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## Real breakthrough or pragmatic continuation? The Polish People's Republic in the assessment of German diplomacy on the eve of imposing martial law in Poland – discussion theses

### Introduction

In Polish journalism and historical debates there are few disputes as controversial as those concerning the probability of intervention of the Warsaw Pact countries' troops in the Polish People's Republic after 1980. Since the beginning of the 1990s, the key element of these disputes, i.e., the symbolic question “will they enter or will they not”<sup>1</sup>, has appeared not only as a regular topic in the daily press (Skórzyński, 1997). Just like the whole issue of 1980-83 (Dudek, 2003; Polak, 2016), it has also been discussed at academic conferences (Smolar, 1997), in documentaries (Kamiński, 2007) or in commemorative memoirs (Tokarczuk, 2017).

For obvious reasons, the situation in Poland since the establishment of the Solidarity Trade Union must have been of interest to the NATO-accredited missions in Poland. Also, their assessments, especially those concerning a possible invasion and forecasts of situation development in the Polish People's Republic, were reflected in the above-mentioned publications (Pleskot, 2020). The signaled question of a potential invasion also appeared literally in diplomatic and intelligence reports<sup>1</sup>. At least it was not used there as a rhetorical figure, but as a key concept of Polish internal policy related to the creation of Solidarity<sup>2</sup>.

It is not surprising that diplomatic documents become an instrument used to prove the thesis of the possible preparation of an invasion, or the lack thereof. The use of files is, after all, the basis of every researcher's work (Paczkowski, Werblan, 1997: 5). However, it is worth mentioning here the elements which determined the work of the institutions from which the documents quoted by researchers or publicists came. First of all, the intelligence services or foreign ministries were tasked solely with protecting the interests of their own countries. And this protection was their priority, even at the cost of

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<sup>1</sup> See the CIA records published online (Wilson Center, Digital Archive, 2021).

<sup>2</sup> A question that was posed throughout the Western European diplomacy of that period (Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes [Political Archive of the Federal Foreign Office; later PA AA], B42, sign. 132908, *German Embassy cryptogram from Stockholm*, 9.12.1980).

not necessarily full knowledge (Szawit, 2020: 70) of what was happening in a particular state of accreditation. Therefore, they were not created in order to prove, e.g., 40 years after they were made, the probability of a possible military intervention in the Polish People's Republic. Secondly, when discussing issues of intervention, it had to be remembered that for special services (George, 2008: 281) and/or diplomacy, the whole situation in a region remained important (Stemplowski, 2003: 9), but not necessarily a single military move in its area. This, in turn, had to mean that events of key importance for the participants of a political shift in a given country could be considered completely insignificant for an external observer making assessments through the prism of protecting his or her own interests.

The elements signaled hereby became the starting point for a research project inaugurated in 2018 by the Szczecin branch of the Institute of National Remembrance (IPN), entitled *The World towards Szczecin*. Its seemingly regional character, aimed at analyzing the perception of the aforementioned metropolis by the diplomatic or intelligence services of Warsaw Pact/NATO countries, facilitated archival research precisely in the context of the main objectives of diplomacy as such. It was a matter of perceiving the political overlap and formulating recommendations to one's own political leadership solely for the sake of protecting the interests of individual members of a particular alliance.

The 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the imposition of martial law, which falls in December 2021, as well as the author's assignment in the project to the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), encouraged the author to conduct a search in the political archives of the West German Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The author of this text was interested in whether December 13, 1981 really changed anything for Germany from the point of view of its own foreign policy. The theses formulated on the basis of this research and presented below aim at explaining the reasons for the behaviour of certain institutions or politicians in Germany after the breakthrough of 1980-1981, which is known from other sources and received critically in Poland. First of all, I refer to the rather reserved attitude of West German politicians (Pleskot, 2016: 45) towards the Solidarity movement, which has been described in the literature, as well as the indications of West German diplomats after December 13, that they were equally reserved in their condemnation of the decision to impose martial law – unless there was a radical use of force against the opposition in the Polish People's Republic and/or a considerable bloodshed (Materski, 2010: 847).

**The first thesis:** From the point of view of the FRG diplomacy, the People's Republic of Poland played a certain, but not the most important role in protecting the interests of the Federal Republic. These interests consisted of avoiding the East-West conflict and, on a smaller scale, economic cooperation. The most important thing remained the elimination of anything that might upset the inter-bloc balance in Europe. The impasse of martial law complicated the situation, but it did not fundamentally influence the defi-

inition of the FRG's interests towards Poland, which had already been defined before the crisis of December 1970 in the People's Republic of Poland. And without understanding the attitude towards the latter, one could not understand the attitude of West German diplomacy towards martial law.

From the West German point of view, stability was crucial for the implementation of its own foreign policy in Europe. Without it, there could be no gradual inter-block rapprochement, which could one day, in some perspective, lead to unification of Germany. The specific measures in this regard (Stokłosa, 2011: 180), known as the New Eastern Policy, which culminated in the conclusion of a series of treaties with the member states of the Warsaw Pact (Żerko, 2020: 1), were nevertheless very quickly confronted, at least in the People's Republic of Poland, with the workers' uprising in December 1970.

As cynical as it may sound, the December events were irrelevant to German diplomacy in terms of the number of dead or the genesis of the protests. All that mattered was that the politician in the Polish People's Republic who had led to the conclusion of the Normalization Agreement with Germany had been removed from power. The government in Bonn, therefore, intended to support and maintain contact with any successor that would respect the agreements and guarantee control of the situation that would eliminate any form of external military intervention. More was not needed to develop formal diplomatic and commercial contacts (Jaskułowski, 2020:5 8).

The same reasoning applied to the creation of Solidarity and to what happened from August 1980 and December 13, 1981 in the Polish People's Republic. It did not matter whether the workers' protests in the Tricity or the introduction of a curfew in 1982 were legal or socially justified. All that mattered was whether what was happening in the People's Republic of Poland threatened stability in the region. And if so, whether this stability could be preserved by avoiding the main threat to NATO, i.e., the intervention of Warsaw Pact troops in the Polish People's Republic.

Of course, Solidarity, as a social actor, is an entity without precedent in any socialist state. But this alone meant that it would not be tolerated not so much by the Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR), but by the USSR. Meanwhile, the decade of the 1970s was, from Germany's point of view, a landmark achievement in reaching the conditions of peaceful coexistence between the world's major political blocs. The possible external military intervention in Poland could have undermined all the work on the relaxation of the East-West relations (PA AA, Department 214, B42, sign. 132911, *Lage in und um Polen*, 11.05.1981), the quintessence of which was the acceptance of the Eastern Bloc as a political solution. The quintessence of which was the adoption of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe Final Act in Helsinki. It was, therefore, important for the FRG not to intervene. But at the same time, the creation of Solidarity was not particularly beneficial either. It was a risk factor because of the very existence, behaviour and difficult to assess costs of the inevitable pacification of the trade unions, which were independent of the Polish authorities.

The FRG concluded a treaty with the Polish People's Republic in December 1970. It guaranteed the existence of basic instruments of action. It referred to the maintenance of full diplomatic relations. A number of additional agreements were concluded, regulating economic relations. The conditions for the migration of people of German origin to the Federal Republic were specified as far as possible (Schwarz, 2002: 25). Nevertheless, Germany was able to function well without the above-mentioned agreements and without a developed bilateral trade exchange<sup>3</sup>. Poland remained interesting in that it pursued a foreign policy that was to some extent open to the West, regardless of international turbulence<sup>4</sup>. But even if this had not been the case, it would not have changed much in geopolitical reality. For the FRG, the most important thing was to avoid uncontrolled social outbursts in the Polish People's Republic, such as the Hungarian uprising, and to respect the bilateral treaties that had already been concluded. Nothing more. The analysis of diplomatic documents suggests that the latter thesis was communicated quite clearly to the Polish side<sup>5</sup>.

**The second thesis:** The assessments formulated by the FRG diplomats at the headquarters of the FRG Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Bonn, but also in the offices in Warsaw and elsewhere, pointed to the danger of an uncontrolled political breakdown after 1980, with Solidarity being mainly to blame for it.

The first important element which becomes apparent when analyzing the West German diplomatic archival legacy concerning the People's Republic of Poland is the fact that, as a rule, since 1980 no special possibilities for a peaceful resolution of the crisis were seen. What is more, the elements considered important by the domestic historiography from the point of view of stabilization efforts did not have to be regarded as such by the FRG Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In this case, it was primarily about the government's agreements with Solidarity of August 1980.

It was of course appreciated that there was no use of violence as an instrument for conflict elimination. Nevertheless, it was pointed out that, despite the apparent recognition of the independent trade unions, the power structure was preserved, above all in PZPR, regardless of personal changes, such as the removal of Edward Gierek from office. It was considered possible that concessions to the protesters would be withdrawn as a result of ongoing pressure from the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) (PA AA, Bonn, B42, sign. 132905, *Gegenwärtige innenpolitische Lage in Polen*, 5.09.1980).

<sup>3</sup> This is shown, for example, in the materials from bilateral talks between representatives of the Polish People's Republic and the Federal Republic of Germany from 1981 (PA AA, B42, sign. 132890, *Cipher from the German Embassy in Warsaw to Bonn*, 10.07.1981).

<sup>4</sup> This is confirmed by the assessments of bilateral relations prepared at the headquarters of the German Foreign Ministry even before the Polish August 1980 (PA AA, Reference 214, B42, sign. 132890, *Entwicklung der deutsch-polnischen Beziehungen in den letzten Monaten*, 30.06.1980).

<sup>5</sup> This can be seen in the notes made after talks between the then FRG Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher and Polish diplomats after December 13, 1981 (PA AA, Bonn, B42, sign. 132916, *Gespräch des Herrn Bundesministers mit dem polnischen Geschäftsträger Wojtkowski am 21.12.1981, 22.12.1981*).

The essence of the conflict, after the agreements in Gdańsk, Szczecin and Jastrzębie, did not change, all the more so because the independent trade unions took an increasingly radical stance, regardless of the ongoing changes in assessments of that radicalism (PA AA, Bonn, B42, sign. 132916, *Lage in und um Polen*, 10.06.1981).

The consolidation of the party system and inevitable changes in the leadership, regardless of the frequency, had to lead to a situation, in the opinion of the West German Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in which it was impossible to reconcile the existence of such different forces within one political entity, i.e., PZPR and Solidarity, all the more so because the goals of both were extremely contradictory. This was most evident after the election of Gierek's successor, Stanisław Kania. Analyses of his speeches emphasized the recognition of the legitimacy of the workers' protest with a reminder of the party's leadership role, which was *de facto* undermined by the trade unions. And this guaranteed conflict (PA AA, B42, sign. 132907, *Cipher from the German Embassy in Warsaw to Bonn*, 5.09.1980).

The second element that contributed to the belief in the inevitability of confrontation was the turn of 1980/1981. Analyses from that period pointed to the possibility of a wave of arrests by the authorities on Christmas Day as a result of, or due to fear of, the outbreak of radical protests, e.g., economic ones (PA AA, Bonn, B42, sign. 132906, *Vermerk. Gespräch des Staatsministers mit dem britischen Außenminister Lord Carrington am 5. Dezember 1980 in London*, 10.12.1980). The fact that they did not happen was supposed to be solely due to the leader of Solidarity, Lech Wałęsa, pacifying the moods of the trade union and society.

The third element, which was a sign of the coming crisis, was the observed development of Solidarity into an organization with radical or impossible to fulfill demands. In particular, its 1981 congress<sup>6</sup> was considered a defeat for the moderate forces and a success for PZPR, which was trying to break the union. The strengthening of the position of trade union radicals was interpreted unequivocally as an element that would lead to an extreme aggravation of the internal situation of the Polish People's Republic. Since October 1981, it was considered "alarming" in relevant documents (PA AA, Department 214, B42, sign. 132890, *Die Lage in Polen*, 8.10.1981). Already after December 13, it was indicated that it was the aggravation of moods that decided for the introduction of martial law, which, according to the German embassy, was finally an autonomous decision of the head of the government and the party, i.e., General Wojciech Jaruzelski (PA AA, B42, sign. 132916, *Cipher from Warsaw*, 13.12.1981). In the available analyses of West German diplomacy, there is an extreme disapproval of the general social attitudes in Poland before December 13. They were supposed to be advantageous for the then authorities of the USSR. They could wait calmly for the development of self-de-

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<sup>6</sup> See the study of the FRG Embassy in Warsaw of September 2, 1981 (PA AA, B42, sign. 132916, *Vorabend des Solidarność-Landeskongresses*, 2.09.1981).

structive attitudes of the citizens of the Polish People's Republic, which would give a reason to intervene without exaggerated inspiration.

The context of this disapproval must of course be kept in mind. Just as diplomacy is not meant to act with empathy towards the country of office, neither are its citizens obliged to conform to opinions and attitudes favourable to representatives of third countries. However, when in May 1981, one of the reports said that Poles were a nation convinced of being "the Christ of nations, producing potential saints and dreamers dancing in their own dreams with a simultaneous tendency to a kamikaze mentality" (PA AA, B42, sign. 132916, *Memo for Department 214*, 12.05.1981), this must have determined the opinion of German diplomacy about the Polish People's Republic as a country in which, after 1980, a tragedy had to happen, the effects of which could at best be minimized.

The key to this minimization, and therefore the most important goal of West German diplomacy, remained the Church. It was defined as an entity which called for calm, tried to tone down extreme attitudes and limited the influence of radical activists on Wałęsa. However, German diplomats were not entirely sure whether the clergy could actually wield the influence they were talking about. Another issue was that the Church had control over the direct media, e.g., sermons, which had no chance of being censored. It also remained a fact that, looking at the notes of conversations between embassy employees and broad representatives of Church circles, clergy and laity, it was rather the Church that asked for help from West German diplomats in toning down the mood, and not the other way round.

Operational signals indicating that some form of the introduction of martial law in the Polish People's Republic was beginning, not necessarily explicitly called an intervention, were reaching the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs from December 1981. Two key themes could be found in the diplomatic documents. First, the initiatives of Church representatives in West Germany were recorded. They considered that the situation in December 1981 did not justify – on the part of the opposition – undertaking a series of strike actions. Hence, they strove for their elimination. At the same time, the authorities of the Polish People's Republic were informed that such actions could take place as a result of the attempts of the authorities to pass new regulations limiting the right to protest (PA AA, B42, sign. 132916, *Cipher from Warsaw*, 10.12.1981). This could be interpreted as an attempt to prevent the authorities from deliberately provoking the opposition and declaring a state of emergency as a result. This complemented the embassy's assessment that the atmosphere must have deteriorated, and conflicts escalated after the summer of 1981 (PA AA, B42, sign. 132916, *Cipher from Warsaw*, 4.08.1981).

Secondly, at the level of direct civil contacts, there were more and more indications of a possible overlap. For example, the Federal Border Guard informed the Federal Ministry of the Interior and the Foreign Ministry of FRG about unusual behaviour, which was recorded since December 1981, such as above-average detailed border controls, up to and including the breaking of seals on humanitarian aid transports (PA AA, B42,

sign. 133029, *Cipher program from the FRG Ministry of the Interior to the FRG Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, 10.12.1981), rumors about the closure of the border of the Polish People's Republic before Christmas and cases of convoys with aid for Poland being turned back already from December 11, 1981. Two days later, foreigners with valid travel documents to Poland were regularly turned back from the internal German border. After their return, they claimed that they had received information about the declaration of martial law from border control officers from the German Democratic Republic (GDR) (PA AA, B42, sign. 133029, *Cipher from the FRG Ministry of the Interior to the FRG Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, 13.12.1981). On the other hand, the travelers who managed to leave Poland reported that martial law had been nominally imposed, but their descriptions were dominated by the belief that the atmosphere in the country was quite peaceful (PA AA, B42, sign. 133029, *Cipher from the FRG Ministry of the Interior to the FRG Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, 13.12.1981).

Of course, the information from the border crossings, because this was where they were primarily registered, was full of unverified rumors or at least peculiar slogans, such as those about Warsaw going up in flames when the Red Army stormed, or the alleged storming of the Wrocław Polytechnic on December 16 by the above-mentioned (PA AA, B42, sign. 133029, *Cipher from the FRG Ministry of the Interior to the FRG Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, 17.12.1981). And so, however, all the time current dispatches signaled a general tendency toward relative calm in the country and control of the situation by the authorities, despite a number of tensions (PA AA, B42, sign. 132916, *Cipher from the FRG Ministry of the Interior to the FRG Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, 17.12.1981). These messages were, as it seems after years, much more credible than the official optimism of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of Poland. It must be remembered that even in conversations with West German diplomats after December 13, 1981, the then head of the Foreign Ministry, Józef Czyrek assured them that Wałęsa was not interned (PA AA, B42, sign. 132916, *Memo from a conversation between the German Ambassador and the Minister of Foreign Affairs Józef Czyrek*, 13.12.1981). It was difficult to find a greater manipulation, or rather unlikely, ignorance on the part of the minister.

**The third thesis:** While the behaviour of the FRG diplomacy, which wanted to prevent outside military intervention in the Polish People's Republic, was clear, its conviction that it would certainly not happen was not so clear.

According to the analysts from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Bonn, it was not so much the Soviet military operation in Afghanistan that spoke against the intervention, but the possible political costs in Europe. These were expressed in the blockade of disarmament negotiations, the unpredictable situation on the ground, i.e., in the Polish People's Republic, as well as huge non-military problems, such as the necessity to guarantee supplies in Poland. Intervention, in turn, was supported by the interpretation of media

signals sent in the USSR. Harsh articles criticizing the Polish authorities in the Soviet party press were interpreted as accustoming the local readership to a possible invasion.

Equally important for the FRG Ministry of Foreign Affairs was the assessment of the financial costs of a potential intervention. According to studies conceived in August 1981 (PA AA, B42, sign. 132927, *Study on the economic situation in the Polish People's Republic of 4.08.1981 prepared for the Secretary of State in the FRG Foreign Ministry*, 4.08.1981), such an intervention would cost 10 billion US dollars a year and would additionally involve up to 40 divisions on the territory of the Polish People's Republic, which, apart from unspecified social resistance, would have to protect major industrial plants against mass sabotage. Additionally, they would have to secure the supply of the population. On top of that, there would be indirect material costs, such as the arms race, the *de facto* collapse of the idea of the CSCE, the loss of foreign assets of all Warsaw Pact countries, or their economic blockade, particularly painful because of the oil crisis of the 1970s.

When, according to the FRG Ministry of Foreign Affairs, could the intervention take place? Certainly, at the moment when the Polish People's Republic renounced its membership in the Warsaw Pact. It is true that there were signals that pacifying Solidarity without the involvement of external factors was the 'third way' in the current situation. What is more, it would even be acceptable to the FRG. External intervention would have become a problem for the whole Warsaw Pact. It would have been necessary to participate in it militarily or at least to help economically, which would have generated costs. In turn, the success of Solidarity would have forced the emergence of similar social movements in other socialist countries. And this was not what any of the communist parties in Eastern Europe desired (PA AA, Department 214, B42, sign. 13447, *Reaktionen in Ost- und Südosteuropa auf die Entwicklung in Polen*, 15.05.1981).

For the FRG, each scenario meant potential economic or political destabilization in the GDR, regardless of the financial costs of an embargo on, for example, trade with the USSR. Every scenario except one, i.e., the elimination of Solidarity by the forces on the part of the authorities of the Polish People's Republic. It guaranteed the absence of external intervention, forced other socialist countries to provide economic aid to the 'brotherly country', albeit not as extensive as in the case of external intervention, blocking e.g., due to the oppressive border control system in the GDR, a possible wave of refugees.

In other words, the FRG embassy in Moscow directly informed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs headquarters in Bonn in its reports that there was no guarantee that the USSR authorities would make exclusively rational decisions in relation to the intervention. The factor of paranoid understanding of the world in the Soviet leadership existed as a fact and could not be disregarded. In May 1981, messages from the FRG diplomatic representation in Moscow contained, for example, information that it could never be predicted whether the intervention would take place or not (PA AA, Department 214,

B42, sign. 132927, *Zur Kurzfassung einer Aufzeichnung der Botschaft Moskau*, 19.05.1981). The diplomats also received, although skeptically judged, signals that the authorities of the Polish People's Republic were to receive an ultimatum from the USSR. According to this ultimatum, the intervention was to take place if the situation on the ground was not brought under control by December 17, 1981 (PA AA, Department 214, B42, sign. 132916, *Lage in Polen*, 7.01.1982). The high risk of intervention and the maintenance of the Warsaw Pact troops in a state of heightened readiness for action was reported – on the part of the FRG – in multilateral forums, e.g., NATO. This topic was very clearly emphasized from the end of April 1981 (PA AA, Department 214, B42, sign. 132911, *NATO-Frühjahrsministerkonferenz in Rom am 04.-05. Mai 1981*, 4-5.05.1981). Incidentally, on December 18, 1981, the FRG Ministry of Foreign Affairs described the situation in Poland as a “disguised Soviet intervention”, which was, however, as one might think, an exaggerated description (PA AA, Department 214, B42, sign. 132927, *Die Lage in und um Polen*, 18.12.1981).

What were the tactics of the FRG diplomacy in relation to the above? Firstly, from August 1980, restraint was maintained in commenting on and reacting to events in Poland, which was in line with the attitude of NATO as a whole. They refused to support any external initiatives that could provide a pretext for military action by the USSR, for example at the level of the CSCE (PA AA, Bonn, B42, sign. 132906, *Behandlung der Polen-Situation auf der Aussenministerkonferenz der ‘Blockfreien’ am 7.-11.2.1981 in New Dheli*, 7-11.02.1981). Accusations, above all from the socialist countries, of alleged interference in the internal affairs of the Polish People's Republic were answered only on the diplomatic level (PA AA, Department 213, B42, sign. 132911, *Gespräche von BM Genscher mit AM Gromyko und GS Breschnew in Moskau (02. bis 04.04.1981)*, 2-4.04.1981) and in a very cautious form. The forms of activity that could lead to such accusations were eliminated. Efforts were made all the time to convince the authorities in Moscow, not in Poland, that it was simply not worthwhile to intervene. This was mainly the purpose of meetings of high officials of the FRG MFA with their counterparts in the USSR MFA, up to the ministerial level (PA AA, Bonn, B42, sign. 132906, *Vermerk über die Unterredung des Bundesministers mit dem sowjetischen Botschafter Semjonow am 17. Dezember 1980*, 17.12.1980). It is worth remembering, however, that the information about the West German stand-off with regard to the events in Poland was intended not only to avoid intervention, but also to win the USSR over to activities aimed at eliminating political flashpoints in other countries or continents, e.g., Afghanistan or Africa, which it had inspired. At the same time, however, a clear warning against intervention was sent at NATO and European Economic Congress levels, if the situation was deemed to be likely to become so (PA AA, Department 214, B42, sign. 132906, *Die Lage in und um Polen*, 18.12.1980).

**The fourth thesis:** Direct assessments of the reasons for the imposition of martial law by the authorities of the Polish People's Republic contained information that justified the continuation of the FRG policy signaled above.

The purpose of General Jaruzelski's imposition of the martial law was to end the progressive paralysis of decision-making structures and the inevitable collapse of the economy. There were voices in West German dispatches about preventing a civil war, the seizure of power by Solidarity, but also about preventing an attempted coup d'état by the ultra-conservative party circles in PZPR. Although official statements from Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs assured of the will to continue peaceful activities aimed at overcoming the crisis, it was nevertheless acknowledged – as early as December 16 – that the Polish People's Republic was under full control of the armed forces (PA AA, Department 214, B42, sign. 132927, *Die Lage in Polen*, 15.12.1981). And this was exactly what was expected in Bonn. Strikes, if there were any, were considered to be limited to parts of larger cities, arrests and internments were carried out quite efficiently, and there was no major social resistance, which also limited the threat of external intervention. To this one added constant information about the voices of the Church condemning martial law, but also calling for the avoidance of civil war, which only further completed the picture of the effective control of the situation by the Polish People's Republic authorities as described by the FRG Foreign Ministry in January 1982 (PA AA, Department 214, B42, sign. 132927, *Lage in Polen*, 21.01.1982). Importantly, this picture did not change despite the information about Wałęsa's intransigence. This was not to be shared by other trade union leaders (PA AA, Department 214, B42, sign. 132927, *Die Lage in und um Polen*, 18.12.1981).

More detailed analyses were, of course, much more restrained, particularly when it came to making predictions about future developments. Admittedly, the authorities' violence was to be reduced. At least the intention was observed, with a very flexible response to change. Significant obstacles were pointed to in the way of further action by the shattered opposition, such as a general strike. However, it was also seen as a possibility of alternative functioning in society, such as passive actions provocative towards the USSR, or sabotage. Another problem for the authorities was the necessary economic reforms, the ambivalence of the Church, the reluctance to act on the part of senior and middle party cadres (PA AA, B42, sign. 132916, Cipher from Warsaw, 13.12.1981), the uncertainty about the loyalty of these cadres, and, understandably, the increasingly difficult economic situation (PA AA, Department 214, B42, sign. 132927, *Die Lage in Polen*, 15.12.1981).

In addition to the opposition, the loser of the martial law was also supposed to be the government, despite achieving two important goals, i.e., preventing the outbreak of civil war and a general strike. General Jaruzelski, who was allegedly a moderate person, was to lose a large part of the public's trust through the imposition of martial law. In addition, the representatives of the conservative wing of PZPR, who were completely ig-

nored by the people, were to regain influence, mainly due to the support of the CPSU. However, this did not change the radical apathy and deconsolidation of PZPR. Its renewal was to take years with no guarantee of success, also due to the collapse of its social importance. The only permanently undamaged institution – politically and institutionally – was to remain the Catholic Church.

The unquestionable authority did not, however, mean success for the clergy in the struggle not only for the release of the internees, but also for attempts to establish dialogue in order to recreate – in the long run – the conditions for the existence of social pluralism, according to the West German diplomacy. It was inferred from the voices of the hierarchy and priests that they saw no chance for rapid progress, but rather for a long process of a very slow return to normality.

Paradoxically, the FRG's policy was constructed in the same way, if only in the context of the reunification of Germany. This calm waiting and slow work were after all the basic foundation of the West German diplomatic philosophy and as such was at least accepted and understood. It was assumed, of course, that apart from a broad time perspective, the system of repression would be developed in the Polish People's Republic, with the full knowledge that e.g., apart from Solidarity activists, the Catholic Church would also be subject to it. Therefore, exactly the same things were done as in the activities of the FRG diplomacy until December 13. Contacts were maintained with the parties to the dispute, the policy of sanctions and appeasement was followed loyally, the gigantic charity and aid actions were not disturbed, but no major offensive action was taken against the military. Jaruzelski was the guarantor of stability. And this was the most important thing for German diplomacy.

**The fifth thesis:** Regardless of the turning point of December 13, the FRG diplomacy worked to its own rhythm and even this, apart from additional technical elements, was not subject to radical change.

Due to the situation in the Polish People's Republic, since August 1980, preparations were obviously made to work in conditions of potential street fighting or civil war. Special communication channels were organized, in fact, more than a year before the imposition of martial law, evacuation plans were considered, and other NATO countries were consulted in this regard. It was also routine to reject any allegations that the West German embassy staff had engaged in intelligence activities. Matters of private visits, accreditation of journalists, unblocking of communications, the right of free movement of diplomats, etc. were settled.

The breakthrough on December 13 itself, of course, generated an additional number of issues or administrative matters to be dealt with – not only those directly related to state policy. The never-ending disputes over the transcription of German- or Polish-language place names served as an example. Even before 1980, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the FRG was engaged in a lively correspondence with the Ministry of Foreign

Affairs of the Polish People's Republic, as well as with many West German natural and legal persons, including federal authorities. The reason for this was, for example, the rejection of letters to Polish representations concerning German citizens imprisoned in the Polish People's Republic simply because the letters used German town names. The ministerial responses, of course, indicated the measures taken. It was added, however, that in order to provide consular assistance on the ground, the presence of concrete posts was necessary first. This would not have been possible without the compromises resulting from the 1970 agreement. Discussions about nomenclature also did not serve the effectiveness of on-the-ground operations (PA AA, B42, sign. 132890, *Relevant correspondence from H-M. Genscher of 1 June 1981 to the prime minister of the Bavarian state government*, 1.06.1981). When, on the other hand, espionage cases arose, apart from asking for specification of allegations and referring to standard declarations assuring that the FRG diplomats worked only in accordance with Vienna conventions, it was signaled at every opportunity that the Polish government knew the position of the FRG on the crisis in the Polish People's Republic. It was, therefore, not intended to generate unnecessary diplomatic polemics, as they would not change anything in the general position and would simply make work on the ground more difficult.

Another matter is that the materials and sources possessed (not only) by the Bundesnachrichtendienst (BND) post, headquarters and West German intelligence service must have been more than modest (Waske, 2013: 217). This is because the information about concrete developments in the situation in the Polish People's Republic visible in the files dated after December 13 was scarce (PA AA, Department 214, B42, sign. 133029, *Die Lage in Polen*, 16.12.1981). It was dominated by rumors, unverified information coming from institutions all over the world, from forums of international organizations, but not from Poland. As an example, the figures about half of the factories that went on strike in the Polish People's Republic after December 13 reached the limits of absurdity. But would correct data have changed anything in Germany's strategic approach? Absolutely not, because there was no external intervention. And that was the only point. And this was not changed by the reports pointing to the contradiction of sources and the lack of physical possibilities of full communication with the offices in the Polish People's Republic, if only due to the blockade of embassy connections.

**The sixth thesis:** Regardless of the FRG's alliance commitments in NATO, as well as dynamic changes in Polish politics, the FRG government was aware of its basic advantage in any talks with the Polish People's Republic. And this was due to the imbalance in the economic potential of the two countries.

Since the beginning of regulated governmental contacts between the FRG and the Polish People's Republic, it was the economy that became the focus of interest for the Polish side. Even when there were no formal diplomatic representations in both countries, trade missions existed there. These missions, by their very nature, analyzed the

economic potential of the host country. How was the economy of socialist Poland evaluated? The economy was always in trouble in the Polish People's Republic. It was the economic crisis that triggered the riots in December 1970 and led to Gierek's seizure of power. And immediately after he took power, as it turned out, it was correctly pointed out in the FRG that it was the economy and its condition that would decide whether Gierek would keep his post (Jaskułowski, 2020: 60). To do so, Gierek needed economic help from the West, above all from the FRG. The only thing was that its economic interests in the context of Poland were not critical, i.e., there was no need to compromise at all costs and for the sake of their development. It was true that it wanted to assist the emigration of people of German origin, but the lack of such assistance did not cause any harm to the FRG. Meanwhile, economic aid from the FRG to the Polish People's Republic became an existential issue, especially due to the errors in economic policy in the 1970s. The FRG authorities could, therefore, calmly wait, knowing that sooner or later, the Polish People's Republic would accept the conditions set for it.

The very overturning of martial law did not change anything in this type of action, except perhaps the increasingly blunt descriptions of supply shortages evident in the German embassy's reports in Warsaw from December 1981 onwards (PA AA, B42, sign. 132927, *Cipher from Warsaw*, 8.12.1981), as well as the scale of the requests for help from Polish diplomacy. They were directed at all levels, not only party or diplomatic. They were listened to, accepted for consideration. And that was all (PA AA, B42, sign. 132890, *Memo from Secretary of State in the German Foreign Ministry to Chyliński, Ambassador of the Polish People's Republic to Germany*, 15.06.1981). This was elegantly called a check on the possibilities of German participation in assistance, whose limited possibilities were explained by its own budgetary problems.

Since 1980, studies on the economic situation in the Polish People's Republic pointed to increasing economic problems and growing social dissatisfaction (PA AA, Department 214, B42, sign. 132904, *Lage in Polen*, 20.02.1980). Since the economic concessions made by the government in relation to the protesters' demands of August 1980 were to cost, according to the FRG, more than 3 billion US dollars, it was generally believed that the economy would be the decisive factor for political concessions, all the more so as the causes of the crisis were sought in the errors of economic policy in the 1970s, the oil crisis and the belief that some form of cancellation of Poland's loans could be achieved.

From the perspective of the economic evaluations of the Polish People's Republic formulated by the FRG representatives in international forums since January 1981, the situation in Poland was based on a very fragile balance between the authorities, the opposition and the Church. This balance could only be changed, improved or disturbed by the economy (PA AA, Reference 214, B42, sign. 133908, *Die Lage in und um Polen*, 9.01.1981). This opened the door to diplomacy for the FRG after the end of martial law. It also gave excellent arguments for the policy to be pursued in the following years, which indeed was the case (Jaskułowski, 2020: 145).

Of course, no one expected a sudden change in Polish economic principles after December 13, but it was the economy that could have curbed the tendency to radically reconstruct the repressive communist political system in Poland. Probably the best illustration of the above was the study of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the FRG of December 15 on the economic situation after the introduction of martial law. The thesis was put forward there that the Polish People's Republic was in imminent danger of bankruptcy (PA AA, Leiter Planungsstab, B42, sign. 132927, *Situation der polnischen Wirtschaft zum Zeitpunkt der Machtübernahme des Militärs*, 15.12.1981). De facto this happened. It also defined the relations with the FRG for the best decade, but also the policy of Jaruzelski, who was forced to agree to political reforms in exchange for economic aid (Kowal, 2012: 22). If this was the strategic goal of the West German diplomacy, it was fulfilled in its entirety. Moreover, it would have been achieved by the same methods if martial law had not been imposed.

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**Abstract:** The author of the following Contribution text was interested in whether December 13, 1981 – it means also the Martial Law in Poland – really changed anything for West Germany from the point of view of its own foreign policy. The answers of this Question, formulated on the basis of the Research in the political archives of the West German Ministry of Foreign Affairs, aim at explaining the reasons for the behavior of certain institutions or politicians in West Germany after the breakthrough of 1980-1981. The main Thesis of the author are: The West German primacy of stabilisation meant doing everything to avoid a soviet military intervention in Poland. How? Through diplomatic and military messages stating that the intervention would be too costly. Besides, in agreement with the US State Department, West Germany tried to avoid doing anything which could give the Communist Party of the Soviet Union arguments for an invasion. Last but not least, General Jaruzelski, as a figure publicly referring to national and patriotic feelings, but also enjoying some form of support in Moscow, was able to provide a difficult, but real stabilisation, even with the use of violence. The diplomacy of West Germany needed nothing more. Therefore was the message given to the authorities of the Polish People's Republic after December 13 was crystal clear. Unless blood was shed, West Germany would not condemn General Jaruzelski's government more than the country's loyalty to NATO required it to.

**Keywords:** Germany, foreign policy, martial law, Polish People's Republic, diplomacy, Cold War

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