

## Jacek Czaputowicz

A key characteristic of the Polish human and civil rights movement of the 1980s was to bring together people of very different political convictions. The movement comprised national-conservatives as well as leftists. Perhaps the most prominent group Freedom and Peace exemplifies this particularly well. One of its co-founders was Jacek Czaputowicz (\*1956). Already in his youth, Czaputowicz had advocated workers' rights as member of the Committee of Workers Defence. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, he played a key role in organizing student protest against conscription. He was arrested several times by the secret police.

## Interview

The conversation took place in the rooms of the German Historical Institute Warsaw, on 29 September 2014. Questions were put forward by Dr. Daniel Stahl, coordinator of the Study Group Human Rights in 20th Century, and Dr. Robert Brier, senior researcher at the German Historical Institute in Warsaw, who knew Prof. Dr. Jacek Czaputowicz from previous encounters and had organized the meeting. Out of pragmatic reasons, the interview was conducted in English.

### Stahl

How do you remember your family? What did your parents tell you when you were a kid about their experiences during the Second World War? What kind of position did your parents have in the Polish society?

### Czaputowicz

I was born in 1956. I think it was an interesting time to be born because I was part of the post-war baby boom generation. Furthermore, on 28 June 1956, there was a demonstration in Poznań, which was brutally suppressed by the communists. In October 1956 there was also a strike at the Żerań automobile factory in Warsaw. Another important event took place that same year as Gomułka<sup>[1]</sup> came to power. Of course 1956 was also the year when the Hungarian Revolution took place.<sup>[2]</sup> When I read about the revolution later I thought, okay, this was the time period in which I was born. My father worked at the Warsaw Politechnika as a lecturer. He was a doctor, a physicist. My mother was a journalist working in the press – *Kobieta i Życie* – I do not know if the magazine still exists today. It was not a political publication but rather a weekly women's magazine.

I grew up in the centre of Warsaw, in Mokotów. In 1967 we moved to the city center (Wilcza street) where I have lived ever since. My parents had quite a big flat, 120 metres, which was unusual at the time because it was an old building. This is the place where Freedom and Peace was founded. It was quite an important place for the opposition: many times the police came there and I saw in the files that they had a plan of this flat. The independent student movement started there in September 1980, it was where the movement held its first meeting.

**Stahl**

How did you perceive the student protests during the late sixties when you were about twelve years old? You were in school. To what extent did you participate in the protests? And how did you talk about these issues at home?

**Czaputowicz**

Friends of my parents were arrested in 1968. One of them, an artist, spent three months in prison. We talked about this at home, so we knew. I was in school and in the scouts and we also had meetings there. But it was kind of hypocritical, because at the same time, this was an official scout group so you also had to follow communist ideology. For example, I remember reading Władysław Broniewski,<sup>[3]</sup> a communist poet. The scout group was organised in the schools. On the first of November, All Saints Day, we used to go to the cemetery with the scouts. It was a day to remember people who died fighting for the country. We were selling lights wearing our scout uniforms and making money from this. With this money we went to the scout's camp in the spring. This was during the 1960s. During that period, I was between five and fourteen years old. This was not a period that anyone would expect I would become an activist. At this stage no one would have expected that I would become an activist.

Still, I remember in 1968, when I was very young, only twelve years old, I went to demonstrations at the Politechnika. It was not far from where I lived. There were police there, and I remember the people (students) gathering and making speeches. I went there alone, without family, but we could go around without family when we were young. During the communist period young people had to rely on themselves.

**Stahl**

How did your parents talk about political issues at home?

**Czaputowicz**

They criticised what was going on but not very much. My mother was even a member of the party; my father was not. He was more critical. But my mother was also critical and pulled back from the party. When martial law was imposed<sup>[4]</sup> she left the party altogether. She was also active in the opposition movement, together with other journalists.

**Stahl**

Did they talk about Stalin or the Russian occupation of Poland?

**Czaputowicz**

Yes, I think they talked about Stalin. But they were very young. When I was born in 1956, my mother was studying journalism at university. It was just three years after Stalin's death and of course she was very critical about these things. She was not directly affected by Stalinism. In fact, I don't think anybody from my family was affected. My wife's parents – I met my wife during the strike in 1980 and we later married – were affected. My mother-in-law spent eight years in prison when Stalin was in power. My father-in-law spent five years in Russia. When he returned from Russia his wife was in prison. My wife was born in 1956, just three weeks after me. We did not know each other even though she lived nearby in the center of Warsaw. Certainly there were families in Poland who were affected by Stalinism.

World War II and the Warsaw Uprising were significant experiences in my family.<sup>[5]</sup> My grandfather was a soldier in the Polish army. In 1939 he was captured and taken prisoner by the German army. He was a professional soldier. For some reason, after World War II, he could not remain in the army so he started to work at the Politechnika. The two sons of my grandmother's sister took part in the Warsaw Uprising and were killed by the Gestapo. Her husband was killed by the Russians in Katyń.<sup>[6]</sup> We used to go to the Powązki cemetery, as I already mentioned, on 1 August, the anniversary of the Uprising, to commemorate them and others. There was a grave symbolizing Katyń, that the Communists did not recognise. It was very interesting: it was forbidden to talk about Katyń, particularly because the Russians were responsible for the massacre. Thirteen thousand people were killed, including the husband of my father's aunt and their children. Her husband died at Katyń; the two boys, who both took part in the Warsaw Uprising, were murdered in Pawiak prison, which the Germans set up. These were familiar stories in my family. We used to go to the Powązki cemetery to commemorate the victims with other people from Warsaw – hundreds of people gathered there.

**Stahl**

During school, in the later years, were you involved in any political discussions or activities?

**Czaputowicz**

Not really. Because I was young, I was not in any communist organisations: they were for those in secondary school.

**Stahl**

Were you involved at secondary school?

**Czaputowicz**

No, I was not involved in the official groups and there were no unofficial groups other than the scouts. They were accepted by the communists but were more independent. The scouts did not follow communist ideology. For example, Antoni Macierewicz, Piotr Naimski, and others who founded KOR – the Workers Defense Committee<sup>[7]</sup> – were involved in one of the scouting organisations at the Rejtan School. In fact, I was active in my scout team organising meetings with known personalities. I also organised football teams. We played in competitions between schools in Warsaw.

**Stahl**

Were political issues discussed in this group or was it more about soccer or sports?

**Czaputowicz**

In the meetings we mostly talked about different cultural rather than directly political issues. We would have meetings with journalists. My mother was a journalist. She came to our meetings, along with other journalists and they explained us how to publish a newspaper. We also invited poets. And we visited some interesting places like museums, those kind of things. We used to go on camps in May and during the summer holidays.

**Stahl**

You started to talk about your professional career that you began after school.

**Czaputowicz**

I was not trained, but I started to work after the secondary school in 1976. I liked my job. I liked to force myself to go to work regularly for eight hours and earn money. I worked together with IT specialists. Then I passed the exam for the Central School for Planning and Statistics<sup>[8]</sup> where I studied economics on the weekends. I wanted to study full-time, however, the rector refused to allow this. Later I learned that the secret police had intervened because I was already involved in the opposition and had been arrested for this activity.

**Stahl**

How did you become involved in the opposition?

**Czaputowicz**

I did not become involved in the usual way. It was 1976 and I worked with Jan Lityński.<sup>[9]</sup> Maybe you have heard of him? He now works in the Chancellery of the President. He was one of the leaders of the KOR, the Workers Defence Committee – an important group within the opposition movement. Jan Lityński was not as well-known as Adam Michnik or Jacek Kuroń,<sup>[10]</sup> but he did belong to this group and he spent some time in prison. He was charismatic. We worked together with other people involved in the opposition movement. Then he was somehow fired and in 1977 they arrested him. I visited him in prison. Later he became editor at Robotnik<sup>[11]</sup> – a newspaper for workers.

Through him I became involved in the opposition movement. I also had friends of my own age involved. I started to distribute the journals and flyers from KOR to my friends and to meet other people from within this and other opposition groups. When they dismissed Jan Lityński from work, we organised a protest. We wanted to defend him officially, through the trade unions. Of course we didn't succeed in reversing his dismissal.

It was unusual that I both worked and studied. Later I became a member of Solidarność<sup>[12]</sup> through my work, and at the same time one of the leaders of the student's movement. I did not have any other friends in Solidarność or the student movement who were involved in both organisations. But then I decided to be in the student movement. Together with other people my age, I started to read all of this material from KOR, the articles they published and also information about repressions. We started to listen to Radio Free Europe, the Voice of America, the BBC, and later France Inter in Polish. These stations informed listeners about oppositions activities and repressions. We started to read books, which were published abroad and forbidden in Poland.

We organised an independent clandestine library with forbidden books.

**Stahl**

For example?

**Czaputowicz**

We read Witold Gombrowicz<sup>[13]</sup> and Czesław Miłosz,<sup>[14]</sup> historical books, *Kultura Paryska*, which was published by emigrants in Paris, and *Aneks*, which was published in London.<sup>[15]</sup> We knew a lot about what was going on in Russia. I did not read Russian, but they were translated abroad, like Solzhenitsyn's work.<sup>[16]</sup> The communists abolished these books so you could not get them from the library. They were on a special list called *cymelia*, which means that you had to have a permission to obtain these books. For example, Gombrowicz was an extremely good Polish writer but as an emigrant he worked in Argentina and, later, in France. The communists did not print him. His books were not very political, but poetry and literary books were highly regarded by critics. The same happened to other books, like *The Captive Mind* of Czesław Miłosz.<sup>[17]</sup>

In 1979, myself, Wojciech Borowik<sup>[18]</sup> and Waław HOLEWIŃSKI<sup>[19]</sup> organised an independent clandestine library with these types of books. It was just a year before political changes began to take place in Poland. The year before *Solidarność* was established was very important and the library was one of the things that the opposition movement achieved. A few years ago I found a catalogue of those books. We had more than 300 titles published either outside of Poland or printed illegally in Poland. We used to meet once a week, sometimes more often, in a café near the University. People would go there to exchange and read books. They would also read the books at the *Politechnika* and other universities in Warsaw. We had catalogues, people would order books and they would come to return one book and borrow another to read and distribute among other students. Students liked to do something that was illegal but not very risky. Of course, the police sometimes confiscated the books: they even came to my flat. But, we had many books stored in different places. I read these books as well. KOR also had a library but it was only for a small group of people. We had the idea to circulate the books to university students.

### Stahl

Was this part of your work with KOR?

### Czaputowicz

It was very connected because they gave us books. In 1979 I went to Paris, to *Paryska Kultura*, to get books. They published a lot and donated books to our library. I talked to Jerzy Giedroń, the editor of *Kultura* and came back with a big bag of books. We also made photocopies. Sometimes we borrowed a book and made two or three illegal photocopies so that we would have another copy to distribute. We were a group of activists in Warsaw and we met every day. This library was created by a group of people who later became very involved in Polish politics. They were also active during the *Solidarność* period. The library network was very important.

### Stahl

What kind of critical ideas did you discuss in this circle? What was interesting about the books you mentioned?

### Czaputowicz

We read everything and we had discussions. We talked about freedom and about emigration. We talked about human lives, about exposing the truth behind the Russian system, about *Archipelag Gułag*,<sup>[20]</sup> and our recent history. We discussed the Warsaw

Uprising in 1944. We talked about 1956,<sup>[21]</sup> March 1968,<sup>[22]</sup> and many other things. We saw that official propaganda did not present the truth. We read about the repressions. We read about 1976<sup>[23]</sup> – the year that KOR was created to defend workers who were imprisoned for protesting the government's price increases. We started to defend them as well. The SKS,<sup>[24]</sup> the Students Solidarity Committee, was founded in Kraków in 1977 after the death of Stanisław Pyjas. He was a student who was beaten to death by the police. His friends (they were very close to KOR) then created the SKS. Afterwards, they started to form similar committees all over Poland. Each committee had different political ideas, but together they represented the student opposition movement at universities.

I did not establish a committee at that time because, since I worked, I did not have a strong relationship with my university. Of course, I knew these people. In 1979, I was involved in organising a demonstration for the first time. It must have been October. In the Czech Republic, members of Charta 77,<sup>[25]</sup> including Vaclav Havel<sup>[26]</sup> and others, were arrested and sentenced to prison. We wanted to organise a protest to show solidarity with them. The KOR organised a hunger strike but we students also wanted to do something. So we organised a demonstration. It took place at the Centre of Czechoslovakian Culture on Marszałkowska street. The idea for a demonstration came from the SKS in Kraków. They did not have a contact person in Warsaw as the SKS was not very active.

I was one of the people who decided to help to organise this protest in Warsaw. I was arrested for the first time at Jan Lityński's flat. I spent 48 hours in prison. When you speak about involvement in oppositional activities, I think that the decisive moment is when you are arrested. It is then that everything happens. Either you decide to stay in the opposition movement or you withdraw. There were many cases like this. They knew that I was organising this protest and so I was arrested. I later found information about this in a file. They did not treat me harshly at that stage. They just said: »Hey, you should not maintain contacts with the people who are in the opposition movement. You maintain contacts with the wrong people. You should think it over, because you will have problems in your life.« That was what it was like the first time I was arrested. But I did not give up.

I was caught again in December 1980 when I distributed leaflets before a demonstration on the anniversary to mark events in Gdańsk.<sup>[27]</sup> We distributed leaflets and had to stick them on walls. I spent another 48 hours in prison. This time it was much more unpleasant because they said: »Okay, we told you. Now you have a problem and your family will have a problem. You will never finish your studies and we will beat you.« They almost did, but in the end they did not use physical violence. They classified me as a dangerous person and watched my every action inside and outside of work. They did not allow me to do anything at the university. Later, I found a list of all students I was in a group with and they wanted to know who would have been a good person to inform them about my activities and with whom I may have been in contact. The same thing happened at work. I did not know it at the time, but they were already monitoring all of my steps.

### **Stahl**

You didn't notice that you were being observed?

### **Czaputowicz**

I did because they observed me when I moved around Warsaw. They follow people with cars. I was arrested maybe six times before Solidarność was set up. They had a plan of my flat. It was less than a year between my first arrest and Solidarność's victory. They also knew about the library but they did not consider that so important.

There was another demonstration. I organised a group of friends and we distributed leaflets in factories to defend a worker called Zadrożyński. I was once again arrested. I took part in the Workers Defense Committee meetings at Jacek Kuroń's and Edward Lipiński's flat. When I was first arrested, I decided to act under my own name. People called Jacek Kuroń, because I shouted my name while being arrested. The names and telephone numbers of the committee members were on the leaflets that I distributed. People would call saying that somebody wearing this or that had been arrested at the factory. Then the information was given to the West. Radio Free Europe would report the names of people in prison. My mother's friends said that they had been listening to the radio and heard that her son was arrested. That was how it worked. After every arrest of an activist, KOR printed their names in its bulletin. Doing so was a way to put pressure on the communists. We were not anonymous. We were protected in this way because when we were in prison, and something happened, everybody would know.

In June 1980, before Solidarność was established, strikes began to take place in Warsaw and Jacek Kuroń said to me: »Hey, observe what happens to public transport in Warsaw.« There was a public transport strike. I went to the bus depot to see if they were on strike or not. The main problem for the opposition movement was gathering information. We wanted to know what happened during a strike. During the second half of August I received a call at work from my friend who was in my flat. He said: »You cannot come home because the police are here.« I was able to escape but they arrested several people in Warsaw at the time, including Jacek Kuroń and other people involved in KOR. They did not want information about what happened in Poland to be communicated. We organised networks of informers and we knew about the strikes in Lublin and Stettin. When Jacek Kuroń was arrested it was difficult to find out what happened and what to do. When things happened in the past everybody would contact Jacek and he would immediately inform the western press. So we informed Urszula Doroszevska, another activist in KOR, but she was arrested a day after Jacek.

Some of the people the authorities were looking for went to the shipyard and stayed there. I hid for ten days. I would have been arrested if I had gone home. Then, somehow, the strikes continued and the strikers signed an agreement with the government. We met at Kuroń's flat the day after signing the Solidarność agreement—an agreement between Lech Wałęsa<sup>[28]</sup> and the communist government.<sup>[29]</sup> I think one of the points of the agreement was that the government was to release all prisoners. As a result, everybody was released from prison. The government accepted what we had fought for: free trade unions. Usually, through the leaflets, we demanded workers' rights and free, independent trade unions.

### **Stahl**

So you were talking about workers' rights. Do you remember the first time you started to talk about human rights within these groups? When did the issue of human rights come up?

### Czaputowicz

We talked about human rights from the very beginning because of the Helsinki Accords. Human rights were one of the goals of US President Carter.<sup>[30]</sup> I remember the story of one of the student activists. Her name was Bogusława Blajfer – a generation 68er – and she gave an open letter to UN secretary general Kurt Waldheim<sup>[31]</sup> who was visiting Warsaw. The letter demanded the release of KOR activists who were imprisoned. We discussed human rights and we knew about the Helsinki Accords.<sup>[32]</sup> They were kind of a base from which to demand freedom in Poland. We discussed human rights within the opposition movement. Another group of activists, from another generation, established ROBCiO<sup>[33]</sup> to defend the rights of citizens. This group was formed in direct relation to the Helsinki Accords and its purpose was to lobby for human rights. You could say that the group was rather right-wing in comparison to KOR. I remember that some said: »Okay, we [KOR] want to include something about human rights in our name.« However, another other group already used the name: Movement to Defend Human and Citizen's Rights. So we continued under our name.

I must say that we were aware of these divisions and the plurality of the Polish opposition movement.

At that time, I think in 1979, another group was established that I should also mention: KPN<sup>[34]</sup> – Confederation of Independent Poland. It was a party with leaders like Leszek Moczulski<sup>[35]</sup> and Andrzej Czuma.<sup>[36]</sup> The Movement of Young Poland with Aleksander Hall<sup>[37]</sup> was established in Gdańsk. The people in these various groups played important roles in the 1990s. For example, Andrzej Czuma was a Minister of Justice, and Aleksander Hall was a Minister in Tadeusz Mazowiecki's first government in 1989.<sup>[38]</sup> People from KOR were also very well known as were we in the student movement. I must say that we were aware of these divisions and the plurality of the Polish opposition movement. Sometimes people competed with each other, but I wanted to join and unite young people. One of our actions at the beginning of 1980, before Solidarność was created, was to defend one student, our friend, had been expelled from the university because of political involvement.

Now I return, for the moment, to a few months prior to Solidarność. I was just talking about our library of prohibited books. We decided to support a very important action to dissolve the communist student organisation, SZSP - the Socialist Union of Polish Students. I already mentioned that I was involved in SKS students committee activities, but we wanted to do something more. The SZSP wanted to represent all students, but we did not want them to represent us. If a student organisation wants to represent all students then it should be apolitical or politically neutral, not socialist by name, and not connected to the party. We sent a letter and gathered signatures. I will tell you that trying to dissolve this official organisation and establish a new, apolitical one, was a very brave act and it caused a big scandal. It was deemed very offensive to demand the dissolution of the communist organisations. The action started in Kraków, where they gathered two thousand signatures. We supported it in Warsaw and gathered a thousand signatures.

I remember walking door to door in all five students' halls – students' hostels – in Warsaw, talking to students, inviting them to sign the letter. We wanted to dissolve this official



organisation and establish a new one. It was a very important action, which had the Socialist Union of Polish Students very much on the defensive. You have to remember that, at the time people like Alexander Kwaśniewski,<sup>[39]</sup> the later President of Poland, and others who played an important role in the 1980s and 1990s, were in the students' official organisation. We had already created a kind of opposition movement at the universities before Solidarność was founded. We wanted to establish independent student organisations. By the time Solidarność was established, we already had structures in place. When I am saying »we«, I mean a group of students who were associated with this library. We established a committee, printed a leaflet, and had the names of forty students who signed an appeal to defend our friend who was expelled from the Warsaw University. His name was Janusz Majewski. We had contacts through this library, which meant that if we wanted to organise a serious action, we already had a group of people who were willing to take a risk by signing their names. It was a risk because when you sign a document establishing a committee, it might be read on Radio Free Europe<sup>[40]</sup>. It was clear that the secret police might follow these people.

Those events took place in spring 1980, Solidarność was established in August 1980. Then what happened? It was the end of August, and September and there were no students at universities, they were still on holidays. When the students returned to university, we already had a committee in place. It was called the Independent Student Union – Niezależne Zrzeszenie Studentów (NZS). I was one of the leaders in Warsaw and I was also on the national committee. I was a member of presidium of the NZS national council. Many students joined it in 1980. It was not as big as Solidarność but about 20 percent of Polish students belonged to it. About 10 percent belonged to the communist student organisation; the remainder of students were not in the union in 1980 and 1981.

So my activity during Solidarność time, those several months, was focused at the university. I organised students and fought with the communists, and with the official student organisation we had wanted to dissolve. They were supported by the party, which meant that they had a monopoly on money, on meeting rooms, and on all of those things that an organisation needs to exist. But we had the support of the Polish students and, therefore, had a stronger organisation. You could say that the independent student union we established was a kind of Solidarność for students. According to Polish law at the time, you could establish an independent trade union – Niezależny Samorządny Związek Zawodowy or independent and self-governing trade union – but only workers could belong to it. And students were not workers. Therefore we were forced to establish a separate organisation. The only reason our group was not a part of Solidarność was because of Polish law.

Farmers faced a similar situation. They did not have contractual relations at work, so they could not establish a trade union. They did, however, establish a separate organisation - Niezależny Samorządny Związek Zawodowy Rolników Indywidualnych, a Solidarność of farmers. The communists wanted to divide society into different groups: workers, farmers, students because they were afraid of what would happen if these groups unified.

### **Brier**

Let us return briefly to one of the central moments of the opposition movement. Do you remember where you were when John Paul II visited Warsaw,<sup>[41]</sup> and did this have any

impact on you becoming an opposition activist?

### **Czaputowicz**

I was already involved in the opposition movement when John Paul II visited, but of course I remember it very well. I went to a mass. I heard him for the first time a year earlier, in 1978, when he was elected. I was surprised and I felt success and pride. Then he visited Warsaw. I remember the mass, which took place by the grave of an unknown soldier at Piłsudski square. I remember what he said very well. I also remember many people walking by my flat as it was not far from the square. You could tell what an important event it was because of the number of people who attended. Some people who did not go to church every Sunday went to the Pope's mass. It was very encouraging. People started to feel a sense of community and maybe even started to feel less afraid of the communists because they could see how many Polish citizens were joined together. It was obvious that the Pope supported the opposition movement. His teaching went against communist ideology. His words were also very appealing because he spoke about human rights, he spoke about workers, he spoke about the rights of the weakest part of society.

I also remember his other visits. One took place when I just been released from an internment camp: it must have been in 1983. The mass took place on Stadion Dziesięciolecia (Ten-years stadium) which is where the national stadium now stands. I remember this visit because I was already active after being released from the camp. I organised a group of people and we gathered at my flat with Solidarność banners. We walked from my flat to the mass carrying these banners. One person from our group was arrested on the way back from the mass. At least one of the people in my flat had been a collaborator with the secret police. I know this because I found the details about what we were doing at the time in my secret police file. I was with my wife in 1986 or 1987 in Tarnów where the Pope was holding another mass. My wife and I had a Freedom and Peace banner. When he passed by, he looked at our banner and said, »Ah!«. We know that he saw our banner. I also visited him in Rome in the 1990s with my family.

There was also a mass in Gdańsk the same year as the Tarnów mass, maybe 1987. I remember it very well because the police stopped me. I was not allowed to go to Gdańsk because they knew that there was a group of people from Freedom and Peace going and they wanted to prevent this. But I remember the photos. There were a lot of people at this mass with big banners Freedom and Peace banners. My friends from the Freedom and Peace Movement had organised this. Later, in the 1990s, I recall that his masses were not so well received by the Poles because he was critical about changes and given the more materialistic attitude to life present in Poland. The Polish reception of Pope John Paul II in the 1990s was more balanced or even sceptical in some circles. But Pope John Paul II was very important for the Polish opposition movement. Later I organised actions in churches. We cooperated with the Church and organised hunger strikes in Podkowa Leśna after establishing Freedom and Peace.

### **Stahl**

When did you think for the first time that the concept of human rights might be helpful for Polish dissidents?

**Czaputowicz**

It was very important. How I now view it is that the communist system was based on repressing human rights. There was no democracy, no human rights, and even no access to books, as I mentioned. Travel abroad was strictly controlled and you could not listen to independent radio Free Europe or the Voice of America.<sup>[42]</sup> Those stations were jammed. You could not gather in crowds. The communists did not observe freedom of assembly and, as you know, demonstrations were forbidden. You could not establish any organisations like our student organisation. We wanted to establish a student organisation and they said no, one already exists, a communist one, you can choose to join it or not. Therefore human rights were a basic issue for us. The opposition movement was organised around the issue of human rights.

My idea was not to withdraw to underground activity, but to be active.

Our activities at the student organization NZS started to become more sophisticated. We introduced non-violent methods into the protests. Then, martial law was imposed in December 1981.<sup>[43]</sup> The NZS was immediately declared illegal. The communists, however, did not accept our organisation from its very inception because they wanted to influence young people. They supported their communist student organisation and its leaders, who were supposed to be the future leaders of the communist party. That was martial law. I was imprisoned with my friends for almost a year. We were transferred with leaders from the student union and from the opposition movement from the Białoleka camp to another one in Strzebielinek.

When I was released from prison, I became involved in the clandestine movement. The authorities dissolved our Independent Student's Union officially, but we kept functioning. It was a bit problematic because we were finishing studies and we could not elect a new governing body since the organisation was now illegal. Slowly we gave it over to the younger generation. I remember the article I wrote at that time, which was published in *Kultura Paryska* and also in the Polish independent journal *Czas Przyszły*, which I edited. I wrote that activists should be present at universities and active in semi-official groups. They should not be marginalised but rather should be involved in scientific activities, discussion clubs, self-government. In this way they could create problems for official organizations. My idea was not to withdraw to underground activity, but to be active. We fought for two or three years until they changed the law and abolished all elected student bodies. But at that time we wanted to be visible, and our people were elected even if our organisation was illegal.

I was arrested several times during the 1980s. The security forces wanted to know what I was doing. They told me I should stop my involvement in the opposition movement and they arrested me often. But I did not talk to them. They came to where I lived and monitored the flat. When I came out, they arrested me while my wife and my children watched from my balcony. They released me after two days. This happened a few times. They followed me whenever I wanted to organise something; for example, a hunger strike, or a petition. That is what it was like in the 1980s.

In 1984 father Jerzy Popiełuszko was murdered.<sup>[44]</sup> His murder was an important and symbolic event because it demonstrated the government's repressive actions and showed that it was not able to control its security forces. There are different stories about what happened but the fact is, he was murdered. After that there was a general feeling of depression within the opposition movement. Many activists of the underground opposition movement were arrested. We had the feeling that the communists wanted to suppress the entire opposition.

At that stage, we were not very optimistic about what would happen in the future. It was autumn 1984, Marek Adamkiewicz, a friend of mine, was taken to the army. He later became an activist for the Freedom and Peace movement. Prior to that he was an activist for the independent student union. By the way, his memoirs are published and it is an interesting book. So, he was taken to the army. Once there he said that he would not take an oath because he did not want to be in the army, which was used against society. He didn't want to swear allegiance with the Soviet Union and defend socialism. What he said, he did, and the army did not know what to do with him. In the end they arrested him and sent him to prison for two-and-a-half years. His arrest marked the first time they imprisoned someone from the opposition for not taking the oath. Some of my friends were in the army and felt the same as Marek Adamkiewicz: they did not take the oath. But, they were allowed to remain in the army, perhaps under special conditions, but they could fulfil their service. In 1984 the communists changed their attitude – they wanted to oppress Adamkiewicz. There was a trial. At the trial the soldier who was supervising Adamkiewicz said that actually he was a good soldier but that he did not want to take the oath. So he was arrested for this gesture. He did not refuse to go to the army, he was in the army. He wanted to defend the country. But, he did not want to defend the socialist system. Other people said: »Okay, you do not want to defend socialism with the army. But you do not have to say it openly. It is best not to create any problems.« But Adamkiewicz reacted differently.

I knew him very well; we were together one internment camp in 1982. As a group of dissidents we decided to defend him. We watched his trial and then we organised a petition. We sent a letter to the parliament and we organised a hunger strike in Podkowa Leśna. This took place for one week in March 1985. Around 15 people participated. Because I organised this, I talked to many people like Jacek Kuroń. He said that he wanted to take part in the hunger strike, but other people discouraged him. The opposition wanted to present it as a student protest that was not inspired by elder opposition movements, such as KOR. This way it would be seen as student activists protesting in order to defend another student. Maybe they were right.

Many people from the opposition visited us during our hunger strike. It took place near Warsaw, maybe twenty kilometres away. The priest, Father Kantorski,<sup>[45]</sup> celebrated a mass and we organised a seminar. Father Kantorski allowed us to come to his church. He was very well-known in Poland for supporting the opposition movement. We had seminars every day. Radio Free Europe broadcast information on what happened, who visited, what the postulates were. We decided that we had to do something in Poland because the country could not stay as it was. We had to change it. The opposition movement was becoming weaker and weaker and repression was increasing. We thought that a clandestine movement was not enough. It was not a good idea because they chased the

leaders who remained in the clandestine movement – there was nowhere to hide.

We thought, we have to do something. We have to change our methods. This was the purpose of the hunger strike. You reveal your name. You show that you are brave, that you can accept suffering, and that you have ideas you will defend. You have to act with your conscience. The growing importance of the peace movement abroad in countries such as Germany and Great Britain meant that we could protest more openly. It makes sense. The communists used these countries to show how Western societies were under American influence. Information about peace protests in the West were in the news on Polish TV in order to show that those societies were against the Americans. We wanted to do something together with the growing peace movement abroad. There was the official peace committee but that was manipulated by the communists. We wanted to establish an independent committee to show that there were also other problems in Poland. Not only did we want to show that the missiles<sup>[46]</sup> should be withdrawn from the West, but we also wanted to combine human rights, democracy, freedom and peace. We discussed these issues at seminars and published the results of the discussions we held during our hunger strike.

Other people from our students movement in other towns, particularly in Kraków, felt the same way. Have you heard of Jan Rokita, Bogdan Klich, or Bartłomiej Sienkiewicz? These three were well known activists. They established the Freedom and Peace movement in Kraków. They thought the same way. I visited Kraków when I organised this hunger strike. They did not come to our hunger strike, but they announced the establishment of Freedom and Peace. Jan Rokita probably wrote the declaration.

The name of our organisation encapsulated our ideas concerning human rights: freedom and peace. We quoted, for example, Pope John Paul II in our declaration, freedom and peace you cannot divide. There is no peace without freedom, there is no peace without the observance of human rights. This was our message. In Germany it was called the Initiative Frieden und Menschenrechte. In Moscow there was another group called the Moscow Trust Group. I believe the goal of this organisation was also to promote human rights. The Freedom and Peace movement began to establish contacts with western peace movements. It was very important not to allow the communists into these movements. We were often imprisoned when western peace activists came to Poland to defend us. When I was imprisoned in 1986, I was not allowed to receive letters. When leaving the prison, I was given all of the letters that had been sent to me. More than 200 letters had been sent to me from Amnesty International around the world.

I liked the idea of Amnesty International, but it was not the solution to our problems.

#### **Stahl**

Why was it necessary to establish another human rights group in 1985? Couldn't you have just established another section of Amnesty International?

#### **Czaputowicz**

No, because we already collaborated with Amnesty International. We already printed their

monthly newsletter. I still have copies of this newsletter. We didn't want to focus only on issues concerning human rights violations abroad – to just show Polish society that there are some problems concerning human rights in Africa, in Israel etc. It was an idea. I even heard from other people, well, why do you have so many problems in Poland? What is going on? We were just illegally printing an international bulletin that was not about Poland. I was adopted as a prisoner of conscience<sup>[47]</sup> by Amnesty International at that time, so I had an idea how it worked.

### **Stahl**

If you had such close connections, why wouldn't you just establish another section of Amnesty International? What was the difference between them and what you wanted?

### **Czaputowicz**

I liked the idea of Amnesty International, but it was not the solution to our problems. According to Amnesty International rules, you defend people, but not those in your own country. They defended me, I defended people in Africa or Israel or in the United States. One of them was a prisoner of conscience and I talked to Amnesty International officials about him. But we could not defend ourselves as Amnesty International. We distributed information to Amnesty International and to people they supported. And, of course, because we were prisoners of conscience, they defended us.

### **Stahl**

Did you, as Freedom and Peace, take notice of what happened in South Africa, South America, etc.?

### **Czaputowicz**

Yes, it was exactly as I explained. We even published and distributed Amnesty International's newsletter. We did so even though other opposition groups criticised us for doing this. I do not think other states or other organisations did this. But we did it intentionally to raise awareness in Polish society of the problems that existed outside of Poland. Of course for most people the important issue was Poland: human rights were abused in our country. For us, it was important to show solidarity with people who were repressed outside of Poland, for instance in the Czech Republic, the Soviet Union, and Hungary.

Then we decided to – because I am now coming to the methods we used – to set up something new. I think it was something of added value to our group; to opposition in this part of the world. We started to use non-violent methods, but that term does not say much. We also sent our military documents (which every man in Poland had) back to the authorities, which was a very brave act. We explained in the letter that we did not want to be in the army, and that we were resigning. We sent these military books back, we defended Marek Adamkiewicz<sup>[48]</sup> and so on. They were furious, because it was a gesture of non-obedience. We were sentenced to 50 days in prison.

What happened next was exactly what we expected and hoped for: other people started to follow Marek Adamkiewicz' case. When they were taken to the army, about a dozen people refused to take the military oath. They were arrested during their first weeks and sentenced

to two or three years in prison. I was also arrested in February 1986. I spent seven months in prison. I was accused of organising the illegal Freedom and Peace movement, which protested against Polish alliances with other Warsaw Pact countries. According to Polish law, I could have been threatened with a sentence of between two and ten years. Fortunately, the communists changed their attitude towards the opposition movement. There was an Amnesty and I was released after seven months, together with other political prisoners.

When I was in prison on Rakowiecka street, I was able to read a file about my case. From this file I knew that there had been a week-long hunger strike by women in the Podkowa Leśna church. A dozen women took part to protest our arrest and the arrest of others for refusing the military oath. I read that more people had refused to take the military oath, and they were sentenced to three years in prison. When they were asked why had they refused to take the military oath, they answered that they had heard about Marek Adamkiewicz's case and about about Freedom and Peace. They decided in their group, in Gorzów Wielkopolski for example, a small town in western Poland, that they would not take the oath because it was not patriotic. They did not want to be in the army, which was communist, and so on. They felt that the Polish army acted against Polish society. The names of the people imprisoned included, among others, Jarosław Wojewódzki, Kazimierz Sokołowski, Sobolewski, and Tomasz Wacko.

The prosecutor asked them how they had known about Freedom and Peace? The answer was »I listened to Radio Free Europe and in this way I learned about this movement. I did not personally know these people.« They looked to establish contacts with us. They acted on their own and they refused to take the oath. So the number of people refusing to take the military oath was increasing, and the authorities, the communists, had to do something about this. They were very afraid of this process. So, they released us and these people under the Amnesty and in 1987 they changed the wording of the military oath. This was a big success for us, because they changed the military oath. It no longer made reference to the Soviet army.

I would like to emphasize that Radio Free Europe's role was very important in this process. Radio Free Europe also had programmes in other languages. In Czechoslovakia, for instance, people also started to refuse to go to the army. The same thing happened in Hungary. Petr Obstil in Czechoslovakia and Zsolt Keszthelyi in Hungary were sentenced to prison for two or three years. A girlfriend of Keszthelyi came to Poland and she went on hunger strike with us. We defended them. We organised protests and sit-ins for the people in the Czechoslovakia at that time and Hungary. We created a network of activists on this basis. And they, in turn, started to cooperate with other countries as well.

Governments were afraid of this process, so much so that the communists in Poland decided to talk about this at a Warsaw Pact meeting at the beginning of 1989. I know this from the secret police files. The files stated exactly when they established a special inter-ministerial committee in Poland to fight against our propaganda. They called us pseudo-pacifists.

On the one hand, they wanted to oppress us. On the other hand, they couldn't because the

number of people involved in our movement was growing. They released people under the Amnesty, but at the same time they wanted to repress us. What did we do when the oath was changed in 1987? We simply changed our strategy and we started to refuse to go to the army altogether. Once again the communists started to have a problem. We demanded the option to do an alternative service, which existed in the Western countries. The communists again responded by imprisoning us. Under the Amnesty they released people who refused to take the oath, but they kept in prison the ones who refused to go to the army. Two of our friends who refused to go to the army remained in prison, so we had to defend them again. You also have to remember the context: the Head of State, or the main party, General Wojciech Jaruzelski<sup>[49]</sup> (later Czesław Kiszczak)<sup>[50]</sup> and the Minister of the Interior were soldiers in the Military Council of National Survival.<sup>[51]</sup>

### **Brier**

That was the intermediary authority that was created in Poland after Martial Law was imposed in 1981. So there was no government, but there was this military council of national survival. It was often described in the West as a military junta.

### **Czaputowicz**

At that time the army was in power. And at certain stages (I also know this from the secret police file) they decided that the secret police were not successfully dealing with Freedom and Peace. The army decided to handle us with their own secret counterintelligence force. In every military commission in Poland they had people who tried to control the recruitment procedure. In every place they wanted to identify those who may potentially refuse to go to the army or who may not take the oath and thereby create a problem for the army. They sent several secret agents to Freedom and Peace. They wanted to somehow act because the army was afraid of our activities.

They treated us as an enemy before and after Tadeusz Mazowiecki's government was established in June 1989.

I know how all of this happened from reading the documents afterward. The government created the Coordination Committee, which was made up of between five or six governmental entities with representatives from the Ministry of Defence, the Prosecutor's office, different departments within the army and so on to deal with the issue. They called our activity propaganda: Freedom and Peace propaganda within the army. They met regularly and they coordinated actions Freedom and Peace. They published articles criticising us in *Żołnierz Wolności*, a military daily. In 1988, this body decided to raise the issue of the Freedom and Peace movement at the meeting of the heads of the military forces of the Warsaw pact countries. They wanted to share information on this problem, which was also emerging in other Eastern bloc countries. The opposition movement's activities represented one of the biggest problems for the Polish government at that time. Of course they wanted to disband our group. They had secret agents.

Freedom and Peace did not play an important role in the united organisation after 1989. They treated us as an enemy before and after Tadeusz Mazowiecki's government was established in June 1989. They did so because we had political goals. What were these



goals? Today, they look quite simple. We wanted the dissolution of the Warsaw pact and the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Poland. The Freedom and Peace movement in Kraków gave the Soviet consulate an open letter to Gorbachev demanding the withdrawal of Russian troops from Poland and the dissolution of the Warsaw pact. Even the other opposition groups did not see these as realistic goals. But, these were the goals we proposed. So we wanted to make a statement and somehow show the attitude of society towards our goals, which from a geopolitical point of view, many thought would never be realized.

At that time I was already a known activist. I met with many politicians who visited Poland, including Margaret Thatcher,<sup>[52]</sup> the Chancellor of Austria, Franz Vranitzky,<sup>[53]</sup> and many senators. From Germany, Volker Rühle<sup>[54]</sup> who was then a secretary of the CDU, before he became the Minister of Defence. And, I had contacts with many people in embassies, particularly with Rüdiger von Fritsch<sup>[55]</sup> at that time.

#### **Brier**

Until about half a year ago Rüdiger von Fritsch was German ambassador here in Warsaw. He was also a political officer, I think, in the West German embassy in the late 1980's, and he was very active in establishing contacts members of the opposition.

#### **Czaputowicz**

I maintained very close contacts with him at that time. For example, in December 1988 I was invited by the German chapter of Amnesty International for a meeting with president Weizsäcker<sup>[56]</sup> and with human rights activists from the East. I was initially refused a passport, but Rüdiger von Fritsch and the embassy intervened. They wanted officials to give me a passport, but they were unsuccessful. Rüdiger described this in this book. But we did meet. He came to my flat and said that he would like to hand over the invitation to me. My wife and I also visited him at his home. He took part in our conferences and so on. At that time we were friends. We also met a few times when he was the ambassador here.

#### **Brier**

Just to provide some context: After the Amnesty of 1986, Western politicians who came to Poland would always, as a gesture towards the opposition, meet opposition activists, like Thatcher in 1988 or the embassies were also starting to establish contacts but only with official organisations in Poland but also with Solidarność along with other groups.

#### **Czaputowicz**

In 1987, I was invited by Lech Wałęsa to form part of the 60 Committee<sup>[57]</sup> who later became the Civic Committee. Prior to that, in May 1987, we wanted to do something new and we organised a peace seminar at a church on Żytnia street in Warsaw. The title was, »Giving Real Life to the Helsinki Charta«. We held the seminar in the church. Although many people attended, a number of individuals from Freedom and Peace were arrested. People came from the West and some even came from the Czech Republic. We wanted an open meeting rather than a clandestine one. People came because we were well-known. For instance, Jan Kavan<sup>[58]</sup> came from London. He was a Czech human rights activist from Charter 77 living in the West. Joan Landy<sup>[59]</sup> came from the United States. We were able to organise this independent seminar.

The authorities were very much against the seminar, and they wanted to repress us. I escaped to this church five days before the seminar, which was a smart move because they came to my flat to arrest me on the Monday morning. I had been at the Church since Sunday evening. They tried to arrest me twice within 48 hours, like my friends. But the seminar was too important for us, so I could not allow them to arrest me. However, they did arrest many of my friends who had helped to organise the meeting. People started to arrive from the West. At the airport, authorities asked them where they were from? When they said there were going to Poland, some of them were sent back. However, sixty people from the West managed to get to the meeting.

We organised groups based on different aspects of the Helsinki agreement, meaning on human rights issues. I remember speeches by Bronisław Geremek<sup>[60]</sup> and Zbigniew Romaszewski,<sup>[61]</sup> and also from the church – Father Jacek Salij,<sup>[62]</sup> from the Dominican, gave an important lecture. He spoke about certain aspects of conscientious objection in the Catholic tradition. I still have these speeches. They were published in our journal *Czas Przyszły*.

*Solidarność* treated us very kindly and we felt that we were a part of the *Solidarność* movement. But, we were dealing with these more difficult issues: the army, the imprisonment of people who refused to take military oath, and so on. I met with Lech Wałęsa and invited him to this seminar. He was a Nobel prize winner. He supported us, but he did not take part in the seminar. Apart from the embassies, we also maintained contacts with foreign journalists. For example, after this seminar, Michael Dobbs<sup>[63]</sup> wrote an article in the *Washington Post*. I think Kaufmann<sup>[64]</sup> wrote an article in the *New York Times*. The current wife of Radosław Sikorski, Anne Applebaum<sup>[65]</sup> worked for *The Economist*. She, along with many others, wrote about Freedom and Peace activities. These articles were important because Radio Free Europe read them, and they kept listeners informed about a new wave of opposition. In this way, we had followers. Other people listened to the radio and joined our group. Sometimes they refused to go to the army. That is how it worked.

### **Brier**

Who were the people that came from the West? I think Mary Kaldor<sup>[66]</sup> was there from Great Britain, and members of the West German Green Party, right?

### **Czaputowicz**

Mary Kaldor? She visited us. She stayed at my flat. But, I don't think she was able to come for this particular seminar. She sent us a paper based on her book *Imaginary Work*. We met a few times. We also met at other meetings, which I will tell you about in a moment. We had contacts with the Green Party in Germany. Petra Kelly<sup>[67]</sup> sent us a letter or a telegram. I have these documents at home. They were published. We also had contacts with Elisabeth Weber, who also was member of the Green Party and very involved with us. We had contacts with SPD member, Gert Weisskirchen.<sup>[68]</sup> He visited us and I think he was at the seminar. I also met other people. After 1989, I attended the annual SPD conferences near Bonn on two occasions. But yes, the embassy provided us with contacts and invited us to a dinner. We had particularly strong contacts with the Greens. Freedom and Peace activists also signed individual peace treaties with the Greens. Turning again to the seminar, it was very successful. We were successful simply because we managed to organise it. In other

Eastern Bloc countries it was normally impossible to organise such an event.

Other countries followed our example. Maybe five months later I went to Budapest for a similar seminar where I met János Kis,<sup>[69]</sup> György Konrád,<sup>[70]</sup> Miklós Haraszti<sup>[71]</sup> and other people. The Hungarian opposition movement managed to organise and carry through with the seminar. It was not held in the church, like in Poland, but in a very nice place in the city. It was primarily Western peace activists that attended the Hungarian seminar. Mary Kaldor was there, as was Mient-Jan Faber.<sup>[72]</sup>

In spring, Freedom and Peace, together with Solidarność's Intervention Commission of Zbigniew Romaszewski, organised another seminar near Kraków. They wanted to organise a seminar in Czechoslovakia but the secret police stopped them twice. Western peace activists were prevented from going and the Czech hosts were arrested. I could travel within the socialist camp, however, because all you needed was an identity card with the proper stamp. Therefore, in autumn 1987 I could have gone to a peace seminar in Budapest. It was important for them that somebody from Poland came. But, even this was impossible.

In the Czech Republic, the opposition movement could not organise. But the initiative to organise discussions and seminars that we had started was mushrooming everywhere. The opposition movement in Moscow organised a seminar. I could not get a Russian visa, but we maintained contact by telephone and we sent them a letter. As far as other seminars are concerned, I think there is information in a police file that one day Wolfgang Templin<sup>[73]</sup> called me at 10 o'clock and we talked about the seminar in Warsaw that I had organized. He was not able to come, but he sent us a statement. At the seminar, we discussed the statement from the Peace and Human Rights Group<sup>[74]</sup> in East Germany and included it in the documents. That is how we maintained contacts. I simply talked to them on the phone.

We wanted to organise a march just like Gandhi and Martin Luther King had done.

#### **Brier**

I would like to ask about these methods of non-violent resistance, which I also think are very important for this entire culture of human rights. Do you remember why you came up with the idea of doing a hunger strike?

#### **Czaputowicz**

We had different inspirations. As far as hunger strikes are concerned, KOR had already held those earlier in Poland. They had held one at the same place that Freedom and Peace did, in Podkowa Leśna. It took place in 1980 after Mirosław Chojecki<sup>[75]</sup> was arrested. During the process of Charter 77 in autumn 1979, KOR organised a hunger strike at the Cross Church in Warsaw. When we were arrested on 13 December 1981, after martial law was imposed, we organised a hunger strike in prison. I had also read Gandhi's memoir, which was published in Poland. We wanted to organise a march just like Gandhi and Martin Luther King had done. We, for example, sent our military documents back to the authorities. In France, farmers protested against nuclear plants and they sent their documents back. Based on their idea, I thought that maybe we should send our military

documents back as a way to defend Marek Adamkiewicz. So we organised sit-ins. This was a demonstration but you did not try to escape: you waited until you were arrested. This meant you accepted imprisonment. Like Gandhi said: »You do not escape, you are ready to be arrested.« This was a different approach toward protest than the clandestine fight with police, which was the dominate method of demonstrations organised in Poland that time.

### **Brier**

I understand that Freedom and Peace was founded not primarily as a peace movement, but rather as a political movement, as a movement for human rights or democracy, kind of picking up the peace issue as something secondary. This was different from most of these Western peace activists, where peace was the main concern. What role or maybe what different conceptions of human rights were discussed then at these seminars. Was this an issue?

### **Czaputowicz**

Yes. So they emphasized the peace part. We always explained peace, but we emphasized that there is no peace without human rights, without freedom. And they accepted this. So when we were arrested, they came to court to observe the proceedings. For example, CND was not really a pro independent peace movement in the East, but END<sup>[76]</sup> was more so, as were the German Green Party and the French peace movements like CODENE.<sup>[77]</sup>

Of course there were divisions within the peace movement. There was a memorandum, signed by a few hundred people from opposition movements in the East and politicians and peace activists from the West. We signed this memorandum together with Charta 77 activists. It was presented at the Vienna meeting of the CSCE.<sup>[78]</sup> Our seminar was organized within this framework. Dieter Esche was one of the activists in Berlin. Earlier, he had been in the European Parliament for the Greens for two years, if I remember correctly. He published a journal, East-West, and organised a Citizens' Assembly<sup>[79]</sup> with Mary Kaldor and Mient Jan Faber. Nonetheless, we were sometimes asked to join their actions. I signed a protest against repressions in Chile. I was attacked by some people from the opposition in Poland who felt that what was happening in Chile was none of our business. They said that I was with these left-wing people like, among others, Noam Chomsky.<sup>[80]</sup> Generally though, we supported human rights in other states, and they supported us in return.

### **Stahl**

When you were attacked by other members of the opposition for talking about these issues, were there different concepts of human rights within the Polish opposition? Were there discussions about what human rights meant?

### **Czaputowicz**

No, I do not think there were different concepts. What we did was to defend human rights. But, sometimes if human rights were abused by America, and America was our ally, so to speak, because it was against the communists, criticising America could be seen as not politically acceptable. It was the context that mattered. With regard to Chile, I think we signed a letter to defend human rights there, which was published in the New York Times. We signed the letter even though the Americans supported the Chilean government.

**Stahl**

There were different groups in the Polish opposition movement. Some tended to be more to the left, while some came from a conservative background.

**Czaputowicz**

There were maybe different political programmes. We were the extreme in the sense that our programme was very radical. We said what we wanted and what should be done. We wanted the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, for Soviet troops to withdraw from Poland, for democracy to be introduced, for human rights to be observed, for Europe to be reunited, and for Germany to be reunited. We stood by these demands. Other people would say, okay, that is not realistic, and maybe they were right. Others would say, you work with the Soviets. What you are talking about is impossible. But that was what we did. That was how we wanted to frame our programme.

We were recognised by Western leaders because we said what needed to be said and we acted. We were repressed. We could oppose the system, which was unjust, by going to prison for refusing the oath. We protested against the army, which the West viewed as dangerous. The Soviet army was a danger for Western states, and therefore the West recognised our activities. Western journalists visited Poland wrote about our activities. They understood how important it was that there were people who would not only talk privately about important issues, but who were also willing to talk openly, and who were not afraid to go to prison, or to pay the price for doing so. This is why the West was so interested in our activities. Many journalist wrote articles, and Western leaders, while meeting with Solidarność, also met with us.

**Stahl**

If you reflect on yourself during the eighties, would you say you tended more to the left, or were you liberal or conservative?

**Czaputowicz**

I would be rather afraid of making this distinction, because it is very difficult. At that time, you could ask were the communists left or right? I don't know. They said they were left, but for us they were simply an undemocratic regime. So, it is difficult to say. However, as I explained, the Pope was very important, and church was very important. We organised some of our actions, hunger strikes, and seminars in church.

When I see these people today, who were active in Freedom and Peace, they are on both the left and the right side of the political spectrum. We could unite a whole generation around our goals. Maybe there is a reason that Freedom and Peace did not establish one political party. I recently wrote an article about Freedom and Peace in history of Kazimierz Sokołowski, last issue: *W sieci historii*. I wrote about Kazimierz Sokołowski.<sup>81</sup> He was a leader from Gorzów, he was very much involved in church.

**Brier**

One of the conservatives, rather.

**Czaputowicz**

Rather conservative. So we all gathered together. At that time they refused to go to the army because they were protesting against the soviets. Others refused because they were pacifists.

The activists were different. Some of them were conservatives, some of them were anarchists. Some of them cooperated with right-wing groups from the West, and others cooperated with the greens.

**Stahl**

In the 1980s, could you already notice the difference in political convictions between these people?

**Czaputowicz**

Yes. I was from Warsaw and would say that we were in in the middle. We organised the movement and collaborated with all regions. Kraków and Gorzów were maybe more to the right. In Gdańsk they more anarchist, rather left wing. Wrocław was more ecologically focused: they maintained contacts with the Greens. We could work together because we knew each other from the late 1970s and early 1980s – the period in which Solidarność was legal. During that period, I visited many universities, took part in rallies, and held discussions with people. We maintained these contacts during martial law.

During martial law some activists said that they no longer wanted to be involved in the opposition movement. Some of the activists wanted to live their lives in Poland, others emigrated. However, some people – a minority – did remain active. We had a network and could therefore organise a countrywide opposition movement: Warsaw, Kraków, Wrocław, Gorzow, Gdańsk, Poznań, Szczecin and many other regions. It is important to note that the independent students' union NZS functioned like a trade union. Like Solidarność, it represented many different political leanings. The idea was to unite everybody who was willing to do something more than just read the independent newspaper: to unite people willing to take risks.

**Stahl**

Surely there were frictions when so many people from different directions came together?

**Czaputowicz**

There were. There were different fractions because it was a movement, not an organisation.

**Stahl**

About which issues mainly?

**Czaputowicz**

The activists were different. Some of them were conservatives, some of them were anarchists. Some of them cooperated with right-wing groups from the West, and others cooperated with the greens.

**Stahl**

But did you fight about any particular issues? Were there issues over which you had many discussions?

**Czaputowicz**

We had many common problems to solve: we wanted to change the military and reform the country. And, we wanted the protection of human rights. Everybody agreed on this. In Gdańsk there were anarchists, and the feminist movement was starting to develop there, whereas in Gorzow they organised seminars in church to defend unborn life. There were completely different positions on very critical issues such as abortion. I wrote about this in an article. Bishop Michalik<sup>82</sup> supported this faction of Freedom and Peace, which, by today's standards, was rather right-wing. This arm of Freedom and Peace were inspired by teaching of the Catholic Church and were very much opposed to abortion. Others in the movement were open to this issue. As you can see, there were particular issues on which activists held completely different positions.

However, we were together in one group because we had common programme that everybody agreed upon. We did not have a platform on abortion, rather our purpose was to fight the communists. We were against the army. We wanted the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Poland. We wanted to change the military oath, and we wanted the protection of human rights. We could unite around our core aims, but we could not remain in one party afterwards because other issues started to become decisively crucial.

**Brier**

Just to sum this up, you would say that Freedom and Peace was not a positive programme of how you wanted to organise society on issues like abortion or others, but it was more kind of a minimal consensus.

**Czaputowicz**

Our core aims are what united us but there were extremely different political convictions within the movement. But what was added value, and what contributed to the success of Freedom and Peace, was that we could unite even with these differences. We also had a platform that related to international affairs, including the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact and the unification of Europe. I remember, for example, that our largest conference was held in Kraków in 1988. It was just before the round table talks and more than one thousand people came.<sup>83</sup> Members of Freedom and Peace in Kraków, together with members of Solidarność, including Jan Rokita and Zbigniew Romaszewski, organised the conference. The event focused on human rights and there were many participants from West and East Europe, including important people from the Czech Republic and Hungary.

We started to talk about European unification. Okay, this is a positive programme, so we thought we have to overcome the division of Europe, and we already emphasized that we wanted to have an observer statute in the European parliament. We followed what was going on there and the idea was to overcome the division of Europe. The international issues we talked about included things like disarmament, peace movements in the West, the dissolution of military pacts, the withdrawal of foreign troops from countries, and the unification of Europe. We also viewed the unification of Germany as a necessary step in

this process. This issue was even included in the documents related to the Helsinki memorandum. Our discussions were very open, and very forward looking. Some people from the opposition movement said that our goals were unrealistic, even dangerous. Maybe they were idealistic, and maybe we were seen as idealists. But, this was why we were treated seriously by Western leaders: because they also wanted these things.

When I read historical texts, there are authors who were critical. There were those who wrote that the programme was unrealistic and that the West wanted to maintain the system as it was, under the control of the communists. This was one argument. My argument was that no, the West simply wanted to have democratic systems in place in Eastern Europe. Therefore, they looked hopefully toward new opposition movements not only in Poland (like Freedom and Peace), but also in other Central European states. Freedom and Peace was more open and less conservative than other opposition groups. Solidarność had more responsibility, so they had to be realistic. But we, together with Charta 77, were very much forward looking. The Czech Charta 77 and Freedom and Peace signed some common documents with Western peace movements. When you look at the Memorandum Giving Real Life in Helsinki Accords and Freedom and Peace documents, both signed together with the peace movement, you will see the common platform. Therefore, Western peace movements were important. At least I think they were important, some people in Poland were more critical: they felt that the Western peace movements were in the hands of the Soviets. But I think they gave important dimensions to our activities.

During the nineties, Freedom and Peace was successfully eliminated from political life.

### **Stahl**

How did the work of Freedom and Peace continue after the democratisation of Poland?

### **Czaputowicz**

Lech Wałęsa set up a Civic Committee. He invited me to be a member. I did not, however, take part in the election. I was a bit critical of how candidates were selected. But, five activists from Freedom and Peace became MPs for Solidarność. We were then in the mainstream, so to speak. But there were also more radical groups in Freedom and Peace. They wanted the immediate withdrawal of Soviet troops from Poland. They demanded this in demonstrations that took place; for example, in front of Soviet consulates. During Tadeusz Mazowiecki's government they were harshly treated by the secret police.<sup>84</sup> I know this from a file that I saw. We have to remember that General Czesław Kiszczak<sup>85</sup> was the Minister of the Interior in Tadeusz Mazowiecki's government.

Generally, Freedom and Peace was successfully eliminated from political life. There were anachists in our group and government propaganda at that time was very much against this element in Freedom and Peace. And also, opposition at Round Table Talks.<sup>86</sup> They did not want to have a competitor or partner in this victory. It was at this stage that divisions within the opposition movement began. People from Freedom and Peace went to different activities. The organisation slowly disappeared; it was not formally dissolved. We also have to remember that there were agents from the secret police who also contributed to the



disintegration of the opposition movement. We know a bit about this. Counterintelligence officers in military services wrote two master thesis about the actions taken against Freedom and Peace.

**Stahl**

Did you personally develop any human rights activism during the nineties?

**Czaputowicz**

I went to work. I was in Wałęsa's Civic Committee. I started to work in the Senate Centre of International Relations after the election. We worked on foreign policy issues. For example, I went to Berlin to organise a trip of six leaders of the East-German movement *Demokratie Jetzt* which included, Wolfgang Templin, Bärbel Bohley,<sup>87</sup> Ludwig Mehlhorn<sup>88</sup> and others. I visited Berlin in 1989 and invited them to Warsaw. Tadeusz Mazowiecki's government was already in power and I organised a meeting with Mazowiecki for them. We also went to Gdańsk for a meeting with Wałęsa. In Germany at that time – during the unification process – they were rather marginalised.

I visited Hungary and the Czech Republic in the fall of 1989 to take part in meetings. I also made a speech during a rally. At that stage there was a network of opposition groups that provided support to each other. But Poland was the most developed in terms of political changes. Mazowiecki's government was in power, we had MP's from *Solidarność*, and they were at the beginning of this democratization process. Therefore, it was very important to support opposition groups in Czech Republic and Hungary. In the Czech Republic there was the Helsinki Assembly, which was organised by members of the peace movement, including Mary Kaldor, Mient Jan Faber and others. I was not involved in that. I was in Senate for one year. Then I went to the Foreign Ministry and became the Director of Consular Affairs. First, I was the Deputy and then I became the Director. My responsibility was to reform consular services abroad so that they did not represent the communists, but rather the new democratic state. You could say I began a diplomatic career.

**Stahl**

How long did you continue with this diplomatic career?

**Czaputowicz**

I studied for one year at Oxford. I was in the strategy department. This was also the period when the communists won the election, so I was not able to build a career. During Jerzy Buzek's government,<sup>89</sup> in the late 1990s, I was Deputy Director of the Negotiation Department for European Integration in the Committee of European Integration. Then I became the Deputy Head of the Civil Service. I stayed there for seven years, after which I returned to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as the Director of the Strategy department. I worked on Poland's foreign affairs strategy. Later, I was nominated for the position of Director of the National School of Public Administration (KSAP). I stayed there for four years and a half years. Now I am a Professor at the University of Warsaw. I am now the head of the Methodology of European Studies unit. I had also developed a scientific career, although it was quite difficult to be a civil servant and a professor at the same time. I work on European integration and I want to improve the methodology of European studies and international relations. I published books on sovereignty, international security, and

theories of international relations.

**Brier**

Sovereignty, actually, if I may, is an interesting term in this respect. I read some of the speeches that were given in 1988 at this human rights conference in Kraków, and what struck me was actually that people like Rokita, for instance, and many of the Polish participants actually said that the idea of sovereignty is merely the last resort of dictators to protect themselves against human rights activism. And I was just wondering, against the background of your experience, how would you see national sovereignty related to the 1982 issues of human rights?

**Czaputowicz**

Rokita, I remember his speech, because he was also attacked by other people. But, he was very much pro-American. He was very provocative and very much pro Reagan,<sup>90</sup> whereas the peace movements were very much anti-American. We had to deal with this problem. I think that, of course international society has a right to interfere in the internal affairs of a country when there is a gross violation of human rights. I believe that one cannot use sovereignty to prevent human rights violations. I find it interesting that you remind me of this issue. Today, they say that, okay, we are sovereign, we should not interfere. But this was a position that the communists used.

**Brier**

Actually, this is one of the main issues always, that there is something which we deal with within our sovereign rights and then the West would say, they insist on human rights compliance.

**Czaputowicz**

This was exactly what the Helsinki process was about. I remember that after our 1987 conference in Warsaw, the government spokesperson, Jerzy Urban, held a press conference. He said: »General Jaruzelski put forward an idea of Jaruzelski's plan on how to build confidence, how to build peace. Freedom and Peace is against Polish interests and against Polish sovereignty.« But they could not prevent us from organising that conference. They arrested 25 people, but they could not arrest everyone, including me.

**Stahl**

Thank you very much for your time.

## Fußnoten

1. Władysław Gomułka (1905-1982) 1948 deposed as General Secretary of the Polish United Workers' Party, 1951-1954 imprisoned, President of Poland from 1956 to 1970.
2. In response to countrywide protests in 1956, Imre Nagy (1896-1958) formed a multiparty government and demanded the neutrality of Hungary. The Soviet army invaded the country and Nagy was deposed.
3. Władysław Broniewski (1897-1962) is considered one of the most important representatives of revolutionary lyricism and Socialist Realism in Poland.
4. In response to the growing protest movement in Polish society, the Polish government declared martial law from 1981 to 1983.
5. On 1 August, 1944, the Polish Home Army began an uprising against the German occupation. By 3 October, 1944 the uprising was crushed.
6. After the occupation of Poland, in the spring of 1940, the Soviet government murdered approximately 4400 Polish officers near the village of Katyń.
7. The Workers Defense Committee (Komitet Obrony Robotników) was established in 1976 to provide support to those who had been arrested during the protests of the same year.
8. Szkoła Główna Planowania i Statystyki (Central School for Planning and Statistics)
9. Jan Lityński (\*1946), co-founder of KOR.
10. Adam Michnik (\*1946) and Jacek Kuroń (1934-2004) had already made a name for themselves internationally in the context of the 1968 Polish student protests.
11. Robotnik was an underground newspaper published by the left wing of the Solidarity movement and later by the reborn Polish Socialist Part
12. The independent trade union, Solidarity, was created in 1980 out of a strike movement. It developed into the most important opposition organisation in Poland.
13. Witold Gombrowicz (1904-1969), Polish writer who lived in exile since 1939.
14. Czesław Miłosz (1911-2004), Polish writer, lived in exile in France from 1951. In 1980 he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature
15. Kultura and Aneks were the two most important émigré journals. The former was already established in the 1940s, the latter was founded in the early 1970s by students who had emigrated after 1968. Both published books.
16. Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn (1918-2008), Russian writer whose detailed descriptions of Stalinist crimes met with significant international response since the 1960s.
17. Czesław Miłosz: The Captive Mind. Paris 1953.

18. Wojciech Borowik (born 1956), at that time a student in the Faculty of Law and Administration at Warsaw University.
19. Waław HOLEWIŃSKI (\*1956), at that time a student in the Faculty of Law and Administration at Warsaw University, worked as a publisher.
20. Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn: The Gulag Archipelago. First published in 1973.
21. In 1956 the Polish army bloodily suppressed a workers' uprising.
22. In 1968, students protests took place in several Polish cities. The government responded with an anti-Semitic campaign and 15,000 Jewish Poles were expatriated.
23. In June 1976 protests took place in numerous cities in response to the Polish government's announcement price increases. The protests were brutally suppressed.
24. Studencki Komitet Solidarności
25. Charter 77 was a human rights organization founded in Czechoslovakia in 1977. It became the center of the opposition movement.
26. Václav Havel (1936-2011) belonged to the resistance during the crushing of the 1968 Prague Spring and in 1977 was one of the founders of the Charter 77.
27. Following the increase in meat prices, strikes developed in, among other places, the Lenin shipyard in Gdansk. During the strike, the workers organized into the trade union Solidarity.
28. Lech Wałęsa (\*1943), 1980-1981 Chairman of Solidarity.
29. In September 1980 the Polish government signed an agreement with the coordinating committee of the striking workers that legalized Solidarity.
30. Jimmy Carter (\*1924) was president of the United States from 1977 to 1981.
31. Kurt Waldheim (1918-2007), 1972-1981 UN Secretary General.
32. Signed in 1975, the Helsinki Final Act obligated signatory states from both the East and West blocs to protect human rights.
33. The Movement for the Defense of Human Rights (Ruch Obrony Praw Człowieka i Obywatela) was an anti-communist, center-right group, founded in 1977.
34. Konfederacja Polski Niepodległej
35. Leszek Moczulski (\*1930) was a right wing dissident who was primarily interested in liberal market issues.
36. Andrzej Czuma (1938), sentenced in 1970 to seven years imprisonment for for alleged coup attempts. After his release he one of the initial founders of ROBCiOs.
37. Ruch Młodej Polski (\*1953) also belonged to ROBCiO.
38. Tadeusz Mazowiecki (1927-2013), 1989-1990 Prime Minister of Poland.

39. Aleksander Kwaśniewski (\*1954), 1990-1995 President of the Socialist SRDP, 1995-2005 president of Poland.
40. Radio Free Europe, founded in the 1950s by the US, was based in Munich and targeted Central and Eastern European countries except for the Soviet Union.
41. The Polish-born Pope John Paul II (1920-2005) visited his home country in June 1979, a few months after he took office.
42. Voice of America is US international broadcaster.
43. In response to the growing protest movement in Polish society, the Polish government declared martial law from 1981 to 1983.
44. Jerzy Popiełuszko (1947-1984) was a Catholic priest who was murdered by the Polish security service because of his support of the dissidents. 800,000 people took part in his funeral. The Polish government sentenced those responsible to prison.
45. Leon Kantorski (1918-2010), 1964-1991 pastor in Podkowa.
46. Based on the 1979 NATO Double-Track Decision, new missiles with nuclear warheads were erected in Western Europe beginning in 1983.
47. Amnesty International advocated the release of so called prisoners of conscience. AI used the term to describe prisoners who vehemently opposed violence and never used violent means.
48. Marek Adamkiewicz (\*1957) refused to take an oath in 1984 that forced him to swear allegiance to the Soviet army. He was then sentenced to two and a half years in prison. He took part in a Solidarity hunger strike in 1985.
49. Wojciech Jaruzelski (1923-2014), 1981-1985 Prime Minister of Poland, 1985-1990 State President of Poland.
50. Czesław Kiszczak (\*1925), was the Chief of Military Intelligence before he held the post of Minister of the Interior from 1981-1990.
51. The name of the military government that took care of government business in Poland under martial law from 1981 to 1983.
52. Margaret Thatcher (1925-2013), 1979-1990 Prime Minister of the United Kingdom.
53. Franz Vranitzky (\*1937), 1986-1997 Chancellor of Austria.
54. Volker Rühe (\*1942), 1989-1992 General Secretary of the CDU.
55. Rüdiger von Fritsch (\*1953), 1986-1989 political officer at the German embassy in Warsaw.
56. Richard von Weizsäcker (1920-2015), 1984-1994 President of the Federal Republic of Germany.
57. The 60 Committee (Sześćdziesiątka) was a committee that advised Wałęsa and from which participants of the 1989 Round Table were recruited. It consisted mainly of intellectuals.
58. Jan Kavan (\*1946), was a Czechoslovakian politician. After the crushing of the Prague Spring in

1968 he went into exile in London, where he worked in publishing.

59. Joan Landy was an American peace activist.
60. Bronisław Geremek (1932-2008), 1987-1989 Head of the Commission for Political Reforms of the Civic Committee, that worked on proposals for the democratization of Poland.
61. Zbigniew Romaszewski (1940-2014), from December 1986 headed the so-called Intervention Commission, which campaigned for victims of repression.
62. Jacek Salij (\*1942), 1982-1989 Member of Rada Edukacji Narodowej, a body that developed proposals for education reform.
63. Michael Dobbs (\*1948), 1986-1987 Chief of Staff to the British Conservative Party.
64. Michael Kaufmann (1938-2010), a journalist with the New York Times, who frequently reported on Polish affairs.
65. Anne Applebaum (\*1964), in 1988 lived in Warsaw as a correspondent for The Economist.
66. Mary Kaldor (\*1946), founding member of the 1982-established peace organization European Nuclear Disarmament (END). She edited its journal from 1983 to 1988.
67. Petra Kelly (1947-1992), environmental and peace activist, 1979 founding member of the Greens, the party for which she sat in the Bundestag (Lower House of Parliament) from 1983-1990.
68. Gert Weisskirchen (\*1944), from 1976-2009 member of the German Bundestag for the SPD, from 1987 to 1990 head of the working group Defense Conversion of the SPD parliamentary faction.
69. János Kis (\*1943), Hungarian philosopher. In the 1980s editor of a Samizdat journal. 1988-1989 visiting professor at the New School for Social Research in New York City.
70. György Konrád (\*1933), Hungarian dissident and writer. Banned from publishing from 1978-1988.
71. Miklós Haraszti (\*1945), 1976 founding member of the Hungarian Democratic Opposition Movement and editor of a Samizdat journal
72. Mient Jan Faber (\*1940), head of the Dutch IKV (Interchurch Vormingswerk Development), an organization to help the peace movement establish a network.
73. Wolfgang Templin (\*1948), East German civil rights activist, in 1985 co-founder of the Initiative for Peace and Human Rights, was arrested in 1988 and forced to leave the GDR
74. The Initiative for Peace and Human Rights was established in 1985 by a group of East German civil rights activists.
75. Podkowa Leśna (\*1949), Polish journalist and dissident. Started hunger strikes with dissidents in Podkowa Leśna in response to his 1980 arrest.
76. European Nuclear Disarmament (END) was a peace organisation founded in 1982.
77. The French Comité pour le désarmement nucléaire en Europe (CODENE) was a left-wing peace

organization that was founded to counter the Communist Party and the Mouvement de la Paix.

78. The Conference on Security and Cooperation was held in Vienna in January 1989.
79. The Helsinki Citizens' Assembly was established in 1990 as an international peace and human rights organization.
80. Noam Chomsky (\*1928), left-wing intellectual, known for his sharp criticism of capitalism and US foreign policy.
81. Jacek Czaputowicz: Walka Kazika Sokołowskiego in: W Sieci Historii 9 (01.09.2014).
82. Józef Michalik (\* 1941), 1986-1993 bishop of the diocese of Gorzów.
83. In the spring of 1989 discussions took place between the Polish Government and the various opposition groups to prepare for the Poland's democratization.
84. Tadeusz Mazowiecki (1927-2013), 1989-1990 Prime Minister of Poland.
85. Czesław Kiszczak (\* 1925), was the Chief of Military Intelligence before he held the post of Minister of the Interior from 1981 to 1990.
86. The Round Table Talks took place in Warsaw from February 6, to April 5, 1989. The government initiated the discussion with different opposition groups in reaction to the growing social unrest.
87. Bärbel Bohley (1945-2010), East German civil rights activist, in 1989 founding member of the New Forum, an organization that fought for civil rights, environmental protection, demilitarization and the greater independence of the GDR.
88. Ludwig Mehlhorn (1950-2011), East German civil rights activist, a member of Democracy Now, a 1989 founded organization that called for the democratization of state and society.
89. Jerzy Buzek (\* 1940), 1997-2001 Prime Minister of Poland.
90. Ronald Reagan (1911-2004) was president of the United States from 1981 to 1989.

## Zitation

Lebensgeschichtliches Interview mit Jacek Czaputowicz, 29.09.2014, in: Quellen zur Geschichte der Menschenrechte, herausgegeben vom Arbeitskreis Menschenrechte im 20. Jahrhundert, URL: [www.geschichte-menschenrechte.de/jacek-czaputowicz/](http://www.geschichte-menschenrechte.de/jacek-czaputowicz/)