural ideal of the PRL as can be imagined; it had little in common even with the symphonic and jazz rock of groups like Kombi and Exodus. Punk's marginality made it an easy target for any cultural or political authorities wanting to suppress the music – its defenders were few, and generally not in high places. By 1981, Gajewski's Riviera-Remont gallery was forced to close.³³⁰

Punk did not simply disappear, though. Instead, in 1980, the organizers of MMG attempted to fuse elements of the punk scene with MMG. That June, the MMG concert was moved to Jarocin, where organizers – including Walter Chełstowski and Jacek Sylwin – created what would become the most important rock event of the 1980s, the Jarocin Rock Festival.

³³⁰ Dąbrowska, "Dzieci śmieci."

The first Jarocin festival in its new form combined the polished bands of MMG with the punk band Nocny Szczury (Night Rats), as well as a few bands that strived to find a balance between these genres in their own sounds. The best example of this style is Maanam – a band that embodied the combination of punk and rock represented by the new MMG at Jarocin in 1980. Maanam shared a good deal in common with its original MMG counterparts. One of the band’s co-founders, Marek Jackowski, had been a mainstay of the Polish rock scene since the 1960s, and Maanam itself had existed under various guises and in various combinations since the mid-1970s. By 1980, though, the band had adopted aspects of punk rock, particularly in the vocals of singer Kora Jackowska. Maanam filled a crucial role in bridging punk and rock, bringing elements of the former to the wider audience of the latter.

Maanam was so successful, in fact, that it became the first rock band representing the second wave of rock to perform at Poland’s most prestigious domestic song festival, Opole’s Krajowy Festiwal Piosenki Polskiej.³³¹ The performance was particularly significant for one key reason: the festival was televised. Consequently, many Poles report this performance as their first contact with the new wave of rock.

Kora’s performance of “Boskie Buenos” (Heavenly Buenos) **[Video 02]** blends aspects of punk with some elements that were more typical for the traditional song that dominated Opole.³³² Most noticeably, Kora appears on stage without her band – just as would a typical *estrada* singer. However, she uses the extra space to her advantage, moving around stage as if she is teasing or even fighting with the spotlight operator. She is dressed fashionably, but neither provocatively (without body piercing or colorful hair dye) nor formally (some singers performed in formalwear). As for the song itself, the selection shows a fraction of the range of Kora’s vocal abilities, which turn a fairly typical rock song into punk rock: just in the few seconds captured here, she rapidly alternates a few times between a gruff, gravely, sneering sound (that still manages to sound melodic) and occasional rapid vibrato. The rest of the song showcases other talents, including shouts and high-pitched squeals.

³³¹ In fact, Kryzys was also scheduled to perform at Jarocin, but was unable to attend due to “academic issues.”

³³² *Opole 1980*, Telewizja Polska, July 1980. Video available at: <http://www.tvp.pl/rozrywka/festiwale-i-koncerty/opole-2009/z-archiwum-opola/opole-1980-18-festiwal/maanam-boskie-buenos-1980>, accessed May 2009.

Another classic example of Maanam's popularization of punk is 1981's "Stoję, stoję, czuję się świetnie," (I am Standing, I Feel Great), a song that expresses the wonderful pleasure of standing up to oppression [**Track 13**].³³³ Kora describes the pleasure of standing – a regular occurrence, since acquiring basic goods generally involved waiting in lengthy lines – as well as the general pleasure of living in the current state of affairs, exclaiming "Oh, how beautiful it is here! Oh, how wonderful!" Beyond "ironic pleasure," however, the text has a second meaning. Rather than being passive, as the authorities wish, Kora insists on asserting herself: "They all tell me: 'lie down,' 'sit down,' / But I don't have to, I really don't want to."

Maanam shows how a rock band could expand its popularity by adopting elements of punk while still keeping within range of popular audience expectations. Kryzys, on the other hand, shows a punk band becoming more professionalized. In 1980, Kryzys, the early Warsaw punk band discussed above, performed at Pop Session in Sopot – the site of the original MMG concert two years earlier. Audiences and critics alike were shocked by their presence and performance, distinguishing them from the other, more typical acts of the festival. Writing about Kryzys at Pop Session, Adam St. Trąbiński wrote, "the surprise was total, the band was probably the only one *authentically playing youth music*. It performed the recently fashionable variety of punk-reagge (*sic*), the decent texts of the percussionist thus caught the attention of youth."³³⁴ The presence of one of punk's pioneering bands at Sopot – the birthplace of MMG and Poland's premier international song festival – marked a dramatic change in the rock scene from just a year earlier

While MMG needed punk for its vitality and connection to youth, punk also needed MMG in order to have any sort of lasting presence. In the PRL, even straight rock faced numerous challenges; the situation was even worse for punk bands. Even comparatively simple tasks in other countries – like finding musical instruments, audiences, paid shows, and places to play – could be prohibitively difficult in Poland, making it virtually impossible to create a lasting punk band. The possibility of recording an album was even more remote in the early 1980s. MMG offered an alternative to the

³³³ *Maanam* (Wifon LP-028, 1981).

³³⁴ "Bez rewelacji," *Non stop*, August 1980. Emphasis in the original.

early punk practice of forming a band for a few months then dissolving. If a band wished to have a lasting presence, it needed to professionalize.

At the same time, this movement of punk toward the mainstream didn't please everyone. The course of the rock and punks scenes – which began to overlap into something that might be called “punk rock” – over the next decade was determined to a significant degree by the awkward tension between these two poles.³³⁵ One side was characterized as underground, independent, spontaneous, avant-garde, and the other was deemed accessible, acceptable, and popular.³³⁶ Balancing these aspects was essential for success, but incredibly difficult to maintain. For many of punk's early adherents, including Gajewski, such a move marked nothing short of the end of punk, taken over by music produced for youth “from on high.” The tense, fluctuating coexistence of these two scenes – or two sides of one scene – shaped the story of Polish rock/punk in the years to come.

Mainstream Rock and its Alternatives, 1982-1984

In the fall of 1981, a new young punk band named SS-20 after a Soviet Missile received an award for its performance in the Warsaw Mokotowski Jesien festival. No one was more surprised than the band, who expected its aggressive brand of punk to shock audience and judges alike. When it went to pick up its award in December, though, it found that the office was closed. Martial law had begun.³³⁷

Amidst martial law – and in part because of it – this period of Polish rock marked the height of its popularity and availability. In short, these were the years of its greatest mainstream success. The period begins with the expansion of rock's availability on the mass media and record presses, in part due to the economic reforms of the IX Extraordinary Congress. Musically, it is marked by the success of bands that fused

³³⁵ As I noted in the introduction, this is a slightly different use of the term “punk rock” than is conventional. Usually, the term is used as a synonym for punk. Here, I use it to denote the convergence of rock like MMG and punk into a hybrid, punk rock.

³³⁶ The opposition between these two poles was metaphorically important and represented real differences between the scenes, but nonetheless should not be exaggerated. Punk had its behind-the-scenes operators – often at student clubs (under the party) and houses of culture (under the state's Ministry of Culture and Art). On the other hand, even polished, mainstream rock like MMG continued to be controversial in some corners in the press and the government well into the 1980s.

³³⁷ Wiesław Królikowski, “Ostry rock'n'roll,” *Magazyn Muzyczny - Jazz*, January 1988.

elements of punk and more mainstream rock and pop genres, in a blend of influences from the previous period's punk and MMG.

This uneasy balance of alternative culture and popular accessibility was a recipe for success, but it also created tensions in the music scene. As mass appeal of mainstream rock conflicted with the independent, DIY, alternative elements coming from punk, the result was the genesis of new bands that emphasized their uncompromising nature. Alongside popular, successful groups like Republika, Lady Pank, and Lombard, a group of bands that lacked widespread exposure through the media and records cultivated a harder edged sound with a small but dedicated audience, beginning with Dezerter in 1982 and culminating in Siekiera's performance at Jarocin in 1984. By 1985, the key to punk rock's mainstream proliferation was lost: it became tremendously difficult for bands to balance a good reputation with fans and professional success.

The division between bands identifying themselves as uncompromising / alternative / underground bands and those deemed popular / official / mainstream was important to many rock bands and fans (and remains important in discussing the music of this period in Poland today). However, I will also show how this boundary was constantly in flux. The popular bands played on television and radio presented their own challenge to authority, and the bands that prided themselves as "uncompromising" and "alternative" almost always were pressed to compromise in some form.

So far, I have focused on the sound of Polish rock rather than the lyrics accompanying those sounds. This has been intentional: rock is first and foremost about music. However, textual analysis can suggest what writers wanted to sing about, and what message they wanted their listeners to hear. It can also help us theorize what listeners might have thought when listening to a song.

In some cases, listeners deeply considered the texts of rock, clinging to every word while listening through headphones, or referring to the text published on the back of the record sleeve or in a favorite music periodical (which frequently published texts, to the delight of readers), looking for meanings hidden in allegory. The frequency with which fans and censors alike came up with these meanings, even erroneously, attests that this way of listening was not unusual. However, I will also move beyond considering lyrics as a way of expressing specific ideas and information in this sense. In most cases –

listening at a concert or on the radio, for instance – lyrics were not heard in a way conducive to deep analysis; nor were listeners necessarily interested in hearing them this way. The “style of listening” of an audience also might vary by genre or even by the song: much of punk displays an impulse to break out of the complex lyrical conventions of professionally written song, although some punk bands considered their texts forms of poetry as well.³³⁸

Lyrics can also be understood as another aspect of the multi-accentual signs comprising the context for the experience of rock. Rather than looking at words as expressing a specific “meaning,” this approach makes them relevant more as cues to the listener, suggesting how the sound of the song should be heard. Even a couple of simple words might shape how a song sounded – whether it is irreverent and fun, or it is to be taken as serious, or angry. Words could also help indicate where a band fit in the music scene – either fitting with popular, radio-friendly music or asserting its belonging to the alternative world through its use of language. Working along with musical queues, lyrics helped determine what “accents” of a song would dominate, while the meaning of those words in turn were shaped sound, the performer, and myriad other factors at and beyond the performance.

Before discussing rock, though, we should return to the historical context of this period of Polish rock: martial law. The coincidence of rock’s period of greatest popularity and most widespread availability in the PRL with martial law is one of the paradoxes of Polish rock. Part of the explanation was outlined in the previous section – rock made economic sense after martial law more than it ever had before. But for most of the Poles that endured martial law, economic reforms were dwarfed by the initial experience of shock and fear.

First, before new conditions emerged, Poland experienced several weeks of uncertainty. Second, these economic possibilities did not mean a reduction in the state’s supervision: censorship restrictions were increased even as performance opportunities multiplied. Further, for many Poles who had not lived through the stalinist era, including many rock fans and bands, martial law was the first time the state showed its willingness to rely on brute force, and the first time the PRL seemed genuinely oppressive. Despite

³³⁸ Tomasz Budzyński of Siekiera and later, Armia, for instance, often referred to his music as an art form.

images of authoritarian power in socialist Eastern Europe, by the 1980s, that power was manifest subtly, enforced through routine and selective enforcement rather than through forceful demonstration. For many participants in the rock scene, martial law brought the state's repressive apparatus to the public's attention for the first time in their adult lives.³³⁹

Maanam's Kora Jackowska, for instance, recalled the difficulty the band had practicing due to the curfew in force, which kept people from even going outside in the evening.³⁴⁰ In a recent interview, Grzegorz Markowski, Perfect's lead singer, recalled that when martial law was declared, "fear ruled," and everyone desperately wondered what would happen next. While bands in the PRL would have already experienced censorship, with the declaration of martial law, Markowski felt that Perfect was subject to constant observation and hostility from the police and censors.³⁴¹ Punk guitarist and vocalist Robert Brylewski was severely beaten after being apprehended at a demonstration shortly after martial law was declared. Kazik Staszewski, a member of punk band Poland and later Kult noted that he "felt the oppressiveness of the system for the first time under martial law." Dezerter's Krzysztof Grabowski similarly noted that to an 18 year old, knowing little about the differences between communism and democracy, the two systems seemed very similar before martial law. Grabowski observed,

I had recently seen a documentary about the Sex Pistols. They were not allowed to put their posters and were boycotted by the record presses because they sang "God save the queen, the fascist regime." We couldn't call ourselves SS-20 because the communist press maintained that such a rocket did not exist... Eventually the SB (the security service) came to my house. Then I realized that there was a political police, and that they dealt with people like me.³⁴²

³³⁹ This was not true for older participants in the rock scene, who would have remembered the forceful breakup of strikes in Radom in 1976, or in Gdańsk in 1970, which resulted in the death of several workers. Even so, martial law made a unique impression by bringing this willingness to use force to a nation-wide scope and long duration.

³⁴⁰ "Rock 'n' Roll Rebellion in Poland: An Interview with Kora," interview by Piotr Westwalewicz, March 5, 2004, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

³⁴¹ Kamil Rubik, "Niepokonany. Rozmowa z Grzegorzem Markowskim," *Rock Magazyn*, <http://www.rockmagazyn.com/wywiady.php?i=14>, accessed April 2004.

³⁴² Lizut, *Punk Rock Later*, 123.

Besides the new, more acute sense of the state's repressive power, martial law came with more concrete limitations. Along with theater, film, and the presses, concerts and festivals were cancelled. The curfew made it much harder to organize informal gatherings to perform or listen to music. This particularly affected the underground punk scene: organizing an unofficial performance during martial law was much more difficult. It also meant stricter censorship for rock bands. With martial law, censors were given wider scope – instructions for censors were to “direct their actions according to the interests of security and defense of the nation,” which covered a wide range of territory under martial law.³⁴³ This meant more room for state interference – although it still left a great deal of power in the hands of individual censors, who had great leeway in their own interpretations.

Martial law also saw the extensive use of another favorite method of suppression – the draft. While military service was required for all young Polish men, how strictly it was enforced, whether exceptions were made (for instance, for students), and when it was issued at all could be affected by one's involvement in controversial activities, including rock. This tactic was applied to several of the bands we will discuss here. Some were affected by the drafting of their members, including Lady Pank and Republika, while others were forced into hiding to avoid it, like Tomasz Budzyński. The draft offered the chance to reassert the state's authority over errant youth, along with the side benefit of making a challenging existence even more difficult for burgeoning rock bands. At the same time, though, it left a bitter taste of authority in the mouths of already skeptical youth.

Yet, remarkably, opportunities for rock arose. In February of 1982, a time when official festivals were being cancelled and any political demonstrations were forcefully broken up, a series of concerts was organized in Warsaw under the title “Rock Blok.” The series had started the year before, but its continuation after martial law was still a remarkable achievement. Organized by concert agency Stołeczny Biuro Imprez Artystycznych (Capital City Bureau of artistic events, or SBIA), it took place at the

³⁴³ GUKPPIW, “Ustawa o kontroli publikacji i widowisk z dnia 31 Lipca 1981 r.” 1982, 1102 Główny Urząd Kontroli Prasy, Publikacji, i Widowisk, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw, Poland.

Gwardia Hall, the home of the police sport club – not an unusual location, but a meaningful one in the context of martial law.

Brygada Kryzys: The Underground Band with the Hit Album

Typically of this sort of event, I was unable to find any official documents dealing with the Rock Blok concerts, but the organizers must have had permission from party authorities or the event would never have been allowed. In any case, they took special care to ensure that party interests were upheld. One of the bands that was to perform was none other than Brygada Kryzys – the band formed from members of Tilt and Kryzys, two of Poland's earliest punk bands. On the program, however, the band was billed as “Brygada K.” On the face of it, this might seem a trivial matter, but for the band, changing the word “crisis” – a reminder of the times (and the failure of the country's leadership) to the inert letter “k” would have been a clear compromise.

The ensuing struggle shows how power relations between the government, the music industry, and bands played out. In order for the SBIA to operate as an effective agency, it required the party's good will, particularly during martial law. Thus, it had every incentive to ensure that the concert fit with political objectives, short of making the concert seem official and thus alienating the second important group – the audience. This, however, was less of a concern under martial law, since recreational alternatives were nearly nonexistent. The fact that the concert took place right under the eyes of party Headquarters in Warsaw also ensured attention on making sure rules would be followed.

Brygada Kryzys, in turn, was governed by its own set of rules: agreeing to change their name would have meant giving in to the system, and thus giving up their claim to represent an alternative to official culture. This alternative credibility was crucial to a punk rock band. This is not to say the band had no choice: they did, and they chose the more difficult option of standing on principles. This difficulty shows how perilous the Polish scene could be for bands to negotiate. Between the barriers of the party, the state, and the industry, roadblocks could be difficult to navigate.

Brygada Kryzys chose not to play under the shortened name – prompting the organizers' response that the band would not, in that case, perform at all. They meant it: the band was banned from performing in Warsaw. For this reason, they established a

reputation as an uncompromising, clearly alternative band. On the other hand, bands TSA, Republika, and Oddział Zamknięty, as well as others performing in the concert series would soon become associated with the “popular” (to their fans) or “official” (to their detractors) rock scene.

Yet, even in 1982, this division was less clear in reality. Opportunities for bands sometimes arose as haphazardly as setbacks. Recall from the previous chapter that among the best selling albums of the year was the debut of Brygada Kryzys, with 100 thousand copies distributed. The story recounted there about how the album was recorded – by the band’s acting as equipment testers during their performance band – is true to its punk roots. It is more surprising that they managed to get the record pressed and distributed.

In part, this was likely because Kryzys – the early Polish punk band from which (along with Tilt) Brygada Kryzys was formed – had already been pressed in the West. In 1981, Marc Boulet, a music journalist and promoter came to Poland in search of underground rock. He was most impressed by Kryzys and fellow punk band Deadlock. The two bands were released together in a press run of 10,000 on the Barclay label in Western Europe.³⁴⁴ The release was controversial – some Polish journalists accused the label and the band of exploiting Poland’s crisis to make a profit. However, the success of a Polish band in the West was a barely fathomable dream for the music industry.³⁴⁵ Besides the cultural cache success would bring for Poland, exporting music to the West would also bring in highly desirable foreign currency, which could be used to pay for the equipment necessary to modernize. The Polish music industry thus learned by watching a western musical entrepreneur that rebellion could be sold for an economic profit – although political imperatives prevented this from being pursued to the same extent as it was in the West.

In 1982, the Polish firm Tonpress released the group’s eponymous studio debut, which included the song “Nie ma nic” **[Track 14]**.³⁴⁶ While the sound quality and complexity of the band’s work has developed from punk’s early days, and the drums and bass in particular are closer to danceable mainstream rock, overall the sound is quite

³⁴⁴ Adam St. Trąbiński, “Solidarite Avec Le Rock Polonais, Czyli Busines Is Business,” *Non stop*, June 1981.

³⁴⁵ Dariusz Andrzejewski, “Bez Komercji,” *Razem*, August 2, 1981.

³⁴⁶ *Brygada Kryzys* (Tonpress SX-T16, 1982).

aggressive. The saxophone cuts through the band’s sound like a saw, while the guitar blends typical punk guitar distortion with reggae-influenced emphasis on the upbeats. The vocals are also nasal and virtually monotone. The lyrics work alongside this lack of frivolity and flair, giving a harsh dose of reality as the group sees it:

Jeżeli jest coś nowego,	If there is something new
Jeżeli jest nowy świat,	If there is a new world,
Ten na który czekamy	The one we await
I o którym marzymy	And about which we dream.
Na pewno nie ten,	Certainly it’s not this one,
Na pewno nie.	Certainly not.
I tak tu już nie ma nic	There is nothing left here
Do stracenia.	To lose.

The album also contained the brief but pointed song “Radioaktywny blok,” which can be translated as “Radioactive Bloc” (as in the Soviet Bloc) or “Radioactive block-shaped-apartment-building” **[Track 15]**.³⁴⁷ With a chain of nouns (“Radioactive” is the only adjective in the song), Brygada Kryzys gives the monotony of the concrete housing structures built during Poland’s reconstruction by the Communists after World War II a sinister, oppressive character.

Beton, beton	Concrete, concrete
Dom, dom	House, house
Winda, dom	Elevator, house
Dom, beton	House, concrete
Ściana, beton	Wall, concrete
Beton, dom	Concrete, house
Sklep, beton	Store, concrete
Praca, dom	Work, house
Radioaktywny blok!	Radioactive blok!

In short, the song might be described as translating simplicity, nihilism, realism, and “no future” – punk’s slogans – into song form.

Brygada Kryzys broke up soon after the record was released – the ban on its performances made its continued existence virtually impossible, since live performance was the source of a band’s income, as discussed in the previous chapter. Some of its members went on to play in other key bands of 1980s Polish rock. Brygada Kryzys was

³⁴⁷ Ibid.

remembered as a paragon of Polish punk, refusing to compromise in its music or its behavior. Yet, paradoxically, it managed to reach the mainstream as an alternative band.

Perfect: Rock with a Twist

The band Perfect was more typical of popular Polish rock, at least at first glance. Perfect was extraordinarily popular over the entire course of the 1980s. Their 440 thousand record distribution in 1982 (with another couple hundred thousand in 1983) is remarkable considering the previous year's biggest rock album was distributed at only one quarter that level. Unlike bands like Brygada Kryzys, Perfect got considerable representation on the radio, including the hits list. It was an accomplished group with a polished, professional sound and a savvy, experienced leader that rode the wave of punk rock's popularity but had more in common musically with 1960s classic rock than with punk. The band's leader, Zbigniew Hołdys, had years of experience working as a musician in the PRL, allowing him to negotiate the band through industry conditions in the way a manager might for other bands.

A quick listen shows how these qualities translated to the band's music. "Chcemy być sobą" features a reggae/ska style electric guitar line, although played on downbeats rather than the typical upbeats **[Track 16]**.³⁴⁸ This could be inspired by reggae, or indirect influence through bands like the Clash, or, closer to Perfect's own style, the Police. The song is also a great place to start looking at lyrics. Most of the song repeats the same set of lines, or variants thereof:

Chciałbym być sobą	I would like to be myself
Chciałbym być sobą wreszcie	I would like to be myself finally
Chciałbym być sobą	I would like to be myself
Chciałbym być sobą jeszcze	I would like to be myself still

The lyrics here serve more to express a basic emotion than tell a story or make an argument. They are also designed for singability; anyone listening could identify these oft-repeated lines and sing along, as Perfect fans frequently did at concerts (and still do today).

For those looking for a deeper meaning, the song continues,	
Jak co dzień rano,	Like every day early,

³⁴⁸ *Perfect* (Polskie Nagrania/Muza and Tonpress, 1981).

bułkę maślaną
Popijam kawą,
nad gazety plamą

a butter roll
I drink coffee,
above the blot on the paper

Nikt mi nie powie,
wiem co mam robić
Szklanką o ścianę rzucam,
chcę wychodzić

No one tells me anything,
I know what I have to do
I throw the glass at the wall,
I want to leave

Besides the frustration expressed and desire for escape, the lyrics leave some room for creative interpretation: the “blot” on the paper might mean a stain from the coffee, or it could refer to an empty space left by censorship, sometimes referred to as a *biała plama* (white blot). Whether this meaning was intended or not, it was almost certainly read in by careful listeners (who, in fact, often came up with considerably more tenuous oppositional interpretations of rock songs, as we will soon see). Perfect’s songs were particularly amenable to wide ranges of interpretations, partially due to the complexity of the texts compared to punk. Due to their design for mainstream promotion, any controversial content would have to be hidden under Aesopian language. The dual structure of the song – a simple, evocative refrain and a more complex verse – allow the text allows the song to fill both purposes: a listener could participate in or sympathize with the singer’s longing to be by himself, or have a small taste of rebellion by participating in a secret conversation with the band about the repressive activities of the state.

Indeed, Perfect attracted attention at Opole in 1983 with a performance of the song **[Video 03]**. Hołdys provocatively appeared in a red shirt, provocatively with CCCP written on it, using irony to smuggle opposition past authorities, as can be seen at the end of the clip. While the audience at Opole was typically subdued and relatively conservative culturally, it does participate once asked, as we can hear and see in the clip. At other shows, however, the audience got even more involved. At a concert at the Stodole student club in Warsaw that year, the audience went beyond participating in singing along, and created its own refrain, changing “chcemy być sobą” (We want to be ourselves) to “chcemy bić ZOMO,” (We want to beat the riot police).³⁴⁹

³⁴⁹ Rubik, “Niepokonany.”

The same year Perfect released the song “Pepe wróć,” or “Pepe come back,” as a single **[Track 17]**.³⁵⁰ The song uses a simpler, bluesy foundation to express the depression of the singer and give a sense of monotony: the song is oriented around a single repeated chord. An electronic wind or string instrument makes a whiny sound over the course of the song. The combined effect with the lyrics is a dark, fatalistic humor.

Curiously, the song was sometimes taken as allegory calling for the return of Solidarity. Hołdys denied this meaning; he explained in an interview that “Pepe” referred to “*Piwnym Pełnym*,” (“filled with beer” in Polish).³⁵¹ The second, Solidarity-oriented meaning may or may not have been intended by Perfect (it does seem like a stretch, although the abstract quality of the lyrics leaves room for doubt), but fans who chose to interpret it that way likely took heart in what they understood as a cry in defense of the banned labor movement on state airwaves. The words fit the depressed, dark humor of the music perfectly: the protagonist wants something to eat, so he decides to “go and wait in line several days / For puffed rice.” It sounds awful, but he notes with sarcastic optimism, “I can bear the crisis. / I do not have to eat. / As long as they do not bullshit.”³⁵² The reference to the “crisis” – the ubiquitous euphemism for the dire economic situation and political unrest in early 1980s Poland – encourages listeners to interpret the song as speaking to the political and social conditions of the time. No one would have had any doubt who “they” were. Pepe’s suggestion that starvation has become a preferable alternative to listening to lying bureaucrats expressed a barely veiled contempt for political officials.

Altogether, the song is miles away from the optimistic calls for active, hard work to overcome the crisis that we will see professed by the party in the next section. Instead, it greets social reality with indifference, boredom, depression, and alcoholism. Even for a casual listener, a few words in combination with the song’s slow tempo, whiny guitar would be sufficient to convey the mood of stagnation. Markowski, Perfect’s singer, later described “Pepe” as “a protest song on the theme of a brewery.”³⁵³ In fact, alcohol appears frequently in 1980s Polish rock, usually in a dual role as the archenemy of life

³⁵⁰ *Pepe Wróć* (Tonpress S-443, 1981).

³⁵¹ Zbigniew Hołdys, “Nie jestem gwiazdą,” interview by Urszula Bielous, *Polityka* 5 (1984): 8.

³⁵² Lyrics and translation courtesy of Piotr Westwalewicz.

³⁵³ Rubik, “Niepokonany.”

and the sole refuge from it. Rather than serving to provide a rallying point to encourage activism through sobriety campaigns – the use of alcohol imagery that Padraic Kenney has noted – alcohol serves more often in 1980s Polish rock to illustrate the dismalness of daily life and the need for an escape.

In 1983, Perfect followed up with a new album, *Unu*. The band's "Autobiografia," (Autobiography), included both its 1982 live album and 1983 *UNU*, was among the most popular Polish rock songs of the 1980s. The song details what could be the life experiences of any Pole of Perfect's generation (slightly older than most punk bands, that is), from destalinization to the protagonist's father's participation in constructing steel blast furnaces, to first sexual experiences. The band then adds its own personal element, describing the challenge of encountering fame on the big stage.

Simply telling the story of one's life, however, could be politically controversial. Regarding destalinization, Markowski later noted that the song's sarcastic line "Uncle Joe died" was changed to "A wind of renewal blew" at the behest of the censors.³⁵⁴ Even within the song, the band works to atone for its compromise: the protagonist admits that he was forced by authorities to play "such things that I am still ashamed of."³⁵⁵

"Nie bój się tego wszystkiego" (Don't be afraid of it all) continues this confrontational tone. The song showcases the band's instrumental facility, with overlapping, syncopated guitar parts; influence of the musically talented band the Police is undeniable. Perfect displays similar facility in its lyrics, using the tool of metaphor to complain about censorship and oppression. The song describes someone "sitting on my head," who "started to spin a web / around my mouth," as well as an ironic "Guardian Angel" that has "stuffed cotton in my ears." "They," the "so-called people" – it continues – give "us animals" a voice "only once a year," and "play on us small, lousy tricks every step of the way," possibly an allusion to Orwell's *Animal Farm* – itself an allegory for communism in which the animals rebel against the oppression of humans only to be corrupted by their newfound power.³⁵⁶

Additionally, the song perpetuates the conceptual division between "Them," the oppressors, and "Us," the oppressed. The song's observation that "they" pretend to

³⁵⁴ Ibid.

³⁵⁵ *Unu* (Tonpress SX-T17, 1983).

³⁵⁶ Ibid.

provide freedom by allowing occasional expression is likely a reference to the state's efforts at normalization, which combined repression and incentives for cooperation. In the face of the repressive behavior of the state, however, Perfect repeatedly tells its audience, "Don't be / Afraid of it all," promising that instead of cowering in fear, "We will tease the lion."³⁵⁷

Republika: Socialism as a Dystopian Nightmare

The band Republika took the technique of literary allusion and allegory a step further, weaving together a world of a dystopian nightmare in many of its songs. Republika was a co-participant in the MMG in 1979 under the name Res Publica; it changed its style and name in 1981. That year, led by its main songwriter, pianist, and flautist Grzegorz Ciechowski, Republika gave its first concert under its new name and new repertoire. This took place in the Toruń student club Od Nowa with which the group became associated, inspiring a whole range of bands drawing influence from new wave in England and the United States. Compared to traditional punk, this music was more complex, more professional sounding, and more oriented around synthesizers than guitar-dominated punk. The band's first album, *Nowe Sytuacja* (New Situation), was coproduced by Tomasz Tłuczkiewicz, president of the Polish Jazz Association and pressed in 1983 by Polton. On it, Republika brilliantly combines its syncopated beats and mechanical sounds with dystopian lyrics.

"Będzie plan" ("There Will be a Plan") combines driving piano chords with an infectious beat **[Track 18]**.³⁵⁸ Ciechowski's vocals add emotion to the otherwise cold rhythmic sounds of the band, displaying some of the expressive devices used by singers like Kora from Maanam, including shouts, audible vocal strain, and idiosyncratic, personalized use of vibrato. The song itself recalls the mechanical sounds of a factory; an effective device in combination with its lyrics:

Jeżeli wszystko pójdzie dobrze
a tak zakłada plan
już wiemy co będziemy robić
za pięć czy osiem lat

If everything goes well
And so the plan is established
We will already know what to do
After 5 or eight years

³⁵⁷ Lyrics and translation courtesy of Piotr Westwalewicz.

³⁵⁸ *Nowe Sytuacja* (Polton LPP003, 1983).

cudowna perfo-perforacja
cudownie białych taśm
historia w końcu będzie taka
jak to zakłada plan

A wonderful perforation
And wonderful white tapes
History in the end will be such
As the plan establishes

będzie plan
na sto lat...

There will be a plan
For a hundred years...

będziemy tańczyć
czaczę-czaczę
bo taki będzie plan
będziemy pisać wiersze krwawe
bo taki będzie plan
a może dotknę twoich włosów
jeżeli wskaże plan
jeżeli powie mi co dalej
co dalej robić mam

We will dance
The cha-cha
Because that will be the plan
We will write bloody poems
Because it will be the plan
And maybe I will touch your hair
If the plan asks me to
If it tells me what more
I'll do what more I have to do

wybudujemy Biuro Planów
i Gmach Planowych Zmian
opracujemy plan dla świata
pójdziemy z nim przez świat
opracujemy plan dla planet
i dla układu gwiazd
wskażemy drogę lunatykom
bo tak zakłada plan

We will build an office of plans
And a building of plan changes
We are making a plan for the world
We will go through the world with it
We are making a plan for the planet
And for the star constellations
We show the route to lunatics
Because the plan establishes it.

będzie plan
na sto lat...
na dwieście lat...
na trzysta lat...
na pięćset lat...
na tysiąc lat...
na milion lat...

There will be a plan
For a hundred years...
For two hundred years
For three hundred years
For five hundred years
For one thousand years
For one million years

The reference, of course, is to the various year plans ubiquitous in socialist economies, particularly in the stalinist era. The song articulates (with little effort at disguising its intent) a vision of a future executed precisely according to plan, down to normal activities like dancing and love to more grim allusions, like “writing bloody poetry.” To the close observer, this vision sharply disputes the common insistence in party circles (as we saw in the previous chapter) that youth were in favor of socialism, but were disappointed in the failure to realize it. To the contrary, in Ciechowski’s vision, fully-realized socialism is far more terrifying than reality. In the last stanzas, the

nightmare spirals out of control, as the plan from the “planning office” extends to the world, the stars, and constellations, “for a million years.” Even to a more casual listener, though, Ciechowski’s reference to the plan would readily link the song to socialism, making listening to it a political experience.

A second song from the album, “Znak =” (Equal Sign), presents another dystopian nightmare, this time in the form of a world of complete equality **[Track 19]**.³⁵⁹ More amusingly (or ironically), though, it is performed to an upbeat, catchy melody.

Wstajemy równo o godzinie DX a przedtem wszyscy snimy równe sny pod kranem program mycia nr 3 Centralny Wyrównywacz nadał mi	We get up equally at hour DX before that everyone dreams equal dreams Under the spout shower program 3 The Central Equalizer gave me
równe buty równe zęby nos równy w stronę baz produkcji krok równą farbą malujemy wciąż równe hasła w koło: równy bądź	Equal boots equal teeth and nose Equal steps to the production center We always write in equal colors, Equal slogans all around: be equal
jeżeli jesteś ładna to już jest źle Centralny Wyrównywacz zmieni cię	If you’re pretty, that is bad The Central equalizer will change you
jeżeli jesteś gruby to musisz mieć przy sobie stale baloników pęk...	If you are fat, you must have A permanent ring of balloons around you...

By challenging ideas like technological progress, central planning, and a vision of equality, Ciechowski attacked the foundation of the communist party’s authority. Of course, by this time, the party was no longer following the stalinist model: variety (within limits) was encouraged, particularly in art and culture. More than a critique of specific contemporary policy, though, the lyrics use the imagery to identify and critique the party without explicitly referring to it. “The Plan” and “equality” worked as signs for party ideals whether a 5 year plan was in effect or not.

“Znak =” was featured in Republika’s first performance on television. Of course, for many onlookers, the band was simply a chance to listen to music that was fun (or terrible, depending on the listener’s views on rock). But Ciechowski made it clear that he

³⁵⁹ Ibid.

wanted more out of his performances than simple light-hearted entertainment. In an interview the year before, Ciechowski described rock as a medium for the more important content of his message. For this reason, he did everything he could to ensure a manner of listening that would take into account his contentious lyrics.

To guarantee that audiences listened to the words of his songs, he noted that he handed out texts before the concerts in order to “call people’s attention to what it contains, what for us is most important.” This, he suggested, was to “grab the internal attention of our listeners, their subconscious layers of awareness, and their emotions, intellectually through the words and emotionally through sounds.”³⁶⁰ The band’s dress and concert style were also designed to focus on the texts. Republika rejected the colorful hairstyle and dress of other bands, instead choosing a black and white scheme that Ciechowski suggested focused attention on the band’s texts rather than its on-stage antics. In this sense, the band’s relatively calm performance (aside from Ciechowski’s intense vocals) itself made a statement. Of course, whatever Ciechowski’s intent, the black and white color scheme came to serve a different purpose, becoming a stylish way for fans to distinguish themselves.

Lombard: (Mocking?) Fun, Carefree Music

Besides engaging socialist doctrine, Ciechowski’s seriousness about his thoughts and words challenged the whole idea of rock as *rozrywka*, or recreation. Other bands joined in criticizing the thoughtless entertainment music of Poland’s past. The best selling record of 1983 – or more accurately, the one with the largest pressing and distribution – belonged to Lombard (which means pawn shop), a band that played catchy, danceable punk-tinged pop. Lombard, like many rock bands, was formed in the period of Solidarity’s dizzying growth and success in 1981. In 1983, Polskie Nagrania released *Śmierć dyskotece!* (Death to Disco), perhaps a strange title for an album surely designed for popular appeal and danceability.

“Śmierć dyskotece!” **[Track 20]** features a complex arrangement for rehearsed, professional musicians.³⁶¹ While punk bands sometimes used brass or wind instruments,

³⁶⁰ Marian Butrym, “Rock jako medium,” *Razem*, August 19, 1982.

³⁶¹ *Śmierć dyskotece!* (Polskie Nagrania/Muza SX-2109, 1983).

here they operate as ornamentation rather than the chainsaw-like cutting sound of the sax in Brygada Kryzys. The electric guitar is embellished with effects, but ones that sound more fanciful than the simple overdriven distortion of punk. The lyrics are the most puzzling aspect of the song:

Łomot łomot łomot tępy	Thud, thud, dull thud
bolą bolą bolą zęby	Teeth hurt hurt hurt
po co, po cośmy tu przyszli	Why, why did we come here?
poznać poznać chcę twe myśli	I want to know to know your thoughts
słowa grzęzną słowa więzną	Words get stuck, words are bound
w miękkiej wacie, w tym hałasie	In soft cotton, in this din
wokół nas otwarte usta	All around us open mouths
wokół nas błyszczące oczy	Around us sparkling eyes
co w tych oczach? Pusta pustka	What is in them? An empty can
łomot łomot je zamroczył	The thud thud confused them.
śmierć dyskotece!	Death to disco!
śmierć dyskotece!	Death to disco!
puszka puszka na muzykę	A can a can of music
z blach stalowych konserwowych	from tin foil, preservative
zabić zabić tę maszynę	Kill, kill the machine
która uszy nam wygina...	that dents our ears...

The most direct reading of the song's text is as a critique of disco and other meaningless, empty entertainment music that dominated the market before the rock boom. The phrase about words being "bound" in the "soft cotton" of disco, and people dancing having sparkling eyes but being empty on the inside, just like the tin can the music comes in are particularly damning; the former is reminiscent of Perfect's line about having cotton stuffed in your mouth in "Nie bój się tego wszystkiego." These lines mock the emptiness and inauthenticity of disco and *estrada*, and simultaneously authenticate Lombard's own music through contrast.

However, when the words are accompanied by music, it's difficult to get past the irony of their being set to such a catchy tune by a self-described pop-rock band.³⁶² While the song is not disco, its danceability, polished sound, and catchiness all bring it closer to

³⁶² The band identified itself this way in Marian Butrym, "Rock może być widowiskiem," *Razem*, August 8, 1982.

that genre than, say punk rock. Perhaps this partially explains the animosity toward disco: mocking that genre allowed Lombard to assert its own alternative status.

It is also possible to read “Śmierć Dyskotece!” as a self-aware mockery of the mainstream press; precisely at this time, articles about rock as an assault on ears and contemporary youth as a “deaf generation” were turning up regularly. In this way, Lombard turned the criticism around, from rock onto disco, and in the process changed it from a serious objection from cultural authorities into a playful farce. Either way, for the casual or the more introspective listener, the music and lyrics evoke an atmosphere of playful rebelliousness, criticizing the ways of the past and the previous generation, embracing something that seemed different, and having a blast while doing it.

Maanam: Playful Defiance to Sex to Darkness and Dread

Of course, the irony of “Śmierć Dyskotece!” need not be resolved: Polish rock bands – particularly Maanam (a relevant comparison since Lombard’s singer, Małgorzata Ostrowska followed Kora’s model in many respects) – often delighted in irony in their songs.³⁶³ In its 1983 album, *O!*, Maanam continued its tradition from songs like “Stoję, stoję” of refusing to behave. “O! Nie rób tyle Hałasu” [**Track 21**] displays a mastery of instruments like other bands that earned recordings, but Kora’s vocals prove that her style is inimitable.³⁶⁴ She manages to simultaneously sound playful, but also terse and sneering, adding gruffness to her delivery. This reaction is understandable, since the lyrics describe how people keep trying to get her to do as they please:

Ktoś łapie łapie mnie za kołnierz	Someone grabs, grabs me by the collar
Patrzy patrzy w moja twarz	And looks, looks in my face
Ktoś krzyczy krzyczy mi do ucha	Someone yells, yells in my ear
W swoją swoją stronę pcha	And pushes from the side
O! O! Po co tyle hałasu	O! Why such noise?
O! O! Nie mam już dla ciebie czasu	O! I don't have time for you

Rather than an expression of protest, the song operates more as a rejection of responsibility and a refusal to be dominated. It is equally significant that the authority

³⁶³ “Rock ‘n’ Roll Rebellion in Poland: An Interview with Kora.”

³⁶⁴ *O!* (Pronit M-0001: 1982).

figure is completely nondescript: Kora is not interested in engaging with authority figures, she wants nothing to do with them.

At this point in its career, however, Maanam was also taking on some of the darker themes that characterized Republika's sound and lyrics. Perhaps the change stemmed from the new circumstance: standing up and rebelling was fun in 1981, but under martial law, it was a different matter entirely. Maanam's "Die Grenze" (German for "The Border" – although the song's lyrics are in Polish), also from the album *O!* describes a world of "Borders / walls, trenches, barricades" and "People without faces, people without hearts." As in the texts of Republika, the submersion of the individual coincides here with isolation rather than enhanced group solidarity as stalinist doctrine would suggest.

Maanam's 1984 album continued the band's trend toward a darker sound and subject matter, as the title implies. *Nocny Patrol*, or "Night Patrol" recalls the police presence on the streets after curfew during martial law.³⁶⁵ The song "Zdrada" (Treason) **[Track 22]** paints similar images of oppression, but also brings them closer to reality through use of the first person. The song's title – often repeated in the chorus – harks back to the worst years of stalinism, when it was a frequent charge leveled against those arrested by the state. In the past, the song recalls, "Treason was written into a kiss, into a tender glance and a fine wine." In a phrase that might have appeared in stalinist propaganda – a curious form of borrowing that often played a role in Polish Rock – Kora sings, "Treason does not waste a moment." The song then dramatically brings the fearsome past into the present by changing tenses mid-song. The next stanza shows the concrete results of "treason" in the present: now, "We are alone, completely alone. / Betrayed wives, husbands, children / all betrayed ideals. / White is black, black is white." Paranoia and confusion overwhelm the speaker in the last stanza: "I don't know anymore who betrays whom / Am I betraying someone or is someone betraying me? / A horrible uncertainty poisons my life. / It is better to be blind and deaf." The first line might be an ironic reference to Bolshevik ideology as well, with "*Nie wiem już nawet kto kogo*

³⁶⁵ "Rock 'n' Roll Rebellion in Poland: An Interview with Kora."

zdradza” bringing to mind Lenin’s famous question, “*kto kogo?*” (who dominates whom?).³⁶⁶ The listener is left to ponder who is really guilty of “treason.”

Maanam also brought punk rock to television. The primary form of rock’s television presence was the *teledysk* – the Polish term for a music video. These videos are fascinating because they show the visual images constructed to represent rock as a studied effort between a band and industry. These parties had overlapping but not quite identical interests. Both wanted the band to be received well by viewers and attain wider popularity. Thus, they both needed the video and music to be catchy and stylish. Artists wanted it to connect to their fans and preserve their image as alternatives to the boring cultural offerings of the past. The challenge for the industry was just as great since the *teledysk* had to be at least passable as cultured and tame enough for mass audiences, while also edgy enough to attract youth.

Maanam’s first video was played on a television show, probably *Leksykon Polskiej Muzyki Rozrywkowej* (Vocabulary of Polish Entertainment Music), billed as a “new television series about recreational music (*muzyka rozrywkowa*) in both the past and the present” in April of 1982, giving it a suitably erudite setting.³⁶⁷ The video itself is in the style of a slide show – the simplest and least costly way of combining music with visual images **[Video 04]**.³⁶⁸ The imagery shows Kora in various settings, and various dress. The lack of action makes for a wide range of interpretation. It can pass for art – Kora appears in one image at a microphone, gesturing like a seasoned stage performer – but it also shows her enigmatic sense of style – and her trademark sunglasses. The fact that the song, “To Tylko Tango” (“It’s only Tango”) is in the style of a ballroom dance rather than the pogo, the dance that dominated at punk concerts – is significant as well, although it could be meant in irony since the song’s tempo is too fast to serve as an actual danceable tango.³⁶⁹

³⁶⁶ Lyrics and translation courtesy of Piotr Westwalewicz.

³⁶⁷ “Leksykon Polskiej Muzyki Rozrywkowej,” *Życie Warszawy*, April 9, 1982.

³⁶⁸ *Leksykon Polskiej Muzyki Rozrywkowej*, Telewizja Polska, April 1982. Available at Maanam’s official website, <http://www.maanam.pl/main-page.htm>, accessed April 2009.

³⁶⁹ My thanks to Brian Porter for bringing this twist to my attention.

A later video, to the song “Jestem Kobieta,” from the album *Nocny Patrol*, is considerably more developed **[Video 05]**.³⁷⁰ The song is one of Maanam’s more subdued compositions, with a slow pace and dreamy, reverb-drenched guitars. The intensity of the lyrics contrasts with the music’s calm sound:

Nie wyobrażam sobie miły	I don’t imagine myself pleasant
Abyś na wojnę kiedyś szedł	If you some time went to war
Życia nie wolno tracić miły	You can’t lose life pleasantly
Życie jest po to, by kochać się	Life is to be in love
Mam w domu szafę bardzo starą	I have an old wardrobe at home
Z podwójnym dnem, a lustrami	With a second bottom, and two
dwoma	mirrors
Gdy zaczną strzelać za oknami	When they start to shoot outside the
	window
Będziemy w szafie żyć	We will live in the wardrobe
Starczy nam ubrań na wszystkie	We will have clothes for every
pory	season
Szalone bale, dzikie kolory	Crazy balls, wild colors
I u znajomych jest tyle szaf	And among our friends there’s such
	a closet
Będzie co zwiedzać przez parę lat	There will be something to visit in a
	few years

The lyrics combine Kora’s playful surreal side, with lines about living in a closet and having all the clothes for all sorts of bizarre occasions, with her darker, apocalyptic side: the song’s backdrop is a war raging outside. The music, however, is entirely dusky. Gone are Kora’s playful vocal breaks and shouts – instead, she stays entirely in her lowest register, and just above a whisper. The video wonderfully complements the song’s mood. Like the vocals, the action is slow, heavy, and subdued. Unlike the song, where she shares her wardrobe with her lover, the video shows several male friends – her bandmates. Using her actual acquaintances rather than an actor playing a boyfriend adds to the video’s emotional intensity. While everyone is calm and no one is showing clear emotions, there is an undertone of sadness and apprehension, particularly in Kora.

³⁷⁰ Maanam, “Jestem Kobieta,” Telewizja Polska. Like many *teledyski* from the 1980s, it can be found at [www.dzentelman.com](http://dzentelman.com). <http://dzentelman.com/archives/2006/08/21/maanam-jestem-kobieta/>, accessed April 2009.

The action – the simple packing of bags – adds to this mood, suggesting a lengthy departure. Rather than sharing the wardrobe, as the lyrics imply, the video’s conclusion emphasizes Kora’s loneliness, as her friends leave her one by one. In consideration of the song’s context – on an album called “Nocny Patrol (Night Patrol), a reference to the evening curfew during martial law, the effect is all the more powerful. While Kora’s move toward a conventional vocal performance and less frenetic tempo may have made the song more amenable for television, it also suits the song’s themes of fear, love, escape, and the threat of violence perfectly.

The one part I have left out so far is the song’s title: “Jestem Kobietą” (I am a woman). At first, there is no clear connection between the title and the content of the song: there is no reason it could not be sung by someone of any gender. However, particularly in combination with the video, Kora uses her femininity to add to the power of the song. As Kora sings, she addresses the camera rather than interacting with her friends, doubly separating her as the only woman among men. Amidst the reference to war, the departure of her friends is a reminder that it is she, like other women, that will be left alone. In these ways, the video and song subtly exploit assumptions about feminine vulnerability in order to add to its power. Simultaneously, though, it subverts gender and sexual expectations in other ways – Kora is going to take care of herself in the absence of her multiple male companions.

Besides its key location in between mainstream rock and punk, Maanam stands out due to the dominant personality of its singer, Kora. Punk rock and to a lesser extent, mainstream rock, were dominated by men – with the exception of among fans, where women and particularly teenage girls were highly represented judging by correspondence in rock fan magazines. Kora offered her audience an alternative to the dominant images of women in Polish culture: *matka-polka* and socialist womanhood. *Matka-Polka* (literally, Polish Woman-Mother) represented a combination of virginal religiosity, motherhood, and nationalist self-sacrifice. The other idea of woman, derived from an uneasy combination of radical communist thought (such as Alexandra Kollontai) and much more conservative later socialist-realist propaganda, portrayed woman as a strong worker and patriot (and as a mother, which combined the two tropes of womanhood into one by making woman the producer of new workers and caretakers of the nation).

These depictions were not just matters of personal freedom and identity; rather, ideas about womanhood were often tied up with struggles for authority by the state and opposition. Joanna Goven, for instance, has argued that the communist party in Hungary legitimized its power based on gender relations – initially by offering emancipation of women from patriarchy, and later, by restoring “proper” patriarchal relations.³⁷¹ Similar clashes over the image of woman occurred between the state and the opposition in Poland, with the opposition arguing against the allegedly unnatural, masculinized socialist woman.³⁷² Despite the frequency with which these images of womanhood were appropriated to argue for the rightness or wrongness of a political cause, be it socialism or anti-communist nationalism, the two images offer a very narrow range of womanhood. Both are self-sacrificing patriotic figures; the choice is between being religious or non-religious, and a virgin or a mother.

Analogous to punk’s effort to steer clear of the opposition and the party alike, Kora offered an idea of what it meant to be a woman that was unlike either the nationalist or the socialist models. She presented herself as unabashed by her sexuality, and seemed perfectly comfortable being the focus of attention rather than a self-sacrificing caretaker working in the background. Her presence at the forefront of the music scene was also an inspiration to young women interested in rock. While the early punk rock scene was dominated by men, a growing number of women found places in bands, particularly as vocalists (a prominent position, although a defined gender role in its own right). Many of these were no doubt inspired by Kora, and by the mid 1980s, even those that wished to distinguish themselves from her found themselves having to take her formidable image of the female punk rock performer into account.

Partially through Kora’s influence – although other key changes were taking place as well, like Magdalena Wisłocka’s sex advice column in the youth publication *Razem* – sex became a prominent topic in Polish rock. Maanam’s rhythmic “Raz dwa” (One-Two, One-Two) on its 1984 album *Nocny Patrol* virtually reproduces intercourse, describing the movement “Up and down, up and down / From darkness into the Sun, from silence

³⁷¹ “The Gendered Foundations of Hungarian Socialism: State, Society, and the Anti-politics of Anti-feminism, 1948-1990” (Ann Arbor MI, 2002).

³⁷² This argument is particularly interesting when one examines how women are depicted in Polish communist propaganda – in most cases, women are presented as strong but feminine and conventionally attractive.

into screaming” in a musical rendition of sexual activity.³⁷³ This trend was particularly strong among female vocalists, who challenged conventional sexual morality by asserting their own sexuality.³⁷⁴ Beata Kozidrak of Bajm, for instance, sang a poppy song incorporating punk style in its vocal delivery, singing unabashedly about sexual attraction and desire in “Józek, nie daruję Ci tej nocy” **[Track 23]**.³⁷⁵

Hej, ty wiesz, jak silna jest twa władza dyskretny śmiech do szału doprowadza mnie. Pewność mam, że dziś mi nie uciekniesz Józek, nie daruję ci tej nocy!!!	Hey, you know how strong your power Discrete laughter drives me crazy I am certain that you won't escape me Joe, I'm not giving you the night off
---	---

Hej, ty!! Rozgrzewasz moje ciało, dobrze wiesz, co tu się będzie działo Zamknięte drzwi, a klucz leży za oknem Józek, nie daruję ci tej nocy!!!	Hey you, warm up my body You know well, what will happen here Shut doors, the key is behind the window Joe, I'm not giving you the night off
---	--

Lombard's Małgorzata Ostrowska joined in singing about the previously taboo topic. The protagonist of Lombard's “O jeden dreszcz” teases her partner with sexual desire **[Track 24]**.³⁷⁶

Nocy spokojnej nie wróżę Ci	I don't predict peaceful nights for you
Znów Cię dopadną wilgotne sny	Again wet dreams befall you
Tak będzie do rana, do rana, do rana	So it will be 'til early, 'til early, 'til early
Zbawi Cię świt	Dawn will redeem you
Głodny! Młody wilk nie jest tak głodny	Hungry! A young wolf is not so hungry
Jak jesteś Ty	As you are
Niebezpiecznie rozpalony	Dangerously burning
Wdzierasz się w moje sny	You are invading my dreams

³⁷³ Lyrics and translation courtesy of Piotr Westwalewicz.

³⁷⁴ Grzegorz Ciechowski from Republika also frequently addressed sex in his lyrics, although he did so in his typically dark, creepy way. “Obcy Astronom,” for instance, describes an alien astronaut watching “you” bathe nude from space.

³⁷⁵ *Bajm* (Pronit PLP-0004, 1983).

³⁷⁶ *Śmierć dyskotece!*

While singing about relationships and love was not only acceptable but expected, singing specifically about sex was taboo in the PRL. This is surprising to some extent since early communists promised sexual liberation from bourgeois morality as one of socialism's many virtues. However, even in the Soviet Union, this radical thinking was replaced by more conservative approaches to sexuality well before the 1980s. This was even more the case in Poland, which was more closely tied to the sexual conservatism of the Catholic church. It was all the more significant that it was mostly women were singing about sexuality, challenging the idea that sex was about fulfilling masculine desire and reaffirming the patriarchal hierarchy.

Lady Pank: Mass Marketing Rebellion

Perhaps the band that best personifies rock's explosive popularity after martial law is Lady Pank. Lady Pank's sound is a careful blend of diverse elements of rock and pop, with a touch of punk's personality. Even more so than with Perfect, the closest musical approximation in international music is the Police – probably not a coincidence since that band was at the height of its popularity at this time. The first eponymous album was wildly popular, with the first three tracks (along with a few others) all becoming hit singles.

“Mniej niż zero” (“Less than Zero”) **[Track 25]** starts the album off with excitement.³⁷⁷ The guitar chords hit on upbeats, giving it the playful feel of pop flavored with reggae. The vocals add a dose of punk, with the shouts of “oh.” Panasewicz takes a laid-back approach to his vocals opposite Kora's spot-on accuracy, falling intentionally behind the beat, giving the impression of a musical slacker. In contrast, though, his enunciation is perfectly clear, allowing the audience to understand the lyrics, which I discussed in the second chapter.

“Kryzysową narzeczoną”³⁷⁸ (Crisis Fiance) **[Track 26]** tells a more coherent story:

Mogłaś moją być	You could have been mine
Kryzysową narzeczoną	Crisis fiancé
Razem ze mną pić	And drank with me

³⁷⁷ *Lady Pank* (Tonpress SX-T26, 1983).

³⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

To, co nam tu naważono	That which was weighed out for us here
Mogłaś moją być Przy zgłuszonym odbiorniku Aż po błądy świt Słuchać nowin i uderzać w gaz	You could have been mine In front of the muffled speaker Past dawn Listening to news and getting high on gas
Nie jeden raz...	Not just once...

The protagonist is ironically lamenting his fiancé's absence, which caused her to miss the good times to be had in the PRL. If we are wondering why she left, the protagonist gives us a hint: he receives a postcard reading, "*Wesołych świąt,*" or Merry Christmas, a likely reference to martial law, which occurred less than two weeks before Christmas and encouraged many Poles to emigrate. Besides boldly (and mockingly) referencing oppression in the PRL, the song suggests that the ideal method for coping with it is having fun – including by “getting high” a few times (*uderzać w gaz*).³⁷⁹ This playful approach to oppression demystified the government by referring to the state and its actions ironically or humorously, thus transforming it from a monolithic source of authority and oppression into something that could be dismissed with laughter.

True to form, Lady Pank had the strongest television presence of the bands discussed here. The rock *teledysk* was less common than rock songs on the radio or record. In part this was probably due to the higher production cost. Another factor, though, was the stigma associated with the mass media, and especially the television among many Poles. Perfect – probably the most professional, polished rock band of the 1980s – could almost certainly have produced a video had they been interested. Republika likely would have been accepted as well. However, on at least one occasion, that band refused to be broadcast on television out of distaste (and an awareness of fans' distaste) for the state-controlled television.³⁸⁰

Lady Pank, though, was not afraid to take advantage of this powerful means of reaching an audience. While Maanam also made videos, Lady Pank took the form to a new peak of musical spectacle. The band's videos brought its playful punkishness to

³⁷⁹ Lyrics and translation courtesy of Piotr Westwalewicz.

³⁸⁰ Jacek Krzeminski, “Bunt kontrolowany,” *Rzeczpospolita*, August 11, 2000. Republika refused the broadcast of its performance at the Jarocin Festival in 1982.

widespread audiences over the TV, as can be seen in “Fabryka Małp” (“Monkey Factory”) **[Video 06]**.³⁸¹

Ktoś łapie mnie i zaciska palce	Someone grabs me and presses a finger
Na gardle tak, że aż tracę dech	On my throat so I can't breathe
Zabijam go po morderczej walce	I kill him after a deadly fight
Budzę się i gdzie już jestem wiem	I get up and where I already am I know
Fabryka małp, fabryka psów	Monkey factory, dog factory
Rezerwat dzikich stworzeń	Reserve of wild beasts
Zjadłych tak, że nawet Bóg	So fierce that even God
I Bóg im nie pomoże	God won't help them
Miliony kłów.	A thousand fangs.
Łap w pazury zbrojnych	Paws armed with claws.
Gotowych do walk o byłe co	Prepared for war, a battle for life
Dokoła wre stan totalnej wojny	A state of total war hums around
Zabijać się to jedyny sport	Getting wasted is the only sport
...	
Gdzie spojrzę - dokoła dżungla	Where I look around - jungle
Otwieram drzwi I znów dzień jak co dzień	I open the door, again a normal day
Donosny huk stu i więcej dział	A loud rumble a hundred and more division
Coś dzieje się wciąż na Bliskim Wschodzie	Something's always happening in the near east
Za progiem znów mój normalny świat	Beyond the threshold again my normal world

The song is immediately bright, catchy, and upbeat, but its syncopated, non-standard time signature (shifting to 3/4 for the second bar of each phrase) make it just off-beat enough to pleasantly defy the listener's expectations. When the lyrics come in, they throw the listener for another loop: they are about being brutally attacked. Not to worry, though: the *teledysk* makes it clear that the threat is as silly as it is terrifying, as the image of Panasewicz waking up in a grandmotherly nightcap assures. Where “Jestem Kobieta” takes place against the backdrop of a threat of violence, “Fabryka Małp” is steeped in it.

³⁸¹ “Fabryka Małp,” *Lady Pank*. Telewizja Polska. Available from <http://dzentelman.com/archives/2006/06/16/lady-pank-fabryka-malp/>, accessed May 2009.

But rather than realistic, it's cartoon violence – the threat is one that can be met with a slingshot and some stealthy, playful maneuvers around the city. Particularly hilarious is the part of the clip that shows the “urban jungle” in which the protagonist must fight for survival: the camera zooms in on a set of late socialist block-style housing as the singer exclaims his terror, crying, “dżungla!” (jungle). The architecture whose monotony terrorizes Brygada Kryzys in “Radioaktywny Blok” is thus reduced to a joke.

Martial law has a presence in this video as well – the “*stan totalny wojny*” (state of total war) that surrounds the protagonist is suspiciously similar linguistically to “*stan wojenny*” (state of war, or martial law, idiomatically). Even more bold is the subsequent line, mentioning that “something is always going on in the near east,” as the band plays with toy tanks running over people. The reference is ostensibly to the Middle East, but taken more literally and less idiomatically, it could be interpreted as the actual near east of the Soviet Union. The song and video both operate by juxtaposing brutal violence and punkish playfulness. If “Jestem Kobietą” resembles an anti-war protest song, “Fabryka Małp” instead laughs at war. In the context of martial law, rock offered both options for dealing with a difficult, grim situation.

Starting the next year, Lady Pank took its cartoon-like interpretation of contemporary Polish socialism more literally, performing the soundtrack for the allegorical children's cartoon, *O dwóch takich, co ukradli księżyc* (About a Pair that Stole the Moon).³⁸² Among the many exploits of its protagonists, young Jacek and Placek, is a journey to a totalitarian state ruled by a tyrant and inhabited by more guards than citizens. True to form, though, the state proves to be just as bizarre as it is oppressive: it is based upon the carrot as its central ideological force. Carrots are the only food, statues of carrots abound, and the punishment for infringing upon the sanctity of the carrot is being sentenced to water the carrot fields. Besides its playful approach to oppression, the film promises relief: Jacek and Placek finally escape the Carrot State by using their imaginations, and running across a rainbow.

Accompanying the journey to Carrot State is Lady Pank's song, “Marchewkowe Pole” (Carrot Fields). “Marchewkowe Pole” sarcastically notes, “Like a vegetable in the

³⁸² The cartoon remade the live action film of the same title, starring the Kaczyński twins, Lech and Jarosław – who would later become the President and Prime Minister of Poland, respectively.

carrot fields I am stuck,” “In the carrot state I feel the best. / I grow: head down and leaves above,” and “You want to meet me? Stick your head in the ground!” **[Video 07]**.³⁸³ In contrast to the monotonous carrots, the cartoon shows a bird – perhaps even an eagle, an overt symbol of freedom – flying freely above the carrot fields. Thus, the band offers a parallel for its own escape from martial law, achieved by laughing at totalitarian power and ignoring it, through escaping into the realm of imagination.

TSA: Bringing Metal to the Masses

Perhaps the only genre that could compete with punk’s assault on culture in Poland was heavy metal. The music was derived from a rough blend of blues and prog rock; however, its dark mysticism, and occasional references to Satanism made it especially controversial. More than any other band, TSA popularized metal in Poland. Its first big success came at Jarocin in 1981; in 1982, it earned its first LP, a live album. The song “51” **[Track 27]** starts out sounding calm and composed compared to punk; the layered sound and solo guitar is reminiscent of prog rock.³⁸⁴ When accompanied by lyrics (the song was also performed as an instrumental), they are directed more at conjuring a mood than telling a story, describing “Going down the cemetery path,” “empty souls,” “our scorched conscience,” and a “November evening.” These dark images invoked paganism, and even hinted at Satanism – a topic that would become more prominent in metal in years to come. These ideas, after all, were anathema to both the modern rationalism of the party and also the religiosity of Catholic Polish society.

TSA also could take a page from the playbook of punk, addressing more concrete concerns. The song “Mass Media” **[Track 28]**, for instance, criticizes those who “dream of a Volvo” because they were “brought up by the mass media.”³⁸⁵ Interestingly, this aspect of the song mirrors party critiques of consumerism, although the party was more reluctant to blame the state media itself (at least publicly; party members did frequently express disapproval of its shortcomings in internal debates). This theme – criticism of the mass (state) media – was incredibly frequent in Polish rock. It likely hit home with its young audience, who had an overwhelming lack of trust for media. According to the

³⁸³ Leszek Gałysz, *O dwóch takich, co ukradli księżyc* (Warszawa: Studio Miniatur Filmowych, 1985).

³⁸⁴ *Live* (Tonpress SX-T-11, 1982).

party's own estimates, only 3% of young Poles trusted the domestic news, and even fewer the international.³⁸⁶

These songs only capture some of the variety of music that made it to the press, the media, and the stage in the 1980s. Each of these bands was highly sought after, its albums purchased – often for a very high price, particularly if on the black market – and listened to eagerly with friends on the radio. They brought income to the state, but once they were in the hands and ears of the listener, they belonged to them.

These songs cover a range of styles and encourage different ways of listening. Some simply invoked a particular attitude or way of thinking about oneself. For Lady Pank it was about being undervalued, not fitting in, being rebellious, looking and acting different. As Perfect sang, it was about wanting to be yourself. It meant illicit desire for *Bajm*. For *Maanam*, it was about defying demands from authority with irreverence, but with an occasional undertone of fear for the future. Perfect offered comfort for this future with “Don’t be afraid of it all.” *Republika*, on the other hand, was less optimistic, instead warning of mechanized life dominated by an all-powerful, all-seeing, homogenizing state. *Brygada Kryzys* sneered at either vision: the future simply did not exist.

All of these were ways of perceiving the world, envisioning one’s relationship to authority, and of sensing one’s own place in it. None of them fit easily with the visions of Poland, its youth, or its culture as advanced by party hardliners, nationalists in the resistance, or traditional Catholics. Further, these songs challenged these visions *en masse*, as they were distributed widely and amplified over the voices of parents and teachers and into the ears of youth. This created an alternative world that was by 1983 able to exist not just above the ground, but in the spotlight, in an authoritarian state.

However, not everyone made it into this spotlight: some bands lacked the will or the ability to gain access to wider exposure through the music industry and media. On the positive side, this spurred the creation of another music industry, one that I have not yet mentioned. A whole cottage industry of self-pressed, DIY-style music that was encouraged by punk pioneer Gajewski developed in parallel to the official music industry. This alternative music industry does not turn up in archives except in an

³⁸⁵ Ibid.

³⁸⁶ Wydział Organizacji Społecznych, Sportu i Turystyki, “Tezy do Wystąpienia nt: Młodzieży,” 1981.

occasional photo or reference to the problem of youth buying up all the Chopin tapes and recording over them. This way of defying the cultural objectives of authorities was not only about defeating state distribution and economics, however: it was also about the experience of listening. Listening to music on an illicitly recorded cassette could be an intense, profound experience; instead of tape hiss, the listener heard authenticity that stood in stark contrast with the polish and sheen of mainstream.

This brings us to the other side of the exclusion of many bands from the official music industry. It amplified tensions that already existed in the rock scene that were rooted in its contested heritage in MMG and punk. Dezerter's Krzysztof Grabowski recalled even twenty years after the fact that he was "furious" with bands that sold themselves to the mainstream, considering them "bootlickers that were getting profits from government concessions." Many other fans felt the same way. In the excitement over rock in 1983 this underlying hostility could be suppressed, but it was an ominous sign for rock in the future. When a band is on the radio with a number one hit for weeks singing about the corruption of the mass media, a confrontation is probably ahead.

"Alternative" Rock: SS-20 / Dezerter

As some bands found their way into the national spotlight, others took their place in the margins. The Jarocin festival embodies both sides of this tension. In August of 1982, the Jarocin festival returned (with some controversy, to be discussed in the next chapter) for the first time after martial law.³⁸⁷ It's uncertain whether the officials that eventually agreed to allow the festival to take place knew what they were getting into. This was the opinion of its organizer, Walter Chelstowski, who later suggested that "The government had not yet perceived its meaning."³⁸⁸

That year, Republika and TSA were among the guest bands— the latter of which had won the amateur competition the previous year, showing the fluidity of the line between mainstream and alternative. Both bands in mid 1982 were quite popular, but just starting to get recognition in the mainstream media (a trend that was advanced by their appearance at Jarocin that year). As a new wave band and a heavy metal band, they

³⁸⁷ "Jarocin '82 Program." From archive of Marcin Jacobson. Available from <http://www.jarocin-festiwal.com/1982/folder82/folder82.html>, accessed December 2009.

³⁸⁸ Krzeminski, "Bunt kontrolowany."

continued to signal the move away from the prog rock of the early MMG. More of a departure, however, were many of the guest bands. Stylistically, they extended across the spectrum, including heavy metal, various hyphenated forms of rock, and punk. The most visible new phenomenon, however, was the first appearances of hardcore punk, embodied in the band SS-20, which created a lasting legacy at Jarocin '82 (Figure 6).



Figure 6. "III Ogólnopolski Przegląd Muzyki Młodej Generacji Jarocin," 1982.

“Burdel” (“Bordello”) **[Video 08]** immediately grabs the listener’s attention with its aggressive guitar sound, simple but frenetic drum beat, and vocals that are closer to shouting than singing by conventional standards.³⁸⁹ It shares much with the simplicity and roughness of early punk, but is faster, louder, and harder. Musically, it is exhilarating – as can be seen in the video, it takes all of the energy of the band to perform it. The lyrics also amplify early punk’s countercultural impulses, desire to shock, and insistence on realism, although they are more vulgar than most early punk and are performed in a way to emphasize this difference.

Jestem głupi, mam pierdolca	I’m stupid, I have a rage
W uchu kolczyk, w dupie stolca	A ring in my ear, shit in my ass
Ciągle płyną na mnie skargi	Complaints about me are always flowing
Ciągle z ludźmi mam zatargi	I always have disputes with people
Je-je-jestem wredny leń	I’m a lousy laze
Nie chcę pracy w żadnym biurze	I don’t want to work in any office
Nie chcę chodzić w garniturze	I don’t want to go around in a suit
Jeździć pełnym autobusem	To ride a full bus
I pracować pod przymusem	and work by force
...	
Jestem inny mam, tato	I am different mama, papa
Czy dostanę w mordę za to?	Do I get a muzzle for that?
Mózg mam jakiś opuchnięty	I have a swollen brain
Jestem chyba pierdolnięty...	Maybe I am fucked up...

The song continues, but this sample gets the point across. As can be discerned from the video, the purpose of the performance is not to convey the lyrics in the most comprehensible way possible; rather, the lyrics serve to reinforce that the band is different and has no interest in conforming to social conventions in life, or cultural conventions in their song. The lyrics do through language what the music does through sound – shock and assault. In combination, they demonstrate to the audience how they should hear the music – as a loud rejection of dominant culture and society. The band’s name – SS-20, after a Soviet missile – also demonstrates its purpose.

³⁸⁹ Mariusz Treliński, *Film o pankach* (Łódź: Państwowa Wyższa Szkoła Filmowa Telewizyjna i Teatralna, 1983).

Another of the band's songs, "Poroniona generacja" (Aborted Generation) **[Video 09]** gave sociologically-minded journalists something to write about, expressing the band's dissatisfaction with society in a most direct manner.³⁹⁰

Żadnej satysfakcji, za dużo frustracji	Scarce satisfaction, too much frustration
Oto obraz mojej generacji	That's a sketch of my generation
Żadnego celu, żadnej przyszłości	No goal, no future
Żadnej nadziei, żadnej wolności	No hope, no freedom

I'll return now to the question I broached when I first presented these words in the introduction. How was this blunt an expression of discontent allowed in 1982, when protests were being suppressed brutally? Actually, it wasn't exactly "allowed": the version of the song that censors received read "no hope, no joy" rather than "no hope, no freedom" – a subtle but relevant difference.³⁹¹ Even this version, however, was censored. Yet, as we see in the video, the band performed the song. The Jarocin festival's organizer Walter Chelstowski later related that this kind of bold defiance of censorship was typical: he would turn songs over to censors and tell bands, "officially I must inform you that you are not allowed to sing these texts, but sing what you want, because no one will pull you off stage."³⁹²

This struggle between bands and censorship was important practically; it determined what bands were able to communicate to their audiences. However, it was also tremendously important symbolically, as a battle with the state in its attempt to assert authority. For bands, it was an opportunity to demonstrate their defiance, and pass it on to its listeners, although the balance was a difficult one since too much defiance risked suppression and not being heard at all.

In fact, the interaction between bands and censors was often quite complex, since censors were not just representatives of the state, but also had a great deal of individual leeway in deciding how to interpret a song. On one hand, this could make the state seem oppressive and arbitrary since one person could decide the fate of a band's song on a whim or suspicion. On the other, it sometimes created gaps where bands could pass a

³⁹⁰ Ibid.

³⁹¹ GUKPPIW, "Informacja bieżąca Nr 121," September 16, 1982, 1102 Główny Urząd Kontroli Prasy, Publikacji, i Widowisk, 1700, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw, Poland.

³⁹² Mikołaj Lizut, "Bezpieka w Jarocinie - rozmowa z Walterem Chelstowskim," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, November 25, 2003.

song by a sympathetic, open minded (or simply careless) censor. Finally, the inherent limitation of censors was that they were mainly limited to texts. While they would sometimes request to hear a song to check for interpretation, their instructions and training concentrated on written language. Offensive sounds could slip through – certainly they were noticed, but censors lacked the tools and motivation to block them.

SS-20s performance it is still referenced today as one of the crucial moments of Polish punk. However, a look at the audience in the film footage shows a less enthusiastic interaction than might be expected. On one hand, this reminds us that hardcore punk was new and aggressive, challenging the tastes of even serious rock fans. On the other, though, it fits with the music: neither the band nor its fans are acting happy or upbeat because, as the music suggests, they have no reason to be. This made for a powerful experience; in the words of one fan who attended Jarocin that year, the experience was “awesome.”³⁹³ However, SS-20s performance reminds us that it was not necessarily a joyous one: Polish youth had little to celebrate.

Besides the first signs of the advent of hardcore punk, Jarocin '82 marked a shift in the Polish rock scene as a whole. That year, the festival continued to hold the title “MMG,” reminding us that punk rock arose from the uneasy fusion of MMG’s commercial and political permissibility and punk’s appeal as a DIY, anti-establishment alternative to official and mainstream culture, as well as the fluidity between these elements. In 1982, the appearance of a band like SS-20 at a concert billed as part of the MMG pushed the meaning of the term so far from the original objective of easing Poland into rock that it lost its purpose. The title itself fell into disuse among all but those journalist and officials furthest removed from the scene, who generally employed it as a synonym for loud, obnoxious music that was outside their own tastes. The next year, in fact, the Jarocin festival dropped the MMG title altogether, becoming simply the “Festiwał Muzyków Rockowych” (Festival of Rock Musicians).

For its part, the underground punk scene, or at least the circles that were first involved in its formation, had declared itself dead as early as late 1980, and was finished off when martial law temporarily closed the student clubs that served as its base and encouraged the flight of its already emigration-prone advocates, including Gajewski, to

³⁹³ Jacek Friedrich, personal conversation, Gdańsk April 2009.

less oppressive lands. Elements of punk and MMG continued to exist, but the categories had lost their original meaning by 1982.

In place of punk and MMG, the new tension was between an “official” or “mainstream” and “alternative” rock scene. The former comprised the bands that were able to get their records pressed by state and semi-private labels and their songs broadcast on radio and, at the far end of the spectrum, television. The latter were the bands that were mainly relegated to the realm of live performance – and to certain venues and festivals, at that. In part, this distinction was imposed by authorities, who continued to be reluctant to promote sometime as culturally and politically controversial as, say, a hardcore punk band on the state radio or record label or a prestigious song festival. But it was also self-imposed, as bands sometimes refused the wider audience that came with the patronage of the music industry in order to maintain their alternative status. The most important source of this distinction, though, were rock fans themselves, for many of whom keeping the tentacles of the state out of their alternative cultural world was essential, even if it meant discarding bands that were deemed to have become tainted by signs of collaboration.

As I noted in the previous chapter, these terms are tremendously charged in the context of the Polish rock scene. Being an “alternative” band meant being authentic – that elusive but critical term when dealing with rock music. That is, it meant being spontaneous, real, true, and independent, it meant a personal, emotional connection with the audience, it meant singing and playing about what you really felt and thought regardless of commercial or political consequences. In short, it meant everything good that rock had to offer Polish youth. Being “official,” on the other hand, meant being inauthentic, false, directed by above, by the state or by commercial interests, it meant feigning emotion and a connection with audiences, and it meant singing and playing what you were told or what was popular with the masses. In short, it meant everything bad about late communist Polish culture.

Or this was how the bands that considered themselves alternative and their fans saw things. Not surprisingly, the bands that were labeled “official” did not see themselves in this light. While they were surely aware of the distinction, as rock continued to gain in popularity over the 1980s – which in turn increased the divide between the two camps –

they simply thought of themselves as rock bands, but ones that happened to be more artistically accomplished and more popular than other rock bands. Their fans also saw matters differently. Fans of a more mainstream rock band may not have had high standards for their favorite band's distance from mainstream culture or much concern for independence from the music industry, but they were nonetheless acutely concerned with their band being real, emotionally engaged with its audience, and different from what their parents and teachers liked. In the end, though, they could point out that cooperation was a necessary evil: in order to reach a wider audience, or get a show, or even get instruments and a place to play, a band had to cooperate with some part of the system, whether in the form of a youth union, a house of culture, or state radio.

And they were right. Working with the system was not an "either/or" matter for bands; rather, it was a question of degree. Consequently, these categories were constantly in flux, as bands and their fans – and less directly, the press and the government – maneuvered to locate the position of a rock band in the cultural/political spectrum between officialdom and alternativeness. Bands did this by producing signs, while their audiences and indirect spectators interpreted them. These signs could be found anywhere: in a record deal with the state industry, in a polished, well-rehearsed song, in lyrics written by a professional, or a particular hairstyle, or, alternately, in a ban from the radio, a particularly jarring guitar chord, a reference to martial law in a song, or a particular hair style.

Even the most alternative, uncompromising band was subject to these rules – even SS-20 / Dezerter. Everything about the band's performance indicated its alternative status: its ragged sound (and dress), its shouted vocals, and its crude but effective lyrics. In fact, the band made such an impression that it caught the attention of industry officials (and perhaps political authorities) who refused to allow them to appear at a later concert until they changed their name – which they did (to the only slightly less offensive Dezerter). For their troubles – and for their newly found popularity after Jarocin – the band amazingly earned a record single from Tonpress. Krzysztof Grabowski, the band's drummer, credited this unexpected offer to Marek Proniewicz – the director of the firm –

and the lobbying of Marek Wiernik, a music journalist who was among the first to write about the band.³⁹⁴

Grabowski related that the band's "intention was clear from the beginning – it was necessary to seize the opportunity and create a provocation." And it was provocative. The band presented twelve texts to the censor, of which four were accepted. Among these was "Spytaj Milicjanta" ("Ask a Policeman") **[Track 29]**.³⁹⁵

Spytaj milicjanta,
On ci prawdę powie!
Spytaj milicjanta,
On ci wskaże drogę!

Ask a policeman,
he will tell you the truth!
Ask a policeman,
he will show you the road!

Jak stać się doskonałym,
męskim, pięknym, silnym
Którędy dojść do celu
i zawsze być niewinnym?

How do you become wonderful,
manly, beautiful, powerful
Which way do you take to the goal
And always be innocent?

Listening to the recording, it can be discerned that compared to the Jarocin concert, the band is a bit more rehearsed, as would be expected of a studio recording. The band even adds a half tempo break toward the end of the song, an element that required both planning and coordination. Still, the song showcases the band's sarcastic negativity, hardcore guitars and drums, fast pace, and its succinct simplicity: it clocks in at just over one minute. The lyrics take a more ironic approach to reality than the others songs from Jarocin – perhaps out of the necessity to meet the stricter censorship requirements for a recording compared to a live performance.

The song was later described by Grabowski as a pastiche of socialist realism. In any case, the sarcasm would not have been lost on any audience, particularly as the song begins with the whistle, the assertion of the policeman's repressive authority rather than his comradely assistance. Even so, some of the band's fans were upset by Dezerter's appearance on a state label, reading it as a symbol of cooperation with authorities. As this example suggests, the line between "official" and "alternative" was often thin. Bands constantly had to negotiate a path between losing their audience by being branded official and losing their audience by refusing to cooperate with the ubiquitous state and industry and thus being unable to perform.

³⁹⁴ "Kochani nasi bracia cieszcie się z życia," *Brumu*, 1994.

³⁹⁵ *Ku przyszłości* (Tonpress N-65, 1983).

The band recovered its reputation relatively quickly: it used the money generated from the single to purchase a tape recorder in order to self-release its next two albums under its own label, Tank Records.³⁹⁶ It was also in this period that the band became more ideologically interested in the punk movement, reading about the Sex Pistol's manager, Malcolm McLaren.³⁹⁷ It also helped that the scene was still relatively young, and Dezerter was frequently described, in every other respect, as impeccably uncompromising.

Dezerter's example was also unusual because Jarocin, for all of its popularity among youth, was generally isolated from the music industry's promotional interests. A band that performed at Jarocin had a chance to expand its audience, but the festival was not a gateway to commercial success. To a large degree this was thanks to the party and the music industry. The party, for all its interest in youth and culture, held enough opposition to rock to prevent a concerted effort to come out and try to claim rock as its own. The industry also remained distant. While the television firm Studio 2 was one of the festival's sponsors, it didn't bring any equipment to film. Nor did record companies or the radio record bands' performances. Instead, many in the audience came with their own tape recorders – a personal alternative to the state music industry. Only a few independent film producers, whose footage I used above, were interested in professionally recording the concert on video or tape.

This was also part of the festival's allure, though, for the exact reasons I described above. This omission from the state media helped Jarocin serve as an alternative space rather than an official one. Although it had roots in music industry officials' plan to promote rock, it also focused more on punk and prided itself on contrasting with Opole and Sopot, which had much higher media profiles. Already in mid 1982, Chelstowski was able to joke in the program about the growing success of rock and the challenges that commercial success brought:

Today already there isn't a large city that doesn't have a rock music review in our market – currently we're deciding whether it isn't too much, whether the public needs a few tens of Woodstocks annually.

³⁹⁶ Ibid.

³⁹⁷ Królikowski, "Ostry rock'n'roll."

Once it was necessary to pursue the organization of our concerts in all artistic institutions that propagated music, but now they live by exploiting rock music to the limits of possibility and the capacity of the market.

Jarocin, however, was different; it was safe from these aspects of commercialism:

In Jarocin every year, the best new groups from the whole country – often repeat winners from regional reviews – appear. Here they have the chance to get rated by fans and the public and present themselves on a state-wide forum. We don't recognize any awards – we believe we don't have the right to that. The only award is the Audience Award – the only true one and the only not weighted by conventions.³⁹⁸

Chełstowski is referring to the Jarocin festival's lack of a formal jury, the mainstay of most Polish musical reviews. This was important symbolically as well as practically: it meant bands were judged strictly by the audience, without giving cultural authorities – generally chosen from industry, press, and government figures – a chance to dictate the values of the festival. It also meant that a successful band had to appeal to the audience rather than the cultural values of the cultural and political elite. For one week, the bands at Jarocin were not beholden to industry standards or party values – they only had to speak to their fans.

Warsaw Rastamen: Reggae in Poland

Despite Dezerter's surprise single, hardcore punk was still generally far from being accepted by cultural, industrial, and state authorities. About the time Lombard, Perfect, and Republika were playing at Opole, however, another alternative musical phenomenon was developing, as became evident a month later at the Jarocin festival in 1983, where reggae was featured prominently for the first time in the festival's history.

Reggae had attracted the interest of Polish punks since at least 1980. They could especially appreciate its anti-establishment outlook, but also looked with curiosity at some of its religious-mystical elements, including the use of marijuana. Later, the music itself filtered into the punk scene, particularly in the music of Kryzys and then Brygada Kryzys – who even performed a deeply reggae-influenced song about the herb, under the

³⁹⁸ “Jarocin '82 Program.”

title “Ganja.” After the collapse of Brygada Kryzys, some of the band members reformed into the band Izrael in mid 1983. The band chose the name because it “had the fog of the enemy in the PRL,” with connections to the nation of Jews and their history, and also metaphorically, since Israel was oppressed by Babylon, the allegory for oppressive authority.³⁹⁹ Izrael was devoted entirely to reggae. About the same time, another reggae group, Daab, was also forming in Warsaw, while Bakszysz/Bakshish had formed in Kluczbork at the end of 1982.

The concept of Polish reggae mystified critics, who argued that the music was religiously, politically, and culturally specific to black people in Jamaica. If critics had difficulty in understanding what punk could mean in a socialist country, the meaning of reggae in an overwhelmingly white, Catholic country was even more incomprehensible. But the selection of reggae to be a new genre of alternative music was not a haphazard one. Izrael explained to one skeptical interviewer, “We don’t consider reggae religious music, it’s a part of life. It’s not about black and white. I don’t know what that is about. There is no black and white. That division is nonsense.” Instead, they argued,

For me reggae is for example the rhythm of my heart, friend. European culture is far from the natural possibility of discovering reggae. That’s why it is said that only black people play reggae. European culture is entirely degenerate. We have nothing in common with that civilization and thus we don’t play like those musicians who have a lot in common with it. We won’t create that civilization because we know that its creation is destruction. We create everything in truth, we voice truth. The world lives in lies, you know, and we speak the truth.

If European culture in general was degenerate, it was Babylon in particular that was the enemy they argued, alluding to the PRL:

That which is in Babylon is entirely different from us. Of course Babylon touches us, because we live in it – it is difficult to clarify the myth at first, but so it is. You are small, you grow and see the things around you. And so you have intelligence.⁴⁰⁰

³⁹⁹ Lizut, *Punk Rock Later*. Also for this reason, the band’s name was written with a backwards “z” and “r,” and was often rendered as “Issael” by the press. The state of Israel was contentious in the PRL because the Soviet bloc was frequently siding with Arab countries against Israel, which had the support of the United States.

⁴⁰⁰ Romek Rogowiecki, “Issiael: Pozytywna Wibracja,” *Non stop*, June 1983.

After making this bold statement, the band handed the interviewer a pamphlet with a quotation from pan-African pioneer Marcus Mosiah Garvey:

We stand face to face with highly with highly developed civilization that cannot last – it must fall because it has no spiritual foundation. It is a civilization that is vicious, greedy, dishonest, immoral, a-religious, and corrupt.

Contrary to the arguments of critics, for Izrael, black Jamaicans and Poles had a great deal in common. Both faced a powerful, degenerate civilization that threatened their livelihood. Thus, Izrael took up the framework of reggae and African nationalism, which promised to fight the enemy – Babylon – with the truth revealed by music. In this sense, reggae and punk shared a desire to overturn dominant values by fighting their corruption and lies with truth. However, where punk operated through the mode of realism, for Izrael, reggae operated more mystically. For its performers and fans, it was the music of the heart rather than the mind – its truth was revealed through experience rather than negation. While it received less mention in interviews, drugs, and particularly marijuana were also important to this path of discovery.⁴⁰¹

Izrael had just formed when Jarocin took place in 1983, but Bakszys and Daab both performed at the festival. The success of the 1982 festival had increased the event's popularity even more dramatically. In 1983, the festival was expanded to seven days, with over 300 bands sending in cassettes to perform, and drawing some 20,000 audience members.⁴⁰² Daab performed in green, yellow, and red – the colors of Ethiopia, linking them to the ideas of Rastafarianism.⁴⁰³ Bakszys performed the song “Wibracje” (Vibration), which was reportedly one of the festival's biggest hits. The sound and text of the music facilitated this goal. Rather than a complex poetic text or realistic critique, the song repeats “oh Jah,” invoking the ideas and style of reggae along with the music, which is laid back, with emphasis on upbeats **[Track 30]**.⁴⁰⁴ The main lyric, repeated over the song, is “Vibration, pulsation are our weapons in Babylon.” In other words, the music itself is the band's defense from within oppressive Babylon.

⁴⁰¹ The tricky but seldom addressed issue of the importance of drugs in countercultural music is treated in Nicholas Bromell, *Tomorrow Never Knows: Rock and Psychedelics in the 1960s* (Chicago, 2002).

⁴⁰² Kamil Sipowicz, “Jarocin '83: Zmiana Warty?,” *Razem*, September 25, 1983.

⁴⁰³ Jerzy Rzewuski, “Jarocin '83,” *Magazyn Muzyczny*, December 1983.

⁴⁰⁴ Jarocin Rock Music Festival, 1983 (Bootleg recording).

Jarocin was not the only festival where reggae made an impressive showing. That year, the Ogólnopolski Turniej Młodych Talentów (All-Poland Tournament of Young Talents) attracted applications from 536 bands, of which 9 were selected to perform, including Bakszysz as well as Dezerter.⁴⁰⁵ Also that year, the Robrege festival started in Warsaw. While it got little attention its first year, beginning in 1984 it attracted some of the edgiest alternative punk and reggae acts to the middle of Warsaw. By this time, reggae had become widespread to the point that journalist Dariusz Michalski could write,

“Marcus Garvey, the deceased prophet of Rastafarianism, would be shocked if he found himself in Warsaw today. For a while now, specifically since September of last year, people can be seen dressed in red-yellow-green colors – the national colors of Ethiopia – walking around the streets. It can be a hat, or a patch, or a more important part of the wardrobe. Hairstyles are in the rasta fashion. "Dreadlocks" are often seen.”⁴⁰⁶

Much attention has been paid to the papal visits of John Paul II to Warsaw (and rightly so, considering the massive crowds that were attracted). For many Poles, though, this contestation of control over the streets would have been far more radical: after all, the presence of the Catholic church in Poland was widely accepted, even if groups disagreed on its specific role. Reggae enjoyed no such consensus. Yet, Muniak Staszczuk of T. Love Alternative and Robert Brylewski of Izrael both recall the festival as a place where punk and reggae bands could play in the middle of Warsaw amidst the ubiquitous smell of marijuana, and the entire absence of censorship and the secret police.⁴⁰⁷

Unlike Jarocin, Robrege had no professional “guest” bands. Over the years, performers included a range of bands including Dezerter, Siekiera, Armia, and several others. Besides punk, the festival included an obligatory reggae section (for which it was named) as well as a *nowa fala* portion. This did not mean bands like Republika, however: rather, it included Deuter (a band with deep roots in Polish punk scene but reactivated with a somewhat different sound) and T. Love Alternative, which brought to the festival an interesting blend of punk sounds and other influences, including 50s rock and roll and

⁴⁰⁵ Dariusz Michalski, “Nagrody rozdane - zwycięzcy brak,” *Sztandar Młodych*, August 5, 1983.

⁴⁰⁶ Dariusz Michalski, “Reggae w Polsce i za granicą,” *Sztandar Młodych*, August 19, 1983.

⁴⁰⁷ Lizut, *Punk Rock Later*. Rogowski reported later that there was a censor, although she was particularly lenient – and in fact lost her job for it. See Andrzej Wójtowicz i Sławek Rogowski, eds., *Pamiętajcie o... Hybrydy* (Warszawa, 2002).

ska. Its leader insisted on its alternative status (as the choice of name demonstrates). His performance of “Wychowanie” **[Track 31]** at Robrege in 1985 bolstered those credentials.⁴⁰⁸

Dziękuję mamie i tacie za opiekę Za ciepło rodzinne i kłótnie przy kolacji	Thanks mom and dad for your care For a warm family and arguments at supper
Dziękuję szkole za pierwsze kontakty	Thanks school for first contacts
Na dzikie wakacje i nerwy w ubikacji	For wild vacations and nerves in the bathroom
Ojczyznę kochać trzeba i szanować	It's necessary to love and honor the fatherland
Nie deptać flagi i nie pluć na godło	Don't step on the flag, don't spit on the emblem
Należy też w coś wierzyć i ufać	It's necessary to trust and believe in something
Ojczyznę kochać i nie pluć na godło	Love the fatherland and don't spit on the emblem
Cześć gdzie uciekasz, skryj się pod mój parasol	Hi, where are you running, hide under my umbrella
Tak strasznie leje i mokro wszędzie	It's coming down hard and it's wet everywhere
Ty dziwnie oburzona odpowiadasz nie trzeba	You're strangely indignant, no need for an answer
Odchodzisz w swoją stronę, bo tak cię wychowali...	You walk on your own side, as you were taught...

The patriotism, family togetherness and camaraderie is reminiscent of the language of both the party and of Solidarity, but the sarcasm of the song is not difficult to detect. The title particularly is redolent of party discussions about youth and education as well as the debates going on about youth in the press. Particularly considering the audience at Robrege, the intended sarcasm would be clear. The music fulfills this objective as well, since it is playful and fun rather than serious and reverent.⁴⁰⁹

⁴⁰⁸ T. Love, “Wychowanie,” Robrege Festival, Warsaw 1985. (Bootleg recording)

⁴⁰⁹ Despite the clear sarcasm, it should be noted that the song does not necessarily mock the ideas of family and patriotism themselves; rather, it mocks the hypocrisy of a society that claims to value them despite their absence. Either for this reason, or perhaps out of a failure to register the sarcastic tone, the song has sometimes been associated with right-wing nationalism in the post-communist era, when patriotism was less obviously identified with the party outside the political context of the PRL.

Like the Orange Alternative in Wrocław, Robregé “took back the streets” of Warsaw from authorities, to reference Kenney. One small detail makes this comparison less than perfect, however. The reason the festival was allowed was that it was sponsored by the official student club Hybrydy and its manager, Sławomir “Gašior” Rogowski. Rogowski himself was not a party member, but he used his connections with the leadership of the student organization ZSP and the PZPR’s student committee to gain authorization and protection for the festival.⁴¹⁰ The situation is yet another reminder of the proximity of even the most alternative bands to state authority. Even what looks at first like a classic demonstration of civil society setting up an alternate space took place by negotiating within official channels.

Siekiera: Underscoring the Mainstream/Alternative Divide

As we have seen, the boundary between the most popular rock bands and the alternative bands was subtle and shifting. Both types of groups struggled to make music in a difficult environment, and faced challenges about when to cooperate and when to stand firm. Even so, this boundary became increasingly important as the most popular bands increased their public presence: identifying oneself as alternative came to mean differentiating oneself from bands like Lady Pank or Lombard, or even Republika or Maanam. Two festivals in 1984 show this growing divide within Polish rock.

The first of these was the Opole festival – Poland’s most prestigious domestic rock event – in 1984. As in 1983, rock again made an appearance at the festival, with Lombard, Lady Pank, and Kombi performing. This time, however, the bands were included in the official competition portion of the festival. Lady Pank’s incorporation into the official festival portion of Opole was a tremendous step; it meant that the band performed for the entire public, not just those who chose to view the rock portion of the festival. Further, its performance of “Fabryka Małp” **[Video 10]** brought the band’s provocative but colorful rebellion to a national audience through the television.⁴¹¹ To appreciate the shock of this appearance, let’s also look at another, more traditional

⁴¹⁰ Wójtowicz and Rogowski, *Pamiętajcie o... Hybrydy*.

⁴¹¹ *Opole 1984*, Telewizja Polska, July 1984. Available from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7yyFL6ucaGo>.

performer more representative of expectations for Opole, Halina Frąckowiak **[Video 11]**, with her calm, considered performance, formal dress, and orchestral backing.⁴¹²

To the Polish audience, the variation between these acts was tremendous, as we will see in the controversy that followed the festival the next chapters. However, to alternative rock fans, the kind of people who attended Jarocin, the distinction was not as clear. All of the participants were involved in a state-sponsored festival. All appeared on television, and were dressed and made up for the jury, whether in the evening gown of Frąckowiak or the striped pants and stage makeup of Lady Pank. As we saw in the second chapter, the music of bands like Lady Pank now appeared alongside *estrada* on state radio. By 1984, the conditions of the rock scene had changed, and with them, the meaning of the music of bands like Lady Pank. Once they had been a new alternative to *estrada* and even the rock of the older, more arranged MMG bands. Now, for alternative rock fans, it all sounded about the same.

For alternative rock fans, in short, Lady Pank's mainstream success meant that rock had moved into the official sphere, which meant its death. In 1984, Chelstowski announced that he was holding the Jarocin Festival for the last time – which he humorously acknowledged sounded a bit like the band Perfect announcing it was breaking up yet again. But this, he promised, was no promotional strategy. Rather, it was a response to tendencies he was seeing in the press and among industry and political authorities – tendencies I will discuss in a moment. Chelstowski wrote ominously,

I've recently encountered a return to the times when the appearance of a musician and type of his behavior are the only criteria of rating art. Descriptions of the sort, "he has awful hair (colored and short!!!), the music is awful and I can't understand any of it" decides whether a person has a chance to exist on stage or elsewhere. I expect that times await us in music, when on stage "entertainment" [*rozrywka*] rules and there won't be a place for wider and harsher media. And it won't be a short period. Is there a point in building up hope, in giving one chance to appear on a big stage?⁴¹³

⁴¹² *Opole 1984*, Telewizja Polska, July 1984. Available from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VK7UtnKwaxE>.

⁴¹³ Walter Chelstowski, "Festiwalowa zmiana warty," *Non stop*, May 1984, 8-9.

At first, this statement is confusing; after all, the appearance of Lady Pank at Opole proved that rock was closer than ever to public approval; rock had, in fact, been given a “chance to appear on a big stage.” However, by 1984, Lady Pank too could be interpreted as “rozrywka,” by fans of more uncompromising rock bands.

In a response, Chelstowski affirmed that his final Jarocin festival would maintain its alternative status, and be limited to those bands that had not performed at Opole, the Soviet song festival, or the Military song festival. In other words, he chose to make official song festivals like Opole and Jarocin mutually exclusive in an attempt to reaffirm the boundary between mainstream and alternative (and Jarocin’s location on the alternative side). Jarocin ‘84 was an assertion of independence – not just from the industry and the state, but difference from the bands of the mainstream music scene, be they Halina Frąckowiak, Kombi or, by now, even Lady Pank. While Chelstowski had been accused of manipulation and inviting too many “stars” the previous year by Anna Dąbrowska, one of the music journalists closest to the punk rock scene, this time he was serious about the festival’s alternative status.⁴¹⁴ Even the show’s guest bands were alternative – Dezerter, Izrael, TSA, and T. Love Alternative. The main genres represented by the amateur bands were hardcore punk (Moskwa, Abbadon, Prowokacja), heavy metal (Kat), reggae (Rokosz, Bakszysz), and new wave (Madame, Made in Poland, Piersi, Nowo-mowa). But the biggest impression was made by Siekiera’s hardcore punk performance.

SS-20/Dezerter first brought hardcore punk to Jarocin in 1982, but Siekiera’s “Było tylko czterech nas” makes Dezerter seem tame in comparison [\[Video 12\]](#).⁴¹⁵ The frenetic bass-snare pattern is typical for the genre, as is the shredding electric guitar. However, Budzyński’s grating, gruff yell stands out even among hardcore punk. The lyrics are simple, but effective:

Było tylko czterech nas
ona jedna, ciemny las
bez ratunku i bez szans.

There were only 4 of us
Her alone, a dark forest
Without rescue and without chance

⁴¹⁴ “Daleko od Woodstock,” *Non stop*, October 1983.

⁴¹⁵ The footage from the festival has been published along with numerous live performances by the band on *Na wszystkich frontach świata* (Manufaktura Legenda, 2009).

Było tylko czterech nas
cztery skóry, wolny czas
między nami dobrze jest

There were only 4 of us
Four leather jackets, free time
Among us all is well

The repeated final line contrasts eerily with the threat of sexual violence in the first three. With this tension, the song uses gender to shock its listener at a level on par with the assault of its sound. It works; the song is capable of shocking and disturbing even a sympathetic, open-minded listener 25 years later. It is difficult to imagine a greater contrast with Opole, with or without the presence of Lady Pank – and this was the band’s point, and Chelstowski’s as well. With its ostensible last breath, Jarocin had asserted its distance from the mainstream.

Siekiera captured punk’s oppositional spirit, but it also contained the seeds of its own downfall. While punk had never been a coherent, single-minded movement and had always been anti-establishment, it now was turning as much of its animosity inward. Siekiera was an assault on dominant values, but it was also an attack on mainstream rock and punks that had given in to compromise. Even Adamski’s personal appearance was a rejection of what had been the punk movement: he wore a beard. While this might seem like a relatively innocent statement, the band’s singer at the time, Tomasz Budzyński recalled that it “drove audiences crazy because punks didn’t do that. Punk was like a uniform, but we wanted to be more.”⁴¹⁶

At Jarocin, the band also used gender as a device to differentiate itself from punk bands that it saw as having become too conformist. As I noted, the song’s lyrics heavily suggest sexual violence toward the woman, alone in the woods. The video of the performance at Jarocin disturbingly reinforces this threat when it zooms in on one of the few women in the crowd, make her the object of the camera’s focus much as the woman in the woods is the focus of the violence of the four leather-clad men in the song.

One way of reading of this violent imagery is to treat it much like other punk imagery – it was an assault on conventional morality and decency, designed to shock. It was not necessarily an incitement to perform such an action; Adamski often wrote with a sense of irony and theatricality. As Adamski himself said, “our texts can’t do anything. It’s just a game, literary fiction that we like.” But misogyny was not a typical feature of

⁴¹⁶ Lizut, *Punk Rock Later*.

punk texts; why choose this particular fiction? This question itself offers part of the answer: misogyny was destructive on a greater scale than mere political criticism or questioning social mores. Like Adamski's beard, it was probably as likely to upset a typical punk as anyone else, and Siekiera affirmed its belief in "conflict at every level" – even within the punk scene, including between the members of the band.⁴¹⁷

But Siekiera's use of gender is also more specifically meaningful. The band wanted its music to be an assault on everyone and everything, but it was particularly significant in the context of other gender-based attacks that targeted mainstream bands that were stylistically influenced by punk but had moved away from its underground, alternative aspects. A couple of months after Siekiera's performance at Jarocin, for instance, TSA's leader rationalized his choice of heavy metal as his ideal musical style:

Because it is music for men. Just like going to war, you must choose your offense. I chose heavy metal. ... Heavy metal music did not betray rock and its ideals. It did not betray counterculture. ... The rebellion of punk rock quickly was reborn in commercial opportunism. This will never happen with our music.⁴¹⁸

At first this seems like a non sequitur. Both mainstream and alternative bands alike were dominated by males. Why would making music for men make any difference? However, more than an attack on actual women, these comments made sense as criticism of the feminine behavior that TSA and Siekiera ascribed to bands that had gained mainstream acceptance, and specifically, Lady Pank as well as their young fan base.

As can be seen in the video from Opole in 1984, Lady Pank dressed colorfully, wearing striped pants and shirts, and used stage makeup. Their hair was long in comparison to punks and coiffed in comparison to metal bands. While gender-bending behavior had once been an acceptable punk tactic to shock mainstream society, by 1984 it had become increasingly associated with commercialism and show business. This tension was not new to punk: alongside its occasional gender-bending and questioning of masculine norms, punk typically harbored a deep animosity to the commercialized carefree world of disco, which was in turn connected to gay culture and feminized dress among men. Particularly in conservative Poland, punk never pushed gender boundaries

⁴¹⁷ Urszula Bielous, "Odchwaszczane Jarocina," *Polityka*, no. 33 1984.

⁴¹⁸ Wojciech Soporek, "Wybralem Heavy Metal," *Non stop*, October 1984, 6-7.

too far: Gajewski wrote in his 1979 manifesto that punks were “fascinated with sexual perversion, but live in hetero pairs.”⁴¹⁹

Lady Pank’s combination of commercial success with stylish dress, makeup, and largely young, non-masculine fan base pressured this tension. One music fan complained in *Non Stop*,

I am tired of all of the letters from underage kids in love with Lady Pank. They go to concerts not to hear the music, but to cry hysterically and talk about how they are such wonderful boys and their rock is heavenly. Perhaps they really are wonderful, but certainly not at playing music. Their look is another matter. They paint themselves like girls... does no one know that they are puppets that only play as Mister Mogielnicki tells them to?⁴²⁰

Just as for TSA, for this dissatisfied music fan, being a commercialized tool of the system was interpreted as feminine behavior, and linked to feminine appearance. Ironically, these disgruntled alternative fans and musicians were assisted by more conservative journalists in the press in painting this sort of feminine behavior and concern with fashion as a betrayal of rock’s countercultural values. In 1983, an editorial appeared in *Polityka* under the title “Costume of Rebellion” (*Kostium Buntownika*) that charged, “dressing up in foreign costume has become latest style. Supposedly “authentic” concerts are more like Hollywood than they are rebellion.”⁴²¹

In the tense rock scene, characterized by contrary impulses to attain a wide audience and to offer an alternative to mainstream culture, gender became one way of criticizing and cordoning off bands accused of commercialism and – through an assertion of masculinity (or in the case of Siekiera, even misogyny), a device for reasserting one’s own alternative status. This was just one small subset of the manifestation of the tensions built into the Polish rock scene that intensified as the decade went on.

⁴¹⁹ Gajewski, “Punk.”

⁴²⁰ Jacek Korczak, *Non stop*, July 1984.

⁴²¹ Tomasz Raczek, “Kostium Buntownika,” *Polityka*, no. 5, 1983.

Mainstream? Alternative? 1985-1988

1985 found the rock scene rife with tension. As we will see in the fifth chapter, as the most popular rock bands continued to have a considerable public presence, they saw increasing animosity from fans that interpreted their high profile as betraying their alternative credibility. At the same time, bands were pressed by a set of contrary pressures. Recall from the previous chapter that compared to 1982-1984, record production in this period went down considerably, partially due to enduring limitations in the industry, particularly as émigré and private firms left Poland and concert attendance figures fell. 1985 brought signs that the time when any rock album was guaranteed to sell as many copies as could be pressed had come to an end. Making a living as a rock band was becoming more difficult practically just as any indication of popular success became increasingly stigmatized.

Bands were under equally great pressures to have mass appeal in order to have any chance at a wider audience, and also to defy expectations, establish themselves as uncompromising and alternative to appeal to their fans. At the same time, they were facing intense financial pressure from new MKiS regulations that made it even harder to survive as a professional musician, and haphazard limitations imposed by authorities that still were fighting for a vision of socialist Poland that had no room for a phenomenon like rock. These contrary pressures made it difficult for bands of all types to continue to exist, as we will see.

This set the backdrop for the Jarocin festival in 1985. Considering the difficulties facing the rock scene, as well as Chełstowski's impassioned claim that the previous festival was to be the last, it is perhaps surprising that the festival took place at all. Yet, it continued, again taking place over five days and attracting at least 20,000 young Poles, as well as two video crews.⁴²² In comparison to the previous years, there were more guest bands, with over twenty present. This was in part because many of the previous amateur acts had by now become professional and were now included in that category, including

⁴²² Neither of these represented the Polish state media, which continued to ignore the festival. One was a BBC crew filming a documentary on rock. Andrzej Kostenko, *My Blood, Your Blood* (Great Britain: BBC, 1986); Piotr Lazarkiewicz, *Fala*, (Poland: Studio Filmowe im. Karola Irzykowskiego, 1986). Both are well worth seeing, but the latter especially offers a fascinating depiction of Jarocin, complete with interviews with local authorities who offer various endorsements of the festival. For instance, the regional party leader praises it as a continuation of a patriotic choral movement that started in the area in the 19th century.

Siekiera, Moskwa, and Kat. However, the festival also included several acts from abroad and by established bands like Republika and Maanam, Leszek Winder from Krzak, older acts like Tadeusz Nalepa (from the 1960s group Breakout), and even Maciej Zembaty, a performer from the Solidarity song festival in 1981 who was now appearing at Jarocin with John Porter, one of the early figures of the Polish punk rock scene.⁴²³

Perhaps the change in the type of bands represented was because Chelstowski had begun to face increased pressure from political authorities after central party organs had finally taken note of the festival the previous year – which after all, he had made especially confrontational by allowing only alternative bands and focusing on hard core punk and metal. In 1985, there was a greater variety of music; alongside the standbys of hardcore punk and metal, the program included more artistically and politically acceptable genres of blues, pop, and “new music.” Under this last category, the organizers included *Nowa Fala* band Republika and newer bands that had developed what became known as “*zimna fala*,” or cold wave.

Made in Poland’s “To tylko kobieta” (It’s Only a Woman) **[Track 32]** is a classic representative of this genre. This particular song was nearly eight minutes long, including a five-minute instrumental introduction – a stark contrast with punk’s simple urgency. Compared to punk and particularly its hard core variety, the pace is slower, synthesizers replaced guitars, vocals are calm rather than passionate or furious, and lyrics are more likely to be abstract and relatively complex. The most obvious comparison in western music is Joy Division, although Poland’s new wave bands, and particularly Republika were also probable influences.

Republika was one of the many guest bands at the festival. If Siekiera’s performance at Jarocin in 1984 became the lasting image associated with the festival that year, it was Republika’s performance at the festival in 1985 that was most widely reported and remembered event that year. Both performances worked up the audience into an aggressive frenzy, bordering on violence. But this time, rather than concentrated in the mosh pit, this violence was directed toward the stage, at Republika.

⁴²³ Jarocin 1985 Program. Available from www.jarocin-festiwal.com, accessed July 2009.

Ciechowski later recalled that “the first thing we heard after going on stage was a huge whistle. Then a rain fell of sour milk and tomatoes.”⁴²⁴ The band performed one of its early hits, “Biała flaga” whose opening lines asked the question, “where are all my friends?” with a new relevance. When the stage lights went out to audience, they showed an angry crowd; one group was holding up large sign sneeringly asking, “where are all of your friends?”⁴²⁵ A few loyal fans were intermixed, cheering and waving Republika signs, but they were outnumbered.⁴²⁶ “Biała flaga” had once sounded different, new, and alternative; now it sounded like cooperation with the state. Republika’s success on the radio and with recordings had made its music unsuitable for Jarocin. As one reporter put it, “Those who come [to Jarocin] treat any measure of commercialism, official culture, or radio and television as instruments of Satan. Republika, accused of stardom and commercialism, became aware of the strength of these convictions.”⁴²⁷

The band did not give up, though. After battling with the audience for the whole performance, the band finished with one of its newer songs, “Moja Krew” **[Video 13]**.⁴²⁸ The song is far from the uncompromising sound of punk or heavy metal, but its dragging pace and Ciechowski’s intense vocals distinguished it from much of the band’s catchier syncopated work. The lyrics contributed to the impression of the music, creating a disturbing world that uses blood to perpetuate its dystopian horrors – and not just any blood, but Ciechowski’s own – and the audience’s.

Moja krew, moja krew	My blood My blood
Co chyłkiem płynie w głębi ciała	Always flowing hidden deep in the
które kryje się	body
Po ciemnych korytarzach	Through dark corridors, in alcohol,
w alkoholu, w ustach kobiet, krew	in the mouths of women, blood
Podskórne życie me mierzone w	Subcutaneous life measured in
litrach i płynące wspólną rzeką	liters rivers flow together into
w morze krwi	a sea of blood
Moja krew moja krew	My blood my blood
Mrozona wysyłana i składana	Frozen and sent and collected in
W bankach krwi	banks of blood

⁴²⁴ Grzegorz Ciechowski, “Republika - Jarocin '85,” <http://www.republika.art.pl/jarocin.html>, accessed April 2004.

⁴²⁵ Pasternak, “Jarocin '85: Niepodległy trójkąt rocka.”

⁴²⁶ WADROM, “Dobry rok rocka,” *Sztandar Młodych*, August 19, 1985.

⁴²⁷ Pasternak, “Jarocin '85: Niepodległy trójkąt rocka.”

⁴²⁸ Lazarkiewicz, *Fala*

Bankierzy przelewają ją na tajne Konta, tajna broń, Moją krwią Tajna broń konstruowana aby jeszcze lepiej, Jeszcze piękniej Bezboleśnie ucieleśnić krew,	Bankers transfer it to secret accounts, secret weapons, my blood The secret weapon constructed to be even better, even more beautifully Painlessly incorporate blood,
Moją krew Wypijaną przez kapłanów na trybunach na mównicach, na dyskretnych rokowaniach Moja krew, Moja krew	my blood Drunk by priests at the tribune at the rostrums, at discrete negotiations My blood, My blood
To moją krwią Zadrukowane krzyczą codzień rano Stosy gazet nagłówkami barwionymi krwią, Moją krew Wykrztusił z gardła spiker na ekranie liczę ślady mojej krwi	It's my blood Printed, screaming early every day Composing newspaper headlines painted in blood, My blood Coughed from the throat of the speaker on the screen I trace the tracks of my blood My blood, my blood
Moją krwią moją krwią Leciutko podchmielone damy delikatnie przechylają szkło na rautach w ambasadach	Lightly tipsy women delicately tip the glass at embassy parties
Tak to moja krew, To moją krwią Podpisywano wojnę miłość rozejm pokój wyrok układ czek na śmierć	Yes it's my blood, it's my blood Signing for war, love, truce, peace, verdicts, agreements, checks for death
Moja krew! Moja krew I twoja też I twoja też I moja też Moja krew I wasza też I nasza też I nasza też I moja krew...	My blood! My blood And yours too and yours too And mine too, my blood And all of yours, and ours too and ours too and mine...

Amazingly, Ciechowski recalled, the audience listened in complete silence. The band finished with loud applause and even a few calls for an encore.⁴²⁹ The band had succeeded in making it through the concert, responding to the challenge of the audience, which covered up their polished, star status by literally covering them in trash. They gained enough respect in doing so to perform their final song. The concert ended with applause, but only through Republika's superhuman musical effort. As one person attending the concert put it, "they saved their lives, but they haven't earned [our]

⁴²⁹ Ciechowski, "Republika - Jarocin '85."

trust.”⁴³⁰ The conflict had been building for at least two years; an interviewer shortly after the incident mentioned that talk of Republika’s “betrayal” had been circulating. Ciechowski was incensed:

These are senseless objections, but easy to clarify. First of all, there are people, rock fans, and also a few journalist, that listen to only beginning bands, those that would be described as punk or pseudo avant-garde. They only acknowledge those bands. When one of those bands, like with us, succeeds in crossing a certain threshold of professionalism, they lament... Four years ago we treated the game just as professionally as today. The only difference is that then, I lived with my parents, and now, by myself. Secondly, punk rockers believed at the beginning that we were playing their kind of music. They very quickly came around and stopped liking us... There was no betrayal! Those who say that are simply stupid! What betrayal? With whom or what did I declare myself? Before myself, I am clean, and also with my wife, my true backbone and litmus test.⁴³¹

But for Jarocin’s audience, it did not matter. Bands like Republika – that is, bands that had once been controversial but managed to penetrate the walls of bureaucracy blocking them from the mass media, or as others saw it, bands that had been co-opted by the system – were no longer welcome at Jarocin; they were no longer part of the alternative rock scene. Jarocin had once been a sort of refuge, where young Poles could go and see and hear bands that were different from those that appeared on the airwaves and state stores. It still filled this purpose in 1985, but the contestation that rock had set up against authorities had begun to seep inside the festival walls. It came in as Chelstowski invited a wider variety of participants representing the music of another generation of polish youth or of Solidarity, and as bands that had once been alternative found their way onto records and the radio.

Republika’s experience at Jarocin in 1985 suggested that life would get even more difficult for popular punk rock bands. In these conditions at home, many of these bands – long interested in an audience outside Poland – looked abroad for conditions more conducive to their existence than those at home. International tours were an opportunity

⁴³⁰ Pasternak, “Jarocin '85: Niepodległy trójkąt rocka.”

⁴³¹ Krzysztof Masłoń, “Erotyka, polityka, republika,” *Razem*, December 22, 1985.

to escape the controversy surrounding their popular success in Poland as well as get a small taste of what commercial success could be like for artists in other countries. Maanam toured mainly in continental Europe, including West and East Germany, France, and Holland, while Republika mainly focused on the market in Britain. Perhaps most publicized, though, was Lady Pank's extended three week visit to the United States in 1985.

The presence of a band like Lady Pank, established in a socialist country but sharing many aspects of popular bands in capitalist countries (including its own merchandise line, as noted in the previous chapter), is fascinating in its own right. The band secured a five year contract with the American music label MCA, which in turn gave the band a taste of the capitalist publicity machine. The band not only had a chance to ride in a limo; they even performed on American Bandstand. The event got more attention in Poland, though, where the press took the opportunity to express national pride at the success of a Polish band in the United States: one article proudly cited Newsweek's claim that Lady Pank was the "greatest Polish musical phenomenon since Chopin." For its part, the band was characteristically cool describing the biggest revelation of the tour as the realization that Americans "use a lot of ice in their drinks."⁴³²

But touring abroad could only temporarily resolve the dilemma of bands trying to exist professionally. The bands that had first brought elements of punk to the mainstream were now branded as "official" by much of the rock scene, cutting further into an already reduced audience. While attendance figures (still, despite some efforts at reform) did not affect bands' earnings directly, they did make them less appealing to agencies looking to book concerts, making shows more difficult to schedule, particularly on the scale necessary for surviving as a band.

In January of 1986, Lombard broke up, prompting a concerned journalist to remark on the difficult conditions of the professional rock scene, with reduced concert attendance (itself in part the result of strife within the rock scene), which resulted in fewer concerts and even lower pay for bands, as well as rising costs for concerts and recordings alike since the industry could no longer count on making profits from sheer volume. All of these conditions prompted the writer to ask ominously who would be the

⁴³² Andrzej Kołodziejki, "Różowy ciółg w Manhattanie," *Polityka*, no. 14, 1985.

next to fall.⁴³³ His answer came soon. Maanam disbanded shortly after, followed by Republika a few months later. Lady Pank continued to perform until June that year, when its activity was halted by a highly publicized scandal. The bands that had brought rock to the mainstream were gone.

Neither the communist party nor the state had directly acted to bring down any of these bands. Rather, it was the political, social, and economic conditions (themselves in large part the work of the party and the state, to be sure) of Poland in the 1980s. Of course, internal band dynamics were at work as well, but these were tied to the aforementioned conditions as well; it is not a coincidence that these bands all fell apart at roughly the same time. State regulations and industry limitations assured that almost no one could make a living as a rock musician. The combination of widespread animosity for the “system” with the impossibility of existing publicly apart from it had sapped bands like Republika and Maanam of much of their fan base, leaving them in a condition of greater weakness.

As the popular groups that brought punk rock to the Polish public weakened and collapsed, they left a vacuum in the concert scene. In this situation, new strategies for coping with the difficult times emerged. One such strategy was to escape the categories that dominated the Polish rock scene semantically. In 1985, the band Papa Dance formed with the self-described purpose of offering music that was “something missing from Poland.” This description might have been applied to punk or MMG in the late 1970s, but in 1985, it meant an unabashedly commercial band. In an interview, Papa Dance frankly observed, “there are very few bands playing professional music located somewhere on the spectrum between *estrada* and rock.” This meant that their music was “arranged to a degree that other bands are not.” Moreover, it was entirely uncontroversial. They even casually noted that they were often treated as disco due to their extensive use of piano, and particularly since they did not even have one guitar⁴³⁴

Discussing matters like being created to be professional, having arranged music, and being commercial, was virtually incomprehensible in the context of Poland’s rock scene, where defending your credentials was a matter of survival. Yet, just as mainstream

⁴³³ Rafał Szczęsny Wagnerowski, “Na Żywo,” *Non stop*, January 1986.

⁴³⁴ Andrzej Pasternak, “Papa Dance: Czy ty lubisz to co... my?,” *Sztandar Młodych*, October 11, 1985.

bands with their roots in punk rock were being criticized for cooperating with the system or becoming too commercial, Papa Dance opted out of the debate entirely. Moreover, the strategy worked. While the band had many detractors among both more serious rock fans and critics, it also earned a popular following.

For most bands in the Polish scene, though, alternative status was too valuable to discard so casually. These groups had a much more difficult task to perform: a delicate balancing act between managing to exist professionally in an even harsher financial environment, and appealing to fans that demanded an ever more uncompromising stance toward the industry and political authorities. Of course, this path was filled with pitfalls, since existing professionally and existing apart from the state were both challenges. Doing both simultaneously was outright impossible. Yet, alternative bands were desperate for exposure, or even just for opportunities to perform. In combination, these led to a complete reversal of the situation in 1984: the very bands whose fans had lashed out at mainstream rock bands for appearing at Opole participated in the festival themselves.

The Opole Song Festival in 1985 highlights the results of alternative bands meeting with the need and desire to expand their audience. The presence of rock at Opole was a great surprise – not just that it was there after the harsh criticism the year before, but also that the bands that were represented were mainstays of the alternative scene (here I am tempted to use quotation marks – an indication of the category’s collapse): T. Love and Siekiera. If anyone at Jarocin in 1984 had been asked if Siekiera would perform at Opole the next year, it would have been taken as a joke. However, they did perform, and what’s more, they won an award for their performance in the form of a record contract with Tonpress. Although the performances took place in the Rock at Opole concert and not as part of the song competition as rock had the year before, the environment was starkly different from that of Jarocin. Unlike Jarocin, there was a jury; in fact, it was made up of rock professionals like Andrzej Mogielnicki, Kora from Maanam, and Walter Chelstowski. The symbolism here is suggestive: the alternative bands of the year before had become the headliners, and the mainstream rock bands and their managers had become the official festival jury. At Jarocin that year both Tilt and Siekiera appeared as guest bands, just as Maanam, Republika, and TSA had in past years.

I have not been able to find any videos of the performances at Opole, but if you are imagining a scene similar to the mosh pit at Jarocin the year before, you're probably a long way off. By the summer of 1985, Siekiera and its vocalist, Tomasz Budzyński had parted ways, the latter forming Armia with Robert Brylewski (formerly of Kryzys, Brygada Kryzys, and Izrael). After Budzyński's departure, Siekiera took its sound in a new direction. In an interview, the band's now-undisputed leader, Tomasz Adamski, responded to the accusation that the band's new sound had moved in the direction of *nowa fala* rather than hardcore punk: "the 'new' Siekiera is not far from the 'old.'" Defensively, he added, "some crews that just go to a concert for the fog and demolition say that it's treason. But I can't play my whole life a particular way just to not get accused of treason."⁴³⁵

Adamski's point is well taken. It's perfectly reasonable for a band to change its sound. Even more, his admitted frustration in the band's inability to make any headway in expanding its audience despite its success at Jarocin is understandable. One reading of the new work, and the bands' appearances at prestigious Opole is that rock was professionalizing: as bands expanded their audiences and increased their musical skills, they acted more like other professional musicians in the Polish music scene. However, in the context of the socialist Poland, such a change was never "just" professionalizing or choosing to change one's sound. In the Polish rock scene, particularly by 1985, no decision was simply a matter of artistic choice or professionalizing. After all, this choice had very real consequences. The band that had perhaps the greatest reputation as uncompromising and alternative got an award at the most prestigious Polish song festival, then earned a record deal with a state record firm and a print run of 45 thousand. What's more, it was not just giving in to commercial interests, as it might be in a capitalist system, where bands are sometimes accused of "selling out." Rather, it was, for critics, being complicit with the whole political-economic-cultural system of the PRL.

One of the Siekiera's new songs even appeared on a *teledysk* that year. In contrast to the all-out onslaught of "Było tylko czterech nas," "Misiowie Puszyści" (Fluffy Teddy Bears) **[Video 14]** works more through a dark creepiness.⁴³⁶ Budzyński's gruff yell is

⁴³⁵ Karol Majewski, "Jak pogański taniec," *Razem*, August 25, 1985.

⁴³⁶ Telewizja Polska, 1985.

replaced by Adamski's colder monotone vocals, complemented by the dark, gothic atmosphere of the video. The lyrics again are quite simple, but they are abstract rather than brutally concrete: "Cobbler kills a cobbler (*"Szewc zabija szewca"*) / Bumtarara, bumtarara." The song is definitely a long ways from mainstream *estrada*, or the pop-punk of bands like Lombard or Lady Pank. On the other hand, though, it was certainly more accessible – and playable – than hardcore punk.

Even beyond the change in the band's sound, the chance to record and expand the band's audience was a great reward, but one that came with consequences. Another interview captures the band's difficult position following its "success":

I am aware that many see the mere fact of Siekiera recording a record as unworthy of us – since we are an "underground" group – as a compromise. These same people do not make similar objections to foreign performers. If not for recording, no one would ever know about the existence of these bands. There is the possibility for recording a record – and it arose from the performance in Opole, where we took part in the rock competition organized under the sponsorship of Tonpress – so we are recording it. It was proposed that we make a *teledysk* – we are making it. We won't turn down the opportunity for contact with our audience. I am not pursuing the matter of our songs making the hits list, but I won't take up a defense against it.⁴³⁷

Kult also managed to get its first *teledysk* in 1985, to the song "Piosenka Młodych Wioślarzy" (song of young rowers) **[Video 15]**.⁴³⁸ The *teledysk* plays on the song's title, using old fashioned footage of young rowers bringing to mind stalinist era physical health campaigns. The song combines synthesizers and faced-paced, rhythmic vocals. Staszewski's lyrics are more abstract and surreal than is typical for him, taking the form of a confused jumble of expressions of a desire to "stay" and someone pressuring him to "leave." Kult's leader, Kazik Staszewski, had roots in the punk movement back to the first new wave festival in Kołobrzeg, where he appeared as part of the band Poland. Staszewski's band had always had a varied, idiosyncratic sound drawing on many styles, but he had always been included as part of the alternative punk world. The shock of his

⁴³⁷ Wiesław Weiss, "Siekiera," *Magazyn Muzyczny - Jazz*, February 1986, 15.

⁴³⁸ Telewizja Polska, 1985.

appearance on TV would not have been quite as great as seeing Siekiera at Opole, but would still have been considerable. Indeed, Kult followed in Siekiera's footsteps, and performed at Opole in 1986.

Tilt also enjoyed its first mass media success in 1985. Like its counterpart, Kult, the band was especially welcome in the rock scene due to its roots in the origins of Polish punk at a time before commercial interests had tainted its sound or ideals. But Tilt too got its share of criticism. Piotr Bratkowski, a pioneering journalist who brought a serious, open minded approach to punk rock to the pages of the literary journal *Literatura*, asked Tomasz Lipiński what fans thought of the band's new direction in an interview tellingly entitled "An Alternative to Alternative?"

Yes, I know what our friends say, they ... that we have betrayed them, we sold out. These are old stories that have nothing to do with our music or ideology. We simply extracted ourselves from certain social associations that created the so called Warsaw underground: we don't show up in a couple of clubs, we don't drink beer with our friends, we don't talk to each other about how great we both are. And this is what decides it, not any artistic factor. That, and the fact that we have a manager...⁴³⁹

The song "Runął już ostatni mur" [**Track 33**] shows the band taking its sound in a fun and accessible direction.⁴⁴⁰ Its instrumentation and rhythm are reminiscent of upbeat ska; the middle of the song features a guitar solo with an atypical (for punk) display of musical virtuosity. The lyrics were also uncharacteristically optimistic:

Runął już ostatni mur między nami	The last wall has fallen between us
Nie mówimy ani słowa	We don't speak a word
Bo tego się nie da powiedzieć słowami	Because it can't be expressed by words
Nie dzieli nas nic	Nothing divides us
Nie dzieli nas nic	Nothing divides us

A youth magazine dismissed "Runął już ostatni mur" as a "standard example of a song about nothing," but the words are actually quite poignant when considered against the

⁴³⁹ Piotr Bratkowski, "Alternatywa Alternatywy?," *Non stop*, May 1986, 6-7.

⁴⁴⁰ *Runął już ostatni mur* (Tonpress S-550, 1985).

backdrop of a rock scene that was dividing and turning against itself.⁴⁴¹ Accompanied by punk instrumentals, these words might sound ironic or sarcastic, but with its upbeat, polished sound, they come across as either obliviously carefree or desperately wishful thinking.

It is not my intent here to criticize these bands or their songs. In comparison to Tilt's earlier work, this catchy track is more likely to make my own play list. Similarly, as gripping as Siekiera's early work is for its sheer force, the band's newer work is memorable for its dark mood and a drum beat and vocals that are just repetitive enough to sink deeply into your brain. And in fact, Poles had a similar impression: in the summer of 1985, along with the standbys of Republika, Lady Pank, TSA, Bajm, Kombi, Maanam, Lombard, and Oddział Zamknięty, the state radio hits list featured new singles by Tilt, Kult, and Siekiera.⁴⁴²

As key "alternative" bands continued to show up on records and the media, even the Jarocin festival had its reputation as the center of alternative culture come into question. "Zigzag" from the punk band TZN Xenna, for instance, later recalled that his band rejected Jarocin because rather than a real alternative, they saw it as a "police carnival of youth" whose rebellion was conditioned and controlled, funneled into the formula, "it's summer, so we shave our hair into a mohawk."⁴⁴³ Yet, by 1986, even TZN Xenna had a single released by Tonpress under the title *Dzieci z brudnej ulicy* (Children from the dirty street).

In this environment of blurring boundaries between alternative and mainstream, one of punk's original sponsors tried to revitalize the movement with the creation of a new scene under the name "GSA," or the Gdańsk Alternative Scene (*Gdańska Scena Alternatywna*), connected to promoter Waldemar Rudziecki. The name was particularly significant: in the difficult times of the second half of the 1980s, the GSA bands associated themselves with the memory of a time when punk had been untainted by contact with the mainstream. In an interview with *Non Stop*, several members of GSA

⁴⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴⁴² "Notowanie nr - 1 - Lista Przebojów Trójki - Polskie Radio Online."

⁴⁴³ Janina Blikowska and Robert Rybarczyk, "Nie Szukam towarzystwa w garniturach," *Gazeta Stołeczna (dodatek do Gazety Wyborczej)*, May 17, 1996. While this sentiment may have intensified after Jarocin's commercialization in the 1990s, the fact that the band was uninterested in the festival even at its peak suggests these feelings were quite concrete.

bands linked the movement to these punk roots, and particularly the by-then-legendary band Deadlock.⁴⁴⁴ For those who did not pick up the connection, however, the modifier “alternative” was added to the name. And it worked, attracting the attention of the press and the rock public. While the GSA bands were an important presence at Jarocin in 1986, they followed the example of TZN Xenna in 1987, shunning the festival once Chelstowski was replaced as director.

The bands represented included a considerable range of sound. Bielizna – its name shortened from the more controversial Bielizna Goeringa (Goering’s Underwear) – took elements of early punk (instrumentation and sound texture), but added some musical complexity (the song is divided into verses and chorus, and even has an instrumental interlude). Also distinct are the melodic, vibrato-laden vocals similar to those of the (US) Misfits’ Glenn Danzig (whose name is German for “Gdańsk,” curiously) **[Track 34]**.⁴⁴⁵

My personal favorite of the GSA bands, though, is one not mentioned in Rudziecki’s review – Kosmetyki Miss Pinki **[Video 16]**.⁴⁴⁶ The performance here combines new wave’s use of synthesizers with the energy of punk in the guitar work, with an added touch of 1960s psychedelia. The text is simple and suggests conflict, like many punk texts, but is simultaneously more abstract and surreal; it is particularly reminiscent of Kora’s texts with Maanam. Its delivery, however, is distinct due to the rapid vibrato of singer Katarzyna Kulda.

Ciągle w ruchu walczę o przestrzeń życiową pięścią łokciem głową	Always in motion I fight for space for life A hit in the head with an elbow
ciągle w ruchu biegnę idę krzyczę walczę o życie	Always in motion I run, I go, I scream I fight for life
nie mogę wytrzymać nie chcę się zatrzymać jestem już zmęczona jestem już zmęczona	I can’t bear it I don’t want to stop I am already tired I am already tired

⁴⁴⁴ Grzegorz Brzozowicz, “Przełom w Burdelu: Gdanska Scena Alternatywna,” *Non stop*, April 1986.

⁴⁴⁵ *Fala II* (Polton PC-058, 1988).

⁴⁴⁶ Kostenko, *My Blood, Your Blood*.

The GSA bands were intended to return to the alternative sounds of the past, but also to achieve professional success: again, Rudziecki was a promoter, not a punk. Given the scarcity of new acts on the Polish scene by 1986, many rock journalists and fans took it as a godsend. Others were more skeptical, alternately expressing mystification as to why it was necessary to attempt to return to a scene that had died nearly 10 years earlier, or suggesting that some of the bands were commercially motivated.⁴⁴⁷

In another time and place, all of this exposure of underground, alternative music to a wider audience would be great news. Indeed, some fans were probably excited to see their favorite bands get wider recognition, although many would have been disappointed that it was only possible after they changed their sound to something that fit more comfortably with the tastes of the general public. Plus, cultural conservatives would have been dismayed to see these bands on state airwaves since the names and images of the band continued to convey a sense of provocation, although they might well have been equally dismayed by Lombard or Lady Pank.

But in Poland by the mid 1980s, appearance on the hits list, along with performing at Opole and especially when combined with a change in sound to something less aggressive was a sure sign of betrayal to many in the rock scene. This was precisely the time when many of the mainstream bands were facing powerful backlash from fans and journalists close to the rock scene alike were looking for something that continued in the tradition of alternative, underground, authentic rock. Paradoxically, or perhaps logically, the alternative-mainstream divide became increasingly essential discursively to defining rock and a band or fan's place in the scene even as that line was actually becoming impossible to uphold in the scene itself.

Conclusion

The grafting of punk's energy and appeal to youth onto MMG's professionalism and promoting mechanisms catapulted the new musical fusion of punk rock to widespread popularity. The combination of punk and MMG opened a huge array of possibilities: punk ensured a constant inflow of new performers with music that was different enough to attract youth, while MMG added enough polish and

⁴⁴⁷ Przemysław Mroczek, "I zlot młodzieży cynicznej ery atomowej "Nowa Scena,"" *Non stop*, May 1986.

promotion to partially accommodate the Polish music industry and politicians. Between 1982 and late 1984, rock moved from the cultural margins to become a nationwide media phenomenon – in the midst of martial law in an authoritarian state. As this paradox suggests, though, it arose from a particular combination of conditions that made lasting success difficult to maintain. The rock scene's success depended on the balance between two contrary impulses: its oppositional, countercultural roots and its ability to operate in the cultural mainstream. It also depended on the approval, or tacit acceptance, of authorities on youth and culture, which made it possible for regional and local officials as well as the music industry to cautiously promote rock without making it seem wholly official either. The industry, meanwhile, continued to operate at the boundaries of viability, harnessing rock's popularity to overcome the conservatism built into the system (and into many of its directors).

This created the remarkable situation where bands could project their own ideas about culture and life in contemporary Poland life onto state airwaves to audiences as wide as the party's own in the form of the songs I detailed above. The attitudes and ideas expressed in their songs offered alternatives to the ideas of Polish culture, the nation, and socialism advocated by conservative authorities inside the party and outside it. But this was just a fraction of rock's power. Even for those who did not consider the ideological weight of songs, rock encouraged alternative attitudes, emotions, and lifestyles that reaffirmed its fans' dissociation from the social and cultural values that dominated among the previous generation – that is, widespread, easily accessible alternative culture. It might mean going to a concert with other rock fans rather than a ZSMP meeting with other young socialists, to church with devout Catholics, or a Solidarity rally. The audience that rock addressed was young, fun loving, and uninterested in politics or piety. Or perhaps it was disillusioned and “mad as hell.” But it was not politically and socially engaged, hard working socialist youth working to bring the reality of the PRL to the level of its promises or the devout national vanguard seeking to restore the greatness of the Polish nation.

Or was it? As we saw in the previous chapter, a key reason rock was allowed was because it could be fit into some reformist interpretations of the party's visions on youth and culture. Alternately, as we will see in the next chapter, some members of the Catholic

Church saw rock as a possible way to reach out to disaffected youth. Members of the opposition, in turn, sometimes identified with rock's irreverence toward communist authorities and ideals – even if they were disturbed by their simultaneous disdain for traditional Polish national culture. In this way, there was a constant struggle over rock's meaning, as bands, fans, the press, and the state all sought to interpret rock in a way that fit their own objectives – as fun that was independent of the state, as a rejuvenation of youth activity in culture, or as a sign that the state should redirect its interest in culture to more traditional areas. But this too was a battle, where rock bands and their fans were able to fight against authority in every corner – from the state, the party, their parents, and even more popular rock bands and their fans.

By 1984, this battle over rock's meaning had its effects on the rock scene. Just as an unstable collection of contingencies propelled rock into the spotlight, it faltered as the conditions necessary for its success began to come under pressure. The success of relatively polished bands amenable to the music industry's needs at the expense of rougher-edged acts created animosity within the rock scene that threatened to tear apart the uneasy amalgam of alternative culture with mass appeal. As this trend continued, fans and bands alike sought to assert their independence by isolating groups tainted with cooperation with the system. This was particularly problematic since all bands had to cooperate with the system to some extent in order to be heard at all. At the same time, rock's rise to prominence elevated what had been an esoteric debate about the meaning of rock in the press to a media frenzy about rock symbolizing the end of Polish culture and the downfall of Polish youth. This, in turn, made the party's longstanding position of disinterested ambiguity on rock no longer viable. Just as the rock scene was starting to turn against itself, the party instructed the music industry to do the same.

Starting in 1985, the tense combination that had made an alternative music scene with mass appeal popular had begun to fall apart. This was due in part to tensions within the scene itself. The contradictions of the Polish rock scene had temporarily allowed bands to gain widespread popularity while still holding the promise of alternative culture. Now, however, it was finally starting to experience the negative side of its effect: the more popular a band was, the less alternative appeal it had, and the more alternative appeal it had, the fewer people ever heard it. This tension was compounded by the press,

which publicized the most popular bands while constantly calling attention to aspects of commercialism. Finally, music industry conditions contributed by forcing bands to perform a high number of concerts year after year, glutting the scene with the same bands and depriving them of enough time in between shows to learn new songs to make concerts more interesting, by focusing song choice around the tastes of a few presenters, and by a record industry that was still willing and able to press only the bands that were guaranteed popularity.

Chapter V

Rock's Public

The previous chapter shows the sheer variety of rock's sounds and words, which invoked wide-ranging feelings of ecstasy, rebellion, anger, playfulness, hopelessness, idleness, hate, and companionship. For rock fans, these newly available forms of expression offered compelling new ways of thinking, dressing, and behaving – that is, new alternative forms of culture.⁴⁴⁸ For others, though, rock appeared more menacing. I have suggested throughout this dissertation that these sounds, words, and imagery of rock could be interpreted in many different ways – for instance, as a youth cultural movement or a symbol of the death of culture; as an alternative to official culture or as corroboration with the system. This chapter will consider how rock's meaning arose through a complex interplay between its sound and the debate over its meaning.

Rock's meaning was never self-evident, but rather, was debated in an ongoing struggle between and within the music industry, the party, and bands and their fans. The outcome of this debate was deeply significant to all of these groups, since it determined whether the industry could meet its financial and political goals, whether the party could bolster its authority as a disseminator of culture and champion of youth, and whether bands were suppressed, heard as complicit with the system, or able to walk the fine line of existing in a realm of alternative culture. Rock became a symbol that wide ranges of Polish society could use to debate some of the key questions in contemporary politics –

⁴⁴⁸ As I noted in the introductory chapter, there is a rich body of scholarship by the Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies in Birmingham, England from the 1970s and 1980s studying youth cultures – including punk. Much of this work has used the concepts of “counterculture” (a way of living and behaving that is opposed to dominant cultural norms) and “subculture” (a youth culture that is engaged with and often opposed to both the parent culture and dominant culture). I have mostly avoided using these terms here, in part because identifying something as “countercultural” suggests that its meaning is straightforwardly oppositional. Instead, I try to emphasize the contingency in meaning of rock. Even so, I am indebted to the cultural studies tradition for its commitment to thinking seriously about style, behavior, and language.

what the Polish nation, Polish socialism, Polish youth, and Polish culture should look like.

The previous chapters have shown how rock bands, the music industry, and the party all fought to define rock and its place in 1980s Poland. This chapter will step back and look at the interplay between all of these groups, examining how rock became a nationwide topic of debate across generations, political boundaries, and social divisions – in short, among rock’s “public.” Following Michael Warner, by public, I mean those who were addressed or identified themselves as being addressed by rock.⁴⁴⁹ This includes fans, but is not limited to them: critics vehemently opposed to rock sometimes felt compelled to respond to it (sometimes even allegedly without ever having seen or heard a band perform). As such, at various moments, rock’s public might include punks, party members, conservative cultural critics, Solidarity members, priests, workers, and parents.

The term “public” is useful here because the term “society” is heavily laden with connotations that imply a degree of unity as well as stasis, particularly in the context of the PRL; one of my arguments in this chapter (and in the dissertation as a whole) is that the party/society binary that dominates historiography of 1980s Poland is flawed. While the third chapter offered an important glimpse into party debates, this chapter allows us to consider how these debates were tied in to discussions taking place outside the party as well. Describing the debate over rock as a “national” question would be problematic as well: certainly many Polish rock fans did not consider their music to be addressing questions about the nation. “Publics” offer an alternative way of analyzing rock’s broad social significance since they conceptualize large groups of people in a way that accounts for internal diversity, and overlapping, shifting boundaries.

Rock’s public was engaged in a constant cacophonous debate about the music. As groups and individuals responded to rock, they were influenced by other voices in the debate about its meaning, but also added their own ideas. In doing so, they affected the meaning of rock, but their own ideas about contemporary Poland were also shaped in the process. Through rock, the concepts of “Polish society” and “Polish culture” were constantly challenged, redesigned, reinterpreted, reinforced, and reconstructed over the 1980s. At the same time, rock bands often fought to escape this debate altogether,

⁴⁴⁹ Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics* (New York, 2002).

envisioning themselves as an alternative to the party, to mainstream Polish society, and to the opposition and the Catholic Church.

The debate over rock was often oriented around the sound of the music itself. In the previous chapter, I discussed the sound of music by looking at the music itself and the bands performing it. Bands could shape how their music was heard by choosing particular ways of performing, words, and behaviors. At the same time, though, a considerable amount of significance is also assigned by the listener; factors outside the scope of the music and performance itself were also important in how a song might be heard.

For instance, as we saw in the last chapter, whether a song appeared on the radio daily or was considered too uncompromising to be played on the state media affected how it was received by listeners. Consider a Polish rock fan that has just heard that the band they had always considered uncompromising was making a record deal with a state label, or even that one of its songs had become a number one hit on the radio for the fourth straight week. Now, the taint of commercialism might make the same song sound not quite as jarring – although on the other hand, it might not have any effect, depending on the listener. On the other hand, a listener that had just read an article on how rock was an assault on Polish culture might have precisely the opposite reaction: what once could be dismissed as mere noise might sound like a threat. In this way, the sound of rock for its listeners was constantly shaped by the changing discourse about it.

To return to the model I invoked in the previous chapter, the meaning derived from a song comes from a range of interrelated factors – or signs – articulated by the performer, but also the accent put upon them by the listener. Depending on the song, its performance, the listener's tastes, mood, or even simply what the listener read in the newspaper that morning, a sound might be interpreted through the lens of political resistance, nihilism, art criticism, cultural education, fandom, antifandom, or any other combination of frameworks. Bands could influence this process themselves – through their sound, their words, or by explicitly telling people how to listen to their music (like *Republika's* Ciechowski did, as I noted in the previous chapter). The voices of people and groups in rock's public had effects as well, however – and particularly those with disproportionate weight, such as those in the press.

The Press

The press operated as an intermediary between the rock scene and the government and industry, as well as wider Polish society. It was on the pages of the press that much of the debate took place about what rock was, whether it was “culture” or the antithesis of it, and whether it was a viable form of youth recreation, a sociological symptom of the times, or a corrupting influence on youth. The ideas exchanged in the press were significant in shaping what rock meant for many Poles – and thus, how it would simultaneously fit into and shape the wider context of society, culture, and politics in late socialist Poland.

In more practical terms, how rock was presented in the press was also significant for, say, a rural house of culture worker deciding whether he should allow a rock band to use its facilities and equipment, a regional branch of a youth union in deciding whether to sponsor a rock festival, or a radio presenter in deciding whether playing a rock album would be a good or bad career decision. In shaping the way rock was understood by Polish society, it also contributed to further policy decisions at higher levels of government, particularly by younger members of the party who had not yet made up their minds whether rock could fit with socialism or not.

At the same time, though, it also shaped what the music meant to ordinary people and rock fans. While Poles were certainly not a blank slate waiting to be told what to think – after all, a rock movement had come and gone more than a decade previously – the way the music and the people it was associated were described in the press shaped how rock fit into the presumptions people already had about youth and culture. An article in the paper might not convince a culturally conservative Pole to like rock, but it might convince her or him that it was a matter of taste, a sign of Poland’s crisis, or alternately, a destructive influence to be suppressed. Or, as was the case of Robert Brylewski, one of the most active punk guitarists of the 1980s, the press could simply provide a rare source of information about an exciting new phenomenon: Brylewski suggests he learned to be a punk by reading a polemic against it in the newspaper *Życie Warszawy*.⁴⁵⁰

⁴⁵⁰ Lizut, *Punk Rock Later*.

Of course, rock bands knew how closely their image was tied with their presentation in the press. At every turn, consciously or not, they worked to shape their image in the eyes of the press by the music they played, the way they played it, the way they dressed, and the comments they made in interviews. Thus, the way the press described rock was shaped by rock bands and their fans, as well as by the thoughts, inclinations, and prejudices of writers – not to mention the political concerns of writing in an authoritarian state, although the political imperatives for writing about rock were still unclear.

Before moving on, a word or two about the Polish press is in order.⁴⁵¹ For the purposes of this dissertation, the press can be broken down into three rough groups. First of all, there was what I will call the “mainstream press.” This ranged from *Trybuna Ludu* (The People’s Tribune), the official newspaper of the Central Committee of the PZPR, to middle-of-the-road news like *Życie Warszawy* (Warsaw Life) to the more editorially-inclined weekly, *Polityka*. The second group is the specialty press, which included periodicals dedicated to youth, such as socialist youth organizations papers like *Sztandar Młodych* and *Na Przełaj*, one focusing on youth entertainment (*Razem*), and a couple on music popular among young people (*Magazyn Muzyczny* and *Non Stop*). The third group is the unofficial, underground press, which included self-published fanzines like *Post*, *Papier Białych Wulkanów*, *Szmata*, *Kanał Review*, *Pasażer*, *Azotox*, and *QQRYYQ*, which followed a distinct set of rules in engaging with rock.

The press in the PRL was relatively restricted compared to most democratic countries. Anything deemed to be harmful to the interest of the Polish state was censored, and this could include a range of things, from criticism of the party or a sensitive aspect of state policy to nationalist extremism. These restrictions should not be exaggerated, however. Aside from sensitive topics – anything having to do with the USSR, the party’s leading role, or the suitability of socialism as the proper path for Poland, to name a few – the press was free to engage in extensive debate. In fact, in comparison to the US press, I have found that polemics and interviews are at least as confrontational, argumentative,

⁴⁵¹ As with other groups I discuss in this dissertation, combining all of these periodicals under the title “the press” should not be taken to indicate homogeneity. Indeed, as I will show, opinions differed significantly between and even within particular periodicals. However, the term is still meaningful since all of these titles (with the exception of underground punk fanzines) recognized themselves as engaging with each other on a field of debate.

and pointed. For the most part, the press was more than a mouthpiece of the party. One exception to this rule was *Trybuna Ludu* – literally subtitled the “mouthpiece of the Central Committee of the PZPR.” However, even here, there was a range of acceptable opinions and intense debate between them; as we saw in the third chapter, the party rarely enjoyed internal consensus.

Rather than acting as a one way conveyor belt, pushing party ideals on Polish society, I have found that the press and the party (and also the state, particularly the Sejm and the Ministry of Culture and Art) operated in a constant dialogue. Issues that the party identified as critical interests – for instance, cultural education for young Poles – often received considerable attention in the press. On the other hand, when an event or phenomenon attracted the attention of the press, it was likely that the party would respond. This is precisely what happened after the Opole festival in 1984, when the outburst of negative publicity over rock’s dominance of the traditional festival pushed the Division of Culture to issue its most direct statements calling for rock’s suppression.

Overall, rock fell within the press’s range of acceptable debate topics, and was met with a wide range of opinions.⁴⁵² The one limit was that no one wrote about rock specifically as an attack on the party or even directly on socialism (although it certainly was depicted as a threat to socialist values). This may be because this idea would itself have been seen as harmful to the state interest and as such, was censored or simply left unsaid. Or it could have stemmed from the constant effort of most rock bands to stay away from anything resembling formal politics. After all, if one was looking for oppositional political activity to participate in or write an article about, Solidarity was a much more obvious choice.

At the beginning of the rebirth of rock in the late 1970s, most of the mainstream press paid little attention to either punk or the MMG. Occasionally a mention of a concert or a scathing article on the degeneracy of punk would appear. Neither side of the rock scene merited attention as music for the mainstream press, where coverage of music was oriented toward respectable forms like *muzyka poważna* and less prominently,

⁴⁵² Out of hundreds of censorship interventions, I never came across a periodical article that was censored for its opinion on rock music. This doesn’t mean one doesn’t exist, but the reason for censorship would likely be because in talking about rock it criticized some other aspect of Polish politics or society rather than because it was excessively critical or admiring of the music.

professional recreational music (*muzyka rozrywkowa*). Criticism was dominated by a few prominent figures like Andrzej Ibis Wróblewski and Jerzy Waldorff. These critics in turn directed their attention to music mainly in terms of its masterful construction and potential for cultural uplift (especially with *poważna*) and its ability to soothe and relax listeners after a day of work (particularly with *rozrywka*). Waldorff's column in *Polityka*, for instance, touched on both of these issues with the title, "Muzyka łagodzi obyczaje" (Music soothes the manners).

One of the first articles written about the new wave of rock music suggested that it too could fit into these models. A 1978 article in a youth magazine admitted that rock in the 1960s had provoked controversy as a symbol of the degeneration of Polish youth. However, it took up a defense of the present generation of rock music by explicitly contrasting it with that of the past. Writing about the first MMG concert at Pop Session, Zofia Jaremko noted that in the past, youth music had been

... a style, a way of life, and an expression of rebellion. Going to a concert and behavior at it was not only interesting musically, but also an assignment to a specific group, accepting the role of a rebel. ... This year's Pop Session showed that those times are behind us, that youth musicality is a musical phenomenon like any other, not bringing controversy, not arousing great emotions: you like it or you don't, it's better or worse, it's met with applause or is accepted with enthusiasm and that is all.⁴⁵³

In short, Jaremko suggested that unlike the first time around, "youth music" (a euphemism for rock that avoided its more rebellious connotations) was no longer a matter of politics, or even of sociology – rather, it was a "phenomenon from the realm of art."

Paradoxically, such a statement was itself tacitly a political as well as aesthetic judgment. As the article's contrast between MMG and the first wave of rock suggests, it was by no means a matter of general agreement that rock was a political non-issue. The act of cordoning it off into the sphere of aesthetics – and suggesting that aesthetics themselves were not a political matter – was a highly debatable political proposition. This begins to suggest how complex it is to try and discuss something like "the politics of Polish rock." Political significance can be found everywhere, but, particularly in the

⁴⁵³ "Festiwal nie wykorzystanych szans," *Walka Młodych*, August 27, 1978.

press, whether someone supported rock cannot be translated into a straightforward political statement. For instance, the account above was almost certainly written to defend the MMG concert from potential detractors. Later in the article, the author notes that, contrary to popular expectations, “Every band [in the MMG concert] was genuinely worth hearing.” Writing about it as a strictly musical phenomenon allowed the music to fit more easily with widely accepted cultural values – and the values of the socialist youth organization that sponsored the magazine, the ZSMP. However, interpreting the music in this manner also threatened to wash over what made it interesting – that it was different from the tame, inert music that dominated the Polish stage.

Some of Poland’s leading music critics disagreed with this assessment of rock’s aesthetic value, sometimes even contesting that it was an aesthetic phenomenon at all. In particular, Andrzej “Ibis” Wróblewski – one of Poland’s most prominent critics who soon became well known for his distaste for rock – fiercely contested the possibility of rock having any aesthetic value. In an appropriately-titled article, “Battering Ram of Sound,” he described the new music of the MMG: “the strength of sound of that equipment exceeds the boundaries of pain. ... At concerts synthesizers bore into the ears like needles. The rumble of the bass guitar pounds the diaphragm. The salvos of percussion force you to open your mouth, because it seems that the eardrums can’t stand the atmospheric pressure.”⁴⁵⁴ Thus, Wróblewski suggests that the mere attempt to critique rock as music is a risk to one’s hearing, more like visiting a loud manufacturing plant than attending a cultural event.

Many of the journalists grouped around the periodical *Magazyn Muzyczny: Jazz* worked to combat this type of attack on the value of rock by defending its artistic integrity. The magazine’s title merits some attention in itself. In many ways, rock in the late 1970s and 1980s was like jazz had been three decades earlier in Poland (and the first wave of rock a decade after that) – a musical form that seemed new and exciting, attracting the interest of youth and the disapproval of more conservative cultural and political authorities. While the magazine hosted a diverse range of articles, its overall goal was promoting the idea that rock had aesthetic merit – an effort similar to the one

⁴⁵⁴ *Literatura*, November 14, 1979. Cited in Robert, “Co w prasie piszczy: Konflikt Pokoleń,” *Non stop*, January 1980.

that had turned jazz from a marginal, controversial musical form into a celebrated contribution to the PRL's cultural calendar, second only to classical and perhaps folk music in the eyes of most cultural authorities. In January of 1981, lead editor Wiesław Królikowski urged people to keep this sort of transformation in values in mind before criticizing rock:

The music of Handel was recreational (*rozrywkowa*) music for a certain sphere centuries ago, currently it has aesthetic weight. Today's recreational music with practical uses on a day to day basis becomes the document of the epoch. Some recordings of Coltrane, Davis, and Hendrix provoke us to intellectual-aesthetic reception. We must rate today's music with tomorrow in mind – time is the best judge. Today, we can only strive for contact with every significant type of music in good faith, building a passion for knowing and for tolerance. ... it is important not to operate with blind emotions.⁴⁵⁵

Nor did Królikowski stop at words: he followed through his prediction that rock would follow in the footsteps of jazz (and Handel) by organizing a concert, "Rockin' Jamboree" – as a rock equivalent of the by then famous annual Jazz Jamboree festival in Warsaw.⁴⁵⁶

Another frequent argument in the magazine was that rock worked as a sort of "gateway music" to more refined types – that is, listening to rock would eventually cultivate an interest in jazz, which would then lead a taste for the subtleties of Mozart, Beethoven, and Chopin.⁴⁵⁷ A similar long *durée* argument in defense of rock pointed out that older rock bands that had since been accepted as having artistic merits – especially the Beatles, and to a lesser extent the Rolling Stones – had initially provoked controversy, displaying more provocative behavior at their concerts and outside them than the currently popular bands of the MMG.⁴⁵⁸

These arguments allowed the magazine's staff to argue that rock should be accepted by the government, supported by the industry, and acknowledged by critics. However, this position came with a less open-minded consequence. If rock was to be held up as a respectable art form, its more unruly elements had to be suppressed: every time a

⁴⁵⁵ "O Muzyce, Emocjach, Intolerancji," 15.

⁴⁵⁶ "Rockin' Jamboree."

⁴⁵⁷ Wiesław Weiss, "Rockowisko '80," *Jazz: Magazyn Muzyczny*, among others.

⁴⁵⁸ Wiesław Weiss, "Ekstrema Rockowej Ekstazy."

fight broke out at a concert or a band vandalized a hotel room, demonstrated less than ideal musicianship, or dipped into vulgarity in its lyrics, it served as fodder for anti-rock polemics. This meant that rock bands had to fit the model of cultural integration proposed by the magazine, and that they risked an intensely negative response in cases where this standard was not met.

In coverage of the 1980 festival at Jarocin, for instance, the reviewer was equally critical of reporters who met rock with uncritical enthusiasm and those who “wring their hands and call to heaven for help.” Accepting rock’s inventory in whole, with its blessings and black fruits together, on one hand, or total negativity in dealing with the music on the other were both mistaken; “uncritical public” and “conforming youth” were treated with equal scorn.⁴⁵⁹ *Magazyn Muzyczny* suggested an open mind, but high cultural standards. In this manner, the magazine attempted to inscribe the boundaries of legitimate rock. The article mentioned earlier, comparing contemporary rock favorably to the more violent rock of the past concluded with a call for bands not to follow the model of the early 1970s, when,

Instrumental quickness replaces reflection and a temperament appropriately lacking fantasy, intensity of sound becomes a religion, and musical fury – a god. If this had a place in the early 1970s, now it is only a manifestation of an anachronistic mentality.⁴⁶⁰

These criticisms of rock for failing to meet the magazine’s standards were not the same as the undifferentiated critical blasts from Wróblewski. These two critical approaches certainly had different implications for the state and industry: while Wróblewski’s uniformly negative view suggested rock was best ignored or suppressed, the position taken by *Magazyn Muzyczny* offered the possibility that rock was an art form, and as such, could meet party and industry needs to promote and disseminate culture. Moreover, as the magazine frequently indicated, it was very popular among youth. In this sense, it could conceivably offer the elusive solution to the problem of deciding between politics and money – if rock was genuine art, the industry could fill both goals at once by promoting rock. Even so, for the bands that did not measure up to

⁴⁵⁹ Jerzy Rzewuski, “I Ogólnopolski Przegląd Muzyki Młodej Generacji – Jarocin ‘80,” *Jazz: Magazyn Muzyczny*.

⁴⁶⁰ Weiss, “Ekstrema Rockowej Ekstazy,” 14.

these standards, the end result looked much the same whether the criticism came from cultural conservatives or journalists trying to fit rock to widely accepted cultural models.

In particular, defenders of rock on aesthetic grounds had difficulty fitting punk into their idea of rock as a valid cultural form, compatible with classical music and jazz. Ironically, where critics like Wróblewski found that punk met their expectations about rock perfectly, rock's champions had more trouble. In *Razem*, a general youth magazine, critic Marian Butrym (later the head editor for *Magazyn Muzyczny*) interviewed Kora Jackowska of Maanam. Toward the end of a sympathetic interview, dealing with the band's difficulties with music industry conditions, he launches into a tirade against punk:

- Jackowska: ...people have fun together at the shows
Butrym: they even sometimes puncture themselves
with pins during songs
Jackowska: Yes. This is very fashionable. They pierce
their cheeks and ears
Butrym: This is idiocy
Jackowska: It is, but let young people do what they
want. It doesn't hurt anyone but themselves,
and it's marginal. These are wonderful,
intelligent youth, really.
Butrym: An intelligent person doesn't pierce his
cheek because he knows that it is senseless
Jackowska: Perhaps you remember that hippies did
much worse. It may be stupid, but it's not so
damaging for their health.
Butrym: Punk is less a musical than a sociological
phenomenon. It went to the streets before it
came to music.⁴⁶¹

For Butrym and many of his colleagues, defending rock's aesthetics meant attacking the aspects of it that did not fit their idea of what rock should sound and look like – in this case, exemplified by punk. Thus, while “good rock” merited aesthetic attention, Butrym relegates punk to the non-musical realm of sociology.

In turn, sociologically-inclined journalists were often eager to write about punk. Typically, these approaches tied rock to the crisis Poland was facing in the early 1980s, identifying the music as a “product of the times.” In January of 1981, the ZHP newspaper, *Na Przełaj* published a report dealing with punk rock as not just a musical

⁴⁶¹ “Zjawisko zwane MAANAM,” April 19, 1981, 14-15.

style, but as an entire subculture.⁴⁶² Perhaps influenced by some of the work of British cultural studies, the approach ascribed relevance to aspects of punk including demographics, dress, behavior, and language, all of which were addressed as indicators of the movement's ideology, social cause, and function.⁴⁶³ The sound of punk music became secondary here – at most, it served as an indicator of what the movement was actually about: social crisis.

Barbara Dąbrowska begins the article by interviewing Piotruś, a Warsaw punk. Describing his appearance, she expresses surprise at his flannel shirt and ordinary pants and boots. Piotruś explains that punk is not about looks – a punk can have safety pins in his cheek or not, it's a matter of preference. All the kids hanging around the old city (a part of Warsaw) with safety pins in their noses, he adds, are “a parody, a masquerade.” He, on the other hand, is one of the last of the real punks. Dąbrowska then offers a brief family and life history. Piotruś is seventeen, and his parents are bureaucrats – “poor them,” he says good-naturedly.

After outlining the social background, Dąbrowska asks Piotruś to share his (punk) ideology. He obliges:

The world is senseless, and life grey, uniform, trite, filled with absurd requirements, bans, and obligations. A punk hates this. A punk knows that in the world you can't do anything good, the world doesn't change, why change it anyways, since it will end. With the world, you can only shake it up, shock it, provoke it and stand it sideways, destroy it in order to achieve the only possible objective – breaking people's shells of indifference so they might feel hate, fear, disgust. Something alive.⁴⁶⁴

The interview continues, following Piotruś to a concert at Remont where Dąbrowska observes that the young audience, mostly school pupils, has a chance to “completely transform itself” in enthusiasm for the performer, “whistling, stomping, and dancing.” Before the interview concludes, she meets Henryk Gajewski, the band Tilt, talks to another youth sympathetic to punk but skeptical of its adaptability to Poland, and looks

⁴⁶² Dąbrowska, “Dzieci śmieci.”

⁴⁶³ The influence of cultural studies in Poland can be discerned more directly two years later, when Jerzy Wertenstein-Żuławski wrote a review of Dick Hebdige's *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (London, 1979) in an industry journal, to be described below.

⁴⁶⁴ Dąbrowska, “Dzieci śmieci,” 12-13.

through a punk fanzine, *Pasażer* (cited previously in my description of the Remont Gallery).

In comparison to later sociological approaches we will see, Dąbrowska's is relatively open-minded. The fact that the author picked someone that dressed relatively tamely for a punk suggests she was looking for something other than pure sensationalism. Her attendance of the concert with the interviewee (and not simply for the purpose of lambasting the primitiveness of the music), meeting Gajewski, and searching out multiple sources with varying viewpoints also sets the article apart from some that would follow.

At the same time, the article shows how easily description can turn into moralizing when dealing with such a charged topic, as can be discerned in her description of the interviewee: "There is something in him, perhaps the distended mouth, the ugly expression of an uglier face, perhaps the almost completely shaved hair, that makes more short-tempered customers [at the bar in which the interview is taking place] look with undisguised animosity" and her account of the pogo, "the trademark dance of punks, dynamic jumping, throwing yourself to the ground in convulsive twitches." The latter description, in fact, would provide a nice visual complement to Wróblewski's description of rock's sound "drilling into the ear."

Similarly, like other contemporary sociologically-based descriptions of punk, this one tries to universalize the interview into a statement about the nature of punk. This is not necessarily a criticism of Dąbrowska: the reasoning behind this kind of reporting is that it should offer a generalizable understanding of the phenomenon it covers. However, it creates a problem, since the information contained in the report is anything but universal; rather, it is a particular snapshot of a diverse, changing scene. Even who belonged to it was up for debate: the "kids hanging around the old city with safety pins in their noses" would likely dispute Piotruś' claim that they are just "a parody" or "a masquerade." Other punks would contest aspects of the ideological outline suggested by Piotruś, or that punk could be captured in an analytical ideological statement. Further, the mere fact of the presentation of the interview in the official press, in the style of a social science, gave the movement a more official, homogeneous character than many of the people identifying with it would likely have been comfortable with.

As this suggests, the desire to universalize knowledge about punk was not only a practical problem; the very possibility of the approach was predicated on controversial ideas about how punk was to be understood. By presenting punk as something to be studied sociologically, journalists entered the controversy over punk's meaning. Choosing this method for understanding punk was based on the conviction that punk's source was to be found in wider social factors rather than in the creative impulses, desire, emotions, or ideals of the people participating in the movement. Or at best, it turned those thoughts and feelings, and the music itself, into effects rather than causes. Further, in identifying punk as a topic to be studied, its purpose was to objectify and fix it, then broken down and processes it into rational information.

On the other hand, the aesthetic approach in journalism dealing with punk was also a particular and contentious choice, fitting uneasily with how punk rock bands saw themselves. While the bands of the MMG that remained uninfluenced by punk – bands like Krzak, Exodus, and Kombi – were content to accept the idea that their music should be treated aesthetically in a manner similar to classical music, this scheme was more difficult to apply to punk and punk-tinged rock. While Marian Butrym refused to fit cheek-piercing into his idea of rock, many punk bands would have been just as repulsed by the idea that their music was a gateway to a bright musical future of listening to Mozart and Handel, or that it stimulated a higher level of thought and inspiration (or at least as these concepts were meant by cultural conservatives; “higher thought” as meant by Rastafarianism might have been acceptable). Ironically, Wróblewski's description of rock as a “drill in the ear” comes much closer to how Piotruś characterized the goal of punk – as breaking people out of their comfortable shells through shock – than the descriptions of those who were trying to defend less aggressive sounding rock from its critics. Needless to say, though, his condescending tone and overall dismissal of the music were less commensurable.

For all of these reasons, the press is a rich, diverse secondary source that tells the story in countless peculiar, particular ways, but it is also a primary source, since it was deeply engaged in the struggle to define the meaning of rock. The importance of the press for understanding Polish rock is not its ability to give us an unmediated description of what the music was like, what it meant to fans, or what it was like to go to a concert.

Much of this information is there, but it is filtered to fit into the debates surrounding the music in Poland at that time. The press tells us what those debates were about, and what the public at large – which seldom had direct contact with punk rock – read about the music. Further, we can sift through the deeply argumentative descriptions to find grains of truth about the movement in the press. For instance, Dąbrowska’s report makes it clear that the question of “who is a real punk” is up for debate in 1981 and some ideas that were circulating about the meaning of punk and its music, as well as providing basic descriptive details about how one punk dressed, how one concert looked and sounded to a reporter, what Remont looked like, and so on. It is just risky to try and turn this into bullet points listing the main aspects of punk ideology, or to assume that the reports fit how bands and punks saw themselves.⁴⁶⁵

For all of these differences in method and attitude toward rock, by the early 1980s, rock’s detractors and supporters increasingly agreed that it was something more than “recreation.” The term “*rozrywka*” not only saw continually less frequent use in describing rock, but also started to fall out of favor as a way of understanding popular music altogether. The purpose of popular music, it seemed, was no longer to entertain; entertainment was certainly not adequate as an explanation of the new phenomena they saw in rock. One of Poland’s most prominent music critics, Jerzy Waldorff, even changed the title of his column in this period, from “Music soothes the manners” (*Muzyka łagodzi obyczaje*) to simply “Music.” After a few articles under this title, he gave up on the column entirely.

The aesthetic and sociological strains of journalism comprised the bulk of treatments of rock in the mainstream and specialty press for the 1980s, whether written in its defense, in opposition, or in an ambiguous space in between. These lenses for interpreting rock lined up roughly with two of the central concerns of party policy in the 1980s that we addressed in the previous chapter – youth and culture. As these issues became prominent in political discourse, they picked up momentum in the press, spawning frequent editorials on the state of Polish youth and the need to defend Polish

⁴⁶⁵ Of course, this brings up the question of whether this dissertation fits how punks saw themselves. To answer broadly: probably not. However, as we will see, there was considerable disagreement over what punk was, even among self-designated punks, particularly as the movement expanded in the mid 1980s. Rather than a totalizing attempt to grasp the essence of punk, this dissertation explores the constellation of ideas, acts, and individuals that the term’s meaning extended to in 1980s Poland.

culture. Around 1982, as rock also gained popularity, voices in the press increasingly placed rock in the context of debates taking place about Poland's culture and youth, either to defend its place in Poland or to argue for its suppression. Journalists used the party's ideas and language to make their own arguments for how rock should be interpreted, and as we will see, these arguments in turn fed into party debates on how to address rock. This interrelationship of the press and party debates suggests that even in authoritarian communist Poland, an element of interplay with popular opinion existed in policy formation.

For instance, in 1982, Andrzej Wróblewski – noted above for his evocative description of rock as a “battering ram” – maintained his distaste for rock, but formulated it in a manner more readily adaptable to the current debate on youth and culture in an article entitled “How to musically educate a deaf generation.”⁴⁶⁶ Rather than simply a “battering ram,” now the music was a “backward style” that led to the creation of a “deaf generation.” As a remedy, he called for the “musicalization” (*umuzycznienie*) of the “deaf generation,” declaring, “music is not a school subject, but a multifaceted means of personal development and important element in the cultural life of a person.” In short, music was perfectly located at the crucial intersection of youth and culture, and rock was a danger to both.

In an article two days before, Wróblewski had noted that even when youth did listen to music, it was mainly rock, which “has as much in common with musical culture as the group Krzak does with a symphony orchestra.”⁴⁶⁷ Shortly after the Jarocin festival that year, he used the festival as an example of how rock was growing to the detriment of true culture, in an article tellingly titled, “Can Szymanowski defeat Holdys,” suggesting that the revered Polish pianist and composer was engaged in a hopeless posthumous struggle with Perfect's guitar player.⁴⁶⁸ Using many of the ideas from the IX Extraordinary Congress on youth and culture, Wróblewski suggested that rock was precisely the opposite of what was necessary in a time of difficulty for culture amidst youth that were unable to appreciate good music.

⁴⁶⁶ “Jak umuzyczniać pokolenia głuchych,” *Życie Warszawy*, June 11, 1982.

⁴⁶⁷ “Muzyka w Szkole: Spirala Wsteczna,” *Życie Warszawy*, June 9, 1982.

⁴⁶⁸ “Czy Szymanowski może wygrać z Holdysem?,” *Życie Warszawy*, September 11, 1982.

In the face of these critiques, rock's defenders pushed back. *Magazyn Muzyczny* continued to take the position that rock could serve as a worthwhile addition to classical music:

Youth is the main buyer of records. It is necessary to do everything to make sure good classical music falls into the hands of teens. It can't be an antidote to Presley, the Beatles, and our rock groups. A mass (*massowego*), modern (*nowoczesnego*) cultural education must bring unfading values of the world and home land of music, but need not inhibit them from fun through music. Rock is music of and for youth. It is a part of mass culture. It is a product of our epoch. Although there is something in it from youth folklore, it can't be transmitted without a phonograph. Thus, in a recording studio music undergoes artistic growth.⁴⁶⁹

The article's use of key words like "culture," "education," "mass," "values," "folklore," and "artistic" connected rock to virtually every positive value being voiced in political debates about youth and culture.

The music industry also made an effort to ensure that rock would fit comfortably into the ideas about culture, education, and youth being debated. After all, as I argued in the second chapter, rock had tremendous economic allure for the ailing industry, as long as it could be politically justified. In 1983, the United Entertainment Industry (*Zjednoczone Przedsiębiorstwa Rozrywkowe*) came up with its own popularly-oriented journal *Forum Rozrywki* (Entertainment Forum). The stated reasoning behind the publication was that "The development of entertainment art (*sztuka rozrywkowa*) depends on talent, knowledge and a technological infrastructure." The periodical was to fill the gaps in these areas by:

- looking at entertainment from a position beyond art and economics
- securing proper proportions and conditions for the development of entertainment culture
- stimulating the further development and proper rating of phenomena currently existing

⁴⁶⁹ The Editors, *Magazyn Muzyczny*, April 1983, 2.

-dealing with the problems of the market and music industry⁴⁷⁰

It pursued these objectives with a diverse combination of promotion, criticism, business, and scholarship. For this first aspect, the pamphlet included a poster featuring a wide range of international and Polish performers, with the latter ranging from 1960s rock to bands like Maanam and Oddział Zamknięty to Deuter, an early Punk band of the type of Deadlock or Tilt. The criticism included a favorable evaluation of Maanam – and particularly the band’s favorable reviews in the West and its “provocative, but humorous, surreal lyrics” and a discussion by Jerzy Wertenstein-Żuławski (whose essay on rock was critiqued by the central committee in the third chapter) of Greil Marcus’ review of Dick Hebdige’s *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, which is recommended to readers interested in understanding punk.⁴⁷¹ The business angle included a calendar of concerts and an article examining the domestic record industry, which it noted had a remarkable 17 domestic rock bands represented among the top 30 hits, despite the fact that only a fraction of Polish rock bands made it to record.⁴⁷² Finally, rock’s historical and sociological basis was established by a selection of articles on rock, including its social background, its history and roots in the United States.⁴⁷³

As a whole, the publication was an effort to take rock seriously. Even more, though, it was an effort to make rock look like it could be taken seriously for its readers as well as authorities who might have doubts as to whether rock merited such attention from the music industry in a socialist country. Besides hinting at its commercial potential, it suggested that rock could be critiqued like any art form (and, as Marek Wiernik argued, that its artistic value was ever increasing), and studied and understood like other sociological phenomena. A poster was included, utilizing bright color and flashy images to remind readers that rock was, on top of all of this, fun and popular. In short, it argued

⁴⁷⁰ Redakcja, “Zamiast Wstępu,” *Forum Rozrywki*, 1983, 1.

⁴⁷¹ Marek Wiernik, “Nadzieje: Kora i Maanam,” *Forum Rozrywki*, 1983; Jerzy Wertenstein-Żuławski, “Semiotyka kultury młodzieżowej.”

⁴⁷² JB, “Kronika Krajowa,” *Forum Rozrywki*, 1983; Jerzy Bojanowicz, “Polski rock na płytach,” *Forum Rozrywki*, 1983.

⁴⁷³ Jerzy Wertenstein-Żuławski, “Problemy: Rock and Roll: Geneza i Funkcje Społeczne,” *Forum Rozrywki*, 1983; Wiernik, “Dokąd zmierza polski rock?,” *Forum Rozrywki*, 1983; Wacław Panek, “Czy to Już Historia?: czyli słow kilka o cwierzewiecu polskiego rocka,” *Forum Rozrywki*, 1983.

that rock was a type of music that the entertainment industry was perfectly justified in producing.

This was only one of several new publications oriented toward rock to arise in 1983. This was no small feat given the shortage of paper and the necessity of securing permission from authorities at the Ministry of Culture and Art (MKiS) and the Main Office of Control of Press, Publication, and Entertainment (GUKPPiW) to create a new periodical. To give a few examples, in Lublin in the summer of 1983, a colorful, fan-oriented magazine entitled *Rock Estrada* was established to discuss “rock music, *estrada*, and popular culture in order to fill the gap in Polish periodicals of this type.”⁴⁷⁴ *Rockowisko* turned up around the same time, as an addition to the periodical *Dziennik Wieczorny* (Evening Daily) with the purpose of reporting on concerts and reviewing music in order to show that rock was a worthwhile cultural addition to books and theaters rather than a replacement.⁴⁷⁵ Meanwhile, *Magazyn Muzyczny: Jazz* changed its format to include more color pictures, and by 1984, even dropped the “Jazz” to just become *Magazyn Muzyczny*.

Each argument in rock’s favor drew out opposing viewpoints with increasing adamancy, however. Negative editorials were especially prominent in the wake of the song festivals. Opole, with its deep roots in Poland’s song tradition, drew the ire of those who opposed rock on aesthetic grounds. Jarocin, on the other hand, attracted the attention of sociologically-minded journalists. The festival in 1982 – shortly after martial law – received much more press coverage than it had the year before (perhaps in part due to the lack of other events during martial law), and this time it made it out of music magazines and into the youth and even the mainstream press. Perhaps the most enthusiastic response appeared in *Na Przełaj*, the ZHP scouting union’s newspaper, which describes Jarocin ’82 simply as evidence of rock’s explosion in popularity. Under the title “We Want Rock,” Krzysztof Hipsz declared,

They are everywhere, on the streets of small cities that are being reborn from quiet enclaves into factories of the rock subculture, standing in a line for tickets to a concert, drinking milk in milk bars, lying on grass in the park, looking for a place in a field to set up a tent. Every hour

⁴⁷⁴ Andrzej Józwiak, “Intro,” *Rock Estrada*, July 1983.

⁴⁷⁵ Leszek Czerwinski, “Jeszcze raz o Republice,” *Rockowisko*, October 15, 1983.

there are more. One thousand, two, three. Colorful, flying, strange. Lively, smiling, happy. With every train to Jarocin at least one hundred get off.

The hyperbolic description of rock's rapid proliferation is familiar, but the positive tone is remarkable: it almost reads like a socialist-realist description of socialist youth from decades earlier, but adapted to rock rather than a literacy or physical health campaign. In this account, rock is the cure for the problem of Polish youth – it can single handedly restore them to the bright future that had not seemed possible since the mid 1950s.

In *Razem*, another youth magazine, the tone was more ambiguous. Krzysztof Masłoń asks in a series of articles, “Why rock? Why is it precisely this music that is in the state to abduct thousands of young listeners around the world, take them into ecstasy, and become for them not only a part of culture, but indeed its synonym?”⁴⁷⁶ Here, rock is indeed exciting, but it is also dangerous, bordering on the delinquent pleasures of crime and sex. Masłoń goes to young rock fans in search of the answer. One responds,

Rock is you, me, them. It is our beer in a cheap bar, our cars that we don't have and want badly to pick up girls, our unbuilt apartment, your work that you hate, my school that I can't stand. And above all, it's music. The only music.⁴⁷⁷

Masłoń claims that he understands: he lived through the first wave of rock, and thinking of the shows fifteen years earlier, he notes that the situation looks much the same: it is all about “ecstasy, spasms, drunkenness, nakedness, and lack of musical sense.”

Remarkably, these words were not meant entirely negatively: he cites these characteristics, in part, as indicating the music's “vitality.” Herein was both rock's allure and also its threat. For the press, and much of Polish society, the enthusiasm youth expressed over rock was incomprehensible, and thus threatening. If they could somehow make sense of it, either aesthetically or sociologically, they would at least know what to do with it. This was precisely what many reporters set out to do: dissect rock and provide an explanation as either an endorsement or hope for an antidote. For most rock fans, the impulse was the opposite. Rock was not to be broken down, categorized, codified, and

⁴⁷⁶ Krzysztof Masłoń, “Walka o swoje imię. Rock pokolenie (2),” *Razem*, December 12, 1982.

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid.

analyzed, but rather to be experienced. As one rock fan responded, “Have you been to a concert? Why are you asking? If you don’t feel rock, you won’t ever understand it.”

Journalist Urszula Bielous disagreed. While attending Jarocin, Bielous interviewed a number audience members at the festival, asking if they were punks, what their social background was, their ideology, and other general questions that attempt to get at the root of what punk was.⁴⁷⁸ The overall impression her report gives is that the movement has legitimate social causes – many of the youth have parents that drink, plus they are unhappy with life in school and prospects for a job, as well as more abstract concerns like nuclear war and lack of hope for the future. At the same time, though, it expresses concern over violence that manifests in punk.

Bielous got some of the answers she was looking for in the interview, but her respondents sometimes resisted, either unable or unwilling to assist her effort to pin down exactly what punk and youth subcultures in general mean. The most common tactic was giving noncommittal answers or avoidance.

Bielous: Is it true that they [punks] steal?
Mirek: Sometimes
Bielous: What turned you on to the hippies?
Mirek: They told me how life is.
Bielous: And how is it?

Mirek responded to this last question with silence. Another interviewee responded similarly:

Bielous: What’s the difference between punks and hippies?
Baśka: Mainly their opinions
Bielous: About what?
Baśka: (silence)
Baśka: (after a moment) It’s a matter of ideology
Bielous: What ideology?
Baśka: (silence)
Bielous: Is it a secret?
Baśka: In a certain sense, yes. Hand me the pipe.

Bielous is attempting to discover what punk ideology actually is, but perhaps also to show that many punks do not really know what they believe – she always notes when her questions are met with silence. However, rather than a sign that punks do not know what

⁴⁷⁸ “Woodstock w Jarocinie,” *Polityka*, no. 29, 1982.

they believe, these silences can be interpreted as a conscious refusal to translate punk into the rational categories offered by a journalist. As I have suggested, for most people that considered themselves punks, punk was not a coherent ideology – that was the sort of thing the party and the Catholic Church had. While it came with a range of typical characteristics, punk was not something that was to be captured in a language satisfying to someone looking for an analytical, sociological answer to print in a journal.

Between 1982 and 1984, sociological concern over rock, and particularly punk, among Polish youth intensified. In April of 1984, *Polityka* published an article discussing punk as an increasingly violent phenomenon in Nowa Huta.⁴⁷⁹ While the main problem is ostensibly that they are resorting to violence, the vast majority of the article is instead devoted to dividing youth subcultures into categories and describing their appearance. It describes poppers, hippies, anarchists, skins, pacifists, and punks – which in turn must be divided into subgroups, including club punks (which are the least threatening) and normal punks. This categorization is in part to aid the reader in identifying members of the subculture, but also suggests an overwhelming desire to objectify and cordon youth off into an understandable, rational framework. In fact, the article even noted that pamphlets were in production for distribution to schools to aid in identifying members of youth subcultures – presumably to combat their harmful influence.

In the previous chapter, I described Siekiera’s powerful, shocking performance at Jarocin in 1984. The performance offered journalists looking for controversy a perfect topic. In an interview with Siekiera, Urszula Bielous noted that the band members distinguished themselves from typical punks:

Most punks (*kumpli punkowych*) usually start out peacefully. Their texts voice protest, like a last line of defense before destruction. They sing about war, even harshly, but there’s irony in this because they are against it. Even though they play strong music, they don’t want anything bad. With us, it is entirely different. I don’t want to say that we wish to kill, but our texts are about that. We sing about what we want to. And in those words, we find freedom. But this means freedom in a destructive sense. In this we are free.

⁴⁷⁹ Anna Romaszkan, “Grzywy I Czubki,” *Polityka*, no. 13, 1984.

If punk as a whole could be justified as a misguided call for social justice, Siekiera set itself against this approach. They went so far in the direction of opposing what they saw as official culture that even punks were too mainstream.⁴⁸⁰ This position set itself up in opposition to the state, but also against mainstream rock, other punk bands. Adamski even added that the members of the band are “against each other.”

We should be wary of reading the Bielous’ interview as revealed truth – her questions were provocative, and her status as an outsider at the festival likely meant that responses were directed at setting up a barrier between the band and a representative of the mass media – and not an expression of the band’s eternal nature. Further, as I have discussed before, punk seldom translated properly to the analytical language of the press. This is why punks formed bands rather than becoming journalists. But at the same time, there is no reason to doubt the sincerity of Adamski’s fierce, violent negativity, as the band’s performance (described in the previous chapter) affirms.

For those who focused on rock as an aesthetic issue, it was not Jarocin that inspired the most widespread and bitter comments. Rather, it was the calmer display at Opole that provoked the press. If rock could be tolerated (or more likely, ignored) at the relatively new and marginal Jarocin festival, its presence at the esteemed Opole festival in 1983 was too much for conservative critics to bear. The 1983 festival, as I described in chapter 3, included an evening devoted to rock. Shortly after the festival, one of its jurors, Daniel Passent wrote a scathing attack on Polish rock, descriptively entitled “Electrification plus epilepsy” – both a play on Lenin’s slogan that socialism is “power to the soviets plus electrification” and a jab at rock’s volume and its audience’s lack of rational behavior.⁴⁸¹

In the article, Passent laments the passing of the “old guard” of Polish songcraft, citing the festival at Opole as evidence of their replacement by rock. This he blames on the market, which is “ruled by rock, rock, and more rock,” where “the text hardly counts at all, often founded on the simplest thoughts, limited to a few phrases and shouts ... words that fill the mouth of the singer simply in order to allow the sound to come out.” Yet, he marvels,

⁴⁸⁰ “Odchwaszczane Jarocina,” *Polityka*, no. 33, 1984, 9.

⁴⁸¹ “Elektryfikacja plus epilepsja,” *Polityka*, no. 28, 1983, 16.

youth and the Opole audience paid big money for the chance to hear the rock group Perfect, Lombard, Republika, Bajm, and a few others. I've seen with my own eyes how teens pull out without reservation 700 zloty for a Republika album, issued by a Polish émigré record firm through financial ruthlessness, but right on target in the taste of the generation.

He then shares with the reader the hidden secrets of rock:

Many-houred rock concerts in no way resemble the polite concerts we see on television, from which the great baseness is carefully culled. Rock begins generally after midnight, before a full amphitheater, in darkness and the well-known stench of alcohol, probably not only among the audience. The musicians assure that in Poland, there are a few bands with decent levels (generally about five) that although yielding to the international vanguard, perhaps at least make noise in a professional manner. I write "make noise" because even a portion of youth plugs its ears for a moment, but still suffer heroically. ... "sung poetry" ... is relegated to the museum.

He sums up his verdict on the rock concert: "artists connected to electricity ... moving violently to the strokes of music. It's an art that can be captured simply: electrification plus epilepsy."

While most bands would probably dispute that Passent captures rock with this description, the article does capture a few key aspects of the anti-rock sentiment that developed in the press in the 1980s and intensified after Opole in 1983. First, it clearly and vocally disputes the points made by *Magazyn Muzyczny*, and by now, industry representatives, that rock can be understood as culture or in any way connected to it. Rock not just unlike polite culture in any way, but also is a threat to it. Rock was sending once-proud traditional Polish culture to the museum. *Poezja Śpiewana* – "sung poetry" – is used as the foil for rock. While the term itself is somewhat amorphous (it can refer to a wide variety of music), one thing was certain: it was art, and rock was not.

Additionally, the article makes a second, less prominent argument that the proliferation of rock results from economics – a subtle reference to the effects of economic reforms on culture, which had by 1983 become a major point of concern for the

party, state, and public alike. Besides identifying rock as a sign that state policy has gone awry – a position that encouraged the music’s suppression – this argument also tainted rock bands with the accusation that they were involved commercially with the music industry in an effort to extort money from fans. Thus, in one broad stroke, Passent was able to challenge rock’s authenticity and also make it seem threatening to state officials. The article’s final passage sums the position up: rock is unhealthy, unnatural, irrational, and dangerous.

Passent’s position was an extreme one, but other accounts repeated some of these charges in subtler tones. In one of the first editorials on 1980s rock in *Trybuna Ludu* – the newspaper of the Central Committee of the PZPR – Marek Meissner wrote to sharply dispute Passent’s claim that the Polish song tradition was dying out. First of all, by quickly correcting Passent’s claim that reformist policy was harming Polish culture, this article reminds us that for those close to the party, a heated critique of contemporary Polish reality in the name of tradition and aesthetics was no more desirable than a heated critique of contemporary Polish reality in the form of a punk song.

The rest of Meissner’s argument is also significant. He continued, arguing that there was still good music, but it was just more difficult to find due to the ubiquity of rock in the mass media. Meissner identifies Opole as a microcosm of this phenomenon: one performer presented an excellent program, but was hardly noticed because rather than rock’s flashy presentation, he “simply wanted to be himself” on stage.⁴⁸² Intentionally or not, then, Meissner uses a popular rock band’s own values to criticize rock: Perfect sang “We want to be ourselves,” but in fact, Meissner suggests, rock is overshadowing performers who display this very ideal.

The article also confirms much of Passent’s sentiment that rock was dominating Poland’s entertainment. Those who responded in rock’s defense challenged the negative descriptions of rock by Passent and others, but they were silent on this charge. After all, their desire was to celebrate the presence of rock in the Polish cultural scene. Instead, they argued that rock’s notable presence contributed to the festival. Wojciech Soporek, writing for the youth music magazine *Non stop*, described the rock portion of the festival as a “genuine artistic event” representing the “most interesting currents of music of the

⁴⁸² “Piosenka na cezurowanym,” July 9, 1983.

young generation.”⁴⁸³ After all, the bands performing at Opole were among the most professional rock bands in Poland at the time (contrary to Passent’s impression). Soporek only confirmed the suspicion of more critical cultural authorities, however, in describing the festival as a sign of the “triumph of rock.”

This charge is particularly significant when one considers what is going on in the rock scene at precisely this moment, as bands were increasingly guarded of their status as “alternative.” Passent and Meissner were essentially arguing that rock had become dominant, mainstream culture – thereby turning rock bands’ own understanding of themselves and their music on its head. Thus, they were reverberating the criticisms voiced by bands that identified themselves as alternative against bands that were played on television and radio and earned record deals, but from opposite points of view. As a result, as rock became widespread, the voices of band, fans, and both hostile and friendly voices in the press – amidst all of their differences – reached a surprising level of consensus that rock’s (or certain rock bands’) ubiquity was a problem.

Moreover, they largely agreed that corruption, greed, and incompetence in the music industry caused the negative phenomena developing in the rock scene. Alternative bands and avid rock fans blamed the industry for recording and playing the same rock bands repeatedly instead of new rock bands, while conservative critics blamed the industry for recording and playing the same rock bands repeatedly instead of culturally superior classical music or at least good old fashioned *poezja śpiewana*. Marek Wiernik, for instance, criticized the director of Tonpress for his timid refusal to press Polish new wave, punk, ska, and reggae bands when they had proven to be popular.⁴⁸⁴ *Magazyn Muzyczny* made a similar critique of the industry for its slowness to recognize the popularity of rock.⁴⁸⁵ In another interview, however, the director of Polskie Nagrania faced the opposite opinion in charges that they were “only publishing music with high profits” – that is, rock – “at expense of classical music.”⁴⁸⁶

Radio presenters faced similar charges from all sides. For anyone whose taste differed from a particular DJ, the *presenter* became a symbol of the faults of the system.

⁴⁸³ “Triumf rocka,” August 1983.

⁴⁸⁴ Wiernik, “A jednak się kręci.”

⁴⁸⁵ Wiesław Królikowski, “Rock Polskich Nagrań,” *Magazyn Muzyczny*, April 1983.

⁴⁸⁶ “Tadeusz Kretkiewicz, dyrektor naczelny P.P. Polskie Nagrania,” *Magazyn Muzyczny*, January 1983.

Even the hits list – ostensibly chosen by fans – was not beyond reproach. Dariusz Michalski wrote a provocative article in January of 1984 suggesting that the list was manipulated, and that positions on it could be bought and sold by impresarios that wished to promote their bands. He later clarified that he meant they could be bought in the form of purchasing large numbers of postcards and stamps in order to send repeat votes, but his point was repeated in less inflammatory ways across the press.⁴⁸⁷ Zygmunt Kiszakiewicz, for instance, questioned in *Rock Estrada* why the lists differed more than could be explicable if a mass audience was deciding.⁴⁸⁸

The criticism intensified after Opole in 1984, where Lady Pank appeared in the midst of the official song competition. Urszula Bielous reported that the festival “shocked audiences” with the extent to which rock dominated: it was “no longer a festival of song.” However, it was not the rock bands themselves that shocked. Bielous described Lombard as “professional” and Lady Pank’s hair, makeup, and outfit as “part of the scenography” as the band “moves on stage to the abstract lyrics penned by Andrej Mogielnicki,” the band’s manager. In other words, the bands were the worst of both worlds: cultural authorities should be concerned that Opole had lost its traditional foundation, while fans of rock as an alternative movement should be concerned that their favorite band’s appearance is merely a calculation made by its manager.⁴⁸⁹

Adam Ciesielski confirmed this sentiment in *Życie Warszawy*, deeming the festival as rock-dominated, “monotonous,” and targeted toward those whose tastes coincide with the hits list. Even fans, he reported, were losing interest in these bands as they were migrating toward bands with “less manufactured sounds,” adding that “Lady Pank, Lombard, Oddział Zamknięty were all received coolly.” In an ironic reversal of roles, the one bright spot of the festival’s monotony was the “concert of the stars” portion dedicated to established *estrada* performers, which revealed that “despite the domination of rock, ordinary song has a chance.”⁴⁹⁰ As the observation that Lombard and Lady Pank were received less enthusiastically than previous years attests, though, these criticisms

⁴⁸⁷ “Jam nie z roli ani z soli, jeno różnych rock-and-rolli,” *Sztandar Młodych*, January 20, 1984.

⁴⁸⁸ “Czarny koń list przebojów,” January 1984.

⁴⁸⁹ Urszula Bielous, “Nie tylko rock...,” *Trybuna Ludu*, June 28, 1984.

⁴⁹⁰ Adam Ciesielski, “Opole '84: Barometr Estrady,” *Życie Warszawy*, June 30, 1984.

resonated with some of the critiques that were already being made by fans of alternative bands.

Punks

So far we have looked at punk and rock through the eyes of the mainstream and specialty youth and music press, an exercise that tells us more about the mainstream press and its concerns than it does about how punk bands and their fans saw themselves. Fortunately, though, punk had its own version of a press – fanzines, or periodicals directed at like-minded readers. Mainstream, youth, and music periodicals all worked to fit punk rock into contemporary discourse about culture and youth, whether to support it or criticize it. Punk fanzines did precisely the opposite: they pursued alternative ways of engaging with the music that attempted to assert and preserve punk’s rebelliousness and its ability to operate as an alternative to dominant culture.

One early example of this reinterpretation turns up in a 1979 issue of punk fanzine *Szmata*.⁴⁹¹ Punk concerts used sound waves to turn concert venues into an alternative space, frequently described in terms like “zone of freedom.” However, these zones were often subject to encroachment by the state, such as in the presence of a security force. For instance, during a musical camping event in 1979, a phenomenon that allowed youth to escape from the normal world for days at a time and to live the experience of rock – a model expanded upon at Jarocin the next year – the police barged into the audience when they noticed a scuffle between a few punks and security guard who was reportedly harassing a woman in the audience. Even far from the city, the state was able to reassert its authority over its subjects, arresting several punks and interrogating them the next day.

This was the sort of event that would attract the attention of the press had it occurred in a more central location. On one side, critics would point to it as a demonstration of punk rock’s violence and crudeness, while on the other, it would either be dismissed as an aberration by an overzealous band or a case of security forces overreacting. However, one punk fanzine offered a completely different interpretation of

⁴⁹¹ This, and many of the other punk fanzines that follow were scanned and uploaded to a website by Michał Szymanski as part of a project of documenting Polish punk on the internet, at <http://www.mitologie.eu/>, accessed January 2008. Unfortunately, at the time I am writing, the website is no longer accessible.

the event. After describing the brutality of police and security guards at the concert, it gleefully observed, "In sum, it was finest moment in the whole show. I'll be curious to see if this year's anarchy repeats itself at next year's event." What was intended as an assertion of state power was converted into a symbol of the exact opposite – its lack of ability to enforce its behavioral expectations on young Poles.⁴⁹²

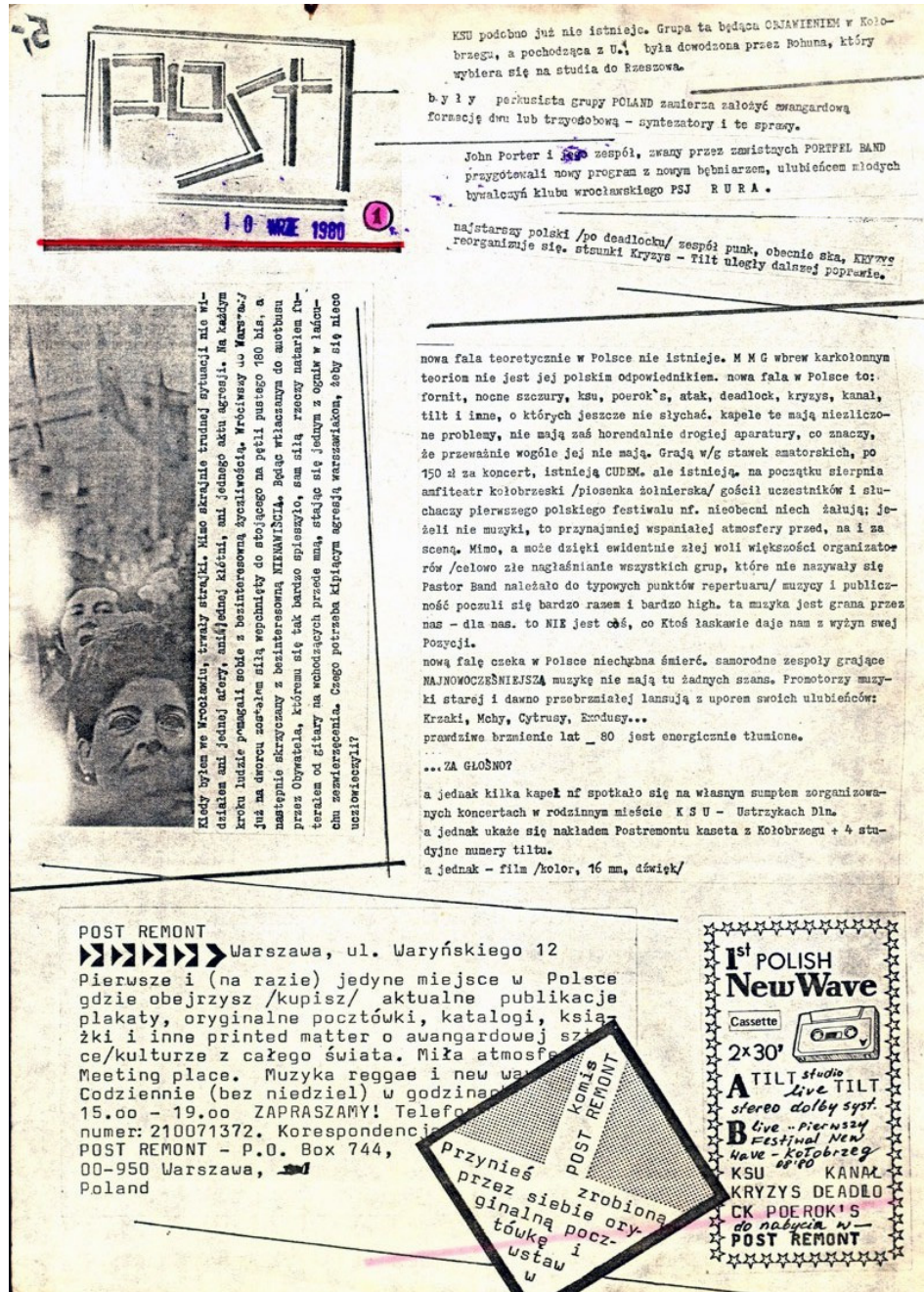


Figure 7. Henryk Gajewski and Piotr Rypson, *Post*, September 10, 1980.

⁴⁹² *Szmata*, no. 1, 1979. Kenney's *Carnival of Revolution* deals extensively with the joy-amidst-chaos embodied in the Orange Alternative movement, which shares a great deal with punk.

This celebration of disorder and absurdity turned up in the form as well as the content of punk fanzines. Henryk Gajewski – proprietor of the Riviera-Remont gallery and punk activist – published his own fanzine, along with fellow punk promoter Piotr Rypson, under the title *Post*. Starting with the first issue, the fanzine is comprised of text passages on diverse topics, but unlike a typical periodical, they are not separated into articles by different titles or placed into a format of parallel, easily distinguishable sections. Instead, the passages are typed in different directions, interspersed with graphics, and separated by skewed lines (Figure 7).⁴⁹³ In other words, organization serves more as an opportunity for an aesthetic statement than an aid to extracting information easily.

By the third issue (Figure 8), content is subjugated even more literally to form, as a graphic of a meditating woman covers up much of the text about the history of sound, *avant-garde* art, and the Remont gallery.⁴⁹⁴ The eighth issue (Figure 9) announces a concert – but rather merely publicizing the concert, the concert announcement serves as an opportunity to write a poem about the punk bands performing, including representation of the sound of the saxophone in typed letters.⁴⁹⁵ Even with the poem, though, form takes precedence over content, as the shape of the text lines and the image of the vocalist and sax player obscure some of the words.

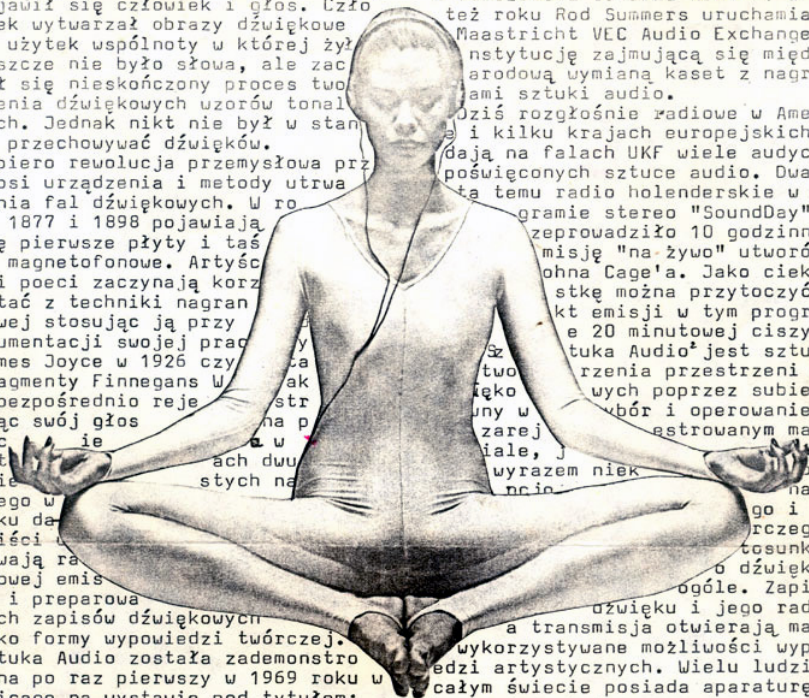
⁴⁹³ Henryk Gajewski and Piotr Rypson, *Post*, September 10, 1980.

⁴⁹⁴ Gajewski and Rypson, *Post*, November 10, 1980.

⁴⁹⁵ Gajewski and Rypson, *Post*, February 20, 1981.

audio art

Na początku był dźwięk! Później, cztery miliardy lat temu, pojawił się człowiek i głos. Człowiek wytwarzał obrazy dźwiękowe na użytek wspólnoty w której żył. Jeszcze nie było słowa, ale zaczął się nieskończony proces tworzenia dźwiękowych uzorów tonalnych. Jednak nikt nie był w stanie przechowywać dźwięków. Dopiero rewolucja przemysłowa przynosi urządzenia i metody utrwalania fal dźwiękowych. W roku 1877 i 1898 pojawiają się pierwsze płyty i taśmy magnetofonowe. Artysty i poeci zaczynają korzystać z techniki nagrania i dokumentacji swojej pracy. James Joyce w 1926 czyta fragmenty Finnegans Wake bezpośrednio rejestrując swój głos na płytach. W latach 20. i 30. XX wieku dzieł sztuki na taśmie szego wieku dał się doświadczyć żywają radiowej emisji i preparowanych nych zapisów dźwiękowych jako formy wypowiedzi twórczej. Sztuka Audio została zademonstrowana po raz pierwszy w 1969 roku w Chicago na wystawie pod tytułem: "Sztuka przez Telefon". Później, w 1977 sztukę audio prezentowało kanadyjskie CEAC w Toronto ("Rejestracje Artystyczne") a w 1978 Ruedi Schill założył w Lucernie Audio Archiwum. W Polsce prekursorem prezen-



tacji sztuki audio była w 1978 roku warszawska Galeria Remont. W tym też roku Rod Summers uruchamia w Maastricht VEC Audio Exchange - instytucję zajmującą się międzynarodową wymianą kaset z nagraniami sztuki audio. Dziś rozgłośnie radiowe w Ameryce i kilku krajach europejskich nadają na falach UKF wiele audycji poświęconych sztuce audio. Dwa lata temu radio holenderskie w programie stereo "SoundDay" przeprowadziło 10 godzinną emisję "na żywo" utworów Johna Cage'a. Jako ciekawostkę można przytoczyć fakt emisji w tym programie 20 minutowej ciszy. Sztuka Audio jest sztuką tworzenia przestrzeni dźwiękowej poprzez subiektywny wybór i operowanie na zarejestrowanym materiale, który jest wyrazem niekiedy nieświadomego i twórczego stosunku do dźwięku w ogóle. Zapis dźwięku i jego radiowa transmisja otwierają mało wykorzystywane możliwości wypowiedzi artystycznych. Wielu ludzi na całym świecie posiada aparaturę od twarzącą lub nagrywającą, czy by to był magnetofon hi-fi, czy też automatyczny magnetofon kasetowy. Radio tranzystorowe jest standardowym sprzętem w każdym domu. Tak więc Sztuka Audio jest już dośc

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POST
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Figure 8. Henryk Gajewski and Piotr Rypson, Post, November 10, 1980.



Figure 9. Henryk Gajewski and Piotr Rypson, *Post*, February 20, 1981.

In all of these ways, the form of *Post* suggests that unlike the mainstream press, this punk fanzine was not primarily directed at conveying information. In fact, it might even be said that the fanzine works against being read analytically for rational content. It certainly says something, but it does so as much through its form as its content; in other words, it is more of a visual form of punk than it is a description of punk. Remarkably, *Post* is one of the more analytical fanzines, and consequently one of the more amenable

to scholarly treatment – perhaps in part, as I will argue, because by late 1980, its publishers felt some pressure to convey information about the punk movement as they saw it endangered.

Papier Białych Wulkanów (Paper of the White Volcanoes) takes a stronger stance against being mined for rational content about the true nature of punk. The first (or more accurately, 0th) issue endeavors to answer the question on everyone’s mind (and likely including your own): what exactly is a “white volcano”? To answer this, the publisher, Jacek “Luter” Lenartowicz (discussed in chapter four as a member of early Gdańsk punk band Deadlock) consults Prof. Lisol McWhite, an expert in White Volcano Therapy:

The answer is relatively simple. White is white, and the volcano is simply a volcano. I think when people finally understand that, it will be easier for them to find the answer to many of the other questions that we have to ask ourselves. Take, for example, the question, “why white and not black?” Could there be a more difficult question? Is this not the most important question that we can try to answer? Why yes, dear sir, it is.⁴⁹⁶

The story does not end there: the professor turns to a research committee at Honey University to answer this question, and so on. Besides its humorous linguistic playfulness, the story reminds the reader how silly it is to try to rationally grasp the magazine.

⁴⁹⁶ Jacek Lenartowicz, *Papier Białych Wulkanów*, no. 1, 11.

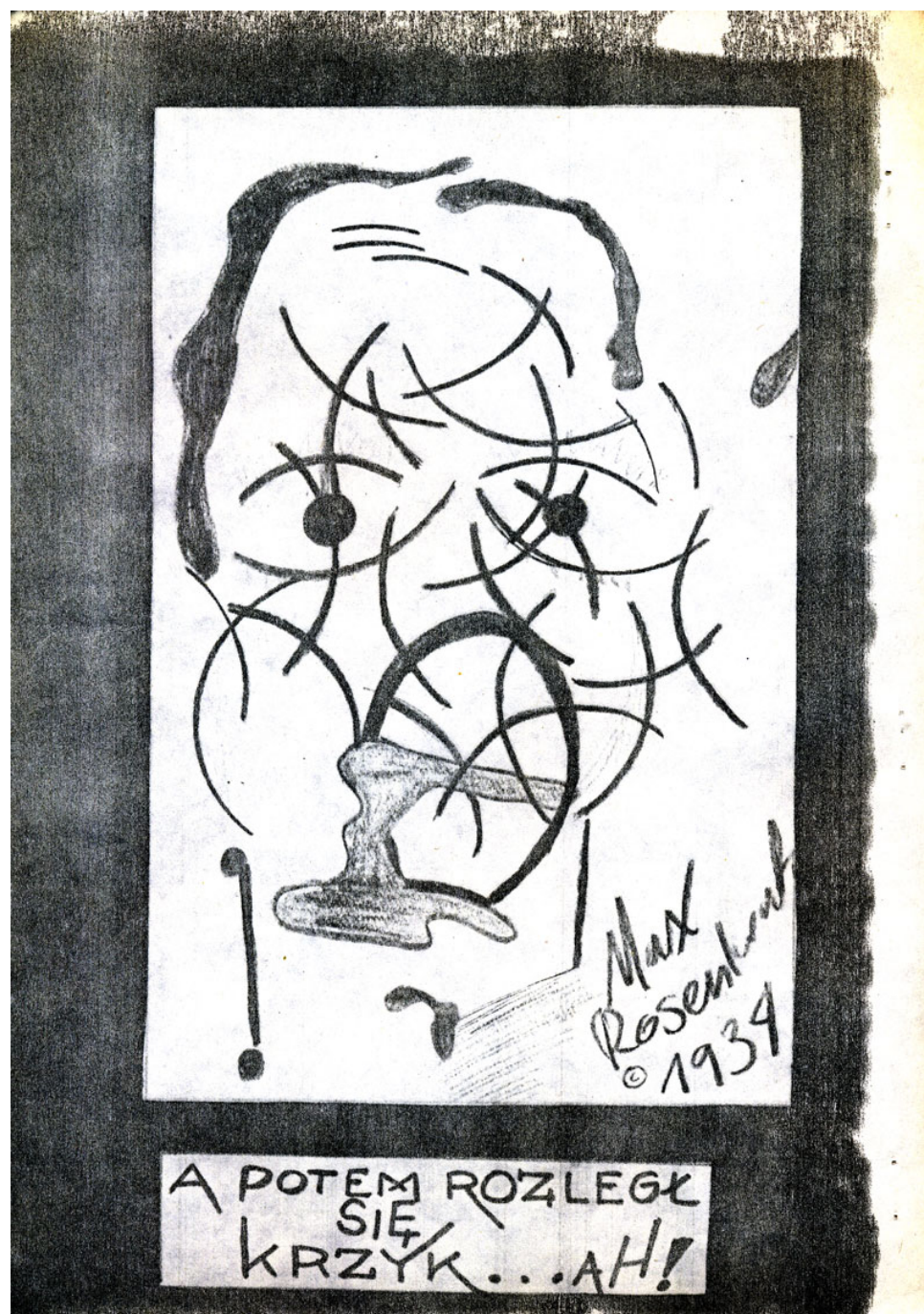


Figure 10. Jacek Lenartowicz, *Papier Białych Wulkanów* no. 2, 8.

This theme replays in many other formations over the paper's pages. One page is entirely devoted to a small picture and a lengthy caption in an unspecified language. Other pages simply contain photographs or drawings, either without captions or with captions that only increase the confusion about the source of the image and the reason for its inclusion – such as a drawing signed by either an obscure or fictitious artist,

captioned, “and then a scream rang out ... AH!” (Figure 10).⁴⁹⁷ One section takes stories from the mainstream Polish press, but rearranges the sentences to form alternate, often nonsensical meanings. Even something as simple as the paper’s title is rewritten using symbols, making it difficult to read (Figure 11).⁴⁹⁸

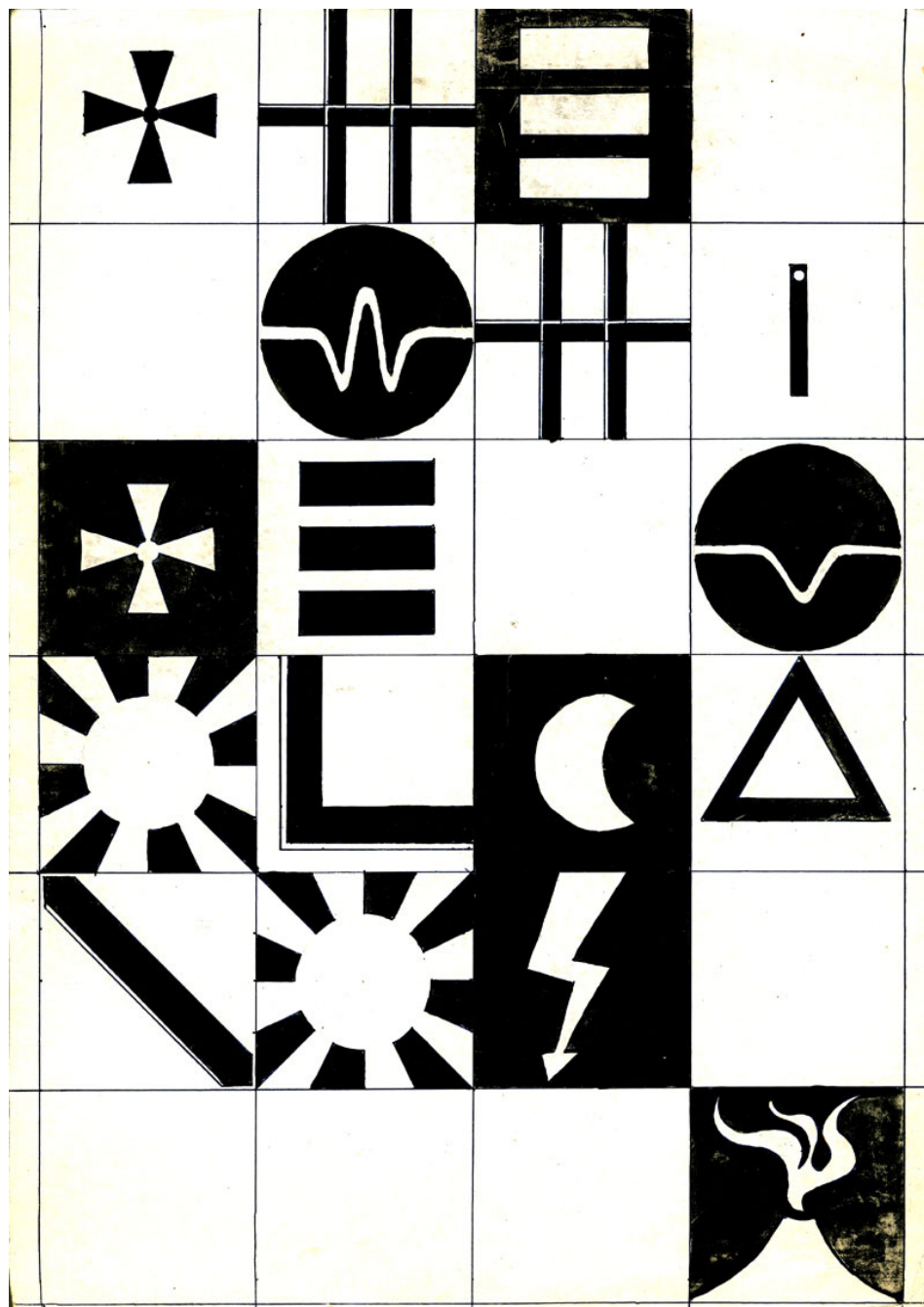


Figure 11. Jacek Lenartowicz, *Papier Białych Wulkanów* no. 1, 10.

⁴⁹⁷ Ibid., no. 2, 8.

⁴⁹⁸ Ibid., no. 1, 10.

These last two examples also suggest a second theme – reappropriation of mainstream devices, such as news headlines, grammar, or even the alphabet. The band Brygada Kryzys, for instance, filled a page in its fanzine in August of 1981 with different uses of the word “Kryzys” – both the band’s name, and a ubiquitous word referring to the social and economic crisis facing Poland in the 1980s (Figure 12).⁴⁹⁹ As Dick Hebdige has suggested about punk more generally, these reappropriations are not designed as much to form new meanings (much as punk was wary of setting up a new formal ideology) as to deconstruct the dominant symbolic order.⁵⁰⁰



Figure 12. “Brygada Kryzys,” no. 0, August, 1981.

Some general observations can be made about these fanzines. They tend to emphasize form over content, promote the do-it-yourself aesthetic (the art is clearly hand drawn rather quickly, analogous to the construction of punk music), demonstrate irreverence for dominant social and cultural trends (including rationality), exhibit a tendency to shock and defy expectations, and an offbeat sense of humor. However, by design, they defy attempts to make them into a programmatic statement, making anyone attempting to do so seem as ridiculous as Professor Lisol McWhite trying to determine

⁴⁹⁹ “Brygada Kryzys,” no. 0, August, 1981.

⁵⁰⁰ *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*.

the meaning of “white volcano.” Rather than statements about punk and its values and ideology, they are more like punk in printed form.

This highlights one of the problems of dealing with punk in the mainstream press, which, unlike fanzines, depended on analytical, scholarly language to make sense of its subject matter. Attempting to do this with punk often ended up making the writer and the subject look silly, and neutralized the punk aspect of what was being covered. No matter how a writer chose to discuss punk, treating it analytically (as the press tends to do with its topics) forced punk into contemporary discursive frameworks – most often, those pertaining to youth and culture. These frameworks were expansive, allowing for many interpretations of punk, but none of them matched up with punks’ understanding of themselves. Moreover, they all tended toward one of two tendencies, each of which threatened the movement. Stories that treated punk as a threat to Polish values and a corruptor of youth made punk seem dangerous and marginal – and thus worthy of suppression. Stories that treated punk as a justifiable reaction to the crisis, mere noise, or a legitimate cultural form made punk seem acceptable or laudable – and thus worthy of ignoring or even celebrating. Both could be made to fit quite comfortably with the existing order. The avant-garde, form-centered model of the fanzine prevented it from being pulled into this trap as well.

In a few cases, though, punk fanzines did come closer to formulating a statement about punk’s values and ideology. This occurred in 1980 and 1981, at precisely the moment when early punk enthusiasts felt punk was endangered. In the previous chapter, I described how punk was brought to a larger audience through its contact with the sounds and marketing strategies of rock, in large measure through the skillful negotiation of the impresarios behind MMG. In the view of Henryk Gajewski and many other punks, as we will see, this contact with commercially minded music would destroy punk. As punk grew in popularity, its correspondent growth in adherents slowly began to move control of its meaning outside the exclusive domain of a few like-minded bands, their managers, and fans. As the range of those able to affect punk’s field of discourse expanded, they lost control over the range of meanings associated by the movement, which developed in numerous directions.

The meaning of punk was both restricted and expanded as it entered the wider public domain. As people saw punk bands perform, particularly outside the confines of the clubs that served as bastions of its ethos, many were inspired to reproduce its forms, particularly in style of dress, behavior, and the sound of its music. In something like the process described by Jean Baudrillard's idea of the *simulacrum*, the form of punk – its appearance and sound – was reproduced, but it was disconnected from its content, evacuated of meaning.⁵⁰¹ In the terms of semiotics, it became a free signifier, ready to be associated with whatever contents its creators or users fastened to it.⁵⁰²

The results of this manifested in a few ways. Most obviously, the number of meanings associated with the sounds and sights of punk expanded dramatically (and would continue to do so over the next decade). At the same time, certain elements of the form of punk became increasingly codified. In the early days of punk, Lipiński recalled,

The variety of outfits was huge, as there was no punk uniform. Some went for ugliness - safety pins, chains, half-shaved heads. Others opted for the cosmic look - overalls, shiny costumes, make-up. And the rest chose the 50s agent style - raincoats, narrow ties, dark glasses.⁵⁰³

By the 1980s, however, short hair (or variations in the form of a shaved head or Mohawk), leather, and safety pins became requisite for anyone who wished to be identified as a punk. The greatest change, however – and the greatest threat in the eyes of punk's early adherents – was that once punk's form could be separated from its content and modified to fit various contents, it could be gradually digested and processed into mainstream culture.

It was at this moment, as punk's popularity reached outside a few coherent groups of acquaintances, that its first enthusiasts in Poland began to document their aesthetic and ideological principles in an attempt to reinforce the boundaries between punk as they saw it and the multitude of other alternative cultural elements that sought to incorporate its energetic music and style. In September of 1980, Gajewski wrote, "Nowa Fala in Poland awaits certain death. The spontaneous bands playing the newest music do not have a

⁵⁰¹ *Simulacra and Simulation* (Ann Arbor, 1995).

⁵⁰² Although here too, as with my argument about multiaccentuality in sound, some contents were more amenable to the form of punk than others.

⁵⁰³ Piotr Rypson, "Krótki kurs polskiego punkrocka" Available from <http://www.pawnhearts.eu.org/~gregland/w-matni/kryzys/polpunk/polpunk.html>, accessed June 2009.

chance.”⁵⁰⁴ Rather than giving up, however, Gajewski used the next few issues of the periodical to talk about the music and some of its ideals. Instead of writing a manifesto, however, he largely speaks by assembling translations from other periodicals, especially western magazines, about groups that embody his ideals.

It is worth taking some time to explore these ideas. Without attempting to make a list of official punk values (official values are a decidedly un-punk proposition), or even suggesting that these are representative of early Polish punk as a whole, these writings they do present an opportunity to see someone documenting some of the ideas he sees in retrospect as critical to a punk ethos, as well as the range of the movement’s influences.⁵⁰⁵ In parallel to Poland’s borrowing of punk, Gajewski takes the examples of music and social movements from various parts of the world and subtly makes it relevant to the Polish condition.

The second issue of *Post* deals primarily with Jamaica and reggae. Gajewski cites an article from the English magazine *Home Grown* on Jamaican reggae and Rastafarianism. While there is a great deal to say about this fascinating and enduring connection between Polish punk and Jamaica, here it is enough to note the degree to which reggae seemed to address many of the same issues Gajewski valued in Polish punk, including its struggling with the state, which banned the music from the radio, the idea of the Rastafarian as an all-seeing soothsayer fighting against social injustice and police oppression. There is also a good deal of mysticism dealing with the use of *ganja* as a creative force and a “third eye.”⁵⁰⁶ It is also around this time that reggae influences start turning up in Polish punk bands, especially Kryzys and Tilt, much as they did earlier in the UK’s the Clash.⁵⁰⁷

These bands took ideas, styles, behaviors, and language associated with reggae, as well as elements of the music, and used them to address their own situation in authoritarian Poland. In an early interview, Tilt’s Lipiński explained that the world was divided into Rastamen and Babylon.

⁵⁰⁴ Gajewski and Rypson, *Post*, September 10, 1980.

⁵⁰⁵ This is particularly unusual because most punk periodicals/fanzines shun analytical, journalistic writing, and instead find a way of incarnating punk in written form. Gajewski does both.

⁵⁰⁶ Gajewski and Rypson, *Post*, September 20, 1980.

⁵⁰⁷ This connection was also typical of many English punk bands, including The Clash.

Babylon gives money to the army, war ... brings back boys
from war when it must without hands, without legs.
Babylon deceives in the press, the radio and television, it
beats, insults, lies, deceives, refuses, bans, poisons, spies,
maltreats, instigates ... so I write what I please. Babylon
divides the world into nations and cities.⁵⁰⁸

Amok, in his own underground fanzine around the same time, included a poem by reggae artist Linton Kwesi Johnson in protest of suspected police involvement against the civil rights activist Blair Peach – a topic that did not even require translation to make it applicable to contemporary Poland.⁵⁰⁹

The fourth issue of *Post* uses the example of Crass – an English punk band that promoted anarchy while opposing aggression, force, violence, the army, and bureaucracy. Already the connections with Polish concerns are evident, particularly with the reference to bureaucracy. In this vein, Gajewski goes on to identify the band as an example of “how freedom is possible” – by being neither right nor left, communist, nor capitalist – and not even an official anarchist group, but rather, against formal politics. This theme – sometimes described as a “third circuit” (*trzeci obieg*) – soon became a popular way for bands to distinguish themselves both from the government and also from the political opposition, particularly the Solidarity movement, whose underground publications were often referred to as a “second circuit.”⁵¹⁰

Gajewski particularly identifies with the do-it-yourself ethos of Crass, shunning the commercialization of art, particularly since “cultural institutions are manipulated by state.” Translating the concept as “*robić swoje*” (make your own) – he advocates not only mass dissemination of culture, but also mass creation. This is possible even for amateurs simply by using a camera or video recorder. Audio tapes can be made simply with conversation, singing “*Sto lat*” (roughly the Polish equivalent of “Happy Birthday” or “For He’s a Jolly Good Fellow”), blowing into a bottle, or recording a local punk band.⁵¹¹

While celebrating the proliferation of independent culture, Gajewski (again, vicariously through Crass) lashes out at popular bands, writing, “Crass hates *rozrywka*

⁵⁰⁸ Dąbrowska, “Dzieci śmieci,” 12-13.

⁵⁰⁹ Andrzej Turczynowicz, “Number 3,” *Kanal Review*, 1980.

⁵¹⁰ Krzysztof Grabowski of Dezerter describes punk rock this way. Lizut, *Punk Rock Later*.

⁵¹¹ Gajewski and Rypson, *Post*, December 20, 1980.

(recreational music) and popular bands.” This is not particularly surprising. More significantly, though, he attacks punk bands that have deviated from the ideals he associates with punk: “Crass especially hates punk bands that start out with ideals but go on to prostitute themselves.”⁵¹² The music of Crass is “simple aesthetically, and is about self-awareness, unlike the crude, aggressive music of some so-called punks.” He then turns his ire to fans, noting that Crass is “not a pop band, so you can’t be a fan – but if you are not made stupid by the contemporary world, you can work with them.”⁵¹³

For anyone with doubts that this criticism is directed at the Polish scene, Gajewski returns to a first-person approach in the next and final issue of *Post*, where he proclaims the death of punk, writing “the bands tilt and deadlock no longer exist – but worse, this is the loss of a group of people wanting to drill a hole in the wall of indistinct youth recreational music ... The system wins again.” His explanation for how this happened is a basic version of the concept of hegemony and cooptation:

musical rebellion against system started, but adjusted to system because the system wouldn’t adjust- it just absorbed it through its net – presses, agencies, managers, images, designs, stores. So, we return to same stars – the rules are well known- you have to have a blond lock amid black hair, or colorful hair, twisted face, lack front teeth. Tonpress [a state record label] - for young people with ambition and a television. First there was punk in late 1970s – like futurism. Then new wave of 1980. Now both are dead.⁵¹⁴

Or in the more impassioned, less analytical words of Luter’s fanzine *Pasażer*,

Polish Rock Music – this hurts the most... Something ended... the music died... idiotic texts... exodus, kombi, krzak, sbb, disco band, 2+1, Maanam, breakout, czerwone gitary ... and the greatest idol, Niemen... boycott this trash... boycott this trash... they are all sons of bitches... music for no one... more cash... a pack of lies... hate them from the beginning... lies of the media... no chance at anything more than vegetation... find and kill ok that’s senseless but wet from tears.⁵¹⁵

⁵¹² The term *rozrywka* is particularly significant. Punk bands detested the idea of music as recreational, a musical function identified with *estrada* and disco.

⁵¹³ Gajewski and Rypson, *Post*, December 12, 1980.

⁵¹⁴ Gajewski and Rypson, *Post*, no. 6 (undated, probably late 1980).

⁵¹⁵ Dąbrowska, “Dzieci śmieci,” 12-13.

Many early publishers of punk periodicals ceased their activity shortly after, giving up on the movement for dead. Some publications pressed on. For instance, *Azotox* and then *QORYQ* were linked to the band Dezerter, discussed in the previous chapter. Jacek “Luter” Lenartowicz established *Pasażer*, which has existed as a punk fanzine and record label intermittently until the present.

Fans, Fan Clubs, and Anti-Fans

Henryk Gajewski wrote that punk bands did not have fan clubs. However, by 1983, fans of the most popular rock bands took a page out of punk’s book and created their own forum for discussing their favorite band and their music. Unlike punk fanzines, however, these fan groups often engaged with debates about rock in the mainstream press, writing in editorials to defend their favorite band from some of the critics of rock discussed above, and organizing voting blocs for their band on various hits list (much to the chagrin of radio *prezenters* and fans of less popular bands alike). Starting in 1983 and peaking in 1984, fan clubs for the most popular bands among younger listeners – especially Lombard, Republika, and Lady Pank – sprang up all over Poland. These organizations, often run by the local youth club, usually operated by correspondence, sending pictures and articles about the featured band in exchange for a small fee. Sometimes memberships reached into the thousands, while other clubs were smaller and more intimate, even meeting in person.

In fan clubs, we can see the extent to which rock bands that secured a spot in the mass media became idols among Polish youth. They wanted to be like them: one fan reportedly saved up the impressive sum of 17 thousand *złoty* in order to buy boots like Lady Pank’s Janusz Panasewicz. A cottage industry sprung up around Lady Pank paraphernalia – with Lady Pank perfume reportedly going for 80 *złoty* a bottle at newsstands. Another young fan admitted, “I want to be exactly like Kora, dress like her, act like her, and live like her.”⁵¹⁶ Fans used bands’ posters and pictures to decorate their walls, sought out music magazines for precisely this purpose, and wrote in droves begging for more large-format, color images (in fact, even an archival copy of *Razem* was missing two pages where its Lady Pank poster was torn out, perhaps by a zealous fan).

⁵¹⁶ Krzysztof Masłoń, “Bunt: przeciw komu?,” *Razem*, December 5, 1982.

But alongside its consumerist side, fandom had its own form of authenticity: when one fan wrote in to a magazine accusing a fan club of trying to make money, it dutifully responded with a list of its expenses in order to demonstrate that no profit was involved: supporting a favorite band was a deeper matter than one of mere profit.⁵¹⁷

The term “idol” does not quite capture the performer-fan relationship, however. Rock performers were revered and idolized, but at the same time, some fans thought about them in a more personal manner. They wrote to and about the bands and their members as though they were their friends, or even lovers. One fan wrote in a letter to a music magazine,

A minute ago, Lady Pank was on TV with the song “To tylko rock and roll.” Maybe you’ll think that I’m stupid, but on the card on which I’m writing right now, I am pouring tears of emotion. I probably never loved anyone, or ever will, as I love Janusz Panasewicz. Do you think I’ll capture him?⁵¹⁸

Of course, this introduced an awkward dynamic, since young teenage girls were writing to male idols at least a decade older than them. But in the imagination of the authors, this awkwardness did not exist, or at least could be overcome. One fan even wrote in to *Razem* to complain, “On the rock calendar, I saw the birth date of my idol, Zbyszek Krzywanski from Republika. How disappointed I was! I never thought he could be 33 years old.”⁵¹⁹ Not easily deterred, however, she then begged the editors to send her his address. Nor were these intense feelings limited to young women; letters from boys lavishing praise on their idols turn up only somewhat less frequently.

It is easy to dismiss these feelings as hormonal aberrations that are less meaningful than more rational engagement with a band’s lyrics. Indeed, these feelings could be powerful and irrational: one fan wrote of Lady Pank, “When I listen to you, I want to cry and scream; I don’t know what to do.”⁵²⁰ Or another on TSA: “They are heavenly. When Marek sings, I don’t know, I don’t hear anything else. I love TSA.”⁵²¹

⁵¹⁷ “Kłopot z fan klubem,” *Razem*, 1985.

⁵¹⁸ Jolanta Dylewska, Aldona Krajewska, Jacek Szmidt, “To Tylko Lady Pank,” *Na Przełaj*, December 23, 1984, 3.

⁵¹⁹ *Razem*, July 1 1984.

⁵²⁰ Witold Pawlowski, “I krzyk i płacz,” *Magazyn Muzyczny - Jazz*, February 1984.

⁵²¹ Masłoń, “Bunt: przeciw komu?”

One fan described her plans to leave home and move to Warsaw, simply to be closer to Lady Pank.⁵²² But dismissing these feelings would be a mistake. As we saw in some of the accounts above, it was precisely this irrationality that some cultural authorities found disturbing about rock. It was beyond reason. They could at least engage with rock's sociological causes or its low artistic level, but the emotional content of rock for its fans was beyond their understanding or power, and that concerned them.

At concerts, these feelings resulted in displays of fierce solidarity with bands – for instance, fans painting “We are with you” on a sheet and holding it up for the band to see at a Lady Pank concert, or dressing in white and black for a Republika show. After the concert, it could mean sending confetti from a show in all of your letters to your friends, as one Lady Pank fan said “all of Poland” did for months.⁵²³ It meant organizing letter campaigns to vote *en masse* for the favored band on the hits list. It also entailed writing in and complaining to editors of magazines and newspapers whenever an unfavorable article about the favorite band appeared. In sum, the emotional state of being a rock fan meant that a large number of young people – the very group the party, the opposition, and the Church were battling over – were committed to and mobilized behind something that they could not comprehend.

This remarkable commitment could also take a more negative form, however, leading fans to attack the bands or fans that they considered hostile to their own favorite group. The purpose of a fan club was to support the featured band, to provide a forum for sharing the experience of being a fan, and to offer additional contact, whether in the form of a newsletter, pictures, or occasionally even an arranged autograph appearance. However, as tensions grew in the rock world and the press amidst accusations that the most popular bands were dominating the music scene and profiting by collaborating with the music industry and implicitly, the government, antagonism grew within the rock scene. In some ways, this resembles the animosity between fans of rival sports clubs; in the fiercely competitive world of popular music in the PRL, the comparison is particularly apt.

⁵²² Dylewska, Krajewska, and Szmidt, “To Tylko Lady Pank.”

⁵²³ Ibid.

There was an especially fierce rivalry between Lady Pank and Republika. While the fact that both of these bands were among the most popular, mainstream groups in 1984 might make the differences between the two seem minor, in fact, this ostensible similarity made it all the more important for each group of fans to assert how different their own favorite was from the other. At one Lady Pank concert, a fan reported that Republika fans were roaming about and trying to tear off Lady Pank patches from fans and steal their band paraphernalia, ending in a bloody fight.⁵²⁴ Animosity between fans was strong enough that in February of 1985, a member of TSA came out publicly against this type of hostility, writing,

“It saddens me when I hear our fans fought with Republika fans. We play different types of music, it doesn't mean one is better, or that you must fight. Want to tell them that all of us bands are friends .We are all members of one rock family. We have one polish rock!”⁵²⁵

The youth rock press also tried to temper some of the animosity between groups. In early 1986, *Razem* published a letter from a Lady Pank fan who had previously been a Republika fan, but had turned away from the band, which it claimed had recently “completely deteriorated” whereas Lady Pank had not. The letter provoked such a range of counter attacks from Republika fans that the editors of the magazine intervened, publishing two letters that left the decision to a matter of taste and personal preference, adding, “we hope this is the end of the battle” and assuring readers of its own “equal regard for the two bands.”⁵²⁶

However, for many youth, this was more than a matter of taste. When combined by growing voices from both fans of alternative music and also critics of rock in the mainstream press – both of whom agreed that popular rock bands were dominating to the detriment of “good music,” negative feelings toward bands like Republika or Lady Pank became more intense. By 1985, alongside fan clubs, a new phenomenon developed, known as the anti-fan (*anty-fan*) and anti-fan club. These groups were occasionally formally organized much like fan clubs, but more often informally consisted of a range of people who shared a dislike for a particular band. Where fan clubs directed the passion of

⁵²⁴ Ibid.

⁵²⁵ Krzysztof Masłoń, “TSA,” *Razem*, February 3, 1985.

⁵²⁶ “Republika i Lady Pank,” *Razem*, March 30 1986.

fans toward their favorite idols, anti-fan clubs directed equally passionate rejections toward the hated artist. In the midst of circulating accusations about bands being official, incorporated, or commercial, one of the easiest ways to support your own band was to distinguish it from another group that was tainted by these accusations. In some reports, groups of these anti-fans would even go to concerts of groups they disliked in order to jeer at the bands and antagonize their fans.

The growth of these negative feelings is conveyed by surveys taken by youth music magazines in 1985. In the year end survey conducted by the magazine *Non Stop*, Lady Pank dominated, with first place in the categories of band of the year, best male vocalist (Janusz Panasewicz), and best songwriter (Mogielnicki) for 1984. However, the same band was also first place on the list of biggest disappointments for the year, with 615 votes out of 2573 participants in the survey— that is, 120 more than voted for it for band of the year.⁵²⁷ In other words, readers of *Non Stop* – probably the best representation of the middle-of-the-road rock fan that spanned both its alternative and its mainstream sides – were divided. Roughly ¼ of readers loved Lady Pank, roughly half of them were uninterested in the band, and ¼ hated them. The same was true for Republika, although on a smaller scale: it was both the second most popular and the second most disappointing band of the year according to the survey. The next year, the results were even more disturbing: a survey of rock fans appearing in *Razem* magazine in April of 1985 awarded the Ministry of Culture and Art with the “noose” award for “the greatest harm done to rock.” Second place went to Lady Pank.

Where in 1982, a band like Lady Pank had only conservative cultural and political authorities and industry representatives to contend with, by 1985, they were also targets for the animosity of rock fans that preferred more uncompromising bands in the spirit of punk, and even for fans of other popular rock bands. This applied to Republika as well: recall from the previous chapter that in the summer of 1985, the band was nearly booted off the stage at Jarocin. The criticisms voiced by each of these disparate groups overlapped to a surprising degree – all parties agreed that mainstream rock bands were dominating the music scene, at the expense of more deserving bands.

⁵²⁷ Wojciech Soporek, “Plebiscyt non stopu: Najpopularniejsi w roku 1984,” January 1985.

In the face of this growing rift, the youth music press sought ways to reunite the rock scene. However, they could not reach an agreement at how this could be achieved. In early 1985, a writer in *Magazyn Muzyczny* noted that the Polish scene had divided into different camps, with one side including bands interested in recording like Maanam, Lady Pank, Klaus Mittfoch, Dezerter, TSA, Lombard, Oddział Zamknięty or Kombi, and the other comprised of bands uninterested in recording like Tilt, Kult, and Deuter, as well as the new groups Siekiera, Piersi, and Made in Poland. This reflects the division that had been developing in the scene over the past years, but the inclusion of TSA and Klaus Mittfoch and especially Dezerter alongside the likes of Lombard, Lady Pank, and even Kombi suggests that movement between the two was more fluid than the bands that considered themselves alternative would admit (Klaus Mittfoch liked to consider itself an “anti-star” band, and Dezerter certainly considered itself one of the uncompromising alternative groups).⁵²⁸ A couple of months later, an interviewer lamented that even a couple of years ago,

Rock fans were divided into fans of official groups and alternative groups, but no wars were heard of, and at a festival like [the new wave festival in] Toruń, bands like Republika, Brak, and punk bands were equally warmly received. Now that is unthinkable.”⁵²⁹

In these conditions, by mid 1985, the question of whether rock was dying had become widespread in the music press. In April 1985, Klub 3 – a formation of the Trójka and youth periodicals *Razem* and *Sztandar Młodych* oriented around youth music asked whether Polish rock had reached an end. It sought opinions among various figures of the rock scene, including musicians Zbigniew Hołdys, Jan Borysewicz (of Lady Pank), and Tomasz Lipiński (of Tilt), as well as Jarocin’s Walter Chelstowski, Tonpress director Marek Proniewicz, and journalist Marek Wiernik. Only the last two completely dismissed the claims, suggesting that rock was having some difficulties with money (Wiernik) and equipment and managers (Proniewicz), but was still going strong. Hołdys took the opposite position, suggesting that rock was not “dying” but rather, was being “systematically murdered by various commissions and journalists that know nothing

⁵²⁸ Wiesław Weiss, “Wróżenie z Fusów,” February 1985.

⁵²⁹ Krzysztof Masłoń, “Zakrecony Punk,” *Razem*, April 14, 1985, 18-19.

about it but give unambiguous opinions and people using rock to make a profit.” This was preventing more ambitious, controversial music from making it to the public.

However, Holdys added that rock was not exactly dying; rather, it was going back underground, leading people to believe that it did not exist. Lipiński and Borysewicz – musicians in bands on opposite end of the rock spectrum between alternative and mainstream – both shared this perception. Lipiński suggested that the mass media had already exploited the top bands to the point that nothing was left of them, but that “real rock” was in the best condition ever. Just in Warsaw, he noted, he knew of hundreds of new bands – it was just a matter of helping them rather than hindering them with policies like MKiS *werifikacje* (verification). Similarly, Borysewicz noted that rock was held back by the mass media, but at the local level, thousands of bands were playing at houses of culture, clubs, and bars. It was simply that they could not be heard on records or on the radio or television.⁵³⁰ The conclusion, then, was that rock may have been dead as far as its mainstream presence, but rock bands continued to exist underground.

Strictly speaking, this was not true: rock continued to be played on programs like the hits list. In fact, at the time the article was being published, the radio hits list top 30 included Lady Pank (number 2), Oddział Zamknięty (number 5), Klaus Mittfoch (number 17), Kombi (number 25), and TSA (number 28). Of course, to a certain extent, the hits list itself could have been an exception to the rule of rock’s diminishing presence. Nonetheless, as one of the most popular radio programs in Poland, it is significant. Curiously, Borysewicz – the guitarist whose own band was number 2 on the hits list – responded to the question of whether rock had died with, “it lives on in our hearts.” One can imagine an interviewer responding, “Rock lives on in our hearts?” And what about its living on in the number two slot on the most popular radio show in Poland?”

This incongruity suggests that something else was going on. Poland’s rock scene was so oriented around the concept of being alternative that even an instrumentalist in a popular band like Lady Pank had trouble recognizing music that enjoyed a mainstream presence for several years as really being rock in any meaningful sense. Seemingly, Lady Pank’s guitarist had trouble seeing his own group as a genuine rock band by 1985. Without delving into the realm of psychology, it is surely significant that in an interview

⁵³⁰ Andrzej Pasternak, “Czy koniec Polskiego rocka?,” *Sztandar Młodych*, April 19, 1985.

that year, Borysewicz identified his favorite band as Siekiera, perhaps the most controversial, uncompromising band of that time.⁵³¹

Rock first rose to popularity in Poland by fusing the alternative, rebellious spirit of punk with the accessibility of MMG. Over time, this uneasy combination fell victim to its own success: as bands became widely popular, fans began to doubt their authenticity. This spurred the music press to search for a way to return to the rock as a cohesive cultural form, although there was some disagreement as to how this would be done. As Borysewicz's choice of Siekiera as a favorite band suggests, one solution to rock's illness was to return to punk rock's alternative roots. In *Non Stop*, a writer under the pseudonym "Dr. Avane" published articles about the "Off" scene (a synonym for alternative) in Poland, connecting it to punk roots in the west and Poland in the late 1970s before it had been adapted to accommodate public consumption. Dr. Avane refrained from disparaging more mainstream groups, but he focused entirely on bands that had not been accepted by the music industry like Deuter, Tilt, TZN Xenna, (the first two groups were early punk bands that reactivated in 1984). In the conclusion, he added a tribute to "culture of the margin" and "underground culture" – a distinct contrast to the rock that had become mainstream at that time.⁵³²

Anna Dąbrowska (a Dezerter fan – a rarity among journalists at the time) wrote in March of 1985 about rock's ever increasing popularity among youth, but drew a more troubling conclusion at the end:

Radio is a prophet in matters of music, a machine for winning young tastes. It's evident that youth accept and love that which is promoted on their favorite programs. The ambition of most of these is prompting their listeners as to what is good and bad... they don't consider that youth, with their unsteady, imprecise views give them unlimited trust and treat these prophets as the final word. Thus they are freed from independent thought... This means that there is a thirst for easier music, not requiring use of the brain, wider listening or musical sensitivity. A guy jumps around on stage like a puppet and calls himself the Polish Jagger, and you believe him. The pseudo-rebellious, pseudo-contestational pseudo-ideology silences the suspicion that

⁵³¹ Kamil Sipowicz, "Mister Pank," *Razem*, January 13, 1985.

⁵³² "Bardzo knotrowersyjny manifest Dr-a Avane," July 1984.

you are listening to stupid music in which nothing is going
on.⁵³³

In other words, rock had once offered something provocative, engaging and different, but it had lost its meaning as it was diluted into little more than a spectacle for dumbed-down audiences. The problem with rock in this account was its departure from its alternative roots.

On the other hand, as voices in *Non Stop* came out critical of rock's mainstream popularity and in favor of alternative groups, Marian Butrym was making just the opposite argument in *Magazyn Muzyczny*, whose editors continued to downplay rock's more controversial aspects. Butrym suggested that good, old-fashioned entertainment was being replaced by the "spirit of the protest song." Moreover, this was to rock's detriment, since it was making rock less fun and more boring. Only occasionally did people remember to dance at concerts, he complained. More and more, rock took on "an entirely serious, mystical, anointed, even Eucharistic mood. A joke, scoff, irony, or lightness are values sought more than a glass of water in the desert."⁵³⁴ Both of these approaches agreed that "pseudo-rebellion" was becoming a problem in rock. However, where writers like Dąbrowska thought the main problem was the "pseudo," for Butrym, the "rebellion" was the primary problem.

The rock scene was already rife with tension in 1985. When one of the greatest scandals in Polish rock broke out in 1986, it showed just how fragile the possibility of maintaining widespread popularity as a rock band was in the PRL. On June 1, 1986 Lady Pank was scheduled to perform at the Olympic Stadium in Wrocław, as part of a youth event organized by the regional ZSMP youth union. As a number of previous examples have demonstrated, this was not an unusual occurrence; youth clubs were frequent sponsors of rock.

Yet, this position was a delicate one, as the events at the Lady Pank concert demonstrated. Besides the typical summer concert experience of a closed hall crowded with people in the summer sun, the concert organizers prevented some ticket holders from entering the concert, reportedly due to the "improper behavior" of some Lady Pank

⁵³³ "Jedyna miłość rock?," *Razem*, March 17, 1985, 18.

⁵³⁴ "Lista Nieobecności," April 1985.

fans. By the time the concert was to start, some audience members had already been standing for four hours. When added to the tension already existing in the rock scene, particularly directed toward mainstream rock bands like Lady Pank, the result was a volatile situation. According to one audience member – a party member taking her two sons to see their favorite band,

There was chaos in the auditorium when it happened. The incident was preceded by whistles and yells that certainly didn't come from the mouths of fans of the band. I saw various aggressive groups hostile to children, with posters and writing on their jackets identifying their membership to "punks" or "hippies," sworn enemies of this type of music. It was thus not fans [causing trouble], but rather unbridled opponents of the band.⁵³⁵

When a less-than-sober Lady Pank member was received by a less-than-friendly crowd, the result was, in the words of an internal report on the incident for the Minister of Culture,

The leader of the band, after coming on stage, dissatisfied with the reaction of the audience, behaved in an insulting manner with words and gestures, voiced rude comments at the security services, and finally committed an act overtly offending public morality, showing his genitals. To the applause of the audience he was apprehended and led away by the police. The organizers publicly condemned the behavior and the event ended without any further disturbances.⁵³⁶

The local ZSMP was outraged. They wrote a note to the party's Central Committee informing them that their intent had been to provide a much-needed social event, as well as a "interesting and useful way of spending free time" – also mentioning its proceeds funding children's homes. Thus, we can imagine the union's righteous indignity at the "hooliganish excesses" of the band members. Not wanting "to use vulgar words, because that is the domain of [Lady Pank guitarist] Mr. Borysewicz and his companions," the local ZSMP leadership omitted a description of the event in its report to

⁵³⁵ Marta Bartkowiak, "Letter to Wydział Kultury," June 4, 1986, 1354 Wydział Kultury PZPR, 1326, 947/116, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw, Poland.

⁵³⁶ Wicedyrektor Departamentu, mgr Jerzy Bisiak, "Notatka służbowa dla MKiS Ob. Prof. Dr Kazimierza Żygulskiego w sprawie incydentu na stadionie olimpijskim we Wrocławiu 1986.6.01," June 1986, 1354 Wydział Kultury PZPR, 1326, 947/116, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw, Poland.

the Central Committee, but they assured that any observer of the event could fill in the repugnant details. The one ray of hope the ZSMP committee could see in the event was that “youth present at the stadium separated themselves from pseudo-artists, having had enough of the savagery of people for whom the world revolves around money.”

Moreover, they continued,

The excesses of Borysewicz are not an isolated occurrence. It was only one of many symptoms of the deathly illness that for some time has affected Polish recreation. We cannot accept that people of Borysewicz’s type raise our fellow youths. Unfortunately, people responsible for that sphere of life believe that there is no problem. They prefer to leave the door open to what is going on in Polish entertainment than to aid the pure amateur cultural movement.⁵³⁷

Concluding, they apologized that the “enjoyment of children and youth was interrupted by hooliganish excesses,” adding, “in the name of the observers of the event we categorically ask for the immediate dissolution of the band Lady Pank.” They then promised to send a request to that effect to the Minister of Culture and Art.

The intense moralizing of the language used by the ZSMP comes as some surprise, considering they invited the band to perform in the first place. To some extent, the reason for such a strong position was probably a desire to avoid full responsibility for the scandal by shifting the blame away from themselves. However, the choice to shift blame not only to the band, but also to “people responsible for this sphere of life” was a risky move when writing to the Division of Culture and Minister of Culture and Art – that is, the people who were ultimately responsible for that sphere of life.

Beyond the ZSMP’s own efforts to cover itself, however, the language suggests the delicate state of Polish rock: while it had garnered some tolerance from authorities by 1986 (at the level of the ZSMP, it evidently had enough support to warrant inviting Lady Pank in the first place), an incident like this could provide just the impulse needed to quickly reverse this position. On one hand, this rapid change may have been the result of vying forces within the organization, some more tolerant of rock, and others less, with

⁵³⁷ Ryszard Lis, wiceprzewodniczący zw ZSMP, “Oficjalne stanowisko zarządu wojewódzkiego ZSMP we Wrocławiu w sprawie wydarzeń podczas imprezy odbywający się 1.6.1986 na stadionie olimpijskim,” June 3, 1986, 1354 Wydział Kultury PZPR, 1326, 947/116, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw, Poland.

rock's opponents gaining strength from such a clear example of a breach of tolerable behavior. On the other, it may have simply pushed individuals uncertain where policy on rock should stand over the line, to opposing it. Without any evidence of the debate that went into the writing of the letter or the decision to invite the band it is impossible to say for certain, but both factors were likely at work.

In any case, central authorities were not fooled by the ZSMP's attempt to absolve itself of blame. The MKiS report on the incident noted that the ZSMP had "directed its objections poorly," since they were responsible for the event as its organizers. With some condescension, the report noted that the ZSMP report had a "sharp tone" but offered a "not entirely concrete" description of what had taken place. "Of course," it continued, "the ZSMP's request for breaking up the band by the Ministry is groundless, since the existence of such a group depends exclusively on the mutual agreement of its members..." Neither the party nor the Ministry were in the business of breaking up rock bands. Nor could they deny them the right to employment, the note added, without a court order. However, the regional party authorities were perfectly able to prevent the organization of events with the participation of the band. Moreover, Pagart could refuse to include Lady Pank in plans for travel abroad and thereby "practically exclude the band from performing abroad." This was precisely what the author of the report suggested, noting that "the continued existence and performance of the band Lady Pank is against the interest of society."⁵³⁸

In its conclusion, however, the report took a more even tone. The Ministry, it reported, had long attempted to prevent rock's infringement on "music of a more traditional character" by funding and promoting the latter. Even so, it added, "that does not mean that we can deny the fundamental values appearing in youth music, including – in better times for the band – in the recordings and performances of Lady Pank." It then added, partially in its own defense, that the high profits and demoralization of youth mentioned by the ZSMP was the fault of regional authorities who were going "outside the official program for disseminating culture" rather than a lack of central directives.⁵³⁹

⁵³⁸ Wicedyrektor Departamentu, mgr Jerzy Bisiak, "Notatka służbowa dla MKiS Ob. prof. dr Kazimierza Żygulskiego w sprawie incydentu na stadionie olimpijskim we Wrocławiu 1986.6.01," June 1986.

⁵³⁹ Ibid.

Concluding, the report called for censuring the band, but stopped short of the ZSMP's wholesale critique of rock (and the system that allowed it). Marta, who attended the concert as a party member and the mother of two Lady Pank fans, went further in a letter to the Division of Culture with her own account of the event. Using her credentials as a school teacher, she suggested that the party refrain from following the advice of the ZSMP in calling for the band's dissolution, since most youth would see it as not only senseless, but as a cause for "solidarity and spontaneous empathy with Borysewicz."⁵⁴⁰ Further, she pointed out the irony of moral outrage on television and in the press, since the images they continued to publish and broadcast "exposed" more children to Borysewicz than the incident itself had.

Indeed, the press eagerly took up the opportunity to present a scandal, with images of the incident published on newspaper and magazine covers as well as coverage on television. In this case, though, the situation provoked even more outrage due to the nature of the event. First, it was organized as a youth event by the ZSMP. Second, the band had always had a younger fan base, mostly mid-teens, but had attracted some even younger fans with their involvement in the soundtrack of the cartoon *About Two who Stole the Moon*. As a result, a considerable portion of the audience was young teens or even children. As the incident was publicized, the ZSMP was not alone in attempting to isolate itself from the repercussions. Andrzej Mogielnicki, the band's manager and lyricist, condemned Borysewicz, claiming that not only the audience, but also he and the other band members were victims of the incident. Lady Pank had been at the height of popularity only two years earlier; now, it had trouble finding anyone willing to speak on its behalf. The situation was precisely the sort of thing rock's most committed opponents had always thought would happen – alongside demolition of hotels and other hooliganism. Even the relatively rock-friendly youth magazine *Razem* noted that the incident was disappointing, but not a surprise given the band's propensity to hooliganism.⁵⁴¹

The ZSMP was not alone in its moral outrage at the scandal. The most moderate words in the press came from *Non Stop*, where Jerzy Bojanowicz and Jacek Zwozniak

⁵⁴⁰ Marta Bartkowiak, "Letter to Wydział Kultury."

⁵⁴¹ "Fan," *Na Przelaj*, May 4, 1986.

acknowledged Borysewicz's bad choice, but pointed out the hypocrisy of the media and everyone else involved in allowing and publicizing the incident. Zwozniak mocked the letters that were being published expressing moral outrage at the incident (and particularly one from an alleged friend of Borysewicz's family claiming that Borysewicz was a bad son, refusing to visit his mother when she was ill), writing, "I am waiting for the next letter to be sent to the editors. The letter should begin with the words, 'We, women, mother-Poles, pregnant working wives, and so on,' and then express condemnation."⁵⁴²

A few fans responded, thanking Bojanowicz and Zwozniak for their more balanced approach, blaming the incident on the industry and others who wanted the band to fail. However, the damage was done. Ominously, Zwozniak had noted that the ZSMP's request for the band to be dissolved was pointless because the band had, in effect, dissolved itself. This was not just due to anticipated difficulties the band would face in organizing future events. Shortly after the incident, fan clubs for the band began to dissolve. One club in Kraków ceased its activity in July when the local directors of the youth organization that sponsored it decided to dissolve the club.⁵⁴³

The "Ohyda" fan club in Łódź also announced that it was dissolving after three years of activity. In this case, however, it was the club's own decision – not due to the antics in Wrocław, it insisted, but rather because "continuing activity would not have the least bit of sense." The club's leaders wrote a letter to *Razem* explaining that "Everything would have been ok [with the fan club] if not for the band, and particularly its manager." In the view of the club, Lady Pank and Mogielnicki had failed to support the club or even live up to its promises to provide promotional material or events at which it had agreed to appear. They asked,

Can a fan club exist in this scenario? We long had flaps over our eyes, long we were naïve, but in the end, we awoke... It is strange that the band itself became the reason for the breakup of its own fan club. The more popular the band, the more it disrespects its fans and fan clubs. Some fans awake from this blindness when they understand that not everything about LP is heavenly.⁵⁴⁴

⁵⁴² Jerzy Bojanowicz and Jacek Zwozniak, "Nokaut czy Harakiri?," *Non stop*, August 1986.

⁵⁴³ "Fan." *Na Przełaj*, July 27, 1986.

⁵⁴⁴ *Ibid.* July 20, 1986.

In some ways, this rebuke is even worse than the loss of fans due to the scandal; this was a sign of a deeper problem with the band's place in Poland's rock scene, not just a particular incident. In combination with the growing critique of mainstream rock bands, the scandal helped build a coalition between conservative politicians, parents, and disillusioned youth – a grouping that spelled doom for the band's future. This was took place with particular drama with Lady Pank, but similar developments took place more subtly with other popular rock bands, including Republika (which was nearly booed off the stage in 1985 at Jarocin), Lombard, and Maanam. By late 1986, none of these bands was active.

As many of Poland's most popular rock bands broke up and ceased activity, some of the bands that had been most closely identified with the alternative scene – Siekiera, Kult, and Tilt – took their place in the spotlight, as I detailed in the previous chapter. As the distinction between alternative and mainstream, punk and pop blurred, the meaning of punk altogether came up for debate. This time, though, the forum was not underground fanzines, but rather, *Na Przelaj*, the periodical of the official scouting organization, ZHP. After being proliferated by its association with MMG and mainstream rock, punk was now no longer the domain of a few dedicated followers; rather, it was subject to the opinions of a diverse range of young Poles across the country.

Na Przelaj had occasionally covered rock over the 1980s well before it entered the mainstream press. With the development of the Scouting Broadcast as the most highly regarded alternative radio program in 1985, *Na Przelaj* followed in its footsteps. While the magazine did not sponsor or even take up a defense of punk, it served as a forum where alternative music and culture could be discussed relatively openly. The first case took the sociological format.

In December of 1985, the editors published two letters. One was from “Agrawa,” a young Polish woman who considered herself a punk and wanted to know why people always picked on punks when all they wanted was to be themselves and be treated like normal people. The other was from “Beata,” who told the story of how she had briefly

spent time with a group of punks, only to have them turn against her and treat her “like a call-girl” when she did not want to devote herself completely to the punk agenda.⁵⁴⁵

The magazine asked what punks had to say “in their defense.” These positions were just vague enough to offer a wide room of interpretation, but specific enough to provoke a response, particularly due to the implication of punks’ aggression against women. Indeed, the responses were overwhelming. More surprisingly, though, the majority were from women, both claiming to be punks and otherwise. Letters were published over the next several issues, well into 1986; it was perhaps the longest-running reader response theme of the magazine that decade. The series was titled “Punk according to two views,” but in fact, the number of positions that came out was much greater.

Many of the first responses were defensive, blaming Beata for the situation. One young woman calling herself “Acha” wrote,

I don’t understand Beata when she writes she was treated like a call girl. They didn’t do it to her, she allowed it... There are many girls like me, but there are also those that only have discos in their heads. I have a boyfriend in the movement, punks also love, and have hearts, because they are also people.⁵⁴⁶

Another wrote,

Beata didn’t join group out of similar ideology, she was just a poser... that wanted to dress in leather. Being around them a few months doesn’t mean she knows who they are. We are on the margins, we encounter aggressiveness, how can we not be aggressive?⁵⁴⁷

A few weeks later, “Kaszana” suggested, “Beata came just because she was fascinated, saw it as a new adventure... only those who share our ideology can stay with us.”⁵⁴⁸

Some readers took a more belligerent tone. “Agatka Wariatka” (Crazy Agatha) wrote that it was not punks that needed to write in defense of themselves, but rather, “normals,” who smelled bad, were always drunk, and behaved much worse at soccer games than punks at their concerts.⁵⁴⁹ Another lashed out at *Na Przelaj* and its editors,

⁵⁴⁵ “Punk podwójnie widziany,” December 8, 1985.

⁵⁴⁶ Ibid., December 15, 1985.

⁵⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁹ Ibid., January 5, 1986.

asking why they published the letters at all – “So you could sneer at us? So you could have contact with us trash-children?”⁵⁵⁰ Similarly, one young woman calling herself a punk criticized the periodical for publishing such trash, which was sure to agitate punks.⁵⁵¹

The third defensive approach was to identify the problem as primarily one of misidentification. One reader asked whether perhaps Beata had mistakenly identified as punks what were actually just an ordinary bunch of “*gitowcy*” (bullies/hooligans) or fascists, who “recently have been wearing leather,” making identification difficult.⁵⁵² Another assured Beata that her tormenters were “just poser-punks,” since “real punks don’t do this.”⁵⁵³ A third, “Młody,” suggested that perhaps Beata had encountered pseudo-punks, or “*panks*,” (from the Polonized version of the word from which Lady Pank took its name), and not actual “punks.” For real “punks,” he added, “it’s not about appearance or shocking people, although that is a goal. Our music is dirty, but there is beauty in dirtiness, no?”⁵⁵⁴

Some readers reaffirmed Agrawa’s conviction that punks should be tolerated and treated like normal people:

People identify us with hooligans, the margins, not taking trouble to understand that in punk philosophy is the most important. First they think punk – hooligan, only later, a person. People are educated by the papers, if they read that punk means bandit, they believe it. They treat us as dangerous animals that should be shut away somewhere. But all are free to their own style, even if it is fantastic.⁵⁵⁵

Another agreed that punks were the object of unfair aggression, but offered a logical explanation:

Punk music is music of battle for human rights, for freedom, for the right to be different. And even if you listen and don’t understand entirely, something remains.... It is not possible to listen to the texts of a band like Deuter and not consider, for just one moment, what has happened in

⁵⁵⁰ Ibid., December 15, 1985.

⁵⁵¹ Ibid., January 5, 1986.

⁵⁵² Ibid., December 22, 1985.

⁵⁵³ Ibid., December 29, 1985.

⁵⁵⁴ Ibid., December 8, 1985.

⁵⁵⁵ Ibid., December 29, 1985.

Poland and what is happening now. To answer Agrawa, people don't like punks because they speak the truth about them, about their newspapers, television, and other matters that aren't discussed.⁵⁵⁶

Other readers – although a decided minority – responded with sharp rebukes of punk, suggesting that their rejection by society was merited. Aska M. called them an “army of Satan,” as well as remarking that punks were dirty.⁵⁵⁷ Anit wrote, “We don't just dislike you because your movement exists. It arises from your brutality and indifference ... You talk about peace, but you act with violence.”⁵⁵⁸ A third reader objected to punks' connection to music, writing, “Punks are only interested in music. For other people it is pleasant, nothing more. What will Agrawa do when she is old enough to have to earn money and take care of herself?”⁵⁵⁹

One frequent objection was to the magazine's – and some readers' – referring to punk as a “movement” (*ruch*). Some met this suggestion with irony: one reader calling himself a “decent punk” sent greetings from everyone in the “movement” to all the “normals.”⁵⁶⁰ Another outright rejected the idea that it could be objectified and categorized so easily, writing,

The “movement” – as you call it ... isn't a single group. There are different philosophies, thoughts about life, social origins, and levels of intelligence like any group of youth ... Punk ideology can't be clearly formulated – many people think they are punks, but don't have anything in common with it. Thoughts are the private matter of each, no one examines anyone. There are existentialist and beer seekers, bandits and near saints, crazies and geniuses.⁵⁶¹

Of all of the variety in these responses, perhaps the one certainty that arises is that punk was impossible to pin down and categorize, at least by 1985. In part, this was because there were as many ideas of what punk was as there were people calling themselves punks (or more, since non-punks also had their own ideas about punk). This variety was often combined, however, with an ingrained resistance to being categorized

⁵⁵⁶ Ibid., December 22, 1985.

⁵⁵⁷ Ibid., January 5, 1986.

⁵⁵⁸ Ibid., December 15, 1985.

⁵⁵⁹ Ibid., January 5, 1986.

⁵⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁶¹ Ibid., December 22, 1985.

and rationalized by society. As Z.D., the writer of the passage quoted above, put it, “No real punk would answer your question.” Being understood rationally by wider society was not one of their interests.

For both of these reasons, it would be foolish to try to define punk here. If it had once been something like a movement, when it was restricted to a few clubs, managers, and bands in Warsaw and Gdańsk, its meanings had expanded beyond the control of this small group as it entered wider social circles. Now, just as the punk rock scene was fracturing into mutually hostile groups, challenging each other as to what was genuine and what was not, different ideas of what “punk” meant were arising and competing. This did not mean that the possible range of meanings was infinite: nobody claimed being a punk could mean conforming to social norms whenever possible or trying to fit in. Moreover, despite differences in opinion, everyone agreed that being a punk meant something, that it was different from other people, and that this was important. But by 1985, the range of possibilities had expanded dramatically, even as it seemed ever more crucial to identify who was “real” and who was not.

The second tack the magazine took with punk adopted the aesthetic approach. Instead of interrogating the meaning of punk socially, it looked at punk as art. Under the title *Koalang*, Aldona Krajewska published a series that presented lyrics from Polish punk songs. The title says a great deal about the series’ literary basis and subcultural orientation: it is a term drawn from a literary work by Janusz Zajdel, who uses it to denote a special internal language that only a few select people can understand.

In the series, Krajewska ardently defended the music, and particularly its texts from the attacks of conservative cultural critics that failed to understand the value of the music: “Rock creativity, and especially punk rock, heavy metal and co. is thrown together into one bag: ... Worthless trash.” However, she noted,

Jarocin is evolving. After the simplicity of texts of the punk rock types, recently compositions of bands qualified for the review, even removed from the stratum of sound and interpretation, remain artistically valuable, often mature under a formal connection, conveying a vision and speaking about that which effects and hurts all of us.⁵⁶²

⁵⁶² Aldona Krajewska, “Koalang,” *Na Przełaj*, March 16, 1986, 5.

In her argument for punk's artistic value, she invoked the ideals of both socialist approaches to culture and more traditional Polish literary values. For the former, she described punk musicians as the worker-artist, the ideal of socialist efforts to disseminate culture among the working class, writing "Jarocin for a few days a year is a city of poets who day to day go to school, work in a factory or industrial complex... The understanding between the stage and audience is complete." At the same time, they could be seen as a substitute for a new group of Polish poets, like the group of young 19th century romantics that were held as the height of Poland's literary development:

There are no Skamanders in the 1980s of our century, it's not clear if the bards will be born. What did they write when they were 20? The authors of rock poetry are often younger. There is not much to compare in their creations – not with the goods that no one asks for, from the shelves with the word "poetry" in bookstores. In regards to strength of presentation, authenticity, depth of thought, currentness, there is nothing to discuss, they are the best.⁵⁶³

Considering the level of controversy about punk's musical and sociological value at the time, the article series is remarkable. In some ways, like Dr. Avane in *Non Stop*, it sought to return to punk as a small underground artistic movement connected to *avant-garde* art movements like surrealism. One issue even included a lengthy treatise on Dadaism, whose "ideology and activity" reminded its author – 16 year old "Abnormal Jacek" of Warsaw – of punk. He wrote, "In the Dada Manifesto we read that it is necessary to inform people of their own hopelessness, battle with rubbish, stupidity, the fat bourgeoisie ... enlighten them!!!"⁵⁶⁴ It then proceeds to describe the movement, quoting liberally from the manifesto, for an entire page of the magazine.

Still more remarkably, the series published the lyrics of songs by some of the most controversial punk bands, including Abbadon, WC, Dezerter, Siekiera (from its hardcore years; "Było tylko czterech nas" is included), and Moskwa (written M-kwa, likely to avoid censorship, although the band itself frequently suggested it was even more subversive to expose censorship by writing its name this way) as well as newer punk

⁵⁶³ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁴ Ibid., September 28, 1986.

revival bands like Variete, Kosmetyki Miss Pinki and Dzieci Kapitana Klossa.⁵⁶⁵ While they were separated from the sounds and actions that gave them much of their power, producing the texts in written form was an even bolder move as far as censors were concerned, since it was the texts and not sounds that drew direct intervention from the state. The cycle also encouraged writers to send in letters describing their own thoughts about punk texts and bands, and even began to publish texts written in by hopeful amateur punk poets. Pati, for instance, wrote an ode to Jarocin, describing how youth from all of Poland came to make the grey city colorful with their dyed hair, for “a week of joy / a week of song / a week of brotherhood / and unity.”⁵⁶⁶

While these lines from a young poet are more reminiscent of socialist realism than of punk, in its overall objectives, “Koalang” can be seen as a sort of punk art revival movement, disseminating some of the most controversial punk poetry among young Poles – and specifically (and remarkably, given the decidedly non-punk connotations of scouting) those tied to the scouting movement. Even more, it encouraged them to participate in punk by writing their own texts. It was also a slap in the face to more conservative cultural authorities, among whom even the most tolerant often thought punk was noteworthy strictly in a sociological sense, and certainly not worthy of mention in the same paragraph as the Skamander poets. It elevated the movement, assailed from without by critics and from within by disagreement, to the realm of high art – certainly a more flattering and a safer place than the murky territory of being a sociological phenomenon.

Two letters from readers sent in on May 4 1986 capture both sides of opinions about this. Piotr wrote,

These are texts of some culture or subculture. This is fiction. If culture rests on something like this, then it is nothing. That which you are introducing is only the desperate hemorrhaging of words.

Marzena, on the other hand, argued,

I read through Koalang, and something arose in me. It delighted me, I inhaled quickly. The texts are miraculous,

⁵⁶⁵ Krzysztof Lesiakowski, *Jarocin w obiektywie bezpieki* (Warszawa, 2004) describes this interesting preference by Moskwa to display censorship.

⁵⁶⁶ “Koalang,” July 1986.

miraculous! Purely wise and aware, sometimes threatening, but most importantly, true. The wonderful “young poetry of the 20th century.” I am full of respect for their creators, respect far greater than I have for the creations of [famous writers] Rey or Moliere.

Clearly, the second approach looks on punk much more favorably, comparing it to the world’s best works of poetry. Some high-profile punk band members appreciated this approach. Accusations that punk was a sociological pathology, devoid of aesthetic value were condescending and offensive, devaluing the music and its fans. At the same time, this interpretation encouraged concert organizers, radio presenters, and industry representatives to restrict the presentation of the music, depriving bands and fans of the contact they each craved. In response, musicians mocked sociological treatments of the music, and sometimes defended their artistic credentials. In 1987, for instance, after years of hearing of the lack of his music’s value compared to the “sung poetry” of more established entertainers, Tomasz Budzyński of Armia and early Siekiera cited classical composers Mahler, Debussy, Stravinsky, and Messaien as influences, asserting that he was both a “screamer” and a “poet” – although more than either, he thought of himself as a “painter.”⁵⁶⁷

By defining punk as high art, however, “Koalang” also restricted its meaning to a particular range. Many punks certainly did not listen to the music because it was like reading Rey or Moliere. Defining punk as high art fit it into a formula that cultural and political authorities were very comfortable with – even if they doubted that it belonged there. This was one of the dilemmas of treating punk to a rational analysis in a mainstream periodical: treating it as a sociological phenomenon made it appropriately shocking and controversial, but demeaned the creativity of its producers, and additionally, risked attracting the attention of authorities who wished to suppress it. Treating it as high art, however, credited its creators with intelligence and artistic talent, but cordoned off its destructive impulses.

By mid 1986, writing about punk’s origins might have seemed like a rebirth of the movement, but it also had an air of nostalgia – a wistful look at days when punk actually

⁵⁶⁷ Tomasz Budzyński, Sławomir Gołaszewski and Andrzej Turczynowicz, “Niewidzialna Armia,” *Magazyn Muzyczny - Jazz*, August 1987.

had meant something. Punk's association with MMG and mainstream rock had increased its numbers of enthusiasts (and opponents) dramatically. However, it also multiplied its possible meanings to the point that no one agreed on what being a punk actually meant. As punk came into contact with the mainstream press, its meaning was increasingly filtered through its analytical language and contemporary discourse on youth and culture. Despite the diversity of responses in *Na Przelaj*, all are far from the approach to punk in the fanzines at the beginning of the decade.

Rock as a "Third Option"?

1980s Poland is often discussed as a conflict between the party and the opposition, with the latter identified with the desires and aspirations of Polish society in general. I have already suggested how this binary breaks down when we look closer at Poland in the 1980s, since various constellations in and out of the party were overlapping and internally heterogeneous. Rock continues to complicate this binary model: most rock bands sought to carve out a space in Poland that was independent of the party, but also of Solidarity's romantic nationalism and the Catholic Church. This was not easy, however, particularly since each of these groups contained people who could identify with some aspect of rock and sought to use it as a foothold for their own interests. Others in these groups, however, found rock to be the antithesis of a Catholic Polish nation. Analogously to the divide between reformers and stalinists in the communist party, a struggle developed between and within these groups over rock's meaning, as each attempted to mold the music to fit their own vision of how Poland ought to be and their own place in it.

As I noted in the third chapter, Solidarity is at the center of importance in Poland in 1980. The movement encompassed roughly one third of Polish society, which included significant representation among members of PZPR.⁵⁶⁸ Solidarity was quite popular among young people, both workers and students. In contrast with previous events, such as the student strikes of 1968 or the worker strikes of 1976, in 1980, students and workers went on strike together. At Warsaw Polytechnic, for instance, students grouped under the name "University Students and Solidarity" submitted a platform reading:

⁵⁶⁸ Crampton, *Eastern Europe in the Twentieth Century*, 367-376.

The strike is about the future and the independence of Polish science and culture. We must improve schools, universities, and actually study things that are important, in spirit of the student strikes of 1968. Workers fight for work conditions, so do we. Being at the strike is better education than many books.⁵⁶⁹

According to a survey commissioned by the party in Warsaw in 1981, close to fifty percent of youth identified Solidarity as a “beneficial influence” (*korzystyny wpływ*) on the current situation in the country, in comparison to a mere three percent that thought about the PZPR this way.⁵⁷⁰ Further, the numbers for Solidarity were likely considerably higher among students and particularly workers (at the Lenin shipyards in Gdańsk, for instance, eighty-seven percent of young workers said they trusted Solidarity, with twenty-six percent trusting the PZPR).⁵⁷¹

While Solidarity was initially focused on the specific rights of workers – pay, safety, right to assemble, and food prices – over time, demands came to include wider areas, including culture. Solidarity had an impressive presence in Poland’s cultural circles. It earned the support of many film and theater actors, writers, and particularly among performers in the cabaret tradition – a cultural form that Solidarity was particularly closely linked to. These, along with other cultural workers, expanded Solidarity’s platform to include many aspects of Poland’s cultural sphere. In late 1980, cultural workers presented their own platform as part of the wider strikes in the union. Its provisions included the following propositions:

-a nation is a large collection of people that find common identity in culture.

-the means of culture’s existence clarifies the nation – ours is such that culture persisted during state’s death, holding national identity due to culture’s strength [quotation from Pope John Paul II].

-we stand in defense of this great national good.

⁵⁶⁹ Komitet Strajkowy, Pracowników Kultury NSZZ “Solidarność,” December 11, 1980, Number 52, Dissent in Poland, KARTA collection.

⁵⁷⁰ Wydział Organizacji Społecznych, Sportu i Turystyki, “Tezy do Wystąpienia nt: Młodzieży,” 1981.

⁵⁷¹ Komisja Młodzieżowa KC PZPR, “Aktualna sytuacja społeczno-polityczna w środowisku młodej klasy robotniczej i ZSMP,” September 29, 1981.

-years of neglecting culture, treating it as an instrument leading to emptiness in social life as well as cultural agencies.

- we need to ask question if the patronage of culture in last several years has been so bad intentionally, turning Polish culture into that of thoughtless consumption.

-the individual development of man and free thought have been overridden by the need for ideological uniformity

-man [*człowiek*] is an element, means, and end of culture.

-we need to reform according to the principles of full functioning of national culture in social awareness and free choice between various thoughts, views and judgments.

- in order to do this, must change way culture is financed in Poland, the whole political culture of government.

-need to increase funding by 2%

-change principles of investing in culture

-get rid of blank spots in the cultural map

-the issue of censorship

-the problems of agencies in the interest of all

culture

-Call for full democratization in access to culture, tolerance for the creative freedom of individuals.

-assurance of access for all members of society to all goods of civilization, society must be brought up to be prepared for this.

-financing must not depend on single way of thinking without considering the good of man (*dobro człowieka*).

-need to increase the cultural budget at least to level supported by other western European countries – a 2% increase would soon bring a higher level of social-economic life.⁵⁷²

⁵⁷² Komitet Strajkowy, Pracownikow Kultury NSZZ "Solidarność," December 11, 1980.

As we can see here, the party was not alone in talking about the importance of culture; this was a serious issue for Solidarity in as well.⁵⁷³ The similarity is not coincidence: many of the party's ideas from the IX Extraordinary Congress were designed to meet precisely these objections.

Just as with party policy, though, it was not clear where punk or rock fit into Solidarity's cultural workers' views of culture. Certainly, cited concerns about censorship, emphasis on creative freedom and tolerance, variety in views and judgments could fit with punk rock ideals and benefit its performers (although this is not an absolute certainty, since as we saw, some journalists criticized rock precisely on the grounds of its exclusion of and intolerance for more traditional forms of music). On the other hand, it is less clear how punk rock might contribute to a unifying national identity, or even the development of the individual.

One of the few occasions at which rock and Solidarity encountered each other highlights the uneasy relationship between them. At the 1981 festival at Jarocin, a representative of the local Solidarity chapter was on the organizational bureau for the festival.⁵⁷⁴ The relationship with the bands performing and the fans was not purely comradely, however: the Solidarity chapter served as the "order service" (*szużba porządkowa*), along with the local fire department.⁵⁷⁵

A more concerted effort to integrate punk rock and Solidarity took place only weeks later, in one of the operational centers of both movements. In Gdańsk in August of 1981, Solidarity organized a concert for the one year anniversary of the strikes, the *Pierwszy Przegląd Piosenki Prawdziwej "Zakazane Piosenki"* (First Review of Genuine Song, "Forbidden Songs."⁵⁷⁶ The event's profile was impressive: besides patronage by

⁵⁷³ Jan Kubik has described the culture wars between the party and Solidarity in detail. Indeed, the similarity between Solidarity's demands for culture and the subsequent discourse taken up by the Division of Culture is striking.

⁵⁷⁴ Jarocin 1981 Program. Available from <http://www.jarocin-festiwal.com/1981/folder81/folder81.html>, accessed June 2009.

⁵⁷⁵ Krzysztof Hipsz, "Na starcie - Jarocin 81," *Na Przelaj*, July 12, 1981. The term "*szużba porządkowa*" is difficult to translate exactly; it certainly doesn't have the negative connotations of "Security Service" in Polish, but it does imply a hierarchical difference. Unfortunately I have been unable to find more details on this aspect of the festival.

⁵⁷⁶ Wydział Kultury KW PZPR Gdańsk, "Informacja dotyczaca przebiegu I Przeglądu Piosenki Prawdziwej pt. "Zakazane Piosenki,"" August 1981, 1354 Wydział Kultury PZPR, 315, 889/50, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw, Poland. An electronic reproduction of the festival program can be found at <http://www.dolinaradości.pl/pppp/03.htm>, accessed June 2009.

Solidarity leader Lech Wałęsa, the event featured actors Jerzy Stuhr, Andrzej Strzelecki, Daniel Olbrychski, and Krystyna Janda, as well as prominent song personalities Marek Grechuta, Jacek Kaczmarski, and Maciej Zembaty. As I will show, these last three exemplify musical culture associated with Solidarity. Also appearing on the program, however, were two less expected musical acts – Brygada Kryzys and Maanam.

How did these acts fit together in the same festival? First, let's look at Solidarity's song tradition. Solidarity's songs derived largely from the cabaret tradition – live stage performances, usually on a small, unofficial scale at an established cabaret venue – which continued to thrive in Poland into the 1980s. Cabaret shows contained much variety, ranging from short comedic sketches and dances to satirical songs to more serious, poetic songs that often perfectly fit the category of *poezja śpiewana* – “sung poetry,” attesting to their cultural value. Jacek Kaczmarski's “Rejtan” fits this model perfectly **[Track 35]**. “Rejtan” is a lengthy tale of an ambassador lamenting the partition of Poland (a barely-veiled allusion to the contemporary Soviet dominance of Poland). Zembaty's “Brygadzysta Albin” is a satirical tale about worker attending a party congress who is filled with class anger by the superior food given to the presidium **[Track 36]**.⁵⁷⁷ Significantly, “Brigadzista Albin” was based on Albin Siwak, a bricklayer-turned-party official who was a member of the Politburo and opponent of Solidarity at the time of the performance.

The two songs come from different sides of the cabaret tradition. They share certain elements, however, that made them appealing to most Solidarity activists. Both songs feature a singer/guitar player, with substantial facility. This absence of orchestral backing creates a more intimate connection between the performer, the music, and the audience. Both songs are driven by lyrics – and moreover, by immediately politically charged lyrics. Compared to most *estrada*, these songs are simultaneously musically simpler, more direct and personal, and lyrically more complex and pointed. Sonically, they are easily distinguished from the mainstream *estrada* type songs given at the beginning of this chapter. As with punk, this was no accident; the title of the concert, “*piosenki prawdziwej*” contrasts Solidarity's music with some other, false song –

⁵⁷⁷ Solidarity produced a cassette with recordings of the performance in 1981. Since then, it has been reproduced on CD by AKWENDRUK, an organization that prints Solidarity materials in Poland. See www.akwendruk.pl.

presumably the non-political song that had long dominated at Poland's premier festivals. As the title suggests, the songs operate in what Pádraic Kenney has described as "truth-telling," the dominant mode of dissident politics in Poland, which emphasized speaking truth to counter the party's lies.⁵⁷⁸ Both songs – by allegory or by satire – are designed to expose the falsehood of the Communist leadership with truth about the reality of the system.

Kenney goes on to argue that the *avant-garde* movements that developed in the 1980's after martial law – mainly *Pomaranczowa Alternatywa* (Orange Alternative), but also punk – opted for a mode that emphasized fun and chaos rather than truth telling. As I have shown, this does not quite work for punk and rock taken together – there is a very strong current of self-identification as truth tellers among the people performing punk rock, whether it meant deconstructing the dominant values like punk or revealed truth through mystical experience, as with reggae. Nonetheless, Kenney is on to something here. If telling the truth never loses its value for most punks, the form it took differed dramatically from that chosen by Solidarity.

It differed so much, in fact, that this opportunity for linking Solidarity's counterculture with punk failed to materialize.⁵⁷⁹ The reasons for this tell a great deal about the two movements. Punk and Solidarity's cabaret-style music were aesthetically quite different – at least as different as Solidarity's music was from *estrada*. Musically, the Solidarity songs are a long way from punk – at least the direction it had developed by late 1981. The folksy acoustic guitar of Solidarity's songs was more adapted to storytelling than an assault on mainstream musical values facilitated by the distorted electric guitar of punk. In punk, the vocals serve as much as an additional instrument as for conveying meaning with lyrics, which were often designed purely for the purpose of provocation. It is difficult to imagine something further from punk's directness than "Rejtan" – an allusion to a painting about a historical event, which is described in 15 verses as a metaphor for contemporary politics. Zembaty's satire is closer to some elements of punk – particularly the proto-punk variety of Walek Dzedzej – with its more

⁵⁷⁸ Kenney, *A Carnival of Revolution*.

⁵⁷⁹ If Maanam did in fact perform at the festival, the performance went unmentioned then and has gone unmentioned since. Maanam does not appear on audio recordings of the festival, and I have been unable to find any reference to the band performing, except for those citing the inclusion of the band in the festival program. Kryzys was included in the program as well, but is known to have not performed.

simple lyrics and occasional stylized vocals, but its focus on storytelling (11 verses of it, at that), its use of the literary technique of satire (and particularly political satire), and more conventional vocals and guitar accompaniment differentiates it.

Robert Brylewski, a member of Brygada Kryzys at the time, recalled significant differences in the band's vision of the show and that of the show's personnel. The sound man, for instance, reportedly told the band, "there would be many old people present, so we couldn't play loud." For its part, the band had "prepared a special show. It began with the scream of a siren in complete darkness. Then a blonde woman would appear in the streams of light holding a child's hand, and carrying machine gun in the other." Brylewski continues, "They invited us not really knowing what they were doing. They just knew we were against the system. It was a misunderstanding."⁵⁸⁰

In the end, the organizers refused to let the band perform. Brylewski blamed the organizers for caving in to party pressure, but this seems unlikely. For one, the organizers were quite bold about defying official directives. A report to the division of culture of the Central Committee of the PZPR on the festival noted that songs were performed at the festival that had specifically been forbidden by censors – including the satirical tune by Zembaty above. In general, cabaret attracted far more attention from censors over the entire 1980s than did punk rock.⁵⁸¹ More likely, the festival's organizers simply found the performance distasteful and a poor fit with the bulk of the show.

This sense of distaste went both ways. Brylewski noted, "We didn't feel at home there. I was put off by the caricatures of Polish and Soviet officials on the walls. It wasn't our style." In the end, Brylewski concluded,

They were too political for us. If you involve yourself in politics, you never know what you're becoming part of. I was with them the whole time in my heart, but I felt they were playing out their own game. We were sorry at the beginning, but with time, we felt validated by fact that we were so subversive we were even banned at a freedom festival.⁵⁸²

⁵⁸⁰ Lizut, *Punk Rock Later*, 54-55.

⁵⁸¹ This is based on my own highly unscientific perusal of folders from the Główny Urząd Publikacji, Prasy, i Widowisk, which contained on average at least twice as many interventions for cabaret as for punk rock.

⁵⁸² Lizut, *Punk Rock Later*, 55-56.

This attitude toward the opposition was common among punk bands. Krzysztof Grabowski from Dezerter had similar feelings, observing,

Solidarity was a great hope, a taste of freedom, but I had a feeling it would end badly. After a year or so, I became aware that it was a big game between two sides. One was better and one worse, but both were politicians. Certainly if I had to choose, I would have chosen Solidarity. But I never had to, so I did my own thing. We had different visions that didn't line up.⁵⁸³

These objections to Solidarity based on its status as a political organization are especially surprising since the Solidarity movement in its early years is sometimes described as “anti-political.”⁵⁸⁴ For most punks, though, Solidarity was precisely a political movement – something which they had no interest in becoming. After the song festival in 1981, there was never more than a passing effort to link Solidarity (or its underground form during martial law) and punk rock. Instead, many bands fashioned themselves as third options, or “third circulations,” free from the official politics of the party and the oppositional politics of Solidarity, although as we have seen, this course was extremely difficult to navigate. To return to Walek Dzedzej’s legendary “Nie jestem tym czym ty,” “I’m not in the ZMS, I’m not in KOR (the workers’ defense committee, an organization affiliated with Solidarity), I’m not in the party, shit, I’m not anything.”⁵⁸⁵ Brylewski expanded on the theme himself when he penned the following words – not after being arrested, censored, or banned by the government, but shortly after being turned away from the Solidarity concert:

I don't trust politicians
I don't trust politicians, no

They're the ones that drew the borders
They're the ones that built the walls
They're the ones that divided us
They're the ones that look down on us from on high

They're the ones who have their own affairs
That we know nothing about

⁵⁸³ Ibid., 117.

⁵⁸⁴ Berhard and Osa both interpret the movement this way.

⁵⁸⁵ Wiernik, “Dokąd zmierza polski rock?”; Witold Rogowiecki, “Surfing na polskiej, nowej fali,” *Non stop*, February 1984.

They're the ones who declare wars
In which we perish.

I don't trust politicians....

Where Solidarity defined Poland in terms of a division between “us” (the people) and “them” (the party), for Brygada Kryzys, all politicians counted as “them,” whatever the nuances of their platforms.

The tension between punk rock and Solidarity became less of an issue after martial law, when Solidarity was banned. However, as the 1980s went on, other groups oriented themselves with respect to rock, and sometimes defined themselves through it. By 1984, the annual Jarocin punk rock festival became a battleground on which a struggle over Poland's youth took place. Alternative social movements, Catholic clergy, and representatives from various sections of the state and party went to the festival seeking to extend their influence among youth. Sometimes they did so by co-opting rock, other times, by suppressing it. For their part, some rock bands and fans accepted overtures to integrate elements of religion, opposition culture, or cooperation with the state into the festival, but many others pushed back in resistance.

The interactions between these groups were complex and shifting. By grouping people into categories like “rock fans,” “the state” and “clergy” I do not mean to imply homogeneity or exclusivity: identities overlapped and opinions varied, and were being asserted and defined in part through engagement with the rock scene. The precise characterization of young rock fans and their music, the state, the party, and Catholicism was constantly contested, as was the relationship between these groups. For instance, one Catholic priest might seek to form a closer bond with Polish youth by embracing rock and playing hymns on a guitar, while other Catholics aligned themselves with conservative forces in the state in hopes of combating what they considered to be rock's threat to Polish society and religion. Government representatives sometimes accepted this alliance with religious authorities and used their power to silence performances that were religiously offensive, although at other times they expressed as much concern over the presence of Catholic clergy at Jarocin as they did over youth subcultures. In some cases, senior party officials sought to strengthen their ties with Polish youth by taking up a defense of rock against social and religious groups opposed to it. In short, rock served as

a device for defining and contesting the identity of key interest groups in Poland in the turbulent 1980s.

For instance, one Catholic priest might seek to form a closer bond with Polish youth by embracing rock and playing hymns on a guitar, while other Catholics aligned themselves with the state in hopes of combating rock's threat to society and religion. State security forces sometimes accepted this alliance with church representatives and used their power to silence performances that were particularly offensive, although at other times they expressed as much concern over the presence of the church at Jarocin as they did over youth subcultures. In some cases, senior party officials sought to strengthen their ties with Polish youth by taking up a defense of rock against social and religious groups opposed to it. For their part, rock fans responded in diverse ways: some tolerated representatives associated with the government, and even welcomed the presence of the church, while others vehemently expressed their independence from these sources of authority. Each of these complex efforts to define group identities and the relationship between them turned up at the Jarocin festival in the mid to late 1980s.

Starting in 1984, Catholic priests started to show up at the Jarocin festival, sometimes carrying posters and handing out flyers, other times armed with guitars and leading folksy hymns. One local church had held a mass for deceased musicians during the festival to attract young rock fans.⁵⁸⁶ Another church showed religious films, hoping a multimedia approach would appeal to young people. Piotr Lazarkiewicz's documentary on the Jarocin festival in 1985 captures an interview with two priests who came to the festival to try to attract youth to Catholic mass, noting that "the youth at Jarocin are among the most rebellious, but also the most searching." The church was not the only group vying for the attention of youth at Jarocin, however. *Fala* also captures a beauty contest organized by the local ZSMP: the union's local leader identified Jarocin as an ideal location for the organization to "realize its program" and establish a dialogue with youth.⁵⁸⁷ At the same time, Maciej Zembaty – noted above for his performance at the Solidarity song festival – brought elements of culture associated with the opposition to the festival in 1985.

⁵⁸⁶ Lesiakowski, *Jarocin w obiektywie bezpieki*.

⁵⁸⁷ Lazarkiewicz, *Fala*.

Certainly some of the fans welcomed the church's presence at the festival or approved of the inclusion of a performer with links to Solidarity. Others probably did not altogether object to the display of attractive young women, even if it was sponsored by the unpopular ZSMP. However, some saw these encroachments as threats to the autonomy of the festival and rock as alternative culture. As external pressures on the festival's autonomy increased the next year, it pushed some bands and audience members to radical positions in order to reassert their independence.

The 1986 festival followed a similar format to the previous year, with a wide range of music from blues to punk to reggae to metal. The GSA made a strong showing, but most popular act reportedly was Kobranocka, a hard rock band from Toruń. More than in years past, though, the festival was distinguished by non-musical events, as representatives from various social groups vied to shape how rock would fit into the social, cultural, and political landscape of Poland.

Particularly visible were the security forces, which many fans and bands linked to the party and state. For instance, Paweł Sito of the *Rozgłosnia Harcerska's* "Polski Independent" hits list wrote,

When I first came to the festival four years ago, it was like being in another world. Last year, when the radio first came, we didn't want to return to Warsaw and its reality – but this year the traditional symbol of Jarocin, an red-black circle but with reversed colors clarified the situation: this year was not a festival that all of its participants will connect with pleasant memories. It was a festival of unpleasant incidents.⁵⁸⁸

Initially, Sito's comment seems cryptic; what would the reversal of the colors of the Jarocin symbol, a red dot surrounded by a black ring, imply? One plausible reading is that his reference to Jarocin's symbol is a bold metaphor: the reversal of the colors – with red surrounding the black – symbolized the encircling presence of the "reds," or communist authorities.

⁵⁸⁸ Paweł Sito, "Centralne dożynki: Jarocin '86," *Magazyn Muzyczny - Jazz*, September 1986, 28-29.

Some of *Non Stop*'s writers agreed, noting that the behavior of security services gave the festival its negative atmosphere.⁵⁸⁹ A security officer working at the festival denied in a later interview that there had been any special plan from on high, for instance to "infiltrate the subculture;" rather, they were there to "ensure security."⁵⁹⁰ Nonetheless, the state's presence was felt by bands. During its performance, Kazik Staszewski from Kult angrily announced from the stage that he would not be returning to Jarocin again, since the excessive intervention of censors had left his band with almost nothing to play. Such an announcement was not only a complaint; it also a critique served to distance the band from the state by revealing its repressive operations.

Another band went further to assert its independence from the authorities surrounding it. The reggae band Immanuel attempted to skirt regulations and perform a text that had been censored. While texts had been subject to censorship at the previous festivals, bands had always managed to evade intervention (with bands presenting prepared texts for censors, then singing whatever they liked). This time, the increased state presence made evasion more difficult. The band calmly sang,

Niepotrzebny jest prezydent	We don't need a president
Nieporzebny jest konfident	We don't need an informer
Niepotrzebna jest CIA	We don't need the CIA
Niepotrzebna jest PZPR	We don't need the PZPR
Śpiewam na chwale Jah	I sing the praise Yah
Śpiewam, by lud wolny się stal	I sing so people will be free

For those in the government who wished to suppress rock, these eruptions of animosity were valuable evidence of the threat it posed to maintaining authority. In the past a direct reference to the party was risky, but this time, authorities intervened, arresting the band after the concert.⁵⁹¹

The report on the incident from the Ministry of Internal Affairs went all the way to the PZPR's leader, Wojciech Jaruzelski. The report hinted that the party was not alone in making a broader presence at the festival in years past. Besides the incident with Immanuel and Kult (the band's exposure of the activities of censors was itself a security

⁵⁸⁹ Grzegorz Brzozowicz and Przemyslaw Mroczek, "Jarocin '86 "próba sil": Po Prostu Szczepan," September 1986.

⁵⁹⁰ Jacek Krzeminski, "Bunt kontrolowany," *Rzeczpospolita*, August 11, 2000.

⁵⁹¹ "Sprawa zespołu IMMANUEL," Available from <http://www.jarocin-festiwal.com/1986/immanuel.html>, accessed June 2009.

threat), the report noted the distribution of fliers for alternative social movements and the presence of a significant number of priests at the festival, inviting youth to attend mass and view films. One bold priest even discussed the brutal treatment of festival attendants by the MO during mass, seeking to align the church with youth at the expense of the state's reputation.⁵⁹²

From the perspective of the state, the presence of Catholic Clergy among so many impressionable youth was disturbing. Yet, security forces were not alone in their skepticism about the church's place at Jarocin. For some of the festival's participants, the church was just another representative of authority that the festival served as a refuge from. Animosity toward the church was particularly strong among heavy metal bands and their fans. This is not to say that Satanism was a calculated maneuver or political statement for most of those involved. However, it was not a coincidence that it started to turn up in the mid 1980s. While heavy metal had a presence at the festival since TSA's presence in 1981, it was only after representatives of the church started appearing at the festival in 1984 that it took on serious, explicit anti-Christian elements.

For some, it was a deliberate statement of protest. The lead singer of the group Kat, for instance, confronted a pair of priests at the festival and explained to them why he wore an inverted cross: to symbolize his disagreement with the church, which he sees as going against nature.⁵⁹³ Many metal fans as well as punks came to the festival with pentagrams and other satanic imagery.

Kat's performance at the festival merits discussion in its own right. So far I have focused more on punk than metal, but the genre offers an interesting contrast with punk. While the punk rock scene felt the pressures of mainstream exposure and commercialism early in the 1980s, heavy metal had been somewhat less susceptible to this kind of internal strife. In part this was probably because heavy metal was not associated with ideals to the extent that punk was, making it harder to criticize for failing to live up to them. The few ideals it did sometimes have were connected to abstract mysticism or fringe ideas like paganism and Satanism, which – unlike punk's protest against hypocrisy and social inequality – could not be in any way mistaken for acceptable.

⁵⁹² MSW, "Załącznik do Informacji Diennej, 1986-07-31," July 1986, 1354 Wydział Kultury PZPR, 1268, 947/57, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw, Poland.

⁵⁹³ Kostenko, *My Blood, Your Blood*.

This also meant that a metal band could put on a huge show, replete with makeup, fireworks, and costumes without attracting criticism for “selling out” or going mainstream. Instead, metal bands reveled in the glamour of spectacle, translating it into a sign of their own power, as can be seen in the band’s performance of “Oracle” at Jarocin in 1986 **[Video 17]**.⁵⁹⁴ I have not included the song’s lyrics here. In part, that is because they are in English (really, listen again) and would surely have been no more intelligible to those in attendance than to us listening now. This is not necessarily a problem, though. Heavy metal lyrics often serve more to create a mood than tell story or make a point. Many songs wove a mystical, futuristic, cosmic landscape, marked by destruction. In this case, though, the imagery is primarily pagan. To this purpose, words and images turn up like, “evil,” “terror,” “call of hell,” “locusts,” “a black crown,” “sipping blood,” “witches bathed in blood,” “necklaces of bone,” and finally, people “lost in their faith.”

Kat’s performance itself adds another component to the music and lyrics. Despite the gender-bending makeup and hair, the music was self-classified as masculine (as in the TSA interview cited in the previous chapter) as well as masculine in practice, and replete with imagery of destruction and violence. The irony with which punk often met these subjects was missing, however. In any case, it certainly asserted its independence as an alternative cultural phenomenon. Kat’s performance was not even the most controversial; another metal band, Test Fobii Kreon destroyed a cross on stage.

These assaults on Christianity carried over beyond the stage as well; reports circulated of black masses held in the local cemetery and even an exhumed grave.⁵⁹⁵ In Satanism, heavy metal bands had found perhaps the only thing that could upset Polish society more than exposing one’s genitals to an auditorium filled with children. In fact, it even provoked considerable controversy among rock fans. A few rock journalists, including Paweł Sito and Aldona Krajewska – both more interested in punk than metal – wrote articles critical of Satanism in metal. Sito suggested that even metal fans did not approve of the display of Satanism by some bands.⁵⁹⁶ As a result, he noted, much of the audience sang along with the band Azyl P.’s song, “Allelujah,” affirming the compatibility of rock and Christianity. Krajewska engaged in a debate with a

⁵⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁵ Lesiakowski, *Jarocin w obiektywie bezpieki*.

⁵⁹⁶ “Centralne dożynki: Jarocin '86.”

representative from the metal group Dzieci Szatana (Satan's Children), responding to his account of the festival with her own take on matters:

The Children of Satan are distinguished by satisfaction with their own ignorance, primitivism, and sense of strength in a group. To the degree that punk as a movement had at its base negating social hierarchy and schemes dividing between poor and rich, metalheads are based on the open approval of evil that is force, stupidity, magic, and superstition.⁵⁹⁷

These words came from no conservative, uptight rock hater: Krajewska was the journalist that was responsible for the "Koalang" series that celebrated punk rock texts. In a similar spirit, a month later, *Na Przelaj* published an article that fondly recalled the days when punk had been dominant: "With pleasure we look back today at times of the greatest activity of punks, people with an unusual imagination and a sense of humor, in comparison to the religious-musical extremism of black metal."⁵⁹⁸

Just as the Lady Pank scandal had formed a coalition between conservative party members, concerned parents, and disillusioned youth, the outbreak of Satanism at Jarocin formed a coalition between conservative Catholics, conservatives in the state and party (including the Security Service, which focused special attention on this aspect of the festival), and even some rock fans who preferred punk. After Jarocin in 1986, for the first time, bands performing at Jarocin faced serious legal consequences after the festival for their breaches of conduct. Test Fobii Kreon was tried for "attacking the Christian faith" – prosecutable as a crime of religious intolerance – and only avoided a stiff penalty on the technicality that the cross destroyed did not have the body of Christ represented on it, and thus could be interpreted as artistic expression rather than the destruction of a religious symbol.⁵⁹⁹ Authorities also took advantage of the ripe atmosphere for repression to respond to Immanuel, which declared the PZPR unnecessary in its song. The band was arrested, and then called before a council in Jarocin in November which sentenced them to 3 months in prison or an 80,000 *złoty* fine. This is the first case I have found where a

⁵⁹⁷ "Dzieci Szatana," *Na Przelaj*, October 5, 1986, 14.

⁵⁹⁸ Mirosław Witkowski, "Przeginanie Pały," *Na Przelaj*, November 23, 1986.

⁵⁹⁹ Zbigniew Zaranek, "ODIUM SATANIZMU W WĄGROWCU," *Dwutygodnik Palucki*, March 15, 1991. Available from <http://www.jarocin-festiwal.com/zespoły/tfk/j85-86/zaraneko.html>, accessed June 2009. This is an interesting charge for an ostensibly atheist socialist state.

band was punished outside the festival for activities occurring in its course; it is fascinating that its assault was not on socialism or the party, but rather, on Christianity.⁶⁰⁰

By the time of the Jarocin festival in 1987, members of these groups – rock fans, religious groups, and government representatives – were engaged in a complex, multifaceted struggle at the festival. To the outside observer, the 1987 festival followed much the same format as the previous two years, comprised of four days, including an amateur band competition and performances by some 25 professional bands. Attendance was somewhat higher than the previous year, with around 15,000 present according to security estimates.⁶⁰¹ Like previous years, the guest bands included some of the mainstays of the alternative scene, including punk bands Armia and Dezerter (although without a founding member, Skandał), heavy metal Kat, and T Love. The blues-rock band Dżem also performed, as did several stars from the first wave of Polish rock, including Józef Skrzek (from the band SBB, popular in the 1970s), Tadeusz Nalepa, and even Czesław Niemen. Organization behind the scenes differed slightly as well: Chelstowski's absence was filled with an entire artistic council for the purpose of listening to tapes and deciding which of the applicants would be allowed to perform at the festival (the council was comprised of several rock-friendly journalists and a few older representatives of the rock scene).

However, after years of promising each festival was the last, Walter Chelstowski had finally given up his role as its organizer. Amazingly, though, the festival took place in 1987. Marcin Jacobsen, one of the organizers of the first MMG movement alongside Sylwin and Chelstowski, in cooperation with Leszek Winder, a participant in MMG as a member of the band Krzak, took Chelstowski's place in directing the festival. Joining them was the director of Jarocin's house of culture. Not surprisingly considering the controversy surrounding the previous year's festival, Jacobson reported having considerable difficulties getting the go-ahead for the festival from the local government, which was under some pressure to discontinue the festival.

Consequently, this approach created a very different atmosphere for the festival. While Jacobson claimed it was not his fault "that bands participating in the competition

⁶⁰⁰ "Sprawa zespołu IMMANUEL."

⁶⁰¹ M. Słowiński, "Letter to Secretary of the PZPR on Jarocin," October 1987, 1354 Wydział Kultury PZPR, 1556, 960/129-2, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw, Poland.

were not as experimental as in previous years,” it was not entirely a coincidence either. Most of the bands from the GSA did not apply to the festival that year. In their place, Aleksander Kwaśniewski showed up, even giving a radio interview on the scouting broadcast at Jarocin. In the interview, he offered a few vague positive assessments, deeming the festival a “unique phenomenon with a specific climate, pulsating not only with youth music, but also youth.”⁶⁰²

Kwaśniewski had, in fact, already attended the festival twice by 1987, making him one of the few central party representatives to do so (another was Leszek Miller, who had served on the party’s department of Youth, Sport, and Tourism).⁶⁰³ Amidst the outcry following the festival in 1986, Kwaśniewski responded to an angry Jarocin resident’s condemnation of the event. He wrote,

Thank you for sending me comments on the topic of the Rock Music Festival in Jarocin. I have passed them to the committee organizing the festival and requested their consideration in directing preparations. I am of the opinion that the Festival is necessary, realizing the interests and needs of youth. The phenomena you note in your letter are reprehensible and undesirable. Thus the organizers have the obligation for ensuring that these kinds of happenings do not take place.

From the preparation up to this time on this year’s festival, I know that they will meet the understanding and goodwill from the side of most of Jarocin’s society, which also obliges the organizers to responsible preparation and direction of the event.⁶⁰⁴

In short, Kwaśniewski was supporting the festival, creating an alliance with the young Poles his committee was responsible for, against more conservative members of Polish society. Given the party’s reputation, it is tempting to dismiss this approach as an aberration, or to inflate it into a sinister plot to infiltrate the festival. Both suggestions have elements of truth but neither interpretation captures the situation. Certainly

⁶⁰² Adam Halber, “61,18 Mhz: Jarocin '87,” *Magazyn Muzyczny - Jazz*, October 1987. He was also asked more provocatively what he thought about censorship, to which he offered a classic bureaucratic deadpan response, “censorship regulates rules appropriately.”

⁶⁰³ Barbara Józwiak and Mirosław Makowski, “W Połowie,” *Magazyn Muzyczny - Jazz*, December 1987.

⁶⁰⁴ Aleksander Kwaśniewski, “Letter from Kwaśniewski,” May 1987, 1354 Wydział Kultury PZPR, 1536, 960/118, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw, Poland.

Kwaśniewski was not representative of the party as a whole; rather he was at one end of the spectrum since he was tolerant of rock and had already attended the festival multiple times. At the same time, it was not a coincidence that he was Minister on Youth Matters – his selection fit the party’s desire to reach out to youth and bring them trust in the party. For his part, Kwaśniewski acknowledged his own role in “fighting for the festival’s existence,” and talking to the organizers, but denied any influence on its program. In terms of direct influence, this was probably true; while authorities did plan a presence at the festival in 1987, it was more of an ad-hoc solution than the result of a long term, coherent policy. Rather, the party was continuing to explore how rock fit with its plans, much as it had in the past, although now it was getting attention at the highest levels.

The evident support for rock at such high levels did not please everyone. In 1987, the Forum for Catholic Social Thought wrote an open letter to the mayor of Jarocin expressing great concern about the festival, in large measure based on events from the previous year. The forum had learned that the Mayor had awarded “young so-called ‘hard beat’ bands” with money. Just who the members of these bands were was evident from the press, they noted: the periodical *Głos Robotniczy* informed them of the incident in Wrocław with Lady Pank, while the periodical *Kierunki* had revealed that the “most known hard beat bands officially propagate Satanism, and their members wear satanic insignias like the pentagram and use satanic gestures when greeting each other.” Even worse, they observed that a portion of the young fans of heavy metal bands openly confess Satanism. As Poles and citizens of the PRL, the forum publicly asked the mayor what motivated him to promote this type of activity. More severely, it noted,

In the postwar history of Poland, there have been occasions of incompetent people in important places who facilitated much evil for their nation... It is time to resign from bad games and give strength to propagating and promoting healthy and decent forms of entertainment, serving the development of positive end of the character of young people... to the benefit of Polish youth, and also to the nation.⁶⁰⁵

⁶⁰⁵ Forum Myśli Katolicko Społecznej, “List otwarty do Naczelnika Miasta i Gminy w Jarocinie,” 1987, 1354 Wydział Kultury PZPR, 1555, 960/129-1, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw, Poland.

The letter was sent not just to the mayor, but also to the highest officials of the state and the church, including to the Marshal of the Sejm, president of the national council, and the Polish primate. The PZPR was not included as an addressee, perhaps out of mutual distrust between the church and the party (the letter was written by the forum for Catholic thought, after all). However, that it was taken extremely seriously is indicated by how quickly it found its way to the highest circles of the party. First, the associate director of the Central Committee's Division of Culture asked that the matter be fully investigated in cooperation with the regional party.⁶⁰⁶ Then, in October of 1987, the deputy director of the KC PZPR's division of culture sent the letter to the first secretary of the PZPR, Jaruzelski.⁶⁰⁷

Simply put, the decision was between siding with Jarocin's young audience and siding with conservative Catholics. Along with the letter, the deputy director sent a report on the festival prepared by the Vice Minister of Culture. Whereas previous years' reports on the festival had mainly come from the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and consequently concerned security matters, the report from the MKiS gave a fuller picture of the festival, fusing the materials of the ministry of internal affairs with its own evaluations and observations.

The increased presence of representatives of the state and party at the festival is clarified straightforwardly: "The intensive penetration of the youth mass at the festival was directed at identifying all informal groups and observing changes and tendencies in the informal youth movement in the position of preparation for battle with "Satanists." This is perhaps the closest statement I have found to a directive to "infiltrate" the festival. Consequently, it took note of the "informal groups" present, which included:

-Punks: around 150 people and around 2000 sympathizers

-Heavy Metalists: Around 2000 people and around 300 sympathizers, including around 300 so-called "confessors of Satan"

-Rastafarians: around 300 people, and around 1500 sympathizers of reggae

⁶⁰⁶ Vicedirector WK KC PZPR, Ibid.

⁶⁰⁷ Słowiński, "Letter to Secretary of the PZPR."

-Oasis and clergy: around 2000 people and around 300 sympathizers

This last group, the Oasis movement, was a Catholic religious revival group; it is interesting to see it listed alongside Satanists and Punks. The report also noted that for the first time, the city mayor and clergy had arranged an agreement about the form of activity at the festival, although it is not certain whether this was seen as a positive (since it ensured unruly youth would be kept under watch) or negative (since it represented local authorities and the church allying in what might constitute a challenge to central authority).

In its conclusion, the report observed,

The Jarocin rock festival has already become an enduring element of youth culture with a nationwide reach. The experience of past years and of this year's event shows, that in principle it is a continuation by other means of the existence of a threat of an uncontrolled movement, more difficult to identify in its tendencies, its cultural currents, and its world and political views.

First, it is important to note that this is an argument for continuing to allow the festival – not necessarily a self-evident proposition at the time. On the other hand, it bases this argument on an interpretation of the festival as a security strategy. While this view is quite common among members of alternative rock bands, this is the first occurrence I have found within the party.

In the rest of the document, however, other justifications for the festival are included that extend beyond matters of security. Within the report, one can read the efforts of the MKiS to understand rock in reference to their own goals for Polish culture. In general, the report observed, “in the course of the event, no events were noted with terrorist goals, although groups of youth with such ideas were noticed.” In fact, it observed that there were few incidents of crime, mainly associated with drug use, and that there were “no events of an extraordinary character.”

Overall, the MKiS approved of the festival, noting that “the forefront of Polish youth bands” participated in the performances. The competition, it noted, “clearly demonstrated the direction of development of Polish rock music and the domination of

decidedly differing styles” – a contrast with reports in the press about the monotony of rock’s domination. It then offered a description of each variety:

-“reggae” music, characterized by peace or even optimism – it is a music concerned with themes of brotherhood, sometimes reflexively. It is accepted by at least two generations.

-“punk rock” and “heavy metal” music are kindred currents. The texts contain elements of depression, frustration, pacifism, and anarchy. It often expresses protest against established norms and the social-political establishment.

Heavy metal music is the most aggressive current of rock music. Both of these currents have any followers among youth. It can be said that they are accepted by a decided portion of the young generation. During concerts of punk rock and heavy metal groups, it can be noticed, especially among passionate fans, agitation and even a growth in aggressiveness.⁶⁰⁸

These descriptions are not entirely favorable – particularly the association of heavy metal with aggression. On the other hand, they are far more even-toned than previous treatments. The description of reggae reads like an outright endorsement. Even the greater concern expressed about heavy metal is tempered by the repeated observation that it is popular among youth. If the festival’s close observation was justified as a security matter, or even a repressive tactic, the position that authorities emerged with was more complex.

These two documents were sent to the First Secretary together: a fiercely critical attack of Jarocin on moral grounds, and a report that supported the continuation of the festival on a mixed platform of practical security matters and its popularity among youth and rising cultural level. Along with these, the deputy director of the Division of Culture sent his own brief interpretation. He too makes no mention of discontinuing the festival. Rather, his main points are that “too little attention is given to working out the disposition of the programmatic character of the event” and ensuring that no money from the national budget went to the festival (a strange point, since the festival was, and had long been, self-funding).

⁶⁰⁸ Ibid.

The outcome of the matter can be seen in the decision that followed. As I noted in the previous chapter, in 1988, senior representatives from the party's Division of Culture and the state's Ministry of Culture and Art resolved to make the Jarocin Festival "the main site for the presence of state patronage in the milieu of youth subcultures." No doubt it helped that the proposal for that year's festival included, for the first time, representatives from the Ministry of Culture and Art, the Ministry of Youth Affairs, and the Committee on Radio and TV. Further, unlike previous years, when just the matter of approval for the event had trickled down to the organizers through local officials like the mayor, this time the director of the Jarocin cultural center – also the head director of the festival – submitted the "Main Directions of Programmatic Organization" of the festival to the regional government, which in turn, submitted them to the undersecretary of the Ministry of Culture and Art in June.⁶⁰⁹

In light of the increased attention on the festival, even at high levels of government, it was now necessary to justify its existence in a way that had been unnecessary when it could be dismissed as a marginal event. And justifying its existence meant showing how it fit with party goals and the needs of public order. While this may not have directly meant official involvement in the programming of the festival, it certainly meant that organizers had government approval in mind in creating it. After the festival, the Jarocin Cultural Center wrote a report that went at least as far up as the Deputy Director of the Division of Culture. In it, the Jarocin Cultural Center noted that the festival that year had "liquidated the monothematic concerts, providing the possibility for listening to a competition of different types of music." Moreover, it included a list of how the "ideological-education program" of the festival that year had been realized:

1. ZSMP, ZMW and trade unions took part in preparation.
2. a wide propaganda campaign in the youth press for the Rock Festival in the youth press serving as a source of cultural and aesthetic awareness.
3. at the stadium and amphitheater were conducted actions against drug use through fliers and posters.

⁶⁰⁹ Dyrektor JOK, Kazimierz Olszewski, "Jarocinski Ośrodek Kultury," December 1987, 1354 Wydział Kultury PZPR, 1556, 960/129-2, Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warsaw, Poland.

4. during the festival, the JOK held a lecture on the topic of... the environment.
5. There were displays of films on ecological topics connected with the discussion.
6. on the market a group of mime-art performed an anti-alcohol and anti-smoking program.
7. artistic action was directed with the goal of bringing representatives of the working class of Jarocin closer to youth...
8. Great success was attained by groups of party and youth activists directed at educational-integrational activity among newly arrived youth.
9. In the amphitheater were conducted concerts presenting other types of music than rock.

Even if this last point suggested that rock might have retained its controversy, the document as a whole shows the encroachment of party politics not only in evaluating the festival, but in the concepts organizing it.

In the previous chapter, I told this story as the outcome of a lengthy internal debate about how punk rock fit with party directives on youth and culture. As can be seen here, though, part of this decision to compromise was forced by competition with other groups attempting to use the festival to influence youth. In fact, the committee that decided to make Jarocin an official festival noted one of its reasons for sponsoring the festival as the increased involvement of the church; a bishop had recently issued an appeal for believers to “care” for the festival.

Despite many persistent reservations, the government’s desire for contact with youth – and its fear of similar contact between youth and the church and other social groups – was strong enough to accept a punk rock festival as an acceptable addition to the state’s cultural calendar. On one hand, this meant making the festival fit more closely with widely accepted party goals on youth and culture. Not surprisingly, this alliance was not accepted by rock fans with open arms: recall that festival goers chanted for the death of the organizer, Leszek Winder. Zbigniew Hołdys attempted to sever the event from rock altogether, declaring it “dead” with an obituary in *Non Stop*. On the other, though,

including a punk festival on the official cultural calendar was also a substantial and controversial compromise from the perspective of the party.

Conclusion

The Jarocin festival, and rock in general, became an outlet for debating key issues about the People's Republic of Poland in the 1980s, particularly oriented around youth and culture. It also became a site at which different visions of Poland could be asserted and challenged. As various individuals and interest groups sought to define Polish youth and culture through their stance on rock, Poland's political, cultural, and social landscape was being sharply contested. When the controversy over the Jarocin festival pushed the multitude of voices to line up on two sides in 1988 – those who favored the continuation of the Jarocin festival and those who opposed it – the division separating these positions ran right through the party, the opposition, and the Catholic Church. The distance between these views was not just between differing interpretations of rock, but rather between fundamentally opposed visions of Polish socialism, the nation, youth, and culture.

The press stood in the midst of this debate since how rock fit into the complex context of the PRL was determined in large measure by how the music was understood. On one hand, it could be seen as producing angry, uncompromising threatening youth – the mere existence of which challenged the status quo. Yet, this interpretation also opened up the possibility of suppressing the movement. On the other hand, it could be seen as a legitimate cultural form, which gave punk rock some protection, but also neutralized its ability to act as an alternative.

In order to break out of this trap, punk offered its own interpretation that broke outside the rationalist discursive sphere of the PRL altogether. Yet, this alternative possibility was short lived: as punk reached a wider public domain, it was placed, along with rock, in a discursive context that offered a range of interpretations – either positively or negatively, according to sociological and aesthetic frameworks. However, none of these options offered an easy way for it to inhere in the difficult, paradoxical niche required for its success: to be politically acceptable to government authorities,

aesthetically acceptable to the industry and critics, and an exciting alternative for rock fans.

An effort to suppress rock could interrupt even the limited opportunities for publicity in 1980s Poland. Once a band was banned it became an alternative legend, but musically, it was silenced. On the other hand, it was just as much of a risk to rock for it to be treated as just one more form of acceptable official culture. The need to demarcate rock as an alternative sphere was so strong that bands that were tainted with associations with the system were cut off from the scene like infected limbs, as Republika was at Jarocin in 1985. Every positive overture from a party member or even association with a youth union could be read as collaboration, blurring the boundary of alternative culture. Yet in 1988, even the esteemed Jarocin festival was included as an official cultural event.

This suggests the difficulty of a cultural form like rock operating as a form of resistance: even using that word to describe the music defines it in a way that would have encouraged its suppression. Yet, this is not simply a story of incorporation either. As voices in the party sought to work with rock to ally themselves with Polish youth, they gradually shifted the range of views permissible for the party to include elements of rock and punk, or at least created room for debating whether they should be included. This gradual move toward a wider range of acceptable views on key issues like Polish culture helped set up the background for the roundtable agreements, where an alliance with an organization like Solidarity would have seemed a good deal less shocking than cooperating with punk rock. One month after Jarocin in 1988, the party agreed to roundtable talks with a reborn Solidarity. The result, early the next year, was the end of the party's monopoly on political power.

Chapter VI

Epilogue and Conclusion

One June 4 2009, Poland celebrated the 20th anniversary of the first contested elections in Poland since World War II, a concession won by the roundtable accords of 1989. Solidarity registered an astonishing victory over the communist party, winning an overwhelming percentage of the contested Sejm and Senate seats up for election. While caution demanded keeping Jaruzelski as the President – on the first day of elections, the Chinese communist government brutally suppressed protests in Tiananmen Square – the elections marked the irrevocable decline of the party’s power.

To commemorate the anniversary of the elections in 2009, a series of exhibits and events were arranged in Warsaw under the title “Shut Down the System,” (*Wyłącz System*). The festivities culminated in a large scale concert taking place on Plac Teatralny under the title, “20 Years of Freedom.” Performers included Perfect, Turbo, Republika (minus Ciechowski, who tragically died in 2001), Oddział Zamknięty, Klaus Mittfoch, Aya RL, Lady Pank, Dezerter, Kryzys, Kobranocka, Dżem, and T. Love, among others. The concert was directed by none other than Marek Niedźwiecki, the former presenter of the Third Program’s hits list.⁶¹⁰

Interspersed between the performers were video fragments presenting the major events in the clash between the opposition and the regime in the 1980s, beginning with Solidarity, moving through martial law and the murder of priest Jerzy Popiełuszko by the secret police, up to the elections. Despite these dark interludes, the overall tone was jubilant. And so it should have been; the event was commemorating the remarkable achievement of ordinary people joining together and fighting against overwhelming authoritarian power for the right to determine their own fates. The concert itself also had something to do with the mood. The stated objective of the event was to connect young

⁶¹⁰ Stołeczna Estrada, “20 Lat Wolności.” Available from <http://www.wylaczsystem.pl>, accessed June 2009.

Poles with those who grew up in the 1980s.⁶¹¹ In this, it was a marked success – the audience was a large, diverse crowd ranging from school children to older adults, singing along together with Perfect’s “Chcemy być sobą” and enthusiastically cheering for Dezerter’s “Moja Generacja” alike.

Figure 13. Stołeczna Estrada, “20 Lat Wolności,” 2009.

⁶¹¹ “Muzyka połączy pokolenia,” *Życie Warszawy*, May 22, 2009.

Rock from the 1980s has become something like classic rock for Poland, with cross-generational appeal and little of its initial polarizing potency. There was no evidence at the concert of any antagonism between groups like Lady Pank and Perfect performing alongside Kryzys, Dezerter, and T. Love. The audience reaction was decidedly positive, but also calm – almost no one danced, and certainly no one moshed, despite efforts from a couple of Poles in their mid 30s to get the crowd involved. The feeling that emerged, appropriately, was one of solidarity and nostalgia. Rock, alongside Solidarity, had defeated communism and made the way for democracy. Hoping to ride the enthusiasm, a Warsaw politician came out to encourage Poles to continue the tradition of democracy by voting in upcoming elections.

There is much to be said for this vision of rock and Solidarity as the twin forces that brought down the party and replaced it with democracy. After all, many of these rock bands were still around in 2009 to perform, even if temporarily, while the communist party was long since gone. The bands affirmed this representation by agreeing to perform at the concert. Along these lines, in a recent interview, Andrzej Turczynowicz wished for the 1980 Kołobrzeg new wave festival he helped organize, one of the first punk festivals in Poland, to be remembered as having contributed to the fall of communism.⁶¹²

Even in 2009, though, rock maintained some of its irreverence and skepticism. Behind T Love, ever committed to being “alternative,” the bands offered a different message at the end of the festival that added an element of irony to the event with the song “Jest super.”

Popatrz na wspaniałe autostrady	Look at the fabulous highways
a drogi, na których nie znajdziesz	And roads on which you won't find
wybojów	potholes
Rosną nowe bloki	New apartment blocks are growing
i nie ma wypadków	and there aren't any accidents
W czystych szpitalach ludzie	In clean hospitals people
umierają rzadko	rarely die
Mamy extra rząd	We have a great government and a
i super prezydenta	super president
Ci wszyscy ludzie to wspaniali	All those people are wonderful
fachowcy	experts
Ufam im i wiem, że wybrałem	I trust them and know that I chose
swoją przyszłość	my own future

⁶¹² Andrzej Turczynowicz, interview.

Za rękę poprowadzą mnie do Europy	They will lead me to Europe by the hand
Jest super Jest super Więc o co Ci chodzi	It's super It's super So what are you going on about?
Mamy tolerancję wobec innych upodobań Kościół zaciekle broni najbiedniejszych Bogaci są fajni i w miarę uczciwi	We are tolerant of other dispositions The church works to defend the poorest The rich are great and generally honest
Policja surowo karzeźłych przestępców	The police severely punish the bad criminals

The concert organizers wanted to use the event to connect the current generation with the people and experiences of the 1980s; the press report on the concert was tellingly entitled “Music Connects Generations.”⁶¹³ While it projected a shared memory of the 1980s, the contrast between the triumphant, unified past and the fragmentation of the present was stark; in effect, it unwittingly underscored the contrast between the optimism of the past and the disillusionment of the present. It reminded Warsaw that the transition to capitalist democracy was filled with difficulties, economic and political. Much of the political scene of Poland in the years that followed was divided between post-communists and post-solidarity members, with bitter accusations exchanged by both sides, blaming the problems of the past on bad people rather than policy issues.⁶¹⁴

Just as the 1980s are remembered as the peak of Polish rock, they have also been mythologized as a time of social unity against the greater evil of authoritarian communism. The memory of rock music – and even punk rock – has also been adapted to fit this mythologized past. In addition to commemorating the election of 1989, punk rock bands from the 1980s are employed to celebrate national events with growing frequency – for instance, on July 25, 2009, the commemoration 65th anniversary of the Warsaw

⁶¹³ “Muzyka połączy pokolenia.”

⁶¹⁴ David Ost, for instance, has suggested that the unavailability of a class-based argument for describing conflicts of interest in society has turned Polish politics in the direction of volatile identity-based politics (i.e., rather than saying certain politicians are bad because their class interests are different than my own, saying they are bad because of who they are – communists, Jews, women, or homosexuals). *The Defeat of Solidarity: Anger and Politics in Postcommunist Europe* (Ithaca, 2005).

Uprising at the Uprising Museum's Park of Freedom featured performances by the hardcore punk bands Dezerter and Armia. The bands played their own compositions to accompany the poetry of Tadeusz Gajcy, a poet of the Warsaw Uprising – a combination that proved artistically fascinating, but politically heavy-handed as it linked the heroes of the uprising against the German occupation to the more recent social/cultural resistance of rock bands against the communist regime.⁶¹⁵ Similarly, journalists covering rock from the 1980s – a topic that appears frequently in the Polish press today – often frame their work around the question of whether the world of punk rock was in fact infiltrated at various points by the security police or other organs of the state/party.⁶¹⁶ Rather than undermining the assumption that punk rock was an independent sphere that represented Polish society against the communist government, these speculations about occasional breaches reaffirm the fundamental assumption of rock's autonomy.

In short, in recent years, punk rock has become incorporated into a memory of the last years of communism as a time of unified Polish social opposition against a monolithic oppressive state. Without discounting the remarkable achievement of Solidarity and ordinary Poles, though, it is important to remember that the lines of struggle were considerably less clear than this image of a united Polish society, from dissidents to rock bands, fighting against a monolithic, faceless communist party. Of course, to say that the memory of social unity is mythology does not make it irrelevant or bad. However, it can create similar expectations for the present and future, and provoke shock, confusion, and anger when these expectations are not met. Rock in the 1980s is a perfect example of how Polish society, even then, was filled with different people with diverse interests – and indeed, so was the communist party. The memory of the victory of

⁶¹⁵ *Gazeta Wyborcza*, "Wiersze Gajcego na rockowo," July 26, 2009. Article and videos of performance available at:

http://warszawa.gazeta.pl/warszawa/1,95190,6860165,Wiersze_Gajcego_na_rockowo_WIDEO.html, accessed August 2010.

⁶¹⁶ For just a few examples of this ubiquitous theme, see Robert Sankowski, "Trzy dekady Jarocina," *Gazeta Wyborcza: Duży Format*, July, 17 2010; "SB ingerowała w listę przebojów "Trójki"?" *TVP Info*, September 16, 2008, available from <http://wiadomosci.onet.pl/1826051,11,drukuj.html>; Tomasz Rozwadowski, "Rock i ministerstwo," *Dziennik Bałtycki*, September 7, 2008; Krzysztof Feusette, "Wmontowani w akademię," *Rzeczpospolita* February 18, 2008, available from http://www.rp.pl/arttykul/68706,94767_Wmontowani_w_akademie.html;

Mikołaj Lizut, "Bezpieka w Jarocinie - rozmowa z Walterem Chelstowskim," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, November 25, 2003; Jacek Krzemiński, "Bunt kontrolowany," *Rzeczpospolita* November 8, 2000.

the Polish people over an authoritarian regime is an important one, but so is the memory of this diversity.

Nearly everyone involved in the rock scene greeted the fall of communism with relief, and anticipated the return of democracy to Poland with high expectations. However, adapting to the new system presented new difficulties. Politically, it meant that much of the former opposition became the new political authorities. Of course, the rules were different, but many of the people involved in the rock scene were nonetheless disillusioned by the conversion of Solidarity into a political party. While punk and Solidarity had always had their differences, the common ground was much easier to see when the latter had been voicing its own protest against authority than it was when its members were trying to build authority themselves, even democratically.

Perhaps this is not surprising considering the influence of anarchism on punk culture. Krzysztof Grabowski, Dezerter's drummer, recalled, "In June, I went to elections for first time. It was a time of great optimism. Now, I think that the round table distorted the opposition. It gave Solidarity control of a country in ruin. No one came out with clean hands." He continued, "I always thought the government was more or less violence against the people, I still do. Of course, it is necessary for the common good in some things."⁶¹⁷ Tomasz Lipiński of Tilt expressed equal misgivings about 1989:

There was no revolution [in 1989]. We can discuss if it was good or bad. We moved from one system to another establishment, collected around the [round]table. It was good that it did not become violent... On the other hand, our unhappiness is the corruption built into our system from the beginning. We need another revolution, a change of the political establishment, not just another oligarchy, beyond social control. [In politics] the choice is about choosing the lesser evil, like between cancer and cholera. People feel the same. It is still necessary to vote, because otherwise in the Sejm people like [far right politicians] Lepper, Biertych, or Wrodzak will rule.⁶¹⁸

Or as KSU's Eugeniusz "Siczka" Olejarczyk put it, "We were sympathetic to [Solidarity's 1980] strike; we followed it with our whole hearts. When I look at what the

⁶¹⁷ Lizut, *Punk Rock Later*, 130.

⁶¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 40-41.

movement became today, I want to puke.”⁶¹⁹ In this context, the band Big Cyc, a punk band formed in 1988, wrote the song, “Piosenka o "Solidarności" czyli wszystko gnije” (Song about Solidarity, or Everything Decays) in 1993:

Oto stary jest kombatant Co zasługi ma wspaniałe Kiedyś z ludem był pod stocznia	The combatant is old His services are excellent Once he was with the people at the shipyards
Noce spędzał w styropianie	He spent the night in a Styrofoam house
Teraz się urządził nieźle I ma w dupie robotników	Today he has a nice arrangement And doesn't give a damn about workers
Co dzień kradnie ile wlezie I nie znosi głośnych krzyków ...	Every day he steals what he wants And doesn't put up with loud shouts
Trzeba było coś obiecać	It was necessary to promise something
Ludziom, żeby głosowali Wolna Polska, raj na ziemi Demokracja i pluralizm	To the people so they would vote Free Poland, heaven on earth Democracy and pluralism
Wszystko było takie proste Większość w bajki uwierzyła Chcieli mieć bogatą Polskę Bóg gdzieś jest, lecz forsy ni ma	Everything was that simple The majority believed the fable They wanted to have a rich Poland God is somewhere, but there's no cash
Już przestańcie protestować Lepiej idźcie się pomodlić Stulcie ryja i do pracy Dajcie nam trochę porządzić	Stop your protesting It's better to go and pray Shut your mouth and off to work Give us a bit to work with
To elita polityczna Kiedyś w sierpniu było fajnie Teraz mówią na nich "oni" Wszystcy siedzą równo w bagnie	It's the political elite Once in August it was fine Now they're called "they" Everyone sits together in the swamp
Wszystko gnije, wszystko gnije, wszystko gnije Smród unosi się, unosi się i bije	Everything rots, everything rots, everything rots The stench rises, rises and beats

⁶¹⁹ Ibid., 147.

The accusations are so strong they scarcely need explanation: the noble heroes of yesterday had taken the party's place as the new establishment. They had become the new "they" – now using religion instead of socialist doctrine to dupe people into docile productivity.

This may not have been representative of the majority opinion, but this sentiment was not unusual. In a 2003 interview, journalist Michałaj Lizut asked Robert Brylewski whether his songs about Babylon and the system as a source of evil were still meaningful. He responded,

Yes, but after communism, [these terms] have a different meaning. The system was something palpable, evident in every step, and strongly oppressive. That was the communist system. Today we have another system. It operates more discretely, less oppressively, but it still imprisons and bans.⁶²⁰

In other words, Solidarity was another authority; it was just a more challenging creative foil than the party had been. Instead of bureaucrats, now he could sing about "VIP's, a new phenomenon, politicians, businessmen with special privileges," Brylewski observed, complaining, "It means the rest are not important. What about egalitarianism, the great quality of democracy?"

As this suggests, while punk bands had a strong distaste for the communist system, they did not necessarily support free market capitalism. Even before fall of communism, recall that Maanam's Marek Jackowski had misgivings about working with a capitalist firm. Nor were the punk bands of the 1980s generally attracted to right wing politics after 1989, a remarkable fact considering their long, bitter struggle under communism.⁶²¹ Part of the reason for this perhaps is punk's leftist roots in Britain. Further, though, the PRL had afforded enough contact with narrowly defined, exclusionary religion, elitism, and nationalism – for instance, the protest against Jarocin from the Forum for Catholic Social Thought – to impart punk bands from the 1980s with a deep skepticism of these ideas, prominent in the far right.

⁶²⁰ Ibid., 43.

⁶²¹ Among younger, post-1989 punk bands, right wing groups are more common – for instance, I came across a group identifying itself by the label "conservative punk" – a contradiction in terms from the perspective of those who were punks in the 1980s, even given their variety.

The one partial exception is the idiosyncratic Kazik Staszewski, who expressed regret at the lack of a right wing in Poland in 2003, although his reasoning was not based on exclusive nationalism but rather a confidence in the right protecting individual liberties – a position closer to classic liberalism than to the radical right. And even Staszewski did not fully endorse the free market economic system accompanying that liberalism. In a post-1989 interview, he complained about the growing commercialization of society – an issue that had concerned the alternative music scene even under socialism. In fact, he argued that the media in the times of the PRL and under capitalism operated in much the same way. Recording contracts now came with new difficulties, making it possible for very few artists to be “free.”⁶²² And Staszewski, along with Muniak Staszczyk from T. Love, was among the more successful musicians in the transition. The situation was worse for Brylewski and others that showed less interest in working with the new capitalist system. Although he admitted he would not choose to go back to those times, he argued,

It was easier to live in the time at the end of the PRL... as a musician, it was possible to do more, because there was chaos. The reds had their own problems, so they stopped being interested in us. And more people wanted to listen to us.⁶²³

Other artists that had been prominent before 1989 worked to adapt to the new capitalist reality. Tomasz Lipinski from Tilt got a job with the major international music firm BMG, although he quit soon after learning that his hopes that “after communism there would be civilized, just rules for the music industry” were unlikely to be realized. Others embraced the change even more fully, with some of the writers associated with the underground magazine *QORYQ*, itself associated with the punk band Dezerter, becoming successful businessmen in the music industry.⁶²⁴

Out of this situation, a new standard for authenticity developed among the bands that had survived from the 1980s. It was related to the previous conceptualization of authenticity, but became more closely adapted to capitalism. In place of categories of

⁶²² Lizut, *Punk Rock Later*, 13-21.

⁶²³ *Ibid.*, 46.

⁶²⁴ Tomasz Tomczuk, “Typ luzaczka,” *City Magazine (Gazeta Wyborcza)*, January 28, 2004. Available from <http://serwisy.gazeta.pl/czasopisma/1,42475,1886772.html>, accessed June 2009.

“official” and “alternative,” determined by a band’s perceived relationship to the state/party/industry, the new form of authenticity was determined by the equally amorphous relationship of a band to capital.

Krzysztof “Zygzak” Chojnacki from TZN Xenna, remembered as one of the most uncompromising alternative bands, explained his position in this scheme in a 1996 interview. Rather than getting rich off of marketing his band – which he emphasized was not a commercial venture – Chojnacki made his living from designing T-shirts. For him, though, this too was an art form: “I don’t make fashionable things, only good ones. Fashion directs businessmen, and I am not a businessman.” This meant he refused to paint certain things that he considered to be “compromised.” Tellingly, on this list, he included symbols associated with authorities on all sides of the political spectrum from before, during, and after the PRL: “Swastikas, Celtic crosses, Adolf Hitler, Charles Manson, Lech Wałęsa, the Solidarity symbol, PZPR, or SLD [the Left-Democratic Alliance party, which was often identified as the democratic successor to the PZPR]...” “Businessmen paint these things,” he added, “It is necessary to choose between good and bad things in life.”⁶²⁵ Dezerter’s Grabowski argued similarly, “Since 1989, some punk bands have become more commercial, others not. Dezerter is still ‘off.’” He then disdained some of his peer bands’ choice of the path of commercialism: “I was upset about T. Love. I respected them in the 1980s, but they chose the music market. We grew up in same environment, but are totally different now. There are many examples like this.”⁶²⁶

For his part, T. Love’s Staszczuk voiced his appreciation of his ability to finally make money after 1989, as well as the better artistic opportunities afforded by a competent music business. After all, he smirked, “I didn’t like the reds; they came in tanks.” Even so, he thought it important to justify his band’s credibility in the new scheme of authenticity. In dealing with big record firms, Staszczuk argued, “we make all of the rules. Not all bands have this freedom. No one can tell us what to wear, what to play.” Asked provocatively if the band had commercialized, he offered his own interpretation of the matter: “Commercialization is in your head. If you decide to make

⁶²⁵ Janina Blikowska and Robert Rybarczyk, “Nie Szukam towarzystwa w garniturach,” *Gazeta Stołeczna (dodatek do Gazety Wyborczej)*, May 17, 1996.

⁶²⁶ Lizut, *Punk Rock Later*.

music in order to make money, you're commercial. We never thought this way.”⁶²⁷ Kazik Staszewski offered his own argument on a similar question: he located the band’s niche of freedom from commercial concerns by emphasizing its association with a small record label rather than a major company.

For Tomasz Budzyński of Armia, the new system was simply disorienting. With the fall of communism, he noted, he became a “rock star.” Before then, this had always been a pejorative term. “That’s what we said about Lombard and Lady Pank,” he added. This was uncomfortable, although it seemed to come with the new economic reality. For solace, he turned to religion, although he remained anticlerical. True to parts of his punk heritage, he emphasized that he looked to religion not for “political instruction,” but rather a “partnership in faith” and “religion without enemies.”⁶²⁸ As such, he opposed the nationalist Catholicism voiced by right-wing Radio Marija. Even so, his former bandmate Brylewski was hostile to Budzynski’s newly found religiosity, which he mocked as “going crazy with religion.”

Poland after 1989 meant the end of oppression from the party and new opportunities for those willing (and able) to benefit from capitalism. For some of the bands that had once comprised the punk rock scene, though, it also created a new set of difficulties. If communist Poland made it difficult for punk rock to survive for long, democratic, capitalist Poland did not offer much improvement. Even so, in the years since 1989, new bands formed that had not experienced the 1980s music scene. Some older bands did manage to adapt to capitalism. Besides the continued activity of Kazik and T. Love, some of the more mainstream bands have stayed active, including Lady Pank, and Kora from Maanam continues to be popular. Recent years have seen a renewed interest in bands from the 1980s, which as I noted above, has become mythologized as the time of Poland’s finest rock, punk, and metal.

In 2000, the Jarocin festival revived after a six year hiatus. In the year I spent in Warsaw in 2009, I saw advertisements for concerts by Tilt, Kazik (both of whom performed at Jarocin in 2009), Dezerter, Kora from Maanam, Kat, Lady Pank, Made in Poland, and Armia, as well as all of the bands mentioned at the June 4 Concert. Many of

⁶²⁷ Ibid.

⁶²⁸ Ibid.

these bands do not perform regularly, or even exist as bands aside from occasional reunions, but as this suggests, participants of the 1980s punk and rock scene are still active.

Analysis

When I introduced this dissertation, I promised that rock in Poland in the 1980s would serve as a lens through for clarifying both the history of the late PRL and also the operation of popular culture in society. I have tried to meet this goal over the course of this dissertation; however, here I will summarize how what we have learned contributes to our understanding of both the late PRL and popular culture.

To begin, despite the emphasis on martial law as a time of political oppression, party politics alone did not structure the conditions of daily reality in the PRL. As we saw in the second chapter, the experience of a rock band was shaped more on a day to day basis by the conditions of the music industry than by political decisions (although politics and industry structures were linked). In fact, even when party overseers attempted to change the industry to meet policy objectives, they found it nearly impossible to change.

Further, particularly after market reforms, the PRL had an economy characterized by a combination of market pressures and the continued existence of state-determined objectives and policies. Historiography of Eastern Europe has witnessed a debate between scholars arguing whether socialism and capitalism were parallel paths to modernity or fundamentally different systems, argued by Kate Brown and Elizabeth Dunn, respectively. The example of the music industry shows that capitalist and socialist constraints were operating simultaneously in Poland in the 1980s. On one hand, the music industry was required to earn enough money to support itself and to make decisions accordingly after the economic reforms of 1981. On the other hand, political directives continued to be important in decision making. The relationship between these factors was an awkward one; the directives of market demand and the party were frequently quite different, but they could sometimes be squared by rhetorically proficient officials and managers.

As in a capitalist system, rock provided great potential gains and great potential risks; however, in socialist Poland, these were equally divided between economics and

politics. On the level of performers, profit was a requirement of being a professional band, but unlike capitalist countries, it was determined by pay tables rather than the market, although the possibility of concert agencies making large profits from ticket sales for the most popular bands added a market-driven second economy to the mix. Further, as Dunn suggests, aspects of the system modeled after capitalism had somewhat different meanings in the socialist system than under capitalism. While the concept of authenticity in capitalist systems discourages bands from seeming driven by capital, the deeply ingrained hostility toward capitalist domination in the socialist system contributed to even more rigorous anti-commercial standards for bands, even among rock fans skeptical of socialist ideology.

Beyond theoretical debates, this diversity of economic concerns also affected the conditions of daily life in the PRL, a topic that has received little treatment in historiography. More than ever before, the 1980s brought a whole range of choices related to the rock scene. These included not only rock concerts themselves, but also new possibilities for dress, personal style and expression, behavior, and group membership. A shaved head, a Mohawk, ragged clothes held together with safety pins, pierced body parts, dreadlocks, or the stylish dress associated with “poppers” offered a range of choices for personal expression that had not existed the decade before. The presence of these alternatives suggest that life in the PRL was not as drab as the typical depictions suggest – at least for those who reached outside of the official cultural sphere.

This is more than just an addition to the existing depiction of life the PRL; it also shifts how we look at the 1980s, which are often divided into a brief cultural renaissance with the Solidarity movement and then a barren wasteland following martial law, until Solidarity’s resurfacing at the end of the decade. Here, I have shown how many cultural opportunities continued to exist – and even expanded – amidst martial law. This amendment also makes Solidarity’s return make more sense; rather than emerging inexplicably from the ashes, the movement returned amidst a flurry of alternative activity that was taking place.

Further, much of this countercultural activity was taking place not just independently of the (banned) opposition and the Catholic Church, but in fact, was connected to organs of the state or the party. Arguments about the fall of communism in

Poland often invoke the concept of the rise of civil society – that is, a sphere of society independent of the party. Yet, even before martial law, much of rock's offerings as an alternative cultural space were in fact nominally under the authority of the state, in student union clubs. Poland in the 1980s provides a curious situation where something resembling civil society was developing, offering a place for alternative culture, but paradoxically, it was located almost entirely under the auspices of the state and party.

Particularly relevant in this respect were the various groups outside the party, but linked to it. Youth unions, for instance, were in the position of being subordinated to the party, yet needing to appeal to youth. This awkward position led to the possibility of massive events like Jarocin, Robrege, and other festivals that would not have been possible independently of the state, but would not have been acceptable for the party or rock fans if they had been entirely official. Likewise, the music industry was in a contradictory position where it was expected to serve party cultural objectives, but also to earn enough to run itself, particularly after the economic reforms of the IX Extraordinary Congress in 1981. The private and émigré record firms operating in Poland were in an particularly strange position, beholden to certain MKiS restrictions, but operating with relative freedom for production and pricing numbers. These examples remind us that alternatives to communist authority – whether different ways of thinking and behaving or simply different groups to belong to – frequently arose under the auspices of the party as much as in opposition to it.

Similarly, I have been surprised by the complex relationship between the government and the press. While rock fans often rejected the media as one of the most reprehensible aspects of the system, they took quite a different approach to specialty magazines, particularly *Non-Stop*, sometimes treating it almost as a peer. The press depended on official approval for its existence as well as regular censorship, but this did not mean that it always confirmed party expectations or desires. *Non-Stop* in particular was a fine rock periodical by any standards, comparing favorably to its western counterparts in all respects except paper quality in the opinion of this reader. Besides the party influencing the press, the party just as frequently responded to tendencies in the press, deciding to address Jarocin only after a publicity outburst in the press in late 1984. Moreover, from the perspective of the party, writers defending rock were no more of a

threat than cultural conservatives, who were liable to lambaste the party for allowing the decline in the level of culture.

These subtleties already suggest how our knowledge of rock offers a new perspective on the role of the party in the PRL. For the most part, the party has been portrayed as an authoritarian monolith: oppressive, uninteresting, unchanging, uniform, and impenetrable. While this depiction has certain elements of truth, a look at its policy toward youth, culture, and specifically at rock complicates this picture, changing the way we understand the politics of late socialist Poland. On one hand, much of the party-speak – that is, references to abstract goals of socialism, equality, mass participation, and elevating the masses alongside endorsements of Marxism-Leninism – remained the same as it had in previous years, although with the addition of a new focus on humanism and developing the individual. The basic practice of confirming what seemed the dominant position rather than offering alternatives at large party meetings continued as well. Within the party, I have tried to distinguish between local, regional, and central variants, as well as various departments, groups, and committees. However, even within these departments, groups, and committees, a closer look over the long term reveals an array of uncertainty, miscommunication, disagreement, and changes of position.

The frequent changes in party policy have led some observers to assume the existence of a coherent strategy from what is actually the result of disagreement and uncertainty. While the party did sometimes use a combination of incentives and punishments to achieve desired results, this was more on a case-by-case basis than it was a long-term strategy for undermining and incorporating rock. At the same time, this disorder and disagreement frequently created a space for individual initiative, making events possible that would otherwise have been too controversial to carry out. Paradoxically, though, it also meant that bands and fans that valued the status of being alternative expressed misgivings about taking advantage of these sorts of opportunities, interpreting them as a strategy for maintaining power rather than a chink in the system's armor.

Viewed from the outside, the party appeared to have an internal consensus and know exactly what it was doing over the 1980s. However, as I have shown, the period was actually filled with tension, disagreement, and confusion between different divisions

within the party, between the party and the state, and between the center, the regional, and the local representatives.⁶²⁹ It might be an exaggeration to describe these differences as “factions”; democratic centralism (the Leninist policy of agreeing unanimously once a decision was reached among central authorities) made the emergence of clearly defined opposing groups unlikely. However, there were very real differences and disagreements. Rock exploited and emphasized the conflicts that were constantly bubbling beneath the façade of unity – and in particular, the difference between reformist and stalinist views of Poland and socialism.

At the same time, many of the debates taking place within the party over Polish culture, the Polish nation, and Polish youth were simultaneously issues of contention among other key groups in 1980s Poland – the Catholic Church and Solidarity. Like party hardliners, conservative members of Solidarity and traditionalist Catholics saw punk rock as a threat to the Polish nation and its culture (which, they all agreed, should be religious, respectful of “the person,” and nationalist). On the other hand, more progressive members of the opposition and the Church, like reformers in the party, could accept rock in the name of creative freedom and use it as a foothold for pursuing a link with contemporary Polish youth.

To put it another way, there are significant problems with defining 1980s Poland in terms of a division between “the Church” and “the opposition” (identified with “the people”) on one side, and the PZPR (“the system”) on the other. This is not to suggest that rock (rather than the Solidarity strikes of 1980 or the elections of 1989) is the lens through which the real fracture lines of Polish society should be discerned. Clearly, formations like “the opposition” and “the party” had deep meanings in 1980 and 1989, just as they do in memory today. However, beneath a surface of unity, these formations were deeply divided – not just about rock, but also about how Polish culture and society should be defined, and about the place of religion, the nation, freedom, and fun in Poland’s present and future. All of these observations suggest that the typical binary framework for discussing the PRL, dividing its citizens into the oppressed and oppressors, or resisters and compliers, or “us” and “them” – while useful as a rallying cry

⁶²⁹ This fits with similar observations by scholars like Merle Fainsod, J Arch Getty, and Sheila Fitzpatrick about the USSR, who have challenged the idea of the communist party as a well organized, efficient, omniscient, and omnipotent.

for those unhappy with the system – does not work for actually understanding how it operated. It is not just a matter of the PRL being “more complicated”; rather, this binary is a fundamental misunderstanding.

This is not just an important issue for historians. The emergence of this fault line in Polish society and politics suggests why Poland emerged from the fall of communism in 1989 divided in opinion. While political lines between former opposition and former party members remained in place for the first several years in the form of various Solidarity parties and the Democratic Left Alliance, in the new millennium, the division between “ex-solidarity” and “ex-communists” is primarily a matter of rhetorical significance.⁶³⁰ Instead, the primary fault line is in terms of cultural and social views, between fiercely nationalist and traditionalist Catholic parties and the constellation of forces with more progressive ideas about Poland.⁶³¹ In this way, rather than interpreting post-1989 politics in the conventional divide between “post-Solidarity” and “post-communist” allegiances, it makes sense to think of them as a continuation of a progressive-conservative divide that reaches back into the PRL.

The multivalent, flexible role played by rock in 1980s Poland can also be extrapolated to speak to the study of popular culture in general. The central dichotomy around which the study of the politics of popular culture – phrased as resistance/compliance, power/resistance, oppression/liberation, or in other similar terms – is misguided. First of all, popular culture, and certainly music, is not primarily about resistance. Many of the bands and fans I discussed in this dissertation appreciated the music for its refusal to engage in the political debates at the time. Youth looking for politics would go to a Solidarity or KOR meeting or join the party or a youth union. Rock fans listened to the music for a different reason – because it was exciting, fun, vital, expressive, and different, because it made them feel better, or it gave voice to their frustration and anger, and of course, because others like them were interested in it. For some, it was all about how the music sounded and a chance to dance, for others it was also about words and hidden meanings, for still others it was about defining oneself as a

⁶³⁰ This is not to say that it is irrelevant; accusations of former links to the communist regime remain a powerful political weapon in Poland today.

⁶³¹ This underlying fault line between conservatives and progressives became clear in issues like the 2003 referendum on joining the European Union, which pitted ultra-nationalist, Catholic traditionalists against progressives who saw Poland’s future integrated with Europe.

group that was significantly different from the rest of society through music. For all of these reasons, looking at rock as primarily political, or even focusing on the politics of rock risks missing the point – the music – altogether.

However, popular culture is not an independent sphere either. In the context of an oppressive, unjust society, whether capitalist or communist, it makes sense to look for how it relates to power, dissatisfaction with the status quo, and impulses for social change. Paradoxically, in order to make sense of how it operates politically, you have to move politics out of focus. If you look for it, you miss it; like looking at distant stars, it becomes visible in the periphery. This is a difficult position to hold, but a rewarding one. Resistance is not a characteristic that exists “in” something – rather, it is produced through struggle to define where a cultural form fits in the ideological landscape. For music, this struggle took place in production decisions by figures in the music industry, debates in the party, in bands and their music, and in how it is presented to its audience and to the general public.

The conditions in 1980s Poland made this struggle particularly vigorous. In the 1980s the party was deeply concerned not just with maintaining its rule, but with its authority, and was attempting to derive this authority’s in the area of culture, particularly addressed toward youth. At the same time, these were precisely the areas in which Solidarity was challenging the party’s authority – its failure to uphold the culture and values of the Polish nation. This created an environment in which a cultural form, especially one popular among youth, could serve as a battlefield on which the struggle over key ideas about 1980s Poland – its culture, society, and politics – took place. Rock became incredibly politicized, but the specific political role it served varied depending on a wide set of variables including who was speaking, when, in what context, and what song or band was referenced. Maintaining this contingency in meaning is essential if we are to avoid a binary model that defines a punk song as inherently “resistant” to power or “complicit” with it.

The hegemonic and discursive models of power I outlined in the introduction offer a useful way of doing this. If we conceptualize rock in terms of the party’s struggle to maintain hegemonic authority, we can see how different voices in the party took up alternate strategies – some saw rock as fundamentally incompatible and sought to

suppress it, while others identified it as possibly being adapted to fit into socialist Poland, and sought to incorporate it. The struggle between these views took place between these opposing impulses, but also between analogous impulses in the Church and Solidarity. Which view triumphed was not only a question of rock, but also a matter of what interpretation of the Polish nation, youth, and culture would dominate. At the same time, the punk bands and fans that were uninterested in having their music fit either of these frameworks contested both of these views. These debates took place in the realm of discourse at party meetings, in the music industry, and in the press, while bands added their own perspective in their underground publications and in their music and performances. Through them, the meaning of rock was contested along with the meaning of the Polish nation, its youth, and its culture.

For this reason, the contrast between production-focused and use-focused approaches to popular culture discussed in the introduction has been overemphasized, often by those presenting each approach. It is not only that both aspects are important; rather, it is that they are intimately linked. How music is produced – who makes the decisions, the guiding policies, who is profiting, regulations, material limitations, and distribution – deeply effects how it received, or heard, by the audience. As we have seen, the music scene and their reactions to the music were affected by the scarcity of resources, the decision to publish some records rather than others, and concern about the system benefiting from rock's success: these factors influenced how rock was heard by fans. At the same time, the effect is not direct or objective, but rather is filtered through discourse about the music, just as discourse about the music is continually affected by these conditions. This created room for the public to interpret rock, either within dominant discursive frameworks (that is, either as antisocial, anticultural noise or as youth participation in culture) or outside of them (for instance, as “white volcano therapy,” or as something that meets attempts to translate it into analytical language with a sneer and a laugh).

This accounts for the strange relationship of the press to punk rock. Particularly in the early days of punk, the music's defenders and its detractors in the press were equally likely to meet the ridicule of the music's practitioners. As an attempt to create culture independent of the official sphere, any attempt to jam it into dominant discourse, based

on ideas about cultural uplift and rational social justice threatened its ability to operate as alternative culture. This provides an important lesson on the operation of hegemony. Incorporation is often treated as a strategy undertaken by power holders to neutralize alternatives to the dominant ideological structure. Most of the time, though, its operation was much more subtle. Hegemony is ordinary; rather than a sinister plot, it often looks more like a well-meaning attempt at compromise. Even the best intentioned speech by a party member or article by a critic about rock's value as a cultural form or an opportunity for youth participation sapped its countercultural power. The reformist representatives of the state and party who wanted to sponsor rock festivals were not trying to destroy it; they were the ones defending it.

If these efforts weakened rock's ability to serve as an alternative form of culture, though, they also left the party in a weakened state. By the time the Jarocin festival was adopted into the official calendar of cultural events in 1988, reformist forces inside the party had successfully pushed to expand the definition of acceptable Polish socialist culture to accommodate punk rock. However, their success nonetheless left the party's authority compromised. First of all, it remained abysmally unpopular. Even more significantly, though, in order to attempt to avoid a collapse of authority entirely, they had pushed forward a vision of Poland that made the difference between a good communist and a good Catholic or Solidarity member less clear than the difference between progressives and traditionalists/hardliners across party lines. If including punk rock on the cultural calendar had enough support in 1988 to become a reality, coming to terms with Solidarity's more familiar patriotism, social democracy, and religiosity was a comparatively easy challenge. Forging an agreement to share power with Solidarity certainly meant compromise, but that was something the party was accustomed to by 1988. Confronted with failing party authority, reformers identified as much with likeminded people in the opposition as they did with stalinists in the party. With the roundtables, they took the final step to incorporate the people and ideas that had long been seen as their chief opponents; they shifted party hegemony out of existence.

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Gazeta Wyborcza

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Magazyn Muzyczny (Jazz: Magazyn Muzyczny; Magazyn Muzyczny—Jazz)

Na Przełaj

Non stop

Polityka

Razem

Rock Estrada

Rock Magazyn

Rockowisko
Rzeczpospolita
Sztandar Młodych
Świata Młodych
Trybuna Ludu
Walka Młodych
Życie Warszawy

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