



# THE END OF YALTA

Karta

# THE END OF YALTA

## Breakthrough in Eastern Europe 1989/90

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Photo: Jirzi Vszeteczka



Photo: Wojciech Druszcz

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## Nation by Nation – the Relay Race to Freedom

*Fifteen years ago an extraordinary experiment took place in Eastern Europe. Within a short period of time, several nations suddenly found themselves standing face to face with the chance to change their fate – an event rarely seen in history. The fact that the silent public of these several countries could at last speak out, that they dared to reach for freedom, that one after another set aside submission – all this was not a foregone conclusion. Happily, the end of the last totalitarian system in Europe did not become yet another tragic stage in world history.*

*On 4th June 1989, on the very day when Europe saw (Polish) society victorious against its Communist rulers, Chinese students, revolting against their system, were massacred in Peking in the Square of Heavenly Peace [Tiananmen Square]. There, at the hint of a threat, the Communists did not hesitate before resorting to butchery. And they are still in power.*

*Poland had waited too long. Within six months of the founding of “Solidarity”, in the spring of 1981, Polish “opposition” spheres were in a position to win against their own, local rule. However, Poland’s isolated position within the Soviet bloc was not conducive to a victorious outcome. The Soviet Union was yet to face up to perestroika. Poland “survived” her victory but did not see it put in force. Nothing more could be done at that point than see through the hopeless years of martial law and wait for the final outcome. There was no need now for a multi-million “Solidarity” membership, memories and consciousness of what had been achieved would suffice to keep it alive.*

*On 23rd November 1989, on the seventh day of the “velvet revolution” in Prague, Timothy Garton Ash said to Vaclav Havel: “In Poland it took 10 years, in Hungary 10 months, in the GDR 10 weeks, perhaps it will take 10 days, here in Czechoslovakia?”. The revolutionary events did, indeed, take a little longer but word had gone out. The pace of change was truly remarkable.*

*As subsequent steps on the road to change did not meet with expected forced opposition from the authorities, so courage grew. Meanwhile, with every compromise, the power of the authorities became weaker. The peoples of other countries could start out on ever-decreasing marathons.*

*Revolutionary changes sometimes happened to be an illusion (like in Romania at an early stage) and sovereignty to be apparent (Belarus).*

*The breakthrough of 1988/91 meant a peaceful overthrow of Communism in Europe. Today, 15 years after the victorious elections in Poland, the residents of the seven former Soviet bloc countries may be certain that the “Yalta” curse will not come back to them.*

Zbigniew Gluza





Photo Pavel Štecha

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## Agreement

*Yalta, a smallish town in the Crimea, became a symbol. Timothy Garton Ash in his book “The Polish Revolution: Solidarity”, wrote: “When I was in Poland for the first time, I frequently heard the magic word "Yalta". 'Yalta', my new friends would sigh. At the word 'Yalta', conversation would fade into a melancholy silence. Does 'Yalta' mean fate?” The Crimean Conference of the leaders of the anti-Hitler coalition (Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin), which took place on 4-11 February 1945, was yet another stage in the Soviet conquest of Eastern Europe. For the nations of Eastern Europe it was a sentence.*



*Frederic A. Voigt, the English journalist, wrote in March 1945: “The Declaration [summing up at the end of the conference] offers the 'nations of liberated Europe' help in 'solving their pressing political and economic problems by democratic means' (Chapter V). The Declaration refers to the Atlantic Charter, which gives 'all nations the right of choice of form of government'. Meanwhile, twelve countries, from the Arctic Circle to the Aegean Sea find themselves — or will soon find themselves — under despotic rule [...]. All this stems from a system of coercion, sanctioned in Yalta”. (Quote from “Yalta Yesterday and Today. Extracts from journals 1944–1985”, publ. London 1985).*

*The Prime Minister of Great Britain, Winston S. Churchill and the President of the United States, Franklin D. Roosevelt put their stamp and signature to the Red Army's territorial conquests. For those countries which were thus absorbed by the Soviet bloc, this sentence was to last 45 years.*



The photographs come from the State Central Archives of the Russian Federation in Moscow; they have been reproduced by Tomasz Kizny under the auspices of the Programme “Common Ground — Eastern Europe” (financed by the National Endowment for Democracy).

The first show — the airport in Saki, 130 km to the North of Yalta: 1) Churchill, Roosevelt and Viacheslav Molotov, USSR Minister for Foreign Affairs, before a guard of honour, 2) Roosevelt with his hosts, 3) Churchill. Alongside — plenary session of the Conference held in the Livadia Palace, a former summer residence of the Czar, and a “photographic memento” of the Big Three.



*Despite several precarious moments, the Soviet system (in the “Yaltan” sphere) — was to last unabated until 1981. It was then that, as evidenced by Soviet documents (see “Karta” 23), the leaders of the USSR became conscious of the fragility of their own colossus. However, the introduction by the authorities of martial law in Poland smoothed over the symptoms of the crisis, and further emphasised to the “loyal” nations that the sentence was still continuing. But, as subsequent demands for freedom were made, the gaolers proved too weak. Poles, Hungarians, Germans, Czechs, Slovaks, Bulgarians, Romanians, Lithuanians, Latvians, Estonians, Ukrainians, Russians... The end of the totalitarian dictatorship. (Z.G.)*



Shop door opens in Skaryszew, 1989. Photo: Jarosław Stachowicz / FORUM

# Death throes of the PRL

ANTONI DUDEK

## 1988

### 26th April

— Outbreak of strike in Kraków's Lenin Steelworks. In addition to wage rises the workers demand that "Solidarity" activists, jailed during martial law, should be allowed back to work. Thanks to an initiative led by the bishops, mediators make their way to Kraków — Halina Bortnowska, Jan Olszewski and Andrzej Stelmachowski.

### 29th April

— Two-day strike of the Stalowa Wola Steelworks workforce. Among other demands is the legalisation of "Solidarity" activities in this factory.

### 1st May

— The militia breaks up independently organised 1st May parades in Wrocław, Warsaw, Nowa Huta and Gdańsk. Similar action is undertaken on 3rd May.

### 2nd May

— Strike in the Lenin Shipyard in Gdańsk.

### 2nd–3rd May

— 227th Plenary Conference of Polish Bishops in Częstochowa. The published report issued by the Bishops states that *"no government, nor any political camp can solve the burning issues of our country without the wide ranging participation of the whole of society"*.

### 3rd May

— Andrzej Wielowieyski, the advisor to The National Executive Committee of NSZZ [Independent Self-governing Trade Union] "Solidarity" meets with the Secretaries of the Central Committee of the PZPR [Polish United Workers Party], Józef Czyrek and Stanisław Ciosek, who inform him of the consent of General Jaruzelski



Strike in the Lenin Steelworks. Photo: Andrzej Stawiarski



May Day 1988, Warsaw. Photo: Erazm Ciolek





May Day 1988. Representatives of the Strike Committee in Lenin Steelworks: (from right) Andrzej Szewczuwaniec, Stanisław Handzlik, Mieczysław Gil. *Photo: Stanisław Markowski*



May 1988, Tadeusz Mazowiecki during the Gdańsk Shipyard strike. *Photo: Erazm Ciolek*

to the opening of talks with Lech Wałęsa.

— The government spokesman, Jerzy Urban states at a press conference: *“What is happening now is not a repetition of the events of 1980. [...] The current strikes have broken out at the very start of a radical move towards massive reforms and in a situation where work need not be interrupted in order to speak out and to be heard. These strikes, then, are groundless and harmful, both politically and economically. There is only one similarity to the events of 1980: in many cases the strikes are being called for and organised by the very same people who, in 1981, destroyed the Polish economy. Some of them are no longer working people but professional politicians. Directly or indirectly their activities are being controlled by Western countries, who finance their comfortable life-styles in Poland.”*

### 5th May

— Despite the fact that negotiations between the Directors and the Strike Committee were set for 8 a.m., at 2 a.m. sub-units of the ZOMO [Motorised Militia] enter the site of the Metalurgical Works in Nowa Huta and force the steelworkers to end their strike (there are approximately two thousand people in the factory). Tadeusz Pikulicki, an underground press reporter, writes: *“The ZOMO force burst into the factory with a great roar. Each of the militiamen held a truncheon in his right hand and a stun grenade in his left. Others were firing with rubber or plastic bullets. The air was thick with dust and clouds of smoke caused by the grenades. It was dark and terrifying. The steelworkers tripped as they fled in a panic. You could not see where you were going. The ZOMO were making an incredible racket. They hit out blindly with their truncheons and screamed: “DOWN!!! DOWN!!!”. This action (scores of people were hurt) led to the breakdown of*



May 1988, Gdańsk. Strike in Lenin Shipyard. Photo: Stefan Kraszewski / ADM/CAF



May Day 1988, Warsaw. Photo: Krzysztof Wójcik / FORUM

**Stasi report on a conversation with Wiesław Klimczak, the deputy chief editor of the PZPR's publication "Nowe Drogi" (New Roads), 31st May – 3rd June 1988:**

[...] Peace and order are Jaruzelski's strongest doctrine. However, since these cannot be ensured through political commitment, then it will have to be done by compromise. K[limczak] is of the opinion that an entirely absurd situation has arisen in Poland. Currently, neither the Party, nor the political opposition, nor the Church are keen on disturbances, recent events have shown once again that it requires but a spark to set the whole country alight, and none of the above-mentioned want this, because none of them want to carry the responsibility.

[...] K. considers it typical of both the Church's situation and the opposition's that neither the Church via its social organisations, nor the opposition parties are aiming to take over power in Poland. [...] the situation is complicated as much as nobody wants to take on responsibility for the ensuing several years of political development. The main problem is the state of the economy. In K's opinion, the situation has changed so far as, while on one side fresh opposition groups are springing up with various political aims including extreme anti-communism, on the other hand it must be said that the majority of society is against the politics of the Party. This was made plain by the referendum, it will also be evident during the local authority elections on 19th July 1988. [...].

Central Archives of the Federal Department in Charge of State Security Files of the former GDR (BStU ZA), ZAIG 13091, k. 2–15.

unofficial contacts between the representatives of the authorities and the opposition.

— The Militia demonstrates a show of force and makes several mock attacks on the Gdańsk Shipyard.

— During a press conference the press spokesman for the Ministry of the Interior, Wojciech Garstka, states that during the pacification of the "illegal strike" in the Lenin Steelworks, "[...] *the militia did not use force or any means of force. Nobody was injured*".

— The spokesman of the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs states: "[...] *The events in Poland are it's own internal affair. Poland goes her way and the USSR its own*".

**10th May**

— A parade of one thousand people with Lech Wałęsa and Alojzy Szablewski (Chairman of the Shipyard branch of "Solidarity") at its head leaves the Lenin Shipyard and ends the strike.



10th May 1988, end of strike in Gdańsk Shipyard. Photo: Stefan Kraszewski / ADM/CAF

### 11th May

— The Sejm passes an Act entitled “Extra-ordinary Powers and Entitlements of the Council of Ministers”, which gives the Council of Ministers wide-ranging powers of direct intervention in the administration of state enterprises. *“The Sejm granted certain powers. It soon became apparent that they did very little to further matters. [...] Subsequently, an appraisal of the use of these powers was to become a pretext for the dismissal of the Council of Ministers”* — recalls the Prime Minister Zbigniew Messner, accusing General Jaruzelski of wilfully forcing through the matter of extraordinary powers.

— The Provincial Court in Gdańsk throws out an application to register the Lenin Shipyard Branch of “Solidarity”.

### 3rd June

— During talks between the Secretary of the Central Committee of the PZPR, Stanisław Ciosek, and the Director of the Press Office of the Council of Bishops, Father Alojzy Orszulik, the Secretary informs him of plans to create an upper house, the Senate, in which opposition parties would be meaningfully represented. He goes on to say that “[...] under the circumstances it necessary to look into the possibilities of putting together a coalition government with the participation of the opposition. Given the government in its present form it is difficult to envisage the country emerging from this crisis”.

### 13th June

— In a speech given at the VII Plenary Meeting of the Central Committee of the PZPR, the First Secretary, Wojciech Jaruzelski, uses the phrase “Round Table” for the first time, when speaking of the need for open discussion among various elements of society with reference to the new Law on Associations.



July 1988, Mikhail Gorbachev speaks in the Sejm. Photo: Jan Morek / PAI-EXPO

### 17th June

— Despite a second vote in the Sejm, the motion to dismiss Tadeusz Hupałowski from the position of Chairman of NIK [National Audit Office] does not win the necessary majority of votes (it was intended that his place should be taken by Włodzimierz Mokrzyński, a former member of the Politburo). This is the first instance of rejection of a motion moved by the Presidium of the Sejm to make changes in high government places.

### 19th June

— Elections to National Councils. According to official data, 55.01% of those entitled to vote took part (however, in Wrocław, where the official figure stood at 70%, according to opposition calculations only 23% of citizens actually voted). Demonstrations and clashes with the militia in Gdańsk and Nowa Huta.

### 11th–16th July

— Mikhail Gorbachev, Secretary General of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party and Chairman of the Presidium of the Grand Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union, visits Poland. On 14th July, during

a visit to the Central Committee of the PZPR he hears from General Jaruzelski that: *“We are not treating the process of democratisation as a fashion trend which will pass. It is a vital process. We have already done much and we will go further; but there are two borders which we will not cross: we will not stand for the sort of union pluralism which attempts are being made to force upon us, nor will we stand for the creation of opposition parties. However, this does not preclude people representing various political, even opposition opinions and points of view taking part in social and representative bodies. [...] We are also considering changes to the constitution, and toying with the possibility of forming a second house in parliament. The main problem is the situation within the Party. On that hinges the situation in the whole of society.”*

#### Stasi Report on a conversation with Wiesław Klimczak, 7th–24th July 1988:

##### Conclusions resulting from the last plenary Conference of the Central Committee of the PZPR

[...] The realisation that the Polish economy cannot be improved through price rises, inevitably means that another method must be found – namely raising productivity. Yet, here the Party is faced with political resistance. Appeals to the working classes that they must first work harder in order to reap the rewards and live better later, fall on deaf ears in the current economic situation of the Polish People’s Republic. Since no help is forthcoming from outside, no credit worth mentioning from the West nor, as talks with Comrade Gorbachev have revealed, from the Soviet Union, the Party is left with no other choice than to make some small gestures towards improving conditions in factories, and thereby of the whole of the economy, which in turn would bring almost immediate political repercussions. According to K[limeczak] this is tantamount to sitting on a barrel of gunpowder.

BSU ZA, ZAIG 13087, k. 9–10.



August 1988, strike in “July Manifesto” Colliery in Jastrzębie. Photo: Maciej Billewicz / PAI-EXPO

### **21st July**

— Wałęsa passes on a confidential letter (through the auspices of Władysław Siła-Nowicki) to the Minister of the Interior, Czesław Kiszczak. According to the latter, this contains a “*preparatory agreement to proposed contact and talks*”.

### **15th August**

— Outbreak of strike in the “July Manifesto” Colliery in Jastrzębia Zdrój. The list of demands is headed with a motion to legalise “Solidarity”. During the following days, the strike spreads to other collieries, to the Port of Szczecin and to the public transport drivers in Szczecin. On 18th August an Inter-Factory Strike Committee is set up in the “July Manifesto” Colliery.

### **20th August**

— Ten collieries in the Katowice Province are out on strike.

— The Committee for National Defence makes a decision to begin preparation for introduction of martial law. Militia and army forces will not be fully prepared until 31st October (it was probably intended to introduce political measures initially).

— In the headquarters of the Central Committee of the PZPR, a meeting is held between the Central Committee Secretary, Józef Czyrek, and the Chairman of the Warsaw Catholic Intelligentsia Club, Andrzej Stelmachowski. “*I tried to persuade him — recalls Stelmachowski, — that there is a need for something spectacular, something like Gorbachev’s telephone call to Sakharov. I insisted that a meeting should be set up with Wałęsa. Czyrek was uncomfortable, nonetheless, he stressed that a politician never says never, but added that talks could only be held with a non-striking Wałęsa.*”

### **21st August**

— A further meeting between Stelmachowski and Czyrek takes place in the evening. The latter — recalls Stelmachowski — “[...] *declared that General Jaruzelski agrees to talks with Wałęsa with the proviso that General Kiszczak would represent the interests of both the government and the Politburo. The condition that there should be no strike in*

*the Gdańsk Shipyard was reiterated. When he was informed about this by telephone, Lech Wałęsa said that it was now too late (it was 23.30) and it was not technically possible to call off the strike action. Nor was he impressed by the choice of government spokesman.”*

### **22nd August**

— Strikes begin in the Lenin Shipyard in Gdańsk, in the Northern Docks, in the Cegielski Factory in Poznań and in the Stalowa Wola Steelworks. Strikes and protest actions break out in seven provinces: Warsaw, Gdańsk, Katowice, Poznań, Wrocław, Tarnobrzeg and Wałbrzych. A further three collieries join the strike, as well as part of the workforce of the Lenin Steelworks.

— In a television appearance, General Czesław Kiszczak threatens to introduce a curfew, as well as other special measures unless the “illegal strikes” are stopped.

### **24th August**

— During a subsequent meeting with Czyrek (arranged by the Office of the Council of Bishops), Andrzej Stelmachowski puts forward a document — prepared by himself and Bronisław Geremek — containing preparatory proposals for subjects to be discussed at the Round Table talks. They include three areas for discussion: 1) trade union pluralism, in other words the legalisation of “Solidarity” on the basis of an existing law on trade unions; 2) social-political pluralism, which includes a wide range of rights for future legally recognised parties and political associations; 3) an anti-crisis pact, i.e. a mapping out of the direction which vital economic reforms must take.

— During the meeting with Father Alojzy Orszulik, at which Kazimierz Barcikowski, the Deputy Chairman of the National Council of Ministers, is also present, Stanisław Ciosek presents the following vision of reform of the political system of the PRL [Polish People’s Republic]: *“At the top we would have the President, then the Senate (in which there would be a division of power: 1/3 — the ruling coalition, 1/3 — the Church’s re-*



August 1988, strike in Gdańsk Shipyard. Photo: Erazm Ciolek

presentatives, 1/3 — independents), below that — parliament, in which the ruling coalition would hold 60%, and the opposition with ‘our non-party friends’ 40 %”.

**25th August**

— 11 factories in 4 provinces strike.  
 — Wałęsa issues a *Proclamation in the matter of the talks*, which reiterates the main proposals put forward earlier by Stelmachowski and Geremek. In a letter to the Primate, Józef Glemp, he asks the Church hierarchy to act as intermediary in talks with the government and to take on the role of “agreement guarantor” (Bishop Jerzy Dąbrowski was subsequently to be a witness of the Kiszczak-Wałęsa meeting).

**26th August**

— A declaration by the Minister of the Interior, General Kiszczak, containing a proposal “to arrange a meeting in the shortest possible time with representatives of various social and working groups. It could take the form of a Round Table.” At the same time, however, General Kiszczak rejects the “possibility of people who reject the legal and constitutional laws of the Polish People’s Republic participating in the meeting”.

— The Conference of the Council of Bishops, held in Jasna Góra, calls for “a search for roads leading to union pluralism and the formation of associations”.

**27th August**

— The wave of strikes in Upper Silesia begins to fall off. The workforces of three collieries continue their protest (“July Manifesto”, “Jastrzębie” and “XXXth Anniversary of PRL”).

**28th August**

— The Politburo of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers Party gives its assent to the meeting between General Kiszczak and Wałęsa, under the proviso, however, that Wałęsa will subsequently “undertake action to end the strikes”.

**31st August**

— In Warsaw, Lech Wałęsa, Czesław Kiszczak, Stanisław Ciosek and Bishop Jerzy Dąbrowski meet in a villa belonging to the Ministry of the Interior (on Zawrat Street). Kiszczak says that a condition of the initiation of the Round Table talks is the ending of the



31st August 1988, strike in Repairs Shipyard in Gdańsk. Photo: Henryk Prykiel / NAF dementi



August 1988, Gdańsk Shipyard. Photo: Erazm Ciołek





1st September 1988. End of strike in Gdańsk Shipyard. Photo: Janusz Uklejewski / ADM/CAF

strikes. Wałęsa stresses the key importance of the legalisation of “Solidarity” to the successful outcome of further talks; he does, however, undertake to try to end the strikes and after the meeting makes an appeal in this matter. In this way, the main subject under contention is mapped out: the legalisation of “Solidarity”, and for the next few months this will cause delays to the Round Table talks. *“Either this is just another big play to outmanoeuvre Wałęsa, or it really is the opening of a new chapter in Polish history. I hope that the latter is the true assumption”* — says Lech Wałęsa in an interview for “Konfrontacje” (PRON).

### **1st September**

— The Inter-Factory Strike Committee of the Gdańsk Shipyard calls for a break in the protest action, because *“a continuation of the strike would render [...] any negotiations impossible.”*

### **2nd September**

— In answer to the consternation caused in the ranks of the PZPR by the Kiszczak–Wałęsa meeting, the Political-Organisational Office of the Central Committee sends out a letter to all the Provincial Committees of the PZPR: *“We wish to stress that during the talks with L. Wałęsa, no guarantees were given as regards registration of “Solidarity”. [...] The fact of undertaking talks in no way changes our stand on the subject of a trade union model nor our attitude to “Solidarity”. [...] Negotiations may hurry up the process of internal changes within the opposition, bringing about its self-determination and the formation of a constructive stance ready for dialogue with the authorities and for mutual shouldering of responsibilities.”*

**6th September**

— The Council of the OPZZ [National Trade Union Consultative Body] postulates a “vote of no confidence” in Zbigniew Messner’s government. This is the first inkling that the management of OPZZ aims to play an independent political role.

**11th September**

— The Church of St. Bridget in Gdańsk is the venue for a meeting of the so-called “sixty group” (later to become the Citizens Committee), originally formed in 1987 on the initiative of Lech Wałęsa. The dominant theme of the discussions is the necessity for keeping up negotiation with the authorities.

**15th September**

— A second Kiszczak–Wałęsa meeting. The Minister of the Interior undertakes to desist from post-strike repressions. At the same time it was decided who was to be part of the “Solidarity” delegation, which was to take part in the meeting planned for the following day.

**16th September**

— In Magdalenka (near Warsaw) 25 representatives of the PZPR, the United Peasants Party, the Democratic Party, the OPZZ, the Church and “Solidarity” meet on Ministry of Interior premises. Discussions reveal a basic disparity of opinions on the matter of the legalisation of “Solidarity”. The opposition side demands a clear declaration of intent from the authorities before the start of the Round Table talks. The final meeting concludes with Lech Wałęsa’s concession — an agreement to issue a circular communiqué saying only that the subject of the Round Table discussions, which are to start in mid October, will be, among others, “*the shape of the Polish trade union movement*”.

**27th September**

— Mieczysław F. Rakowski becomes the new President of the Council of Ministers (following the dismissal on 19th September of Zbigniew Messner). He offers government positions to four people from independent circles: Witold Trzeciakowski, Aleksander Paszyński, Julian Auleytner and Andrzej Micewski. They all refuse.



3rd September 1988. End of strike in Port of Szczecin.  
Photo: Jerzy Undro / ADM/CAF



Mieczysław Rakowski during the VII Plenum of the Central Committee of the PZPR.  
Photo: Grzegorz Rogiński / PAI-EXPO



31st August 1988, Warsaw. Wojciech Jaruzelski visits FSO car factory.  
*Photo: Zbigniew Matuszewski / ADM/CAF*

**General Jaruzelski during a meeting  
of the Secretariat of the Central Committee  
of the PZPR, 4th October 1988:**

[...] As an example, Comrade Rakowski once said to me, and I can identify with this, [...] that if one of the universities goes on strike then we should shut down the university. That's it. Good bye. No lectures. They will have to make it up later anyway. This is no production line. Immediate shut-down and that's it. No discussion or negotiation with some Białkowski (Chancellor of Warsaw University), or other. Nothing. That's it.

Where factories are concerned, we must ensure that we have the gates under control. Although to be honest we really should not do this. We must work out some strategy. A job for General Kiszczak. Control over factory gates. Let them carry on striking inside. The gates are state property. Perhaps industrial security. There are regulations. There are certain principles of law and order, civil defence, fire regulations, safety, state secrets. Those gates have always been our downfall. Yet that is where we must concentrate our operations. Of course, I have in mind an extreme situation. God forbid that we ever have to actually face it. But we cannot leave ourselves defenceless. We must not let ourselves be manipulated by such powers.

[...]

And then there is the matter of the Party, itself, [...], which is currently in a somewhat precarious

state of apathy. Those Party meetings, the low turn-out, non-party members no longer attend. I believe that some of the things we have discussed today, as well as tomorrow's meeting, these should shake the Party up a bit. [...] It is imperative that more information is available. In fact, we must bombard people with information. However banal, unimportant, but let it circulate, circulate, circulate.

Telexes one after another, and let them penetrate the lower echelons, let them feel that something is happening. We can already launch a solid information campaign based on what we are currently discussing. [...]

We should ask Party members what they think of the "Round Table"? [...] What we could not do at the beginning, for obvious reasons, we should carry out now, better late than never, but then we could not do it earlier. And let them [speak out], after all, there will be all manner of things said and written. But let them feel that they have been asked, consulted, that they have been able to express their fears, that they have been able to put forward their opinions. [...] There is not much we can do in the time left to us. Should we put our position in a telex, in the form of questions which would lead to answers along our line of

action? But they must go out and there must be feedback. At the same time, let them come up with “we must rule pout ‘Solidarity’.” I am convinced that will be the answer from 90% of Party members. And then we can say that we are acting not just on behalf of the Central Committee, but that the whole Party has made its views clear. [...]

As for the active workers. [...] Of course there will be a lot of violence, but we will meet again in a month's time and we will tell them they have to do this and this. That way we ensure their co-operation, they will feel they are a concrete part of the decision process, co-authors. We must chose our people carefully, here, not on the basis of congeniality. They should be young people, as many young union activists as possible. Prepare them, lead them, let them stand up and shout “Out with ‘Solidarity’, we regret that [the Party] is holding talks with Wałęsa...” And we will make excuses, that we must after all negotiate... Young Party members and non-members — there must be a reasonable proportion of both. But it has to be forceful, and seen to be a force, but in our favour, which does not necessarily mean that it should not be critical. The important thing is that the criticism should come from us, from our political ranks. [...]

And now Comrades, a matter which I would call sensitive, very sensitive and very crucial. The Soviet Union, pierestroika, reforms, what has happened there recently. And here we have, as it were, two planes on which we must tread carefully. To start with our opponents see,

read into, popularise and proclaim what is going on in the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union, as it were, washes its hands off these events. Washes its hands, and in this we have nothing to fear. Secondly, not only are these reforms going in a similar direction but they are almost overtaking us and so it is easy to make pronouncements along these lines. And here we should make a stronger point, we should point out that these changes which are taking place in the Soviet Union, are changes coming from within the socialist sphere, in its favour, that they are in fact steered by the Communist Party, which is thus ensuring its own strength and the standing of socialism. And to think that our opponents should want to oppose that. We should make the point that what is going on in the Soviet Union is in our favour and not in theirs. [...]

*(Confidential documents of the Politburo and the Secretariat of the Central Committee. Final Year of Power 1988–1989, “Aneks”, London 1994)*



21st October 1988, Warsaw.  
Photo: Zbigniew Matuszewski / ADM/CAF



22nd October 1988. The Round Table in Henryków furniture factory. Photo: Henryk Rosiak / ADM/CAF

**Bronisław Geremek:** They tried to recreate the events of 1945. During their discussions with the Church, with Stelmachowski, with Wielowieyski, they kept on repeating “We will do what we did in 1945, let us return to those days, the mistakes came later. Poland lies once more in ruins and re-building unites people. Let us create an opposition party based on the PSL (Polish People’s Front). This time, let’s avoid the mistake of that party turning its back on us, and we in turn will not make the mistake of destroying the opposition.” [...] They intended that we be corrupted by power, that our ranks be divided and everyone taking an active part compromised. In some way this was perfectly rational reasoning, although it contained one cardinal mistake — the assumption that the Communist Party would survive.

(from the book: “Geremek relates, Żakowski enquires. The Year 1989”, Warsaw 1990)

sek. He criticises the decision to shut down the Gdańsk Shipyard (“*With this one false move you have set the whole world against yourselves*”) and the unsatisfactory solution to the problem of post-strike repressions. At the same time he declares: “*Recent shots fired in the air have made a constructive meeting practically impossible. I propose that the Church, as observer, should undertake the role of mediator. I would invite Messrs Kiszczak and Wałęsa to meet on neutral territory and with the help of the Church to agree the principles of the Round Table talks*”.

Commenting this initiative in 1990, Bronisław Geremek stated: “*The change in the political stance of the authorities which came about when Rakowski took over the government, was clear and obvious to us all. [...] A fresh acceptance of General Kiszczak’s proposals was not on the cards. And in this situation the Church played a remarkable role, opening the way for a breakdown of the stalemate.*”

### 5th October

— Students picket the Military Studies Department of the University of Warsaw, demanding an end to military training. Similar action is undertaken in other academic institutions.

### 25th October

— In a palace in Jabłonna, belonging to the Polish Academy of Sciences, a Round Table is set up to seat 55 people, custom built by fine furniture manufacturers in Henryków.

### 28th October

— Mieczysław F. Rakowski at a press conference: “*Poles are less interested in a Round Table, rather one which is richly laden*”.

### 31st October

— The government announces its decision to put the Gdańsk Shipyard into liquidation. Talks between Andrzej Stelmachowski and Józef Czyrek on the subject of the agenda for the Round Table talks are frozen. They have actually been in a state of impasse since the middle of October — as a result of continuing post-strike repressions, the undermining by the authorities of an already agreed agenda and meddling in the matter of the proposed opposition representatives (the argument centres around Jacek Kuroń and Adam Michnik).

### 11th November

— Independent celebrations to mark Independence Day are held in many towns. Only in Katowice, Gdańsk and Poznań do the militia decide to move in on the demonstrators. — Archbishop Bronisław Dąbrowski meets in the Belweder Presidential Palace with Kazimierz Barcikowski and Stanisław Cio-

**15th November**

— The Chairman of the OPZZ, Alfred Miodowicz, challenges Lech Wałęsa to a television debate.

**16th November**

— Prime Minister Rakowski in a conversation with the German Democratic Republic's ambassador in Warsaw, Jürgen van Zwoll, states (according to the ambassador): *“The most important decision of this week is the closure of the Lenin Shipyard. [...] I have taken this decision because here in Poland only shock tactics can make changes in the right direction. Comrade Jaruzelski and the leadership of the Party have given their consent. For the first time in years the government has shown that it holds the reins. Despite that, the decision was something of a gamble, as in poker. Nobody was in a position to foresee whether this would cause a new wave of strikes, or whether a different reaction might be expected. In the event it appeared that the majority of the workers were not prepared to support “Solidarity”. [...] Most probably the Round Table talks will not take place in the near future. Nonetheless, I am convinced that eventually it will come to that — taking into account that both the Church and Wałęsa want the Round Table. [...] A fresh legalisation of “Solidarity” is not on the agenda. This would mean a return to the status quo of 1981. “Solidarity” has not changed. It is still the same people, the same methods and solutions, the same source of finance. I know them intimately. My life's aim is the destruction of “Solidarity”. That is why — basically — the other side is right in stating that I am an opponent of the Round Table”.*

**18th–19th November**

— In the Parish of Wilanów a meeting takes place between Kiszczak and Wałęsa, in which Ciosek, Tadeusz Mazowiecki (advisor to the National Executive Committee of



21st October 1988, Wrocław. A street “Happening” organised by the Orange Alternative.  
Photo: Henryk Prykiel / NAF dementi

NSZZ “Solidarity”), Archbishop Dąbrowski, Bishop Tadeusz Gocłowski and Father Orszulik also take part. The government side still categorically refuses the motion to legalise “Solidarity”, not agreeing even to make mention in the final report that the subject had been debated. Under pressure from the representatives of the Church, a compromise is reached on the wording of the report — *“talks will be continued with the aim of reaching mutual agreements”*.

**29th November**

— The Round Table which had been set up in the Polish Academy of Sciences’ palace in Jabłonna is dismantled and returned to the factory where it was made.

**30th November**

— Wałęsa’s televised debate with Miodowicz is transmitted live by the First Programme of Polish TV. Miodowicz: *“I put it that a year of uncertainty was enough to face us with empty shelves. [...] I believe that our principle — one union in one workplace — is a very valid one”*. Wałęsa: *“‘Solidarity’ does not say that we will give anyone anything. We will create the possibility of taking, of earning, of earning and taking and the defence of these interests. And pluralism guarantees that. It is true that a workplace cannot be a political arena. We wish you well, but you do not allow us to exist. So what sort of democracy is*



December 1988, Television debate between Lech Wałęsa and Alfred Miodowicz. Photo: Grzegorz Rogiński / PAI-EXPO

that? Let's come to an agreement on how not to be destructive. If you take the manly decision that there is a place for "Solidarity" — then we will immediately roll up our sleeves and the whole of Poland will get down to work, because time flies and young people are waiting." Public opinion monitors clearly indicate Wałęsa's victory in the debate — according to 63.8% of people interviewed (only 1.3% is of the opposite opinion, the remainder considers that there was no victor).

**5th December**

— Wojciech Jaruzelski, during a sitting of the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the PZPR, comments on the Wałęsa-Miodowicz debate, saying: *"The matter always returns to the subject of "Solidarity" [...] And while on the subject of that unfortunate debate, it must be said that it did us untold damage. There has been a sudden rise in the number of people who consider that "Solidarity" should be legalised. [...] Two matters, then: that "Solidarity" has nothing to fear, because in effect it can only help here, after all pluralism is found everywhere throughout the world and the world prospers, so why should we not?; and secondly: that Wałęsa is a clever man — serious, responsible. Those are the two main points, other matters are of little significance. Wałęsa's image has changed and the attitude to "Solidarity" has changed"*.

**10th–11th December**

— Lech Wałęsa's first visit to France since 1981.

**18th December**

— In the underground crypt of the Warsaw Boże Miłosierdzie Church, 135 "Solidarity" activists and sympathisers form a Citizens' Committee with the Chairman of NSZZ "Solidarity", and also set up 15 committees with chairmen, who will make specific preparations for the Round Table talks, and subsequently will represent the Citizens' Committee during the actual negotiations. The most important Committees are: matters concerning union pluralism (Tadeusz Mazowiecki), political reform (Bronisław Geremek), law and order (Adam Strzembosz), politics and economic reform (Witold Trzeciakowski) and local authorities (Jerzy Regulski). Henryk Wujec is chosen as secretary to the Citizens' Committee, and Jacek Moskwa and Kazimierz Wóycicki as assistant secretaries. Discussions are dominated by the opinion that it is essential to search for agreement with the PZPR. Jan Maria Rokita relates that Adam Michnik argues: *"[...] We are likely to be the losers in this deal. In order to avoid this — we must not wait until the authorities of the Polish People's Republic are helpless and in complete disarray", Michnik made strong warnings against those who were counting on this state of events. "We must also cut ourselves off from all those who would defend the right to use force and must aim to achieve a similar modus vivendi to that which has been achieved in Estonia and Latvia. If there is only a 5% chance, that a patriotic move might be born of this, then we must — without any hesitation — take that 5% chance."*

**20th–21st December**

— The first Part of the X Plenum of the Central Committee of the PZPR. Six members who represent the conservative wing of the Party (among them Józef Barzyła, Zbigniew Messner, Tadeusz Porębski) depart from the Politburo. Their



December 1988. Meeting of the Citizens Committee in the Boże Miłosierdzie Church in Warsaw. Zofia Kuratowska, Roma and Stefan Bratkowski, Ryszard Kapuściński. Photo: Erazm Ciolek



**“Considerations in assessment of the socio-political situation and prognoses for the future” Inter-Departmental Prognostic Team of the Central Committee of the PZPR, 21st December 1988:**

[...] There are no indications which might lead to the conclusion that the matter of “Solidarity” will blow over. Information from the Ministry of the Interior indicates that this phenomenon is spreading. Sooner, or later, this particular phenomenon must become obvious to all. The choice we are faced with is, do we agree on “Solidarity”, or is it to be forced upon us. The current situation — as it stands — does not resolve anything. “Solidarity” is a fact, it exists despite our restrictions. Nor are there any indications that with due force this phenomenon might be resolved in the future. [...]

Our attitude to date has, indeed, been aimed at torpedoing the “Round Table” talks. In these documents, which are of a confidential nature, we can openly state that it would appear that it is we and not the other side, who are setting the initial terms. Let us add, too, that basically we do not want the “Round Table”.

After all, the “Round Table” — in one way or another — must inevitably lead to the legislation of “Solidarity”. And that is something we fear like the plague — because even in the best scenario it must lead to a totally new model of a trade union movement. [...]

Cold reality tells us that the existing phenomenon must be faced, and Wałęsa’s current stance gives room for manoeuvre and compromise.

Of course, it is entirely possible that, once “Solidarity” has been legalised, Wałęsa will change his tone of compromise. And we must take this risk into account. But the Party, the greater part of which is precariously balanced, has no other way out than to face the risk. [...]

*(Confidential documents of the Politburo and Secretariat of the Central Committee. Final Year of Power 1988–1989...)*

places are taken, among others, by Stanisław Ciosek and Janusz Reykowski. Leszek Miller and Zygmunt Czarzasty become the new Central Committee Secretaries. Prime Minister Rakowski moves to discuss the matter of the legalisation of “Solidarity”.

**23rd December**

— The Sejm passes two laws: “Law on trading” and “Law on trading with the participation of foreign companies”, which go a long way towards liberalising trading relationships.

**1989**

**1st January**

— The system of selling cars by way of so-called “assignments” is withdrawn, as are controls on petrol and fossil fuels. The citizens of Poland are given the freedom of exercising control over their own passports, which they can now keep at home.

**4th January**

— A meeting between representatives of the authorities (Rakowski, Czyrek, Ciosek and Władysław Loranc) and the Church (Cardinal Franciszek Macharski, Archbishop Jerzy Stroba, Father Orszulik) in Klarysew. “*I would like to see elections to the Sejm brought forward to April, in order to halt the unstable situation in Poland*” — says Rakowski. “*If this idea were to be acceptable, it must be preceded by a truly national agreement on the matter of a joint programme and division of mandates in the Sejm, [...] I believe that, once the elections are over, there will be time and appropriate conditions for the formation of “Solidarity” according to a negotiated formula.*”

— A student demonstration in Katowice on the anniversary of de-legalisation of the Independent Association of Students.

**5th January**

— At a press conference in Gdańsk, Lech Wałęsa argues hotly with Andrzej Gwiazda, who demands that the National Committee of NSZZ “Solidarity”, chosen during a conference in 1981, be called. Wałęsa is of the opinion that the Working Group of the National Committee, represented by Gwiazda, is of marginal importance, while its radical sentiments serve only to reduce the chance of “Solidarity” being legalised.

**6th January**

— Stanisław Ciosek talks with Tadeusz Mazowiecki and Father Alojzy Orszulik about the approaching second session of the X Plenum of the Central Committee of the PZPR, about the changes in political attitudes and the bringing forward of parliamentary elections. Mazowiecki stresses the necessity of re-legalisation of “Solidarity”. Father Orszulik notes: *“During discussions on the division of mandates in the upper and lower house, Ciosek explained that the PZPR would have less than 50% of the mandates in the lower house, but with coalition parties this would reach 60%, the opposition 30%, independent bodies 10%. In the upper house, on the other hand, the division would stand at 1/3 each, with the proviso that the upper house would have the right to block laws proposed by the lower house. The office of President would be formed, and he would also be head of the armed forces — a similar model to the French”*.

**11th January**

— Another meeting of the same people (in the URM [Office of the Council of Ministers] villa at Baciarelli Street in Warsaw. Ciosek: *“The complete re-fit of ‘Solidarity’ will take about one year; two at the most. Until then we will have a so-called trial period”*. He suggests a step-by-step rebuilding of “Solidarity”; in the first phase involving only factory organisations; the creation of regional and national structures would follow once the “trial period” was over. Mazowiecki questions this scenario. Father Orszulik wrote: *“We asked what would be the procedure for electing the president? Ciosek answered that he would be chosen either by one or both houses of parliament. A general election for the office of president were not envisaged. Mazowiecki: And who will be the president? Ciosek: Jaruzelski, of course. Mazowiecki replied with a smile that we too have a candidate. Ciosek enquired with interest, who that might be. Mazowiecki answered: Wałęsa, of course.”*

**13th January**

— In Wałbrzych four hundred people demand the legalisation of “Solidarity”.

— In Kraków, in answer to an appeal by the “Wolność i Pokój” [Freedom and Peace] Movement and the KPN [Independent Poland Confederation], several hundred students demonstrate under the banner “The martial law team on the scrap heap of history.”

**14th January**

— During a meeting with Mazowiecki and Father Orszulik, Ciosek puts forward two drafts of a law to be presented for approval by the X Plenum of the Central Committee of the PZPR. As it does not contain any clear declaration on the legalisation of “Solidarity”, Ciosek’s interlocutors assess it critically, even going so far as to state (in Father Orszulik’s words) that *“further discussion is groundless”*.

**15th January**

— Father Alojzy Orszulik receives a telephone call from Stanisław Ciosek: amendments have been made to the draft act, to be approved by the Central Committee which “[...] will satisfy everyone because the ‘Rubicon has been crossed’. The word ‘Solidarity’ has been used.” [Ciosek] Added that that is the draft, but, of course, it is difficult to foresee what the outcome will be at the Plenum”.

**16th–17th January**

— Second session of the X Plenum of the Central Committee of the PZPR. In view of

the opposition of some members of the Central Committee who do not agree with the legalisation of "Solidarity", four members of the Politburo (Jaruzelski, Kiszczak, Rakowski, Florian Siwicki) threaten to resign. Eventually, the Central Committee passes a vote of confidence for the Politburo and its current membership (with four abstentions). For the motion "The stand of the Central Committee in the matter of political pluralism and union pluralism", which effectively prejudices the matter of the legalisation of "Solidarity" positively, 143 members of the Central Committee vote in favour, 32 are against and 14 abstain. "The Stand" declares that *"At the Round Table organisational structures should be defined for a national agreement based on wider foundations. This should also include an agreement on terms, methods and a time scale for the introduction of union pluralism, as well as paving the way for the formation of new trade unions, including 'Solidarity'."*

General Władysław Pożoga (Deputy Minister of the Interior): *"[...] the atmosphere on the floor was more radical than that of the Party elite, which was supposedly pro-reform. [...] The theatrical resignation of Jaruzelski was a well-calculated farce"*. Stanisław Ciosek: *"[...] the opposition spheres in the Plenum were well organised and a coup had been prepared; the speeches were evidence of this. Party representatives from Warsaw were most dominant, as were some from Katowice."*

### 17th January

— In Warsaw a group of members of WiP distribute leaflets outside the Central Committee headquarters, demanding the resignation of Jaruzelski.

— At a demonstration in Kraków, students demand the legalisation of the National Students' Union (NZS).

### Professor Andrzej Stelmachowski to Lech Wałęsa, 20th January 1989:

Dear Leader. [...] I would also like to express my opinion on an unpopular and, for yourself, sensitive, subject. I consider that, in view of the chances for the legalisation of "Solidarity", effort should be made to unite all "Solidarity" sympathisers, who continue to regard themselves as members of the Union. I would therefore suggest that we carry A[ndrzej] Celiński's project from last year, namely to organise a "gathering", to include both those members of the National Commission who still remain in Poland, as well as members of those organisations which sprang up during martial law, and then, too, representatives of those organisations which are currently being set up (the 1988 strike committees, organisational committees, founding committees). Personally, I consider that at least half of the delegates should be from among the representatives of the new organisational structures.

(from the personal records of  
Andrzej Stelmachowski)

### 20th January

— Tadeusz Mazowiecki, Stanisław Ciosek and Father Orszulik discuss the agenda for the Round Table. *"It has been initially agreed that the Round Table meeting should take place on 6th February 1989 at a venue defined by the working party on 27th January. It would seem that the palace in Jabłonna is not ideal as it is dirty, so it is proposed that the meeting should take place on the premises of the Council of Ministers in the Krakowskie Przedmieście"*.

— Alfred Miodowicz repeats his opposition to *"the division of labour forces"* as a result of a choice of several trade unions.

### 22nd January

— In a declaration, the National Executive Committee of NSZZ "Solidarity" recognises the decision of the X Plenum of the Central Committee PZPR as a starting point for Round Table talks. Lech Wałęsa delegates the preparations for the discussions with the authorities to Zbigniew Bujak, Władysław Frasyniuk and Mieczysław Gil.

**24th January**

— Ciosek, Mazowiecki and Father Orszulik agree details of the next meeting of the working parties under the leadership of Wałęsa and Kiszczak. *“Mazowiecki asked that alcohol not be served during meals, to avoid accusations of fraternisation”*, notes Father Orszulik.

**27th January**

— During a meeting between Lech Wałęsa and Czesław Kiszczak in Magdalena last minute arrangements are made for the opening of the Round Table talks.



The Round Table in the palace of the Council of Ministers.  
Photo: Erazm Ciolek

56 people will sit down to the talks, of whom 20 will be from the opposition, 6 from OPZZ, 14 from the coalition (PZPR, ZSL, SD, PAX Association, Socio-Christian Union, Polish Socio-Catholic Union), 14 “independent authorities” (5 of them delegated by the Citizens’ Committee), as well as 2 representatives of the Church. Questions of ideology are also posed; Ciosek: *“For us socialism is of the essence, seen not in its Stalinist form or whatever, but as a basic principle. We are interested in three values: attitudes to means of productivity, a normal attitude to religion and a road to democracy. [...] We must establish a common system of values.”* Wałęsa: *“I propose my kind of socialism. There are three bakeries in a town: a private one, a co-operative and a state bakery. The one which bakes the cheapest rolls, fares best.”* A communiqué issued after this meeting stated: *“Having established the formula of a social agreement, we will approach the Government Council to make changes to the law on trade unions and at the Round Table we will set the date for the start-up of the formation of “Solidarity”.”* The door to the Round Table stands open.

**28th January**

— In an interview for “Le Monde” the Central Committee Secretary Józef Czyrek announces that in the approaching elections to the Sejm, the authorities, together with the “constructive opposition” will form a joint election platform. He envisages that the opposition may win 30-40 per cent of the parliamentary seats.

**30th January**

— In Białystok the body of a 31-year old priest, Stanisław Suchowolec, is found. Father Suchowolec was involved with the opposition movement (earlier, the priest had been attacked several times by “unknown attackers” and his car had been damaged on several occasions).

**February**

— A Note from the Party Department of Trade of the Central Committee states: *“New legal regulations [...] have caused a great deal of interest, too, in the Provincial Committees, which in their eagerness to gain additional funds for the Party, are coming up with a variety of proposals to further this end [...]. These initiatives most frequently involve: bringing legal entities into co-operatives; setting up limited companies; buying into companies through the purchase of shares; placing capital in commercial banks; the purchase of securities; setting up a variety of service-production activities in specially designated factories.”* In its conclusion, the Department proposes the acceptance of this initiative, *“while bowing to the principle that these activities should be run exclusively within the state-run sector”.*

### 1st February

— Wojciech Jaruzelski, during his one-day visit to Prague, in a conversation with Milos Jakes, the Secretary General of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, declares: *“The success of the Round Table is not a forerun conclusion. However, responsibility for its lack of success should not fall on us. [...] Having full regard for its threatening presence and the various political orientations of the opposition, the object of the game is for [the opposition] to be swallowed up by our system, to play its part in re-forming our system. This is a huge historical experiment, which — if it works — will have consequences reaching far outside Poland.”*

### 4th February

— In Warsaw the III Congress of the KPN opens. After a few hours it is interrupted by the militia. *“The discussions and decisions of the Congress,”* recalls Leszek Moczulski, *“were to be a form of pressure on the parties to the Round Table, they were not, however, aimed against the very principle of the negotiations, which we had accepted as a necessary evil. We wanted the matter of the elections to be an integral point right from the start of the Round Table discussions, which at the start did not appear to be the case.”*

**Tadeusz Mazowiecki:** The Round Table carries an enormous risk for everyone, of that there is absolutely no doubt. But I still feel that there is no other way out for us and we have to take the risk, and put our cards on reaching an agreement. Of necessity, society will have to show a great deal of maturity, which will be difficult when it is so tired out.

But why be so pessimistic? Perhaps fortune will smile on us!

**Alojzy Pietrzyk:** I will put it simply. Most probably nothing will come of this: nothing good. I do not trust the authorities. They will not go for all out solutions. But the Round Table must take place, because without it there is no chance at all.

(comments from Paweł Smoleński's book *“Szermierze Okrągłego Stołu. Zwątpienia i nadzieje”* [Fencers of the Round Table. Doubts and Hopes] MOST, Warsaw 1989)

**Bronisław Geremek:** We had a vision of a national drama. We knew that the economy was disintegrating in a lightening fashion, so if we did not manage to quickly establish some sort of agreement, pact, understanding, we could awake to find ourselves among the debris of that would be left of Poland. Were we to treat Poland as a smallholding, then yes, it would have been better to wait until the farm manager had proved himself quite inadequate, had run everything down totally and then to take over the reins. But this was not about a smallholding, this concerned our Country. As far as I was concerned there was no doubt at all whether we should negotiate, although I was fully aware of the inherent risks.

(from the book: “Geremek relates, Żakowski enquires. The Year 1989”, Warsaw 1990)

### 5th February

— The leadership of the Polish Freedom Party (formed in 1985) issues a declaration criticising the negotiations with the authorities: *“We declare that the independent Polish forces which sit down jointly with those who are guilty of the crime of martial law are unwittingly giving support to the rule of the communist PZPR”.*

### 6th February

— In the Namiestnikowski Palace (headquarters of the Council of Ministers) in Warsaw, the Round Table talks commence. They take place in three main working groups: economy and social policy (chaired by Władysław Baka from the government coalition and Witold Trzeciakowski of “Solidarity”), political reform (Janusz Reykowski and Bronisław Geremek) and union pluralism (Aleksander Kwaśniewski, Tadeusz Mazowiecki and Romuald Sosnowski representing OPZZ). Sub-groups are set up: agriculture, mining, law reform and reform of the judicial system, associations, local authorities, youth, mass media, science, education and technology, health and ecology. (In this marathon of negotiation, 452 people will take part).

### 9th February

— In Poznań about a thousand people demonstrate, carrying the banners of the



General Czesław Kiszczak, Father Alojzy Orszulik, Lech Wałęsa.  
Photo: Erazm Ciolek



Andrzej Wielowieyski, Jacek Kuroń.  
Photo: Grzegorz Rogiński / PAI-EXPO



Stanisław Ciosek, General Kiszczak.  
Photo: Erazm Ciolek



Tadeusz Mazowiecki, Lech Wałęsa, Władysław Frasyniuk,  
Zbigniew Bujak. Photo: Grzegorz Rogiński / PAI-EXPO

Independent Students Union, the KPN and “Solidarność Walcząca” [Militant Solidarity]. The militia does not intervene.

— During a visit in Kraków, Lech Wałęsa states: *“I declare that — if the KPN were to come to power, I would flee the country”*.

#### **12th February**

— An interview with Lech Wałęsa in the Soviet weekly “Novoje Vriemnia”.

#### **16th February**

— Discussion during a sitting of the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the PZPR about the Round Table and the pre-election campaign. *“Comrade Czesław Kiszczak: For us the most important thing is to win the election, and not the manner in which we do so. We cannot lose power through a voting card. We are putting on our own noose, going like lambs to the slaughter, we are washing dirty linen from decades back, participating in masochism like nobody’s business. [...] Why do we not remind the opposition of their transgressions, crimes — there is plenty to speak of. There is proof. They call us ‘Stalinists’. Why then do we not remind all the Woroszylskis, the Mazowieckis, the Drozdowskis of their paeans to Stalin. Today’s die hard democrats, liberals were fanatical supporters of Stalin.”* Comrade K. Cypryński: *“The Round Table has put in motion processes which we can no longer stop. All that is left to us is to control them and to steer them.”*

#### **17th February**

— Student demonstrations on the occasion of the eighth anniversary of the registration

of the Independent Students Union: in Białystok, Gdańsk, Poznań, Warsaw and — the most dramatic in Kraków (here for two hours the Minister for Education, Jacek Fisiak, is held prisoner by students in a school building).

### 18th February

— In a villa belonging to the Council of Ministers at Parkowa Street in Warsaw, a meeting of representatives of the authorities takes place (Rakowski, Czyrek, Ciosek, Barciowski) with representatives of the Church (Cardinal Macharski, Archbishop Stroba, Father Orszulik. Father Orszulik notes down the discussion: *“Rakowski: The atmosphere of the people is bad. Wages are rising faster than prices. There are no goods in the shops. Everything is being bought out. In the house where he lives, prominent party and government officials past and present live. A few days ago one of them moved out. Rakowski watched with his own eyes as two large unemptied fridges were brought down in the lift. It is obvious that panic and investment of money in goods has affected even Party members.”* — *“Father Orszulik: By taking part in the elections we are agreeing to a one-step division of power. We are faced with a squaring of the circle. How to run free election while at the same time guaranteeing 60% of the votes to the ruling party?”* — *“Czyrek: The biggest danger might be that public opinion will lose faith in the success of the Round Table. We will have wasted people’s enthusiasm. We already have alarm signals. [...] An end to talk of history. Let all sides talk to each other. Yesterday’s performance by Mrs Łuczywo, who shouted that we need a free and independent Poland, was dangerous. Poland has never been as free before as it is today. We should pick out that which unites us and not that which divides us.”*

### 21st February

— Students in Warsaw and Kraków demonstrate in defence of the imprisoned Vaclav Havel.

### 23rd February

— In Kraków, on the anniversary of the founding of the Red Army, the students organise a “happening”. Dressed in Red Army uniforms and chanting: *“The Red Army will defeat the bourgeois”*, they march from the Collegium Novum to the Main Market Square, carrying a huge portrait of Gorbachev over-painted with a shooting target. The event concludes on Freedom Square — with yoghurt and buttermilk cups being hurled at the memorial of thanksgiving to the Red Army.

### 24th February

— A law is passed “Concerning certain aspects of consolidation of the national economy”, which opens the way for private persons to take over state-owned property, through leases, rent or as shares in a joint private-state run company.

— In Kraków there are further street disturbances when the militia prevents marching students from demonstrating outside the headquarters of the city council. The under-



Kraków. Street “happening” entitled “The Red Army with us from childhood”. Photo: Andrzej Stawiarski

ground publication “Przegląd Akademicki” [Academic Review] describes the events: *“The reaction to the ZOMO charge was only marginally marked by fear. Stones and planks were thrown. Counteraction was immediate. The militia used water cannon and tear gas. Flares were shot into the crowd”*. During the clashes 74 members of the Civil Militia were hurt as well as an unconfirmed number of demonstrators.

### 2nd March

— A secret meeting on the premises of the Ministry of the Interior in Magdalenka with the participation of Czesław Kiszczak and Lech Wałęsa; its aim is to break the impasse in the Round Table talks. The main subject in contention is the division of mandates in the future Sejm, presidential privileges, the reform of the judicial system and the registration of the Independent Students’ Union. During the meeting Aleksander Kwaśniewski proposes that the elections to the soon to be appointed Senat be entirely free. A total of 42 people take part in the secret meetings, held outside the official structures of the Round Table — in Magdalenka and in the palace of the Council of Ministers. On the coalition side, the main roles are played by Stanisław Ciosek, Andrzej Gdula, Czesław Kiszczak, Aleksander Kwaśniewski and Janusz Reykowski, whilst on the “Solidarity” side, apart from Wałęsa — by Zbigniew Bujak, Władysław Frasyniuk, Bronisław Gerekme, Lech Kaczyński, Jacek Kuroń, Tadeusz Mazowiecki and Adam Michnik. Representatives of the Church also take part: Bishop Tadeusz Gocłowski and Father Alojzy Orszulik.

### 4th March

— In the Namiestnikowski Palace, the joint chairman of the working groups of the Round Table and a few members of the political staff of both sides attempt once again, without success, to a compromise in the matter of detailed changes in the constitution and election procedure. Stanisław Ciosek: *“On the negative side is the fact that elections to the Senat will prove too effective a background to the elections to the Sejm. On the positive side is the effect this will have in world opinion, important for Poland’s prestige. Our realistic statement of division of power within the Senat — we anticipate that about 50% of the senators will represent PRON. In the small provinces you will not win, in the large ones — yes. We do not want a monoculture, we want the Senat to be pluralistic.”* Adam Michnik: *“Let us not search for methods of battle but rather methods of co-operation. This is not an armed raid. We don’t want power.”*

— In Jastrzębie representatives of the KPN, PPS–Rewolucja Demokratyczna [Polish Socialist Party–Democratic Revolution], “Solidarność Walcząca”, “Wolność i Pokój” Movement, as well as opponents of Wałęsa from “Solidarity” take part in an Anti-Regime Opposition Congress. The Security For-



March 1989, Kraków. “Pilgrimage of Atonement”.  
Photo: Andrzej Stawiarski



ces (SB) arrest over 120 participants, but the organisers manage to issue a statement that their aim *“is to get rid of the monopoly of power of the PZPR and to introduce full political and economic democracy, and free elections.”* The participants in the Congress are strongly critical of the Round Table.

### **7th March**

— A further meeting in Magdalenka. Discussions on the subject of the shape of the electoral system and future relations between the houses of parliament and the president. A member of the Politburo, Professor Janusz Reykowski demands that the Solidarity team condemn the action of the Kraków students: *“It cannot be discounted that the events in Kraków were at somebody’s behest and in somebody’s interest. These are the processes which we were jointly dreading. However, it has taken place and the consequences are far-reaching. The degree to which the Independent Students’ Union was drawn into this affair has gone far beyond the bounds of acceptability. Two matters are of grave import here — the desecration of Gorbachev’s portrait and the matter of the imprisonment of Minister Fisiak. This latter has grave overtones. That is why you must make a gesture on your part to disclaim these incidents.”*

### **15th March**

— A new currency law comes into force, legalising hard currency transactions.

### **18th–19th March**

— III Conference of NSZZ Single Farmers “Solidarity” is held in Warsaw. Its delegates express their support for the Round Table talks.

### **22nd March**

— At a press conference the spokesman of the National Executive Committee of NSZZ “Solidarity”, Janusz Onyszkiewicz announces that the opposition side has received the consent of the authorities to a weekly half-hour programme on television and radio.

### **29th March**

— In Magdalenka the discussion continues around the subject of the changes in the regime and the working principles of the so-called Consultative Committee, which is to oversee the execution of the decisions taken at the Round Table. An extract from the discussion, noted by Krzysztof Dubiński, Secretary to General Kiszczak: *“A. Kwaśniewski: Let’s leave the unfinished items to the Consultative Committee. Let us not lose hope. Let’s discuss the finale of the Round Table. L. Wałęsa: You would be right if we’d said we were putting the elections off till autumn. [...] C. Kiszczak: Most of our side is in favour of that. S. Ciosek: Moving the date of the elections is realistic. T. Mazowiecki: Of course, that would mean working in a different political environment. C. Kiszczak: Entirely different, I believe.”*

### **2nd April**

— A demonstration in Poznań against the building of an atomic power station in Klem-picz. This time the ZOMO forces intervene in a particularly brutal manner, beating hundreds of people, many of them are taken to hospital.

### **3rd April**

— Working party negotiations in Magdalenka under the chairmanship of Lech Wałęsa and Czesław Kiszczak. A serious crisis looms caused by the attitude of the directors of the OPZZ, which discards the principles of index linking of wages, approved by the authorities and by “Solidarity”. A compromise is finally reached on the matter of the range of presidential powers, the relationship between the Sejm and the Senat and the division of mandates in the coming Sejm. 299 mandates (65%) are guaranteed from the outset to members of the PZPR, ZSL, SD and three pro-government Catholic organisa-



20th April 1989, Warsaw. Student demonstration in Plac Defilad. *Photo: Teodor Walczak / ADM/CAF*

tions (PAX, PZKS and UChS). All candidates, without regard for their political affiliations may fight for the remaining 35% (161 mandates).

#### **5th April**

— The end of the Round Table talks. The final, ceremonious sitting is marred by Alfred Miodowicz, who demands that he be allowed to speak, as the third speaker — straight after Czesław Kiszczak and Lech Wałęsa.

#### **6th April**

— According to the statement of the spokesman for the Soviet Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the authorities in the USSR are observing the course of the political negotiations in Poland with interest and sympathy.

#### **7th April**

— The Sejm passes a law making changes to the constitution of the Polish People's Republic, in accordance with the decisions taken at the Round Table and also a new, liberal "Law on Associations".

— The National Executive Committee of NSZZ "Solidarity" entrusts the running of the election campaign to the Citizens' Committee, whose structure is amended to include regional committees. This meets with sharp criticism from some followers of "Solidarity", who believe that the Citizens' Committee is not sufficiently representative to act on behalf of the whole of the opposition.

— A "White March" in Poznań organised by the Independent Students' Union of the Medical Academy and the health service branch of "Solidarity". One of its mottoes: "More doctors — less dignitaries".

#### **8th April**

— A sitting of the Citizens' Committee. Aleksander Hall, Adam Strzembosz, Tadeusz Mazowiecki and Jan Olszewski put forward a proposition to widen the membership of the Citizens' Committee. However, the majority of members of the Committee share the stance of Bronisław Geremek, Jacek Kuroń and Wałęsa himself, believing that maintaining the unity of the movement is of paramount importance, whilst attempts to widen the "Solidarity" camp can only contribute to its downfall and to election defeat. In the event, votes cast in favour of the formula proposed by the National Executive Committee number 66, 19 support the proposal to build a wider coalition and 13 abstain from voting.

#### **13th April**

— The Council of Ministers sets the dates of elections to parliament (4th and 18th June), and it sets up a 21-man State Election Committee, which includes six representatives from the Citizens' Committee. (Approximately 23% of the membership of the district election committees, set up in April, will fall to "Solidarity").

#### **16th April**

— During yet another Sunday demonstration in Gdańsk, taking place after mass in the Church of St. Brygida, several hundred people clash with a militia cordon, surrounding the Provincial headquarters of the PZPR.

#### **17th April**

— The Provincial Court in Warsaw registers NSZZ "Solidarity".

#### **18th April**

— At a meeting between Wałęsa and General Kiszczak a Consultative Committee is set up, whose duty will be the supervision of the agreements made at the Round Table. The same day Wałęsa meets with General Jaruzelski in the Sejm building. Television shows the two politicians greeting each other — Jaruzelski: "*Mountain meets mountain...*",

Wałęsa: *“This time our ways must not part”*, Jaruzelski: *“All for the good of Poland.”*

— The Politburo of the Central Committee of the PZPR discusses the pre-election campaign.

Mieczysław Rakowski recalled: *“Summing up the discussion, Jaruzelski stated that there is mounting anxiety as to the outcome of the elections. He stressed that there was no atmosphere of threat, nor will to fight in the Party. He was not wrong.”*

### 19th–22nd April

— Lech Wałęsa visits Italy, where he is received by the Pope.

### 20th April

— The Provincial court in Warsaw registers the Single Farmers NSZZ “Solidarity”.

### 23rd April

— The Citizens’ Committee, enlarged by the addition of regional committees, accepts the list of candidates for members of parliament and senators and accepts the election programme. The list is supported by 92 members of the meeting, one is against and nine abstain from voting.

### 25th April

— The ZOMO militia breaks up a pre-election gathering organised by the KPN in Warsaw.

### 28th April

— Polish Radio transmits the first broadcast by the Citizens’ Committee of “Solidarity”.

### 29th April

— A meeting of parliamentary candidates and candidates to the Senate, standing for the Citizens’ Committee, with Lech Wałęsa. Photographs of each of the candidates with the chairman of “Solidarity” will be used on election posters (which will prove one of the most successful propaganda moves by the opposition).

### 1st May

— Clashes with the militia on the occasion of independent May Day celebrations in Gdańsk and Wrocław.

### 1st–2nd May

— 234th Plenary Conference of the Council of Polish Bishops in Częstochowa. In a communiqué issued at the end of the proceedings, the Bishops urge Catholics to take part in the elections, as they will *“form a vital step on the road to recognition of the rights of the individual in society and to ending the one leader monopoly”*. Despite some local conflicts (e.g. in Radom), the majority of the clergy gives decided support to “So-

### The KPN Electoral Campaign

For the first time in half a century, Poles had achieved the right to elect 161 members of parliament and 100 senators to the Senat. [...]

The Confederation of an Independent Poland decided to nominate its own candidates to the Sejm and the Senat. We believe that, alongside the representatives of a constructive opposition, seeking an understanding with the authorities, there should be representatives in the Sejm and Senat of an opposition movement whose aim is independence and who steadfastly stand against the system which has been forced upon us, and against the martial law team, which has brought about our country total downfall. [...]

“Gazeta Polska”. Journal of the Confederation of an Independent Poland, no. 55/7, 30th April 1989

### KO (Citizens’ Committee) “Solidarity”

The “Solidarity” Citizens’ Committee is aware that some opposition political groups are putting forward their own candidates for members of parliament and senators, independently of our Committee – with their own election programme.

It is their right to do so, a right we fought for at the Round Table. We declare that we will oppose any attempt to violate this right. We particularly draw the attention of our representatives in the election commissions to this fact.

We would hope that competition for mandates will be a battle between programmes, fought with due personal and political honour, to the mutual good of our country.

“Gazeta Polska”, no. 55/7, 30th April 1989



Lech Wałęsa with: Adam Michnik; Zbigniew Romaszewski; Jacek Kuroń; Zofia Kuratowska; Andrzej Szczepkowski; Henryk Wujec; Mieczysław Gil and Jan Rokita; Piotr M. Polmański, Adam Michnik and Janusz Onyszkiewicz. *Photo: Erazm Ciołek*

lidity” and its candidates.

**4th May**

— During a meeting with students in Gdańsk, Adam Michnik says: *“I must admit that I was mistaken in thinking that Jaruzelski’s departure is essential to the carrying out of reforms in the country. It appears that the General was open to change, managed to reach a compromise, threw aside the politics of constant confrontation, conflicts and repression. All of which merits respect”*.

**4th–5th May**

— The National Conference of Delegates at the X Conference of the PZPR in Warsaw supports the politics of the leadership following the X Plenary Session of the Central Committee of the PZPR, and passes a motion on the necessity of removing the “last traces of Stalinism”.

**8th May**

— First edition of the “Gazeta Wyborcza” [Election Gazette], with a print run of 150,000.

**9th May**

— In the Citizens’ Committee premises in Słupsk, a listening device is discovered.  
— First pre-election television broadcast by “Solidarity”.

**11th May**

— Lech Wałęsa calls on people to desist from strike action and urges them to take part in the approaching parliamentary elections.

**12th May**

— An announcement is made that Wojciech Jaruzelski will stand as candidate for the presidency of the Polish People’s Republic.

**16th–18th May**

— In Kraków, demonstrations organised by the so-called Krakow Group (composed of young radicals from the NZS, KPN and Federation of Militant Youth, as well as the anarchistic Student Action WiP) lead to violent clashes in the streets. The Consulate of the USSR is temporarily blocked and the words “Soviets go home” appears on the building. The most violent clashes take place outside the Kraków PZPR Committee headquarters, which are guarded by the militia, and outside the Convent of the Dominican Sisters. This is the first instance under the new political system of demonstrations calling for the removal of Soviet forces from Polish territories.

**17th May**

— The Sejm passes two laws regulating the matter of religion: “Law on guarantees for freedom of conscience and faith”, and “Law on the relationship between the State and the Catholic Church”. This latter law gives the Church and its institutions the status of a legal entity and guarantees the right to form church and Catholic institutions. The Church can have its own printing presses, radio and television channels, cinemas, theatres and film making facilities; additionally, it is allowed tax and customs relief. The return of Church real estate property confiscated by the state authorities is to take place.

**Extract from**

**M. F. Rakowski’s diary:**

18th May — The pre-election battle is hotting up. The Opposition, together with the “Gazeta Wyborcza” edited by Michnik, is becoming steadily more aggressive, more demagogic. In the field, they attack us without any scruples. In effect we are facing a battle for power. And what about the Party? The Party continues to be on the defensive. Today there is no doubt at all that it is not prepared for a battle.



15th May 1989, Lech Wałęsa meets farmers in Raclawice. Photo: Maciej Sochor / ADM/CAF

### 19th May

— Second sitting of the Consultative Committee with the participation of Czesław Kiszczak and Lech Wałęsa. The discussion is dominated by aspersions cast by both sides regarding the manner of the election campaign. Jacek Kuroń: *“It must be said that the heightened tension was brought about in great measure by the campaign of tearing down of posters, which was a mistake on the part of the Party-Government coalition. We have here the names of 22 provinces, where this action of tearing down posters was carried out; Warsaw does not figure on the list, yet many caretakers in the Żoliborz district say to me ‘Master Jacek, [...] I am very sorry, really I am, I’m the one tearing down the posters, in other words, he has received official instructions.’ Stanisław Ciosek: “I am appalled, I must say, by what our partners are doing [...] throughout their election campaign. [...] In a word, you have crossed the boundaries of decency in your election activities, that is an unfair game. And the motto ‘vote for our people and damn the others’ is unacceptable. This is confrontation.”*

### 22nd May

— Wojciech Jaruzelski on a one-day visit to Berlin. In discussions with the Secretary General of the Central Committee of the German Socialist Unity Party, Erich Honecker, he states: *“Currently, we have a sharp pre-election battle. This is a great political school. It is difficult to foresee the precise outcome of these elections. We have left ourselves a guarantee — 65%, 35% independent and that is where our battle for the independents is being fought with “Solidarity”. We hope to make some gains. The election to the Senat is being run on different lines, but the Senat carries far less weight than the Sejm. But*

*even here we are having to fight to maintain a hold. Mainly for politico-psychological reasons. [...] The situation in the army and in the security forces is good. And the opposition is aware of this”.*

**23rd May**

— The Provincial Court in Warsaw refuses to register the Independent Students’ Union. This causes a wave of protests and short-term strikes in many universities. (It will not be until 22nd September that the Court will change its decision and register the NZS).

**30th May**

— the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the PZPR debates the subject of the weak pre-election campaign of the coalition. *“Comrade M. Lubczyński — Why, as a candidate for senator, standing a good chance, is he not promoted by the central propaganda media. Why are candidates who have little chance promoted by the media? Comrade J. Urban explained that Television promotes those who are on the list. It cannot, however, promote everybody. Comrade W. Jaruzelski ordered that enquiries should be made why some candidates are not being promoted”.*

**31st May**

— The “Tygodnik Solidarność” [Solidarity Weekly] appears once again. Tadeusz Mazowiecki is once more, as in previous years, its editor-in-chief.

**4th June**

— In the first round of the parliamentary elections 62% of those entitled to vote take part. Candidates from the Citizens’ Committee gain 160 of the 161 allocated places in the Sejm, with 92 mandates in the Senat, and the 8 people who did not have the requisite number of votes, go forward to the second round. The coalition does not win a single seat in the Senat, whilst the required number of votes in the elections to the Sejm are won by only three coalition candidates, and these they owe to unofficial backing from “Solidarity”. The remaining 296 coalition mandates will not be allocated until the second

“Gazeta Polska”. Journal of the Confederation of an Independent Poland, no. 57/9, 13th May 1989:

**Declaration**

A boycott is senseless  
Vote “no” to the Communists!

An openly undemocratic election procedure provokes a quite natural and understandable desire to boycott the elections. The evocation of this type of reaction was fully intentional, and aimed at grabbing power by making maximum mileage out of a considerable apathy at the polls. For this reason, boycott of the elections, quite irrespective of the intention of those calling for such a boycott or bowing to it — is the fulfilment of the intentions of the Communists. A boycott would spell support for the PZPR and its allies.

These undemocratic elections can, however, be turned into a referendum against the power of the Communists and, at the same time, ensure that at least some of the mandates go to independent members of parliament and senators. Even in these elections we can already initiate the process of breakthrough into independence and democracy. [...]

“Solidarność Walcząca”. Weekly journal of Poznań Branch of “Solidarność Walcząca”, no. 19/130, 29th May – 4th June 1989:

**Declaration**

We consider that opposition to Communism can most effectively be expressed through a boycott of the coming elections. Refusal to take part in this electoral farce, agreed at the Round Table talks, is the only correct way to react for those who do not intend to stop at this watered down communism and want to advance further — towards a democratic and independent Poland. Our appeal not to participate in the voting is aimed above all at young people. Don’t start out your adult life by participating in undemocratic elections.

These elections cannot be won! The PZPR has an assured majority and Jaruzelski will be president. We will vote neither for Jaruzelski, nor for the Party.

on behalf of Solidarność Walcząca,  
Poznań Branch  
Stefan Bobrowski

Poznań, 21st May 1989





June 1989, Gdańsk. Photo: Jan Bogacz / PAI-EXPO

round. The most painful matter for the authorities is the lack of success with the national list, which includes most of the leaders of the parties forming the coalition. Of the 35 names on the list, only two (Mikołaj Kozakiewicz and Adam Zieliński) receive over 50% of the votes; in view of the statutory election procedure, this means that 33 parliamentary seats will not be filled.

#### 5th June

— Minutes of the extended meeting of the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the PZPR: *“Comrade Kiszczak — the results of the elections have surpassed the hopes of the opposition. They have shocked it and it does not know how to react. The elections to the Senat are an utter defeat for us.” “Comrade A. Kwaśniewski stressed that the most important matter following the elections is not to allow spontaneous demonstrations, over which neither of the sides will have any sway. The opposition fears this, too. We must co-ordinate with “Solidarity” to ensure that public appearances are muted, without trumpeting their triumph.” — “Comrade A. Gdula: — there’s not much we can do with the national list. We cannot annul the elections. It is possible for the new Sejm to bring in amendments to the voting procedure and fresh elections, or even a declaration that the Sejm has 425 seats. It is worth looking into possibly changing the number of mandates on the basis of an agreement between the parties.” — “Comrade S. Ciosek: — I don’t understand the reasons for the defeat. The Party must pay for it, it was not behind us. This is a bitter lesson. Those responsible must bear the consequences. Now the most important matter is the election of a president, for which 35 mandates are needed — and these are lost to us. Now we must discuss this with the opposition because the president is the safety lock on the whole system, it is not just our internal affair, it is a matter for the whole of the socialist community, even Europe. [...] The fault is ours. We trusted the Church and they proved canny as Jesuits. They overestimated our capabilities and we proved that we had not a leg to stand on.”*

— Janusz Onyszkiewicz declares that the “Solidarity” had rejected an offer to participate in the membership of the new government. At the same time Bronisław Geremek



May 1989, Warsaw. Election campaign. Photo: Zbigniew Matuszewski / ADM/CAF

declares willingness to accept relevant changes to the election procedure which would enable the government-coalition side to raise the level of their mandate to 65 per cent.

#### **6th June**

— Geremek and Mazowiecki meet with Kiszczak, Ciosek and Gdula. *“The government party — recalls Geremek, — was very categorical, sharp and aggressive. They asked us outright whether we want to take over power, whether changes had arisen in our manner of thinking.”* When Geremek protested, he heard that the authorities *“[...] find themselves under severe pressure to annul the elections and that, in the opinion of some members of the Party leadership, the crushing defeat of the national list is an attack on the political contract, and conclusions must, therefore, be drawn. [...] We realised that this line of thought is very strong in the Party, and that we must not further strengthen it by a lack of flexibility on our part.”*

#### **8th June**

— At a meeting of the Consultative Committee the coalition and “Solidarity” reach an understanding in the matter of electoral procedure, ensuring that 33 mandates on the national list go to candidates of the ruling coalition.

#### **9th June**

— During a meeting with General Kiszczak, Adam Michnik suggests — in the name of Lech Wałęsa — that the Prime Minister of the new government should be a member of the opposition. In this context he suggests Bronisław Geremek.

— Minutes of the meeting of the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the PZPR: *“Comrade Czesław Kiszczak informed us that our legal advisors (Professor A. Kłafkowski and Professor A. Łopatka) have not agreed to look for means of solving the conflict arising out of the national list within the confines of the law, whereas the Citizens’ Committee of “Solidarity” has forced its lawyers to come up with an interpretation of the law, and thus made it possible to turn to the Council of Ministers for approval of a suitable decree.”* — *“Comrade S. Ciosek mentioned Michnik’s visit to PRON, and his*



9th–10th June 1989, Wrocław. Following the Tiananmen Square massacre in Peking on 4th June. Photo: Henryk Prykiel / NAF dementi

#### 10th June

— Archbishop Bronisław Dąbrowski speaks with General Kiszczak, who states that if General Jaruzelski “[...] were not to be elected president, then we are at threat from further destabilisation and this would herald the end of the whole process of political change. No other president would find such credibility in the ranks of the special services and the military.”

#### 11th June

— The government spokesman, Jerzy Urban, declares that on the basis of the Round Table agreements, General Wojciech Jaruzelski is to become the President of the Polish People’s Republic. The “Solidarity” side protests and denies that such an agreement had taken place.



Photo: Henryk Prykiel / NAF dementi

*suggestion that they might look to supporting us in the second round. There is but one question — should we accept? What reaction will this cause? In view of the talks between Comrade Kiszczak and Michnik, are we right in thinking that in exchange for our president they want their own prime minister?” — “Comrade Czesław Kiszczak — [...] Michnik did not disguise the fact that they fear extreme situations. Until they stand firmly on their own feet, they will not go for confrontation. They have just declared that they are not interested in government positions, that they are for a parliamentary coalition. Yet now they speak of the office of prime minister.”*

#### 12th June

— the Council of Ministers issues a decree amending the electoral procedure — 33 mandates from the national list will be passed on to the district organisations. As most of the candidates on the national list preferred to avoid the humiliation of a further vote, the decree states that only new candidates can be put forward for seats in the Sejm. As a result of this, key activists of the PZPR, ZSL and SD are finally eliminated from the Sejm.

**13th June**

— Further meeting between Archbishop Dąbrowski and General Kiszczak. Asked whether a coup on the part of the hard-liners is possible, the Minister replied that “[...] *it would be sufficient to remove myself and General Siwicki from government. That is why a swift stabilisation of power after the second round of the elections is essential, and particularly the choice of president. Should General Jaruzelski not become president, then the situation would become dramatic.*”

**16th June**

— Minutes of the meeting of the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the PZPR: “Comrade M.F. Rakowski asked the Secretariat of the Central Committee to clarify its stance on the matter of the office of prime minister. Can this be someone from outside the PZPR? [...] He confessed that, personally, he does not see such a possibility, since for the PZPR to hand over the office of the prime minister is to hand over power, forcing the Party over to the opposition.” — “Replies to Comrade Rakowski’s questions: Comrade W. Jaruzelski discounted such a possibility. Comrade B. Kołodziejczak — this would cause the destruction of the whole state system. Comrade Z. Michalek shared the above opinions. Comrade J. Czyrek did not exclude such a possibility in the future. He admitted that in the present circumstances the prime minister should be someone from the ruling coalition. Comrade W. Baka declared that this problem should be thought out and considered in detail. [...] we must look at the possible permutations: — a coalition government, with which the opposition would co-operate (optimal answer); a government in its present form, which would force us to fresh elections within a matter of months; a professional government; a government with a prime minister from the ranks of the opposition. These are the options we must consider, and not assume one from which we will then have to beat a hasty retreat. [...] Comrade M.F. Rakowski: This is our chance to demonstrate that we are not submissive. We must not assume a defeatist position, which will lead to our losing the battle and along with us those thousands, even millions, of people, who have put their trust in us. I am against any form of compromise.”

**18th June**

— In the second round of the elections, only 25.5 % of those entitled to vote do so. “Solidarity” wins the sole parliamentary mandate still due to it, as well as 7 out of the 8 mandates to the Senat. (Piotr



June 1989, Kraków. Photo: Jerzy Ochoński / PAI-EXPO



30th June 1989, Warsaw. Students march in protest against the candidature of General Jaruzelski for the office of president.  
*Photo: Erazm Ciolek (above); Krzysztof Miller / Agencja GAZETA (below)*



Baumgart, standing in the province of Piła, loses — he is the only candidate put forward by the Citizens' Committee not to have appeared on a poster with Lech Wałęsa. He loses to Henryk Stokłosa, an independent candidate.)

**21st June**

— At a demonstration in Kraków, demands are made for the resignation of Jaruzelski and the removal of Soviet troops from Poland.

**23rd June**

— The formation of the Citizens' Parliamentary Party [Obywatelski Klub Parlamentarny], under the leadership of Bronisław Geremek. A decision is taken not to put forward a candidate for the office of president.

**25th June**

— A conference of independent peasant activists in Warsaw reactivates the Polish Peasants Party [Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe]; Józef Teliga becomes the leader of the Temporary National Council of PSL.

**30th June**

— Radical anti-Communist organisations (including LDPN “Niepodległość”, “Solidarność Walcząca”, Federacja Młodzieży Walczącej and Ruch Społeczeństwa Alternatywnego) organise a demonstration in Warsaw under the banner “Jaruzelski must go”. A similar demonstration takes place in Katowice.

— During the first part of the XIII Plenum of the Central Committee of the PZPR, General Jaruzelski declares that he will not stand for the office of president and puts forward General Kiszczak. However, the members of the Central Committee turn to Jaruzelski in their closing motion, asking him to “*rethink his decision in this matter*”.

**1st July**

— During a meeting with the members of the OKP [Citizens' Parliamentary Party], Lech Wałęsa concludes that General Kiszczak's candidature for the office of president would be acceptable.

**2nd July**

— In an interview for “Trybuna Ludu”, the President of the USA, George Bush, calls on the USSR to withdraw its troops from Polish territory.

**3rd July**

— In Warsaw the ZOMO militia disperse yet another demonstration against Jaruzelski, organised this time by the KPN.

— “Gazeta Wyborcza” publishes an article written by Adam Michnik, entitled “*Your President, Our Prime Minister*”, in which he suggests “*an alliance of the democratic opposition with the reform wing of the government camp*”, which would give a basis for an “*on the strength of which the president would be the chosen candidate of the PZPR, whilst the office of prime minister and responsibility for choice of cabinet would be entrusted to a “Solidarity” candidate.*”

— During a visit to Paris, Vadim Zagladin, advisor to Michail Gorbachev, answers questions regarding Moscow's attitude to the possibility of a Solidarity government in Poland: “*This is an internal for our friends. We will maintain relations with any government which is chosen in Poland.*”

— Minutes of the meeting of the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the PZPR: “*Comrade Czesław Kiszczak mentioned [...] the worrying signals he is getting regarding the behaviour of some of our highly placed comrades. They hold meetings with younger officers of the Ministry of the Interior, become friendly with them and, at the same time, make detailed enquiries into the way things stand at the Ministry, what the*



3rd July 1989, Warsaw. KPN march on its way to the Sejm. *Photo: Erazm Ciolek*



3rd July 1989, Warsaw. The militia blocks the KPN march. *Photo: Erazm Ciolek*

*Ministry of the Interior thinks of the leadership of the Party and of the government, whether it is envisaged that the PZPR might be disbanded and a new socialist party, or even several different parties might be formed, whether the Ministry of the Interior is for the General, or against. During the course of these discussions several members of the leadership have had fun poked at them in a quite unacceptable manner.”*

**4th July**

— Both houses of parliament gather for the first time. Michał Kozakiewicz, of the ZSL, becomes the Speaker of the Sejm, whilst Andrzej Stelmachowski of the OKP becomes Speaker of the Senat.

— Meeting between Czesław Kiszczak, Lech Wałęsa and Father Alojzy Orszulik in the Ministry of the Interior’s villa in Warsaw (at Zawrat Street). The Minister of the Interior demands the support of the OKP for his candidature to the office of president. Wałęsa declares: *“I want you to be chosen. I believe you will be chosen and you have my congratulations today.”* Asked whom he sees as Prime Minister, the leader of “Solidarity” answers: *“[...] if the coalition is forming the government, then “Solidarity” will vote for Professor Baka. If the opposition were to form the government, then Professor Geremek would be Prime Minister”*.

**5th July**

— The militia disperses members of the KPN who have been picketing the Sejm building for two days, in protest at the candidatures for president of Jaruzelski and Kiszczak.



3rd July 1989, Warsaw. During the KPN demonstration. Photo: Wojciech Druszczyk



### **6th July**

— During a meeting with Father Orszulik, Stanisław Ciosek states: “*The USSR is giving out various signals that they are leaving Polish matters to the Poles themselves and that they will accept an opposition government.*” At the same time “*he expressed the fear that there was danger of a bloody coup d’état organised by the officer corps.*”

### **7th–8th July**

— During a conference of the leaders of the Warsaw Pact countries in Bucharest, the Secretary General of the KPZR (Soviet Communist Party), Mikhail Gorbachev, speaks of the necessity for “*respect for the independence of sister parties*” and excludes “*the possibility of aggression or threat of aggression*”.

### **10th–11th July**

— The President of the USA, George Bush, visits Poland. In one of his speeches, he gives his backing to the candidature of General Jaruzelski for the office of president.

### **11th July**

— The body of Father Sylwester Zych, a priest working with the opposition movement, is discovered in Krynica Morska.

### **14th July**

— In a declaration, Lech Wałęsa calls for a swift election of the head of state; in view of the “*internal and international situation of Poland*”, only someone representing the PZPR should become president.

### **17th July**

— Resumption of diplomatic relations between Poland and the Holy See.

### **18th July**

— General Jaruzelski changes his mind and agrees to run for the presidency.

### **19th July**

— Parliament elects the President of the Polish People’s Republic. The sole candidate is General Wojciech Jaruzelski. 544 members of parliament and senators take part in the voting. 270 of them support his candidature, 233 are against, 34 abstain and 7 spoil their ballot papers. General Jaruzelski is chosen by a majority of one vote (the required number of votes out of 537 possibles is 269); 6 members of parliament from the ZSL vote against, as do 4 from the SD and 1 from the PZPR, while 4 others (3 from the PSL, 1 from the PZPR) take no part in the voting. The choice of Jaruzelski is made possible thanks to a group of members from the OKP, who intentionally spoil their ballot papers, or abstain from voting.

### **25th July**

— During a meeting with General Jaruzelski, Lech Wałęsa rejects the President’s proposition that “Solidarity” take an active part in a “grand coalition” government, taking over the departments of industry, health, environment and building. He declares that “*the only sensible way out is to allow those forces which have the support of the majority of society to rule*”. The following day the OKP confirms the decision not to take an active part in the new government.

### **29th July**

— XIII Plenum of the Central Committee of the PZPR elects Mieczysław F. Rakowski as the new First Secretary of the Central Committee (171 votes for, 41 against). The decision is also taken of assigning General Czesław Kiszczak to the office of prime minister.

**1st August**

— A meeting of the members of ZSL and OKP. Bronisław Geremek informs them that “Solidarity” MPs will not support the candidature of Czesław Kiszczak to head the government. Wałęsa also speaks out against voting for Kiszczak.

— Rakowski’s departing government takes the decision to bring food prices into line with market forces. This causes dramatic price rises and hyperinflation.

**2nd August**

— The Sejm confirms the candidature of Czesław Kiszczak to the office of prime minister. 237 vote in support, against, however are 173 votes (including 5 from the PZPR, 21 from the ZSL and 3 from the SD).

**7th August**

— Wałęsa makes a declaration, recognising the monopolistic governments of the PZPR as the main source of the country’s crisis. He believes that Kiszczak’s intention to create a government is destructive *“emphasising society’s fear that in effect nothing has changed, that there is no hope for the future”*. *“The only political solution, — concludes Wałęsa — is to set up a Council of Ministers based on a coalition between “Solidarity”, the ZSL and the SD, which I intend to work on.”* However, this effectively paralyses the work undertaken by Kiszczak in forming a new government.

**9th August**

— The ZSL parliamentary party speaks out against continuance of a pact with the PZPR.

**10th August**

— Representatives of the ZSL parliamentary party meet with General Kiszczak, and then with Andrzej Wielowieyski and Jacek Kuroń, deputy leaders of the OKP. Talks take place, too, between the OKP and SD.

**12th August**

— The Deputy Minister of the Interior, General Zbigniew Pudysz, announces the closure of Department IV of the Ministry of the Interior, which deals with matters concerning the Church and religious affiliations.

**14th August**

— General Kiszczak resigns from the office of Prime Minister but nominates the leader of the ZSL, Roman Malinowski, as his successor. The aim of this is to paralyse the negotiations between the ZSL, SD and Jarosław Kaczyński, acting on behalf of Wałęsa.

**16th August**

— The ZSL parliamentary party gives its formal seal of approval to Wałęsa’s initiative and declares its readiness to form an alliance with “Solidarity”. The representatives of the SD express a similar view.

— Wałęsa gives an assurance that a government headed by a representative of “Solidarity” would honour Poland’s membership of the Warsaw Pact, along with its undertakings. He also declares that he himself does not intend to become Prime Minister.

**17th August**

— Lech Wałęsa meets with Roman Malinowski. Malinowski recalls: *“Wałęsa told us*



Wojciech Jaruzelski in the presidential box in the Sejm. Photo: Krzysztof Wójcik / FORUM



Roman Malinowski (ZSL), Lech Wałęsa, Jerzy Józwiak (SD) in Warsaw's Łazienki Palace.

*Photo: Krzysztof Miller / Agencja GAZETA*

*'I have three candidates: Geremek, Ku-ron and Mazowiecki, which one do you see as Prime Minister?' I replied that with due respect to the qualifications of the other candidates, Mazowiecki would be the best. [...] I proposed that we go to President Jaruzelski with one candidature — Mazowiecki's. To which Wałęsa replied 'I knew you'd favour Mazowiecki, all right we'll go to the President with his candidature''.* They then go to the Myśliwski Palace in the Łazienki where a formal alliance is set up with Jerzy Józwiak, the leader of the SD. They subsequently meet with President Jaruzelski, inform him officially of this new turn of events and put forward the candidature of Tadeusz Mazowiecki for the office of Prime Minister.

**Draft Political Declaration of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the PZPR, approx. 18 August 1989:**

[...] Parliamentary machinations and behind the scenes play-offs have little to do with the everyday lives of Poles. If the opposition has any sort of hidden agenda, then it should be revealed and serious discussion should be undertaken before the whole of society.

In the situation which has arisen in the last few days, the Politburo of the Central Committee calls on the PZPR members of parliament, all bodies and Party organisations, as well as all members of the Party and the whole of the state and economic administrative staff to mass round the leadership of the Party and to undertake mass, independent and decided battle against the threat of a sudden political change, which would threaten reforms in Poland and in other countries, endangering the unity and the sovereignty of Poland.

The Politburo gives its assurance that the Party will use every legal means to oppose the threat of a political coup, whose aim is to prevent the repair of socialism by overthrowing it.

(Confidential documents of the Politburo and Secretariat of the Central Committee. Final Year of Power 1988–1989...)

**19th August**

- President Jaruzelski asks Tadeusz Mazowiecki to form a government.
- In a letter to the Central Committee of the PZPR, the leadership of the Romanian Communist Party declares its readiness to come to the help of their communist friends. This initiative of Nicolai Ceausescu's is, however, totally ignored by the leaders of the other countries in the Soviet bloc.
- Declaration of the U.S. Government: despite the fact that a representative of "Solidarity" has been chosen to form the government, Poland cannot count on an immediate increase in aid for the economy.

**20th August**

- The press spokesman for the National Executive Committee of "Solidarity", Janusz Onyszkiewicz, in an interview for American television, states that there is no threat of a Soviet intervention in Poland, provided the situation does not destabilise.

**21st August**

— Mazowiecki speaks of the refusal of the demands made by the PZPR that the number of departments in the new government allotted to the Communists should be established even before the Sejm proceeds with approving him to the office of Prime Minister. At the same time he adds, however, that the representatives of the PZPR will also be given other ministries — apart from the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of the Interior.

**22nd August**

— At a meeting of the Central Committee of the PZPR *“it was decided that, in negotiations concerning the formation of a government and the position within it of the Polish United Workers Party, it is essential to, among others, propose that the PZPR is given six ministerial departments and the office of the deputy Prime Minister [...], — also to fight for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and to ensure maximum influence on management of the Radio and Television Council, — as well as to ensure the biggest possible share of the PZPR in running the central government departments (CKP, GUS, PAP etc.)”*.



Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki in the Sejm.  
Photo: Tadeusz Wierzejski / Agencja GAZETA

**24th August**

— The Sejm approves Tadeusz Mazowiecki as the leader of the Cabinet. He is supported by 378 members of Parliament from all the parties, only 4 are against, whilst 41 abstain from voting.

— In an interview for *“Izwiestia”*, Mazowiecki gives his assurance that *“Poland will loyally fulfil its duties as a member of the Warsaw Pact”*.

**25th August**

— During a meeting with a group of American senators, Tadeusz Mazowiecki makes an appeal for swift economic aid for Poland.

**27th August**

— The leadership of the PZPR exhorts those of its members who work in state administration and in public services, to loyalty to Prime Minister Mazowiecki.

**12th September**

— The Sejm approves the membership of the Cabinet put forward by Tadeusz Mazowiecki. Of the 24 members of the Cabinet, 12 come from *“Solidarity”*, four each from the ZSL and PZPR, three from the SD, and one — the Minister of Foreign Affairs — Krzysztof Skubiszewski — is an independent. 402 Members of Parliament vote in support of the government, 13 abstain. There are no votes against.

*Edited and compiled by Antoni Dudek  
Choice of boxed quotes — editorial staff.*

**Stasi report on talks between General Czesław Kiszczak and a General from the Ministry of State Security of the GDR, 15th September 1989:**

[...] The Party's lack of activity was to blame for the fact that the strikes were not broken and the situation not kept under control. Indeed, there was no Party involvement at all. The leadership of the Party was not adequately informed which is why in the lower echelons important matters were ignored, the Party organisations in factories were left to fend for themselves, as were their directors and everything was left to run on its own. This led to a situation where even members of the Party took part in the strikes, whilst the directors lost their jobs. The lack of a decided leadership of the Party and the passivity of the Party organisations gave rise to the threat that the whole situation would go out of control.

[...]

The next cardinal errors came during the run-up to the elections. No more stupid electoral procedure could have been undertaken than that which was first proposed and then accepted. The PZPR had no influence over anything right from the start and that is why thanks to these elections all was lost. As the whole of the PZPR, from its leadership down to the smallest organisational unit, had insufficient influence on the choice of candidates, the situation boiled down to — as Kiszczak said — “that we have unplanned babies in



December 1989, Warsaw. Photo: Anna B. Bohdziewicz

the Sejm”. Here, too, he sees reasons for the breakdown of the coalition. And consequently the PZPR has members of parliament, of whom it cannot be sure.

[...]

At the end of the talks, Kiszczak stressed that this state of things need not have occurred in Poland and he gave a further reason, namely lack of unity and discipline in the leadership of the Party and a paralysis throughout the Party organisations. The matter of unity and discipline is still the most crucial factor, as well as the mobilisation of all forces. He stressed that he himself is deeply engaged in re-building unity within the Party.

He also spoke of many fantastic ideas for reform of the Party, starting from a change of its name. In his opinion a change of its name would trigger the sudden eruption of three parties, which would be a threat to the survival of socialism in the Polish People's Republic. Comforting, however, is the polarisation which is becoming obvious in “Solidarity's” opposition circles. Currently about 10 organisations are being formed, which want to change their status to that of political parties. It is necessary, however, to wait, nothing can be entirely foreseen. Despite all these problems and difficulties, General Kiszczak expressed his optimism, saying that he was sure that the further advances of the opposition could be stemmed.

BStU ZA, HA II/10, k. 59–69

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# THE END OF YALTA

Karta

## “10 months” in Hungary



15th March 1989, Budapest. A demonstration on the 141st anniversary of the People's Spring.

*Photo: Krzysztof Miller / Agencja GAZETA*

### 1988

#### 3rd May

— János Kádár resigns as Secretary General of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (MSM — Magyar Szocialista Munkáspárt); his place is taken by Károly Grósz, until recently, the Prime Minister. The Politburo now includes Party reformers.

#### 16th June

— In Budapest the police brutally break up a demonstration demanding the rehabilitation of Imre Nagy on the 30th anniversary of his execution. Grósz categorically refuses to rehabilitate him and the events of 1956. *“If we were to recognise those events as being a revolution, we ourselves would become counter-revolutionaries. No, it is totally out of the question.”*

**27th June**

— A 50-thousand strong demonstration takes place in Budapest in protest against Ceausescu's politics relating to the Hungarian minority (launched on 29th April 1988 when the Romanian parliament passed a village modernisation programme, which effectively meant laying waste approx. 7,000 villages in an area inhabited mainly by Hungarians); this is the largest independent demonstration since 1956. (In the course of that year, the Hungarian border is to be crossed by several thousands of refugees from Romania).

**23rd October**

— Police brutally break up a demonstration on the anniversary of the 1956 Uprising.

**October**

— An opposition party with a nationalist trend, the Hungarian Democratic Forum, is legalised.

**13th November**

— A liberal Association of Free Democrats, opposed to the Party and with roots in the anti-Communist opposition of the 70's and 80's is legally registered.

**24th November**

— Miklós Németh, a young Party reformer, becomes Prime Minister.

**November**

— Political parties which were shut down in the Stalinist era are revived: the Independent Party of Small Property Owners, the Social Democratic Party.

**1989**

**11th January**

— Parliament passes a law on freedom of association and freedom of speech.

**28th January**

— The Government and the Party change their attitude to the events of 1956 — no longer is it "*counter-revolution*" but "*a mass people's uprising against the oligarchic powers which humiliated the nation*".

**11th February**

— A law is passed in favour of a multi-party system. As a result about 50 parties are revived or established.

**15th March**

— In Budapest, a demonstration is held to mark the 141st anniversary of the People's Spring.



15th March 1989, Budapest.  
Photo: Krzysztof Miller / Agencja GAZETA





15th March 1989, Budapest. Banners read: “Law instead of ideology”. *Photo: Krzysztof Miller / Agencja GAZETA*

## IMRE KÓNYA:

**(lawyer, in November 1988 founded the Independent Forum of Lawyers)**

The anniversary of the Hungarian People’s Spring, on 15th March 1989, was the background to a quiet but deadly battle between opposition organisations and the Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party. The ultimate decision lay in the hands of the nation — and the nation made its decision. There were two sets of celebrations in Budapest. One was organised by the Party in the vicinity of the National Museum, the other — organised by the opposition — by the statue of Petöfi. From there we made our way to the television studios, demanding freedom for the media and finally, in front of parliament, we paid homage to the two hundred innocent victims who were murdered there in 1956.

This was a great victory as 100,000 people filled the places indicated by the opposition. It showed that the opposition could unite and mass its forces. Later on, during the negotiations, the Communists would often ask us: in whose name does the opposition speak? The answer was obvious: in the name of those thousands who voted for us by taking part not in the celebrations organised by the Party, but in our celebrations. [...]

### 22nd March

— Opposition parties form an Opposition Round Table.

Opposition organisations were established and worked independently of each other. In the long run this was to our advantage, as a multi-party democracy. None, however, was

individually strong enough to counterbalance the Communist powerhouse, particularly as they were all still in the process of establishment. Meanwhile, mounting social pressure indicated that the need for political change in the country was increasingly crucial. [...]

The Opposition Round Table was established in order to counterbalance the power of the authorities and to make it impossible to divide the opposition force. It provided the world with evidence that, while the opposition is made up of many hues, it can work in unison. At the same time it encouraged other organisations to join it, because in the eyes of the general public, participation in the Round Table gave a certain legitimacy. [...]

The liberal Association of Free Democrats reacted very favourably [to the idea of the Round Table, as put forward by the Forum of Lawyers]. I contacted Ferenc Köszeg [one of the leaders of the Association], who told me that they intended to issue a similar appeal. During a Congress in the Corvin Cinema, the Free Democrats issued their document, following which Köszeg asked me to put forward our proposition; several times I was interrupted by the clapping of the participants in the Congress.

The philosopher János Kis, already a key personality in the leadership of the Free Democrats, was seated in the front row. As soon as he heard out my proposition, he admitted that our initiative stood the greater chance of success. He proposed that Congress participants should cancel their appeal and join us in ours. And that is what happened.

The remaining opposition organisations also approved our idea and so it was that on 22nd March 1989, in the Department of Penal Law of Eötvös University the inaugural meeting of the Opposition Round Table was held. Eight organisations took part. [...] The Forum of Lawyers undertook the role of mediator, we were also empowered to represent the Round Table in certain matters. The main aim of the participants in the Round Table was to work out a joint stance on some of the more important questions involved in the transition from a dictatorship to a multi-party democracy. [...]

Immediately the Round Table was established we informed the Communist Party about it and made it known that, from now on, opposition organisations would only negotiate with it as a bloc and that the participants of the Round Table had empowered the Forum of Lawyers to act as a go-between in contacts with the authorities. Despite this, the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party invited individual parties to separate negotiations to be held on 8th April 1989. In addition, the authorities refused to hold talks with the Fidesz Union of Young Democrats, whilst we insisted that it should be represented.

Following a stormy session at the Round Table, we decided that the opposition would not take part in the forthcoming negotiations, which had been loudly heralded in the press, because our terms had not been met. I would appear on my own, as the sole representative of all the organisations. I was to announce that we are not avoiding the negotiations but we do not intend to take part in a game of pretence. My presence was to signify that we were ready to take part in further negotiation.

However, I was not allowed into the conference hall. At the door, György Fejti, the Secretary of the Central Committee informed me that the Forum of Lawyers could not participate in the talks as it had not been invited by the Party. And anyway, the tables are set in such a way that there is only room for invited organisations. *“Excellent — I answered, — then I can sit on seven chairs as seven of the invited organisations have empowered me to represent them.”* Fejti looked somewhat abashed at that and said that even if I were to go in, I would not be allowed to say anything, because I would not be invited to speak.

Nothing else was left to me but to hand over the letter, in which the opposition informed the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party why it was not attending the talks. Five minutes later I was strolling along Roosevelt Square and whistling, while Fejti had to sacrifice his free Saturday in order to listen to the Women's League, the Association of Partisans, the Workers' Guard and other “friendly” organisations, whose representatives had made it to the talks. [...]

### 18th May

— Pressured by massive demonstrations, the Hungarian government suspends construction of the Gabczikovo–Nagymaros dam on the Danube.

### 13th June

— Beginning of the Triangular Table Talks, with the participation of the authorities, the opposition and the so-called social side, which includes organisations from within the government structure.



June 1989, Budapest. Triangular Table discussions.  
*Photo: from the archives of the Hungarian Institute in Warsaw*

The parties to the talks had sent in declarations, explaining what they hoped to achieve through participation. The opposition organisations decided that I should present this declaration on behalf of the Round Table. The choice fell on me as the Independent Forum of Lawyers was not an interested party in future inter-party negotiations.

This was a great experience, particularly as I had never been inside the parliament building. We entered the building

through one of the side doors, then we made our way up a grand staircase. Cameras whirred and flashbulbs popped. On reaching the Hunt Hall, both delegations introduced themselves to each other. György Fejti approached me and extended his hand. I told him my name. He answered that he knows me from television. I retaliated that he could have met me personally two months earlier had he let me into the conference hall. [...]

The President of the USA, George Bush, also met with the opposition during his visit to Hungary at that time. This proved how much our situation had changed. We were invited to the ambassador's residence for a private meeting. We rode in the presidential convoy, escorted by police on motorcycles. On both sides there was also a cordon of police — the same who, on 23rd October 1988, had disbanded our demonstration on the anniversary of the 1956 revolution with water cannon. Viktor Orbán [an opposition member from the Union of Young Democrats] told me later that one of the officers had approached him and declared with a smile: *“We know each other, of course!”* — *“To put it precisely, it is you who know me”* answered Viktor — *“because I do not carry a file on you.”*

(extracts from Anna Richter's interview Imre Kónya from the book: Anna Richter, *Ellenzéki Kerekasztal. Portrévázlatok*, Budapest 1990)

### 16th June

— In Budapest, a 300-thousand strong crowd takes part in the ceremonious funeral of Imre Nagy, which is transmitted live on television to the whole country. Extract from Viktor Orbán's speech: *“We cannot understand how it is that those very Party and government leaders who once forced us to learn from textbooks which falsified history, are now pushing and shoving to touch these coffins, as if they were a good luck talisman. I do not believe that we owe them a debt of gratitude for the fact that, at last, we are allowed to bury our*

*martyrs, nor for the fact that today our political organisations are allowed to function. [...] If we trust in our own strengths, we can put an end to the Communist dictatorship, if we have sufficient determination, we can force the ruling party to subject itself to free elections. If we do not lose sight of the ideals which drove us in 1956, we will elect a government which will not delay in opening negotiations to ensure the immediate withdrawal of Soviet troops”.*

**6th July**

— The rehabilitation of Imre Nagy. On the same day János Kádár dies.

**11th September**

— The Hungarian authorities open the border with Austria, enabling 15 thousand refugees from the GDR to escape to the West.



16th June 1989, Budapest. Ceremonial funeral of Imre Nagy.  
*Photo: from the archives of the Hungarian Institute in Warsaw*



September 1989. A Hungarian soldier cuts the barbed wire fence on the Austrian border.  
*Photo: from the archives of the Hungarian Institute in Warsaw*



Hungary opened its borders to refugees from the GDR.

*Photo: Reuter / FORUM*

**18th September**

— Triangular Table Talks conclude with the signing of draft laws on, among others, free elections and constitutional changes.

**7th October**

— The XIV Conference of the MSM takes the decision to disband the Party and convert it into the Hungarian Socialist Party. For the first time in the history of the “Communist bloc”, the ruling Communist Party is disbanded.

**18th October**

— The Constitution is brought up-to-date, guaranteeing a multi-party system, and a law is passed setting up a Constitutional Tribunal.

**23rd October**

— A democratic Hungarian Republic is proclaimed.

**26th November**

— The majority of citizens declare themselves in favour of a general referendum (initiated by the Association of Free Democrats) to elect a president following free parliamentary elections.

**18th–21st December**

— Parliament undertakes to step down on 16th March 1990. Free elections are to take place on 25th March.

*Compiled, among others, from Jerzy Kochanowski’s book “Hungary”, publ. Warsaw 1997*

**We are indebted to Janos Tischler,  
Deputy Director of the Hungarian Institute in Warsaw, for his help.**

## “10 weeks” in the GDR

**1989**

**18th January**

— Erich Honecker, Secretary General of the SED, says of the Berlin Wall: *“It will stand for fifty years, even one hundred years, unless the reasons for its existence disappear.”*

**6th February**

— 20-year old Chris Gueffroy, is killed by a bullet fired by the East Berlin border guards as he tries to flee over the wall into West Berlin.

**7th May**

— Monitoring of local elections — the first action on a larger scale to be undertaken by opposition groups — reveals mass falsification of election results (the official results: 98.85% in favour of the Unity List).

**7th June**

— In East Berlin 120 opposition members are temporarily arrested when they attempt to pass on a report on the falsified election results to the Council of Ministers.

**August–September**

— Citizens of the GDR attempting to go over to the Federal Republic of Germany, occupy its embassies in Budapest, Prague and Warsaw.

**8th August**

— The Permanent Representative Offices of the Federal Republic in East Berlin are temporarily closed, when 130 people seek shelter there.



Demonstration organised by the New Forum; the banner reads “A radical change or the end”, East Berlin, 4th November 1989

Photo: Andrzej Luc / NAF dementi



St. Nicolas' Church in Leipzig. Photo: Martin Neumann

#### **4th September**

— A spontaneous demonstration (a few thousand people) breaks out following prayers for peace in St Nicolas' Church in Leipzig. From that moment every Monday ever-increasing crowds gather. This leads to street incidents and arrests.

#### **11th September**

— Without consultation with East Berlin, the Hungarians open their borders to all citizens of the GDR. Within the course of the next three days, 15,000 people enter the Federal Republic of Germany through Hungary and Austria.

#### **19th September**

— For the first time in the history of the GDR an opposition group — the New Forum — demands official registration. The following day a refusal is received from the authorities, with the explanation “anti-state organisation”.

#### **30th September**

— The GDR authorities agree “on compassionate grounds” that those of their citizens who are in Prague and Warsaw may leave for the Federal Republic of Germany. The following day 809 refugees, who were waiting in the embassy of the Federal Republic in Warsaw, in guest houses, private homes and church buildings, leave Warsaw on a special train belonging to the GDR State Railways. In this way over 7,600 people arrive in the Federal Republic by way of Poland and Czechoslovakia.

#### **2nd October**

— A crowd of 20 thousand people takes part in the Monday demonstration in Leipzig; the demonstrators chant: “*We're staying here*”.

## Revolution in Arnstadt

In contrast to the large cities of the GDR, in which movements for peace, ecology and female rights had been steadily growing for the last 10 years, both within the boundaries of the church and outside it, in Arnstadt there was a decidedly provincial atmosphere. [...] Rumours were quick to circulate, information was quick to leak to the security services (Stasi). Lack of trust made it difficult for people of similar political views to make contact with each other.

Arnd Effenberger, the initiator and founder of the New Forum in Arnstadt recalls: *“For me, liberation came with the first demonstration in Arnstadt on 30th September 1989. The presence of hundreds of people gives one strength, let’s one go beyond one’s fears, for the first time I felt I was not alone”*.

The demonstration came about thanks to anonymous leaflets, which had been circulating round the town since 20th September. For several weeks the Stasi tried in vain to find their source. [...].

Günther Sattler: *“We spoke about the situation in the GDR among people we knew, everybody complained but nobody dared do anything. If I made any suggestions, they were treated as flights of fantasy. “There’s nothing you can do about it,” people would say. “Before you know it, you’ll be in prison”. I found this very irritating. I’ve had enough of living in cloud cuckoo land. I began to rebel more and more.”* [...]

On 17th September 1989, Günther borrows a typewriter from a friend under some pretext and that very same evening sits down to write the first draft of a leaflet.

His girlfriend visits him the following day. Her immediate reaction is total panic. *“I was afraid for him, for myself, for our future... I thought that if he drags me into this, I will lose my child. I tried to reason with him. I kept telling him to re-phrase it, that some parts of it were too strongly worded, too obvious, while others were not clear. After all, we had no idea what was going on in our own country.”*

At 11 p.m. [19th September] Günther gets on his bike and sets out to paste up the leaflets. He rides round the whole town, from the station to the bank, the post-office, the museum. *“I had to make sure nobody saw me. When I returned to the bank, I noticed the leaflets were no longer there. There were militiamen everywhere. I returned home to calm down a bit.”*

As he had used up all the leaflets, he sits down to the typewriter and produces some more. *“Then suddenly something occurred to me. I thought, if they tear down all the leaflets then by tomorrow morning nobody will have read them. The first lot really did disappear. So I pasted up more, as many as I could. The militia were everywhere; I don’t think I’d ever seen that many in Arnstadt. I returned home at about five in the morning. I sat down and waited for someone to come for me”*.

Throughout the following day Günther is very nervous. Every time the doorbell rings he panics. He can imagine the militia taking his fingerprints from the posters. In order to calm himself, he decides to visit some friends. His best friend greets him with the words *“How dare you come to my house?”*

Arnstadt becomes restless. The wide-spread investigations instil fear and panic into the inhabitants of the town. All typewriters in public institutions are checked out — they are looking for a specific make — a “Mercedes”.

Günther has a visit from the owner of the machine. *“He came to me absolutely furious. He said I could keep it. He no longer wanted it. At the same time my friends tried to persuade me to burn everything. I did not listen to them.”*

But people begin to pass on the news concerning the proposed rally in the Holzmarkt



on 30th September. They copy the leaflet. It turns up in bars in neighbouring villages, to which Günther had never been. Two schoolboys are caught distributing the leaflets. Günther continues to produce them and leaves them in public places. In the “Friendship among Nations” discotheque somebody calls after him and chases him. He expects to be arrested, but simply gets back one of his leaflets with the disarming comment “*Hey! you’ve dropped something*”.

On 30th September, one hour before the time he had set, Günther visits a friend who lives close to the Holzmarkt. People are already beginning to gather there. The militia arrive. Members of the Security Forces covertly “hide” themselves in all the alleyways and corners of the nearby shops and houses. Film cameramen hidden on the roof of the cinema film the whole proceedings. About 200 people make their way slowly but with determination in the direction of the Square.

Nobody had prepared any speeches, for some their very presence was sufficient. At last, one woman takes courage and begins to speak of the low pensions. Others follow suit, they decide to leave the safety of their own anonymity.

Günther keeps asking himself the same question, should he reveal himself? The presence of the Stasi frightens him — he decides not to speak out. [...]

The following day, Arnd Effenberger, a participant in this demonstration tries to find like-minded people and to establish a group. Of the five or six people he speaks to among his friends, only one expresses interest, a teacher and pacifist called Horst Buddrus. Eventually they set up a 4-man group, which is to collect signatures to a petition asking for registration of the New Forum.

A demonstration arranged for 7th October takes a different turn to what had been planned. The number of participants clearly increases; this points to the success of the appeal: “Everyone brings a friend”. The demonstration is intended as an alternative to the official celebrations of the 40th anniversary of the GDR. Someone brings a banner “We demand reforms!”, which is affixed to a shop window. Then the crowd moves forward with the banner at its head, shouting “*Gorbi — help!*”. There is no planned target, some want to go to the Stasi building, others to the headquarters of the SED. Before a decision can be taken, the militia stops the demonstration at the crossroads and within seconds the crowd is surrounded. Only a small group takes notice of the call to disband, others try to reason with the militia from Erfurt, which is equipped with helmets, shields and truncheons. Militia with dogs stand at the side. “*They came up to us slowly — recalls Günther, — and beat their shields with their truncheons. None of us participants had ever heard anything like it, it was extremely disconcerting. The dogs were becoming increasingly nervous.*” The demonstrators are pushed back towards the town park, whilst some — notably those carrying banners — are arrested. [...] To this day Günther has a guilt complex on account of those arrested and wounded. [...]

On 13th October, Effenberger goes to the Town Hall to ask the Mayor for permission to organise a further peaceful demonstration. “*This was the moment I had been waiting for. I went to the first demonstration in fear — and only because hundreds of other people were there too. When I went into the Town Hall, I felt that at last I was doing something for the inhabitants of Arnstadt. That was the moment of truth for me. I told myself: you’ve done it, you’ve finally found the courage.*”

(Extracts from *Arnstadt im Herbst*, a report by Manfred Leyh 1989, from the book *Für ein offenes Land mit freien Menschen*, Leipzig 1994, compiled by Jolanta Pawłowska

**6th–7th October**

— Grand celebrations on the 40th anniversary of the GDR. In a counter march for freedom, 7,000 people pass through the centre of East Berlin; security forces arrest 700 demonstrators. A wave of protests also sweeps through Dresden, Leipzig, Potsdam, Plauen and Jena. Over 1,000 people are detained by the militia.

— A new party: the Social Democratic Party (SDP) of the GDR is established in Schwente, near Oranienburg.

**9th October**

— 70 thousand people emerge onto the streets of Leipzig. As a result of the intervention of — among others — the Conductor of the Leipzig Gewandhaus, Kurt Masur — the local SED desists from using armed force against the demonstrators. In Dresden a delegation of demonstrators hands in a list of demands to the Mayor. The following day the authorities fulfil one of the main demands — freeing five hundred people detained earlier during a demonstration. The Berlin-Brandenburg Evangelical Church turns to the authorities with a demand that they “*undertake comprehensive, clear and credible steps in order to achieve wide-spread support for a democratic and socialist GDR option*”.

**18th October**

— Erich Honecker is relieved of all Party and government functions, at his own request, on the grounds of “ill-health”. The Central Committee elects Egon Krenz to the position of Secretary General of the SED; he announces radical political changes.

**20th–25th October**

— Large-scale demonstrations are held in Leipzig, Berlin, Dresden, Potsdam, Plauen, Karl-Marx-Stadt, Neubrandenburg, Greifswald and Halberstadt. In Dresden, demonstrators demand free elections.



23rd October 1989, a Monday Demonstration in Leipzig. Photo: Archiv Bürgerbewegung Leipzig





10th November 1989, the Berlin Wall following opening of border crossings. Photo: (top left) Anna Biala; (bottom left) Tomasz Kizny / NAF dementi; remainder: Jerzy Patan / Agencja Wydawnicza PATAN-PRESS



### **26th October**

— Jens Reich and Sebastian Pflugbeil, members of the New Forum, are received by Günter Schabowski, a member of the Politburo and First Secretary of the Berlin SED.

— In Dresden, 100,000 people take part in a public discussion forum. A crowd of 25,000 demonstrate in Rostock, 15,000 in Erfurt and 5,000 in Gera.

### **27th October**

— An amnesty is declared for all those imprisoned for attempting to flee the country. Prisoners are to be freed within three days.

— Steffen Reiche, a member of the newly established SDP, turns to the authorities with a demand to set up an East German Round Table.

### **30th October**

— The "Democratic Breakthrough" people's movement is transformed into a political party.

### **3rd November**

— The authorities announce that they will not stand in the way of people who wish to leave for the Federal Republic by way of Czechoslovakia. By 9th November, 40 thousand people use this route to leave the GDR.

### **4th November**

— The largest demonstration to date gathers in the Alexanderplatz in East Berlin, calling for freedom for the press and freedom of association. Between 500–700 thousand people take part. The three-hour rally is transmitted live on East German television.

### **7th November**

— The GDR government resigns. The following day the whole Politburo resigns. Egon Krenz retains his position as Secretary General of the SED.

### **8th November**

— The New Forum is registered as a political association.

### **9th November**

— At about 7 p.m. there is an announcement that the border with West Berlin and the Federal Republic of Germany has been opened. That same night tens of thousands of people over cross to the other side.

### **10th November**

— A huge demonstration in West Berlin, with the participation of the Chancellor of the Federal Republic, Kohl, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Genscher, and Willy Brandt, the Socialdemocratic former Chancellor. Festivals and welcome ceremonies greet the citizens of the GDR in all the border towns of the German Federal Republic.

### **13th November**

— Hans Modrow becomes the Prime Minister of the new government, in which the SED still holds the majority. He announces a democratic renewal and proposes the establishment of a union between the two German states.

— Huge demonstrations in Leipzig, Dresden, Karl-Marx-Stadt, Cottbus, Magdeburg, Neubrandenburg and Schwerin. The motto "*We, the Nation*", is increasingly being replaced with "*We are one Nation*".

### **19th November**

— Long queues of East Germans form to collect 100 West German Deutschmarks as a so-called "welcome". The transport authorities in Berlin shut down some underground

lines due to the huge crowds.

— First legal rally of the New Forum in Leipzig (30 thousand participants).

**21st November**

— The opposition group “Democracy Now” proposes a Round Table. The LDPD (German Liberal-Democratic Party), which is closely allied to the SED, declares its willingness to participate.

**22nd November**

— SED agreement to a Round Table.

**24th November**

— In East Berlin a GDR Green Party is established.

**28th November**

— Debate in the Bundestag on the subject of a possible federation with the GDR. Chancellor Kohl proposes a 10-point plan, whose ultimate aim is the unification of Germany within the European community. The left-wing intellectual circles of the GDR announce an appeal, under the heading “For our Country”, in which they urge that East Germany retain its state independence.

**1st December**

— The People’s Chamber strikes out the leading role of the SED from the constitution and the government makes an official apology to Czechoslovakia for its part in the 1968 invasion.

**3rd December**

— Thousands of citizens of the GDR throughout the whole country hold hands and make a human chain to signalling their desire for democratic change.

— The entire Politburo resigns.

— In prisons and detention centres riots break out as inmates demand an amnesty.

**4th December**

— The East German CDU and LDPD resign from the bloc of parties which form part of an alliance with the SED.

**6th December**

— An amnesty is declared which applies to 15,000 prisoners.

**7th December**

— The first sitting of the Round Table, with 30 representatives from: the opposition, government and the Church (in total 12 parties, fronts and groups). The crucial decisions are: a new constitution, free elections to the People’s Chamber and the immediate liquidation of the Ministry of State Security (Stasi), which had been transformed on 21st November by the government of Modrow into the Department of National Security.

**10th December**

— At an extraordinary meeting of the Party, Gregor Gysi is chosen leader of the SED, which adds to its title “The Party of Democratic Socialism” (SED-PDS).

**18th December**

— The Round Table declares itself in favour of establishment of a union of two independent German states.

**19th December**

— For the first time ever, the Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany takes part

in a rally in the GDR. Following a meeting with Hans Modrow, Helmut Kohl addresses demonstrators in Dresden, who demand the unification of Germany.

#### **24th December**

— The requirement for exit visas for GDR citizens travelling to the Federal Republic is abolished.

#### **31st December**

— 500 thousand people see in the New Year at the Brandenburg Gate.

*(By the end of 1989 the number of people who had left the GDR stands at 343,854; in 1988 this figure stood at 39,832).*

## **1990**

#### **15th January**

— A protest rally is held in East Berlin against attempts made by the government to retain the security services. Thousands of people storm the headquarters of the Department of National Security.

#### **18th March**

— First free parliamentary elections in the GDR, culminating in the victory of the Conservative Coalition (CDU, Social and Democratic Union, “Democratic Breakthrough”), which wins 47.7 per cent of the votes. The SPD gets 21.8 per cent, the SED-PDS — 16.3, the coalition of liberal parties — 5.3, Alliance 90 (an opposition group set up in autumn 1989) — 2.9 per cent.

#### **23rd August**

— The People’s Chamber decides on state unification with the Federal Republic of Germany. There are 294 votes “for”, 62 votes “against” and 7 abstentions.

#### **3rd October**

— German Unification Day.

*Compiled from German sources by Anna Zinserling  
in co-operation with: Xymena Dolińska*



Symbolic graves of people killed attempting to escape over the Berlin Wall.  
*Photo: Jerzy Patan / Agencja Wydawnicza PATAN-PRESS*

## Czechoslovakia's 10 days



Demonstration on the 30th anniversary of the death of Jan Palach, Prague, Vaclav Square, 15th January 1989.  
*Photo: Polish-Czech-Slovak Solidarity Archives*

*In January 1989, demonstrations in honour of Jan Palach were brutally dispersed by the militia. Among those arrested at that time were Vaclav Havel, Jana Petrova, Sasza Vondra. In May 1989 (thanks to a signed petition) Vaclav Havel was freed after serving half of his sentence. On 29th June, the opposition, headed by Havel, announced a manifesto entitled "A few sentences", appealing in vain to the authorities to open discussions. On 28th October 1989, on the anniversary of the establishment of Czechoslovakia, the militia once again beat up demonstrators in Prague — for the seventh time in recent months.*

*On about the 28th October, I came to the film club with a French reporter [...]. She asked why there are not more of us in the ranks of the opposition and that she reckoned the thirty thousand people who had signed the manifesto "A few sentences" — was very meagre. We tried to explain to her that it really depends on what those people represent, what the question is about. She was right on one point. In Aleksanderplatz in Berlin, over a million people had taken part in demonstrations, whilst here even on 28th October the same five thousand people were being bludgeoned by police truncheons, whilst the rest stood silent and waited.*

*Eda Krisecova (Vaclav Havel zivotopis, Praha 1991)*





Prague, 17th November 1989. Photo: Jan Silpoch

### **17th November 1989, Friday**

— A huge legal student demonstration in Prague on the 50th anniversary of the funeral of Jan Opletal – a student killed during an anti-fascist rally in 1939. After a march along a route agreed with the authorities, the demonstrators attempt – without permission – to reach Vaclav Square. The procession of thousands of students and inhabitants of Prague who join them, is blocked by special forces of the militia, armed with combat gear, and is brutally dispersed. Some 150 people are injured, and many arrested.

— In the evening, candles burn under the eaves of the houses in Narodova Avenue, where the bloodshed occurred.

### **18th November, Saturday**

— Students of the University College of Drama announce a strike, and are joined by Prague theatres, whose auditoriums become meeting halls for public discussion. The theatrical world calls for a general strike.

### **19th November, Sunday**

— During a meeting of intellectuals, members of the PEN Club, artists and student representatives, held in the “Drama Club” theatre, a free association called Citizens’ Forum is set up. *“It is open to all those who wish our country to follow a peaceful road to the democratic organisation of society, and thereby to successful economic development.”*

— The Forum supports the idea of a two-hour general strike, suggested by the students of Prague; the strike is set for 27th November.

### **20th November, Monday**

— Government representatives gathered for an extraordinary meeting, issue a declaration giving total support to the Central Committee of the Czechoslovak Communist Party (KPCz). *“We do not wish to go down the road of provocation which certain anti-socialist elements are trying to force upon us. [...] The Government of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, the CzSR and the SSR approve the methods used to restore order*

*and to protect the property and the lives of its citizens.”*

— Demonstrations in Bratislava, Brno, Olomouc and other towns. A Slovak civic initiative is set up in Bratislava, called “Society Against Aggression”, based on the Civic Forum.

— In Prague’s Vaclav Square a 150-thousand strong crowd chants slogans demanding democracy but at the same time people ensure that everything is in order, so that the militia have no excuse to attack.

**21st November, Tuesday**

— Almost all institutions of higher education go on strike. In high schools debates are held.

— At about midday a rumour circulates, that a forty-thousand strong force is approaching Prague. Prime Minister Adamec gives a personal assurance that force will no longer be used.

— In a televised speech, the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, Milos Jakes, says: *“We are fully aware that the further development of socialism is not possible in our country without reforms. We will not err from the path which leads to improvement of our lives.”*

— At 4 p.m. Vaclav Square and the surrounding streets fill with a 200-thousand strong crowd. Representatives of the civic movements and striking students address the crowd from the balcony of the “Melantrich” building (Czechoslovak Socialist Party Publi-



19th November, strike action in the University College of Industrial Design. Photo: Jan Silpoch



22nd November, 1989, Vaclav Square. Photo: Karel Cudlin

cations and editorial offices of “Svobodne Slovo”). Vaclav Havel explains the meaning and aims of the Civic Forum. Its main demands are: resignation from government of compromised party activists, a Civic Forum delegation to form part of the commission set up to look into the events of 17th November, pardon for prisoners of conscience, and immediate recognition for freedom of press and information. If these demands are not met, then on Monday 27th November a two-hour general strike will be called. Cardinal Frantisek Tomaszek in his homile calls for meaningful changes in the relationship between the state and the Church and he asks the participants of the demonstration to carry on without resorting to violence, and that they “*fight for right only in the right way*”. All the “balcony” appearances are conducted by a spokesman for Charter 77, Father Vaclav Maly, a member of the Civic Forum.

### **22nd November, Wednesday**

— Constant vigils and debates take place by the statue of St. Vaclav. Actors and students try to deliver information to Prague’s factories.

— Buses carrying functionaries of the People’s Militia (special security forces) arrive in Prague, in order to – according to the official version – relieve the functionaries of the VB (militia), who are keeping watch over public buildings and institutions. Gradually, however, the People’s Militia disappears from the streets of Prague.

Zdeniek Resenbaum, a journalist of the CzTK: “*Following the huge emotions which the sight of the People’s Militia on the streets of Prague evoked, the Czechoslovak Communist Party preferred to withdraw its armed fist. I believe that Wednesday was the decisive day. The shadow of grey cloth [People’s Militia uniforms] no longer hid the velvet revolution*”.

— A traditional rally at 4 p.m. in Vaclav Square draws hundreds of thousands of participants. Ever increasing numbers of workers join the students.

— The Presidium of the Central Committee of the CSRS National Front issues a declaration: “*The National Front is ready to evaluate new projects and propositions put*



25th November, Cardinal Tomaszek. Photo: Pavel Štecha

*forward by society.”*

— A Civic Forum is set up in Brno.

— In Bratislava the actor, Milan Kňažko, a representative of the organisation “Society against Aggression” speaks to one hundred thousand people gathered in the Slovak National Insurrection Square.

— The trial continues of the Slovak dissident Jan Ciznar, accused of publishing “anti-socialist” articles in an underground publication “Bratislavské Listy”.

#### **23rd November, Thursday**

— 300 thousand people gather in Vaclav Square, including 100 thousand workers from the machine industry factories.

— In Bratislava, the most famous figure of the Prague Spring — Alexander Dubcek — addresses a crowd of many thousands.

#### **24th November, Friday**

— From 10 a.m. the plenary session of Central Committee of the Czechoslovak Communist Party takes place. In Prague, there is a heightened atmosphere of unrest, coupled with hope.

— The crowd in Vaclav Square greets Alexander Dubcek with ovations.

— At 7 p.m. a communiqué is issued informing of the resignation of the General Secretary, Milos Jakes and other members of the Presidium and Secretariat of the Central Committee of the Czechoslovak Communist Party; meanwhile the plenary session continues. (It lasts until Monday morning, when it transpires that of the 24 members of the Presidium and Secretariat only nine have retained their positions.) The crowd cheers.

#### **25th November, Saturday**

— According to information on the Radio, mostly the same people have remained in the leadership of the “new” Party. Karel Urbanek becomes General Secretary. From his television speech: “*We have gone too far away from the people, from the truths of their*

*everyday lives, from their needs and interests. We must sit down with all those who have the country's good at heart, without prejudice, without bias".*

— Under pressure from his colleagues in the Czechoslovak Communist Party, Miroslav Sztiepan resigns from the position of First Secretary of the Prague Branch.

— An afternoon demonstration (this time held in the Letensk Park) masses 750 thousand people from Prague and its environs.

— President Gustav Husak stops the trials, or grants remission of sentence to 8 dissidents (among them Jan Czarnogursky and Miroslav Kusy).

— Vaclav Havel appears for the first time on television screens.

### **26th November, Sunday**

— A meeting of delegates of the Civic Forum (headed by its chairman, Vaclav Havel) with delegates of the National Front and the government is seen as the beginning of a dialogue.

— The press begins to publish interviews with emigrés, information about the Civic Forum, photographs of Dubcek and Havel.

— In Brno people form a human chain reaching from the town centre to the prison in Brno-Bohunice, from which they triumphantly bear away Peter Cibulka, an opposition activist.

— During the rally in the Letensk Park Havel declares: *"The Forum intends to be a bridge in the transition from totalitarianism to true democracy and pluralism, which will find their proof in free elections."* The spokesmen of Charter 77 and representatives of VONS (Committee for the Defence of the Unjustly Repressed) draw attention to the fact that few



26th November, Brno. Human chain stretching to the prison in Bohunice. *Photo: Ota Nepilý*

political prisoners have been released so far. Prime Minister Adamec, initially greeted sympathetically, is jeered by the crowd. A surprise to everyone is the appearance of a representative of the motorised militia units — the same as those who took part in the attack on the defenceless crowd on 17th November. He expresses support for democratic change and explains that he and his colleagues were against brutal intervention but they were obliged to follow orders.

— The Civic Forum issues its own programme manifesto “*What do we want?*” and organises a press conference in the “*Laterna Magika*” theatre.

### **27th November, Monday**

— A general strike paralyses the whole of Czechoslovakia for two hours. (The loss to the country’s economy will, however, prove minimal, as most of the strikers will work out their break later.)

— A Democratic Communist Forum is set up (as a reaction to the all too slow changes in the Czechoslovak Communist Party); they put forward demands, among others, to condemn the armed intervention of 5 countries of the Warsaw Pact in 1968.

— A Green Party is set up in Prague (as regards environmental pollution, Czechoslovakia stands in first place, whilst the death rate is the second highest in Europe).

— Afternoon rally in Vaclav Square. The Civic Forum recommends an end to national strike action, as the demands made to date have been fulfilled or are in the process of realisation.

### **28th November**

— Students, actors and artists carry on their strike, waiting for their demands to be fulfilled.

— During a morning meeting between Prime Minister, Ladislav Adamec and representatives of the Civic Forum, it is agreed that by 3rd December a proposal will be drawn up with regard to the new membership of the federal government.

### **29th November**

— The National Assembly strikes out from the constitution mention of the leading role of the Communist Party, the exclusivity of Marxist-Leninist ideology in matters of development and education, and of the leading role of the Czechoslovak Communist Party in the National Front.

— During a television appearance by Prime Minister Adamec, mention is made for the first time of the necessity for a re-evaluation of the events of August 1968, and for initiation of discussion with the government of the Soviet Union on the subject of termination of the continued presence of Soviet forces on Czechoslovak territory.

### **30th November**

— The Czechoslovak Communist Party takes its first decision to make official contact with the Civic Forum.

— The Civic Forum begins radio broadcasts.

### **1st December**

— Concert given by Karl Kryl, who flies in from Germany. The motto of the Prague streets is: “*Karl Kryl, we’re no longer biting dirt*”.

— Demonstration in Bratislava. Demonstrations are no longer held in Prague and many other Czech towns.

### **2nd December**

— “*Rude Pravo*” publishes an interview with Havel.

— The Democratic Communist Forum questions the course of preparation for an extra-



25th November, the Letensk Park in Prague. Photo: Jan Silpoch

ordinary congress of the Czechoslovak Communist Party and once again makes demands for immediate elections. For the first time, the suggestion is raised that Gustav Husak should resign from the position of President of the Republic. Walls and banners bear the words: “We don’t want a new fence made out of old fenceposts!”.

### **3rd December**

— Following the motion put by Prime Minister Adamec, President Husak recalls ten members of the current government, and substitutes others in their place.

— New political forces are being set up, parties and associations which were disbanded after 1948 are re-convening.

— A ten hour concert entitled “A Concert for all Decent People” takes place in a sports hall – enthusiastic applause greets Marta Kubiszova, Jaroslav Hutek and Karl Kryl, singers who are returning to the stage after a break of many years.

### **4th December**

— The students end their sit-in strike, instead they introduce a programme of readiness for strike action. There is general dissatisfaction with the newly formed government.

— In Moscow a meeting takes place between key delegates of the member countries of the Warsaw Pact: the 1968 armed invasion of Czechoslovakia is recognised as being a contravention of international law.

— After almost 50 years, Czechoslovak citizens can travel to western countries without visas and can buy foreign currency in the banks.

— At the end of a traditional afternoon rally in Vaclav Square, the crowd sings the anthem together with Karl Gott and Karl Kryl. Bells, keys and other tinkly objects ring the “death knell” of the government.

### **5th December**

— Talks between Prime Minister Adamec and a delegation from the Civic Forum,

chaired by Havel.

— The first draft of a new constitution is prepared by experts from the Civic Forum.

— Permission for legal publication of “Lidove Noviny”, which had previously appeared as an underground monthly.

**6th December**

— During a television appearance, Prime Minister Adamec unexpectedly announces his resignation, expressing fears as to the escalation of the opposition’s demands.

**7th December**

— Gustav Husak entrusts the current Deputy Prime Minister, Marian Czalfa, with the task of forming a new government. The Central Committee of the Czechoslovak Communist Party excludes Jakesz and Sztiepan from its ranks for serious political errors.

— A working party of archivists, calls on the directors of all archives to desist from destroying documents (information keeps coming in indicating that Special Security Forces’ files dare being burned in forests).

— In Prague, a procession of young people carrying lit torches, candles and lights marches past the Federal Assembly’s building, under the banner “*We will unmask you*”.

**9th December**

— Agreement is reached from all sides in the matter of membership of the government of the Czechoslovak Republic. “*The delegations of the Civic Forum and the Society*



21st November, Vaclav Havel during a Civic Forum conference. Photo: Pavel Stecha





Vaclav Square. Photo: Ota Nepilý



**JIRZI DIENSTBIER:** The Czech government changed several times; there was one occasion, for instance, when a call came through to “Laterna Magika” in the evening, saying that we had not yet proposed a candidate for Minister of Justice. Anyone who had an idea would rush to the telephone and ring some friendly lawyers. That’s how we managed to engage Dr Bureszova: she came to the “Laterna” and allowed herself to be persuaded to take on the Ministry of Justice. Of course, this choice was not made by chance. We knew how various lawyers had behaved in past years, what qualifications they had.

To be honest, at the beginning it did not occur to any of us that we would form some sort of government, we rather thought that they would not let us, that the whole process would take many years. But when the Federal Prime Minister, Adamec, announced his “reformed” government, people revolted and demanded radical changes. I remember that that evening I went from the “Laterna” to the boiler-house to fire it up as the weather was cold, so that at 10 p.m., when the workers came off their shift, they would have hot water to bath in. I returned to the “Laterna” after midnight, several people were sitting there: Havel, Pithart, Jicinsky and others. We thought about who might be included in the government and someone came up with the idea that I could be the Minister for Foreign Affairs. [...] It did not occur to us that they would want to accept either me or Czanogurski, as he had only just been let out of prison a few days ago.

*(Jana Klusakova a Jirzi Dienstbier rozmlouvaji, Praha 1993)*

*against Aggression could not fit into the debating chamber. So, the future Deputy Prime Ministers and Ministers, headed by Vaclav Havel and Jan Czarnogurski (Havel in a suit and tie was the first of many surprises for the journalists), had to wait in the antechamber, and their “liaison”, Michael Kocab, relayed information to them from time to time. The journalists tried to elicit at least their reactions from the waiting candidates. [...] They have not yet been spoilt by the top government jobs, so it is easy to talk to them. Jirzi Dienstbier, for example, in all seriousness related how he had had to ask his fellow stoker to take his shift tomorrow in the boiler-room; because he himself would most probably be in Prague Castle at the time, receiving his nomination for Minister of Foreign Affairs.” (Jaroslav Richter, a journalist of CzTK)*



10th December, Devin. Czechoslovak citizens tear down barbed wire fencing on the Czech-Hungarian border.

*Photo: Tibor Huszar*

### 10th December — Human Rights Day

— President Husak names the new government, in which nine people represent the Czechoslovak Communist Party, two the Czechoslovak Socialist Party, two the Czechoslovak People's Party, and seven members are independent. Marian Czalfa takes over the office of Prime Minister, First Deputy Prime Ministers are Valtr Komarek and Jan Czarogursky. Jirzi Dientsbier becomes Minister for Foreign Affairs, Finance — Vaclav Klaus, Labour and Social Matters — Petr Miller, and Miroslav Kusy as Minister without Portfolio, responsible for the press and information. The new Ministers make their way to the Castle by bus where, after a ceremonial swearing in of the government, President Husak resigns his office.

— Sitting of the government of “national reconciliation”, dedicated to the introduction of economic reform, preparation of draft laws regulating basic freedoms and civic rights, and to the preparation of new elections. Candidates named for the office of president include: Vaclav Havel, Alexander Dubcek, Ladislav Adamec and Czesmir Cisarz.

— At 2 p.m., the last great rally of the year takes place, organised by the Civic Forum.

### 11th–12th December

— Actors, theatre staff, artists and musicians end their strike.

— Students explain that their continuing strike is a demonstration of solidarity with Slovakia, where not all of the demands have been met yet.

### 17th December

— A march by students and inhabitants of Prague to commemorate the 17th November demonstrations.

— Vaclav Havel appears on television, as a candidate for the office of president he awakens deep emotions. *“If the public good demands it, I would accept the presidency. I will do so but under two conditions. Firstly, that I would be a temporary and working*



22nd December, prison in Leopold. Prisoners freed under an amnesty carry the Slovak writer, Lubomir Feldek.

*Photo: Tibor Huszar*



18th December, Brno. *Photo: Ota Nepilý*

*president, which is what we need at present; but the one who eventually sits in Masaryk's chair must be chosen by a parliament chosen in free election. Secondly, that at my side will stand, never mind in what capacity — Alexander Dubček."*

#### **19th December**

— In Vaclav Square over 100 thousand people demonstrate their support for Havel.  
— Cisarz and Dubcek resign as candidates for the office of president, and support the candidature of Havel.

#### **20th December**

— An extraordinary congress of the Czechoslovak Communist Party commences in Prague. Ladislav Adamec becomes its Chairman, and Vasil Mohorita the First Secretary.

#### **21st December**

— The Czechoslovak Communist Party takes the decision to disband the People's Militia.

#### **23rd December**

— Ministers for Foreign Affairs, Jirzi Dienstbier and Hans Dietrich Genscher, ceremoniously cut the barbed wire on the border between the Czechoslovak Republic and the Federal Republic of Germany.

#### **27th-28th December**

— The co-ordination centre of the Civic Forum issues an appeal to all fellow country-

men overseas to spend at least a few days in their fatherland and to help it by sharing some of their knowledge and experience.

— The mass media carries the news that the First Secretary of the City Committee of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, Miroslav Sztiepan, responsible for the brutal pacification of the demonstration of 17th November, has been held under investigative arrest since 23rd December accused of attempted abuse of power.

— Alexander Dubcek is chosen as leader of the Federal Assembly of the Czechoslovak Republic in open ballot.

**29th December 1989**

— Vaclav Havel becomes President of Czechoslovakia.

— Students end their strike.

*Compilation and translation of quotations from Czech into Polish by Katarzyna Boruń*

**Publications used in the diary of events (apart from those mentioned in the text):**

1. "Biuletyn Informacyjny — pismo Solidarności Polsko-Czechosłowackiej", Wrocław, January 1990.
2. *Kronika sametové revoluce*, National edition CzTK, Praha [1990].
3. *Konec normalizace*, "Lidove Noviny", Praha [1990].
4. *Łagodna rewolucja na praskich ulicach* [articles by CzTK journalists], translated by Jan Stachowski, Warsaw 1990



Members of the Czech Government, formed after the June elections — awaiting the arrival of the Slovak Government. Centre: Petr Pithart, the Prime Minister. Prague, Petrin Park, summer 1990. *Photo: Pavel Štecha*



Petr Pospichal, a signatory of Charter 77, member of VONS and an activist in Polish-Czech Solidarity; frequently imprisoned (for the last time in 1987).

*Photo: Andrzej Luc / NAF dementi*

## PETR POSPICHAL:

It all started with the demonstration in Prague on 17th November. I was co-ordinating the publicity for the demonstration by telephone from Brno: whom should we inform, how and with what, how do we access the West's mass media, etc.

On 18th November I went to Prague, but I did not want the Security Police to know that I was going there, because a few times I had not managed to make it, I was caught and kept under arrest for three/four days. So I just took a plastic bag and left the house, so that no-one would associate this with a journey to Prague. I did not know then that I would not return until four months later.

In Prague, I made my way to Petr Uhl's home and arrived there when they were all listening to a cassette recording of an interview with a woman, who recounted that some man, a close friend, had been killed during the course of the demonstration. We listened to the recording several times and came to the conclusion that this was a very difficult matter — we could neither publish this nor not publish. In accordance with professional responsibility and

ethics (for a long time we had been acting as an East European News Agency), Petr and I decided that we should publish this information conditionally, with the comment: "We have received the following information from a woman who will not reveal her name, but according to her..." This information served to sharpen attitudes — it acted a starter to revolution, although it turned out to be false. It must have been some sort of security police game, but to this day we cannot work out what it was they wanted to achieve.

The following day, on 19th November, Petr Uhl was imprisoned and that same evening Civic Forum was established.

The real work started the following day, on Monday 20th November. A press conference was held in Vaclav Havel's home, after which we proceeded to carry out a revolution. In one gallery they told us that they did not want us, it was too risky and we must leave. So we went to another gallery. In those first days there were about 20-25 of us, but someone always brought along someone else and we expanded, and then we moved into the "Laterna Magika" theatre.

We knew that people would gather in Vaclav Square. We made arrangements with the newspaper "Svobodne Slovo", which had given over to us part of its editorial offices, and from the balcony overlooking the Square, we spoke to the crowd. I was there, too but I did not speak through the microphone. With a telephone in my hand I gave a live commentary for Radio Free Europe. I did this for a whole week. I spoke on the telephone for 10 minutes, they recorded it, took the recording over to another studio and transmitted it from there; in the meantime, I had ten minutes in which to gather my thoughts, and then I would record the next "instalment". It was quite exhausting, it required my constant attention, so that I would not miss anything vital — several hours of intense

concentration each day. At the time, I was the only person to relate the events of the revolution live.

From the third day of the revolution I was constantly there, in the “headquarters”. At night there were fewer people but work did not flag. We received all sorts of information from Prague, from the whole country, we had to decide on the tactics we were going to use, what to do to prevent the crowd from extreme action, so that force would not be used against us; yet on the other hand we also had to guess what the Communists would do. This was a complete unknown — how they would react, whether they would decide to bring in the army against us.

Everything happened very fast. As the “headquarters of the revolution” we had to analyse information quickly and to take decisions. In those first days the fate of the nation really was being decided. It was not like it was in Poland where everything was the result of many years work and where it culminated eventually in a form of agreement with the authorities at the Round Table. We did not know whether there were any reasonable people on the other side; we thought probably not and we were very fearful. We had experience of events a few days ago, when people had been brutally assaulted during a demonstration. Despite that we attempted to undertake talks with the authorities. Two people from the musical world, Kocab and Horacek, organised the first meeting between Prime Minister Adamec and Havel and a few people from his circle.

We knew immediately that we had won, but the question remained, how would it come about. If someone were to try and attempt to push the crowd to extremes, everything could have gone quite differently. People were full of hate. In those circumstances it is easy to push some people to extremes, because they had never had the chance of doing anything against the authorities and they were feeling humiliated. We were very afraid of this. During that first week, demonstrations occurred every day (in Prague five times in Vaclav Square and twice on Letna). In effect we were very lucky because in such an emotional crowd it is easy to commit an assassination, someone might kill someone else, or perhaps someone might die quite by accident. Events in other parts of Czechoslovakia had come to that. We thought for days, how we could prevent this, how to maintain a balance.

Havel won even more authority then, because he knew how the drama of a revolution should be enacted, he could “direct” a demonstration. People stood in the Square and waited to see what would happen. We had to invite people, organise speeches, ensure that the sound worked and people could hear everything we were saying from that balcony.

The “headquarters”, in the person of Havel himself, who was its unofficial commander, gave me a mandate to make revolution on Czech radio. I contacted the Civic Forum in the area (at that time Civic Forum branches were springing up everywhere) and I told them what I had to do and I reported to the Director of Radio.

He met me at the door of the office. I greeted him politely, introduced myself and explained that I was there with a mission: *“My mission is to ask you to leave your desk and leave us alone here. I do hope there will be no problems and that you will understand why we have found ourselves in this position.”* He answered: *“Of course, I have no doubt that this is what must be.”* Everything went off smoothly. Then with a few other people we sat in his office and wondered what to do next. That moment kept repeating itself. We had won power, but we did not yet know what to do with it.

Not all the decisions we had to make were positive; we had to decide whom to dismiss, how to reorganise the radio, or whether it would reform itself; whether I am to be a candidate to run it. I decided against that. We agreed that the radio staff would suggest someone from their own ranks and we found some communist who was willing to go for a compromise.

It was then that I realised that making a revolution is easy, until you come to the moment of change in power. For me that was the end of the revolution.

*Recorded and written by Katarzyna Madoń-Mitzner*





22nd December 1989, Bucharest. Photo: T. Chesnot / SIPA/East-News

## Revolt in Romania

*At the beginning of December 1989, Romania still appeared to be a Communist monolith. The autocratic nature of Ceausescu's radical dictatorship continued unchanged. But it turned out that an opposition force was mustering in the structural hierarchy of power. Logical analysis of the events of the end of December point to Ion Iliescu, as the main actor, and most probably even the co-author of these events. The Hungarian minority in Timisoara proved to be the detonator.*

### **LASZLO TÖKES:**

**(pastor of the Hungarian Reformed Church in Timisoara)**

In 1984, the disciplinary committee commanded me to silence, and the bishops sent me off to a country parish. I said “No.” I protested. Delegations made their way to the bishops, some as many as 50-strong, petitions were sent to them, some with as many as 4 thousand signatures. [...] In 1986 we won: they sent me to Timisoara. [...] Suddenly, there were not 30–40 people at church services, but 500–600, mostly young people, then 2,000 and within two years 8,000 people identified themselves with the parish. [...] That was when the harassment started. From March 1989, the bishop made seven attempts to curtail my duties and send me off to a country parish. But the people said “No!” [...] On 2nd November 1989 four masked men armed with knives broke down the door and attacked us (my wife was pregnant at the time). Luckily, the timely intervention of some men who were there at the time scared off the “unknown intruders” — I myself was wounded. On 9th November a few window panes were shattered, on 16th November — the remainder. I nailed some planks over the windows because none of them had any glass panes. A visit from Major Bucur of the Militia Department of Economic Crime: hard currency dealings — 15 years. The church windows were smashed.

From 1st December, the church and the house were surrounded. We could not even go out shopping. People would smuggle in food and wood for the stove in their bags and under their coats. The final date for my move was set for 15th [December] As with all other information I had received, I openly informed the parishioners: on the 15th, against my will and theirs, I was to be forcefully moved. [...]

In the morning of 15th December 150-200 people arrived at my door. The Securista [Security Police] and the army had disappeared. In the afternoon there were already about 1500 people outside my home and the church. At about 11 p.m. a delegation of the highest order arrived — First Secretary Rotarescu and the Mayor, Mot. They promised everything: food, wood, window panes and leave to remain.

On the morning of Saturday 16th December, workmen were already fitting new panes of glass, three medics were looking after my wife, not to mention food and fuel. The First Secretary and the Mayor ran backwards and forwards five times. The number of demonstrators, demanding written confirmation that Tökes would not be transferred, had grown ten-fold; at the same time they showered them, and particularly the First Secretary with insults and names which it is not fit to repeat. At 3 p.m. Mot invited a delegation to the Town Hall, ostensibly to hand over an appropriate document. Not only did they not return with a document, but they received an ultimatum that if the crowd does not disperse by 5 p.m., then water cannon will

be used. I advised people to go home. In the rapidly growing crowd the number of Romanians, who were shouting other slogans, not ones concerned with me or the Reformed Church, grew considerably. The crowd wanted me to come out, they thought that I was at home under that watch of the Securitate. When, at about 8 p.m. I appeared at a window, the crowd sang the national anthem *Hora Uririi* — five thousand voices! I was deeply moved, just as though it were the Hungarian anthem. I kept repeating: “*Go home*”, they answered “*We love you, we won't let you go*”... They shouted “*Out with Ceausescu*”, “*Freedom*”, “*Bread*”... Most of them went towards the town centre. I felt it, I knew what had happened, what was about to happen — five thousand people gathered in the centre of town, they were capable of anything, and that everything would be my doing. My family would pay for it.

(Laszlo Tökes's recounting of the events in: Titus Suciu, *Reportaj cu inimă in gură* [An Open-Hearted Report] *Timisoara 16th-22nd December 1989*, Ed. Seicon 1990, pg. 13-17)

**From un-published sources *Initial view of the Romanian Information Services concerning the events of December 1989:***

*In the afternoon, when at last the number of Calvinists protesting outside the residence of Pastor Tökes was beginning to dwindle, suddenly a group of aggressive young people appeared. They incited those present to violence, shattered shop windows and blocked the traffic, stopping trams, buses and cars.*

**17th December**

Timisoara

— At about 3 in the morning, Pastor Tökes is arrested and taken to his new parish in Mi-neu, in the north of the country.

— Despite the fact that the centre of town is surrounded by militia, hundreds of demonstrators manage to make their way to the building of the Provincial Government Offices and Party Committee. Some demonstrators throw stones at the windows and at the militia. The crowd storms the building.

Bucharest

— The Political Executive Committee of the Romanian Communist Party (RPK) in conference. At about 3 p.m., following criticism of the inefficiency of the forces of law and order in Timisoara, in answer to a motion moved by Ceausescu, the Committee decides to bring in the army immediately and to use force. During the debate which follows, Ceausescu speaks of a conspiracy between Moscow and Washington, he gives in his resignation and proposes Ion Iliescu (one-time member of the Central Committee and of the Political Executive Committee of the Romanian Communist Party, currently director of a scientific publication) for his position. The Political Executive Committee of the RPK throws out both propositions and confirms its loyalty to the Leader.

Timisoara

— The army surrounds the town centre with armed vehicles and opens fire on the crowds storming the Party headquarters. There are both dead and injured.

**Official Report of Gheorghe Mocut, prosecutor, of the Chief Prosecutor's Office:**

*Until we reached the airport in Timisoara, we — five prosecutors from the Chief Prosecutor's Office — did not know where we were going. In Timisoara we were informed that on 16th [December] a group of hooligans had joined the followers of the Reformed (Calvinist) Church, in order to protest against the relocation of Pastor Tökes, and that they were on the rampage, damaging the provincial party headquarters' building and shop windows. In the prison we were told that hundreds of hooligans had been detained. I had to deal with*

*one hundred and eighty of them, most of them minors, some younger than fourteen. Despite having been ordered to immediately prepare charges, after interviewing them we took the decision to release them. At the same time — in the afternoon and evening of 17th [December] — the crowd could be heard through the windows giving on to the courtyard, chanting “Ceausescu out”, “Freedom”, “Bread for the children”. At 7.30 p.m. we were informed of ten new “commandments” issued by the Political Executive Committee of the Romanian Communist Party, among them the unconditional arrest of all those detained on the basis of “we’ll find something to charge them with”. I stuck my neck out. [...] I did not arrest any of them. I was saved by the revolution.*

**Results of investigations, conducted under the direction of Dr. Marius Micolciou, into events which took place within health service institutions in the town of Timisoara, during the period 16th–22nd December:**

*[...] During the night of 17th/18th [December] all the hospitals were taking in the injured, with the exception of the military hospital where, behind closed doors, M. Todorov led to death, while V. Barbat was thrown out of the operating theatre and taken to the provincial hospital, where his life was saved. This was one of 49 serious operations. [...] We registered 119 deaths, and treated 485 injured. Functionaries of the Securitate tried to carry out investigations. They kept taking away notes and documentation on the injured. Luckily, they did not manage to take away the departmental reports. [...] They did not*



22nd December 1989, Revolution Square, Bucharest. Photo: Reuter / FORUM

*manage to burn everything. They spent the whole day of 18th [December] in the morgue with the bodies, and we were not allowed in at all. During the night of 18th/19th [December], between two and four in the morning, 43 bodies were taken to the crematorium in Bucharest. For the cremation, 23 bags with clothes, measuring 2.5 metres, were prepared, among these were two or three with military uniforms. The clothes were not burned thoroughly. From the unburned remains and the holes in the chests one could deduce that these were soldiers shot for refusing to carry out orders to shoot at the people.*

### 18th December

— Nicolae Ceausescu and his wife unexpectedly fly off to Iran.  
 — In Timisoara, some of the commanders, among them Colonel Viorel Oancea, refuses to shoot at the people. The Army goes over to the people.

### 19th December

— Prime Minister Dascalescu undertakes negotiations with the demonstrators in Timisoara, while the army withdraws to barracks.

### 20th December

— All factories in Timisoara strike, they make an appeal for a general strike. The demonstrations spread to other towns.

## DORANA COSOVEANU:

**(Curator of the National Museum, founder member of the Civic Treaty)**

When, on the morning of 21st December, people gathered to demonstrate outside the Central Committee headquarters opposite the National Museum, I knew that the number of lads in greenish ties and grey boots was not a good sign. We already knew about Timisoara. We watched the rally from a window on the top floor of the Museum, it was like an unforgettable drama unfolding: Ceausescu's speech, interrupted first by shouting, then by the howls of the crowd; then the clearance of the crowd from the Square, but not of the portraits of the leader and the slogans, which filled the first revolutionary waste bins. The Museum was closed to the public.

The night of 21st to 22nd was marked by thousands of candles burning in University Square, lit to commemorate Timisoara, and the unceasing chants of "*Today Timisoara, tomorrow the whole country*" and then the first, almost imperceptible bullets.

### 21st December

— On his return from Teheran, Ceausescu calls for a rally in Bucharest outside the headquarters of the Central Committee under the banner of "working people against the louts from Timisoara". The rally turns into a demonstration against the regime. During his speech – instead of the customary recorded cheering and clapping — shots are heard through the speakers. Ceausescu barricades himself inside the Central Committee building. In the square, the first banners appear, followed by armoured transport vehicles.

### 22nd December

— In the morning Ceausescu introduces a state of emergency.

— The Minister of National Defence, General Milea, dies in mysterious circumstances.

— The dictator and his wife leave the Central Committee building by heli-

copter. They are caught, sentenced by a summary court and executed. Photographs of the trial and the dead couple spread throughout the world.

— The Chief of Staff, General Guse, or maybe his second-in-command, General Stanulescu, probably the kingpin of the military coup, orders the troops to return to their barracks.

— Chaotic shooting breaks out on the streets of Bucharest, armoured cars crush people on the streets; someone hands weapons out to people, telling them to chase the "enemies

## DORANA COSOVEANU:

On 22nd December we had to pass three military cordons, which were surrounding the Square, in order to get into the Museum. But the number of people kept growing, the cordons broke, and a shout of “Down with Communism” accompanied the presidential helicopter as it sped into the unknown taking the leader from the headquarters of the Central Committee. Portraits, books and other articles began to fly out of the windows of the headquarters building. I thought with trepidation of our collections. Downstairs, preparations were being made for an attack on the palace. I wrote in large letters: the Museum belongs to all of us and we must all take care of it. For a moment, the fury of the seething masses abated. We decided to take as many of our treasures as possible down into the vaults in the basement. The Director, an *apartchik*, waited for orders from above, and he forbade us to move anything, but who was going to heed him. First we moved the whole of the Middle Ages, the small Van Eycks and da Messinas. [...]

Towards evening all hell broke loose. Short bursts of machine gun fire shattered the windows, made holes in the walls; apparently solid doors were wrenched off their hinges. There were no telephones, no lights. It was difficult to gauge where the firing was coming from, whether from outside or inside, whether it was the army or the “terrorists”... A night of terror, when it seemed that everything was about to fall around our ears. As day was breaking, we divided into three “patrols”, made up of the curator and a few soldiers and we made a quick reconnoitre of the “European Gallery”. Our eyes beheld a tragic vision: paintings by Rubens, Rembrandt, Jordaens, Breughel were damaged by rifle fire, hanging on broken remnants of frames, some partially ruined by fire. As quickly as we could, we carried the remains of the treasures of our world through the dense smoke. When we tried to rescue a superb XVI-century Flemish tapestry, which yesterday hung in its full glory, it disintegrated in our hands like ashes. Cry? Shout? Flee! Outside it was becoming light. The cannonade started all over again. Only the heaviest furniture and sculptures remained on the 7,000 square metres of exhibition floor. [...]

Revolutionary reality was somewhat strange. For instance, the director made an appeal simultaneously on television and radio to save the blazing museum, and immediately after the appeal was broadcast a tight-knit group of very young men appeared (among them some from Galati), armed with brand new automatic pistols, under the command of someone called Mascalu, who was waving a FON membership card, proclaiming him to be an officer, a revolutionary and a reporter. Although we were now under the “control of the chief man himself”, as they reassured us, although we still did not know who that was, they tried to persuade us to go home out of harms way from the “inevitable, fierce Arab attacks”. We dug our heels in. We slept in a small windowless chamber on the carpet, armchair and chair, or standing up — anything but to survive — right up till Christmas. And we did survive, despite this bizarre, merry crowd, to whom food and drink were brought, along with a television and video player and pornographic films and which never met up with the Arab invasion.

(account in: *Inigma de sapte ani*  
[Seven Year Riddle]. *Timisoara*  
1989–1996, Biblioteca Sighet,  
vol. 4, Bucharest 1997.)



Photo: Societatea “Memorialul Timisoara 1989”



22nd December 1989, Bucharest. Demonstration in front of Romanian Communist Party Central Committee Headquarters. Photo: Krzysztof Miller / Agencja GAZETA



22nd December 1989, Bucharest. Outside the National Museum. "Revolutionaries" at the ready.  
*Photo: Societatea "Memorialul Timisoara 1989"*



22nd December 1989, Bucharest. Photo: ROMPRES Agency

of the revolution”, “terrorists”, “the Arab invasion”, they are fired on by invisible snipers. From the diary of *Major General Gh. Voinea, Commander of the I Army and of the Bucharest Garrison*, it appears that there was an intentional lack of organisation in the activities of the 15 units of the army which had been ordered to undertake pacification duties, or rather to inflame the situation in Bucharest. Once the Dictator and his wife had left, everyone was his own commander. General Stanculescu gave out weapons to the civilians. In Brasov, General Florea refused to fire at the people. Shooting went on until 27th December.

**22nd December (from about 1 p.m.)**

— The battle for power continues. Close colleagues of the dictator, Constantin Dascalescu, Dumitru Mazilu and Ilie Verdet stayed close to the Central Committee building; without success, they try to impose a so-called Civic Forum and their own persons on the revolutionary crowd, which appears to be led by Dan Iosif. At the same time (and for





Central morgue in Bucharest, December 1989. Photo: Societatea "Memorialul Timisoara 1989"

some days afterwards), in the television studios, a group of opportunist-anticommunists (among them Caramitru, Cornea, Dinescu) give uncritical support to the revisionist-Communists, headed by Iliescu, Brucan and Roman, in their bid for power.

— At 17.30, after brief visits to the Ministry of Defence, the Offices of the Chief of Staff, the television studios and the embassy of the USSR, Iliescu and Brucan appear in the Central Committee building. Outside, the revolutionary show goes on, whilst indoors the new power structure takes shape, under the name of Council for the National Preservation Front, under the leadership of Iliescu, with Roman as Prime Minister and Brucan as the Minister for Foreign Affairs, as well as a long list of well-known personalities from the democratic opposition, who have been co-opted to the Council without even being asked for their agreement.

— During the night, Iliescu begins to build a new party, a new way of rule — “a true democracy”, as he was often to refer to it.

*From the un-published “Results of investigations of the military Prosecutor’s Office 1990–94, concerning the events of December 1989” it would appear that up to 22nd December 162 people lost their lives, 1,107 were injured. Following Ceausescu’s flight, however, 942 people died and 2,245 were injured. These victims were essential to give credence to Iliescu’s “revolutionaries”.*

*The elections of 20th May 1990 brought President Iliescu and his party a total success. To this day it has not been revealed what actually went on behind the scenes in the December 1989 revolution.*

*Edited and compiled by Roman Wyborski*

## Freedom for the Baltic Republics

*The beginning of the eighties convinced the Soviet authorities, and in particular the younger leaders of the USSR, that the situation in the empire was getting out of hand. An attempt to rescue the system was made when Mikhail Gorbachev came to power (1985). Perestroika was an attempt to liberalise the politics of the empire and thus regain control of the nations which had now learnt to demand their rights. Economic change was also expected to give Communism a new lease of life.*

*A particularly sensitive area for perestroika's experimentation proved to be the most restless of all the Soviet Republics — the Baltic States. Here, the Communists tried to stand at the head of the revolts but in vain — they found themselves immersed in it.*

*The sequence of events which was sweeping the Western part of the Soviet bloc, had an impact on the whole of the Soviet Union, which was in shambles. When in December 1991, it was being transformed into the Federation of Independent States, the only states to actually be independent were the Baltic States — already for many months beyond the Soviet dictatorship. (Z.G.)*



Demonstration in Riga on the 50th anniversary of the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact, 23rd August 1989.  
*Photo: Anna B. Bohdziewicz*

## PETRAS CIDZIKAS:

Together with other members of the opposition, we wondered how we could help those who had served sentences in labour camps on account of their political beliefs. We collected signatures on petitions but even hundreds of thousands of signatures did not have any effect, and those who collected them were harassed. When, after eight years in a labour camp, Povilas Peczelius, who had been imprisoned for underground publication activities, returned from the gulag, he wanted us to fight for his friend Gintautas Jeszmantas, who still remained in the camp. And yet there were so many more of them.

We tried to work out an effective form of action in a situation which was full of general distrust, where people looked with suspicion at change, politics and so-called perestroika. In St. Matthew's gospel you will read: "These devils can only be thrown out through prayer and fasting". I came to the conclusion that that was the best way out.

At that time, at least fourteen Lithuanian political prisoners were still held in Soviet labour camps. Among them were: Balyš Gajauskas, Viktoras Petkus, Boleslavas Ležunas, Jonas Pakuskas, Sigitas Tamkevičius, Valdemaras Karaliūnas, Gintautas Jeszmantas, Petras Gražulis, Gintaras Tarasevičius.

On 15th August 1988, I told the "Sajudis" Lithuanian Movement for Renewal Initiation Group, that the following day I was going to start a hunger strike aimed at their release. Silence fell when I made my declaration. But the following day, Sajudis declared its support for my action.

I went to my friend, Algimantas Andreika, with whom I had previously arranged that we would go on hunger strike together. We went to Gedymin (Cathedral) Square. I had with me a parcel of publications called "Sajudis News". We gave them out to people, telling them why we were undertaking this action. While we had the "News", all was well; as soon as we had run out of "News" the rain started, people made off and I found myself alone in the Square (Andreika had gone home for something). As I stood under an umbrella, I noticed the militia observing me; on the other side of the Square was the Ministry of the Interior. The militiamen laughed, holding their sides: "*See, there's an end to your demonstration*".

When I arrived at the Square, I said that all I needed was seriousness and concentration. That this is not a demonstration of a political nature but a spiritual and moral one — with a religious basis. And that I wanted people to come here because of an inner need and with open hearts. I am not asking anyone to join me, but if they do join me, I will not chase them away.

Now, standing in the rain, I heard someone call my name. I turn around and there are people greeting me with flowers and saying that they are organising a guard for us. In all over one hundred people stayed with us throughout the night.

The first morning representatives of the authorities appeared and questioned me: was this a meeting or a demonstration? To which I replied that it was a hunger strike aimed at the release of political prisoners. I gave them a flower each, which irritated them greatly and they went away.

Immediately the press was set upon us. The "Komsomol Truth", "Evening News" and other papers wrote that one of us is mad, and the other an invalid. Andreika really was disabled; he had suffered a back injury in the army and I had spent four years in a psychiatric secure unit in Czerniachovsk, so they were in their rights to describe us so. They had shut me up in the loony-bin because they had found some volumes of "Chronicles of the Catholic Church in Lithuania", at my place, along with some poems and articles of a religious nature.

Despite this campaign of slander, an increasing number of people joined us. Some did not say anything, they were just there with us.

We already knew that the authorities would not resort to violent measures, but they would find other ways to break our hunger strike from within. They managed to infiltrate our group with some people who were working with the KGB, and who started to make trouble. There were some, among those who had joined us, who wanted to make their name because, indeed, the world press was writing about us. The spot by the Cathedral became a political arena. Towards the end of the hunger strike we no longer knew who was who. At one point, one of the KGB people told me straight out: "*You can go now, you're not needed any more*".

On 25th August I announced that, due to a conflict among the hunger strikers and pressure



Hunger strikers. Centre from left: Algimantas Andreika, Aldona Bieliauskiene, Petras Cidzikas, August 1988.  
*Photo: Raimondas Urbakaviczias*

from various sources, our action is being suspended. Since some people agreed with this, others protested; there was a vote on it; eventually Andreika supported me and we concluded the strike.

On 28th September, I went to a meeting organised by the Lithuanian Freedom League in Cathedral Square on an anniversary of the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact. The militia surrounded the Square with a cordon, thousands of people gathered; trouble started, pushing, fights. Many people were arrested. I was there until eight in the evening, when the crowd broke the cordon and took over the Square, while the militia retreated. People cheered, recognising their strength.

At about eleven in the evening, Andreika and eight people from our previous hunger strike began another hunger strike here in the Square aimed at the release of political prisoners. Twenty people stayed on, to safeguard them. At about five in the morning, when the lights had been switched off, a hundred militiamen arrived in the Square and brutally beat up the hunger strikers and their guards. They shoved them into cars and drove them off to prison, where they were again brutally beaten. Most seriously injured was Andreika and he spent several weeks in hospital.

At 1 p.m. the Freedom League again organised a meeting in Cathedral Square, to which representatives of Sajudis were invited. Antanas Terleckas made an impassioned speech, denouncing the previous day's incident and demanding that the prisoners be freed. Vytautas Landsbergis also spoke. I announced that I was going to continue my hunger strike.

I returned home, took some essentials, a mattress and sleeping bag and was back in the Square at 6 p.m. Quite unexpectedly some people brought me a ply-wood shelter, and there were many flowers. And that was how I started my



Petras Cidzikas during his second hunger strike



Petras Cidzikas. Photo: Maciej Drygas

second hunger strike.

The beginning was rather risky — after all, the previous night they had arrested all the hunger strikers. But I felt God was watching over me and that helped me overcome my fear. People took turns looking after me, protecting me.

This vigil on behalf of the political prisoners was something unusual. Many young people came — including a group of young Poles — they were all so full of love that I felt unworthy of their esteem. They prayed with me and sang. I received letters, people came to see me from the darkest corners of the Soviet empire. A group of some 25-28 Armenian students arrived and some of them joined the hunger strike, too.

For a long time there was no reaction on the part of the authorities. The 1st Congress of Sajudis was approaching and once again

the blackmail started. Provocateurs tried to break down my morale, they told me: *“You won’t make it physically. Freeing prisoners involves long procedures. Two or three months, at least — you know the way our bureaucracy works.”* Or they would bend over me and talk about food, ask me whether I’m hungry, they would check to see that I was not eating and what I was drinking. They spread rumours that, at night, I would be guzzling food and drinking brandy and that they even had the photographs to prove it.

As the Congress approached, so the number of journalists around me grew, there was an ever-increasing number of people. But at night, there were fewer people around, because the nights had become frosty and it was difficult to stand around in the cold and keep vigil.

During the Sajudis Congress (22nd-23rd October) there was pressure to prevent anyone from the opposition speaking. But, despite everything, I managed to make myself heard — on the 24th day of my hunger strike. The Congress participants greeted my speech with warmth. Algirdas Brazauskas, the First Secretary of the Lithuanian Communist Party, promised that all political prisoners would be freed.

Negotiations commenced. The authorities did not want the prisoners to make an appearance in Vilnius. We agreed that it would be sufficient for them to telephone their families with the news that documents granting their freedom were ready.

The tension in the city was palpable. Nobody knew how things would work out. They would come to see me, worried that I might fall ill or die, because they had never seen anyone refuse food for so long. News went round that an ambulance had twice called on me. Later people told me that when they passed the Square and saw my shelter, they felt uncomfortable, it was difficult for them to just carry on home regardless.

On 29th October, after picketing the Central Committee headquarters twice, we announced that I am breaking my hunger strike as the prisoners are being released home (we had received telegrams confirming this from everyone except Gajauskas, but the authorities assured us that the documents were on their way to him and that he would soon be free). At the same time, the Cathedral was given back to the faithful (up until now it had served an art gallery). People began to feel the taste of a double victory.

After 33 days I broke my fast. Gajauskas’s wife told me that her husband knew nothing of his release. I went with her and Pieczeliunas to the offices of the Chief Prosecutor of the Republic. I told him that if we do not hear that Gajauskas has the documents in his hands, then tomorrow I will resume my hunger strike. The following day we heard that Gajauskas was on his way.

*Recorded by Vita Želakevicziute and Maciej Drygas  
in Vilnius in March 1989*

## 1987

### Spring

— A wave of protest sweeps through Estonia against the building of phosphor mines in Kabala-Tõlne, which would incur a massive influx of Russians. A Green Movement is set up, spearheaded by Communists — as well as the national nomenclature and the KGB. This heralds the beginning of a mass movement, preparing the public for perestroika.

### 14th June

— On the 46th anniversary of the first Soviet deportation 5 thousand people, including political prisoners freed at the beginning of the year, gather by the statue of Liberty in Riga. The demonstration is organised by Helsinki'86 — an organisation set up in July 1986 by a group of Latvians who intended to emigrate. The police do not intervene until after midnight, dispersing the demonstrators. In an appeal addressed to Gorbachev, Helsinki '86 demands that a referendum on the attachment of Latvia to the USSR be conducted under the eye of the UN.

### 23rd August

— Three thousand people take part in a demonstration near the statue of Mickiewicz in Vilnius organised by the Lithuanian Freedom League, which has been active in the underground for ten years (Vytautas Boguszis, Antanas Terleckas, Julijonas Sasnauskas, Andrius Tuczkus). Speeches are made by Catholic opposition activists, incl. Nijole Sadunaite, but not by the anti-Communist members of the League, so as not to provoke the authorities with their radical ideas. The Ribbentrop–Molotov Pact is denounced. The authorities organise an alternative rally commemorating the victims of Stalinism at the statue of the Communist, Angarietis.

— In Tallin, anti-Soviet opposition activists, freed during the January amnesty, founders in July of the Group for the Publication of the Ribbentrop–Molotov Pact (among others: Heiki Ahonnen, Mati Kiirend), organise a 2-thousand strong rally, at which they demand the independence of Estonia.

— At a rally in Riga, organised by Helsinki'86, 2 thousand people gather, demanding an end to the consequences of the Ribbentrop–Molotov Pact.

### 26th September

— In the press, representatives of the young Estonian national nomenclature call for the “economic sovereignty” of Estonia and the right to own property. This is one of the primary aims of the perestroika which has been introduced in the Soviet Union.

### 18th November

— Helsinki'86 organises a huge demonstration in Riga on Independence Day.

## 1988

### 21st January

— During a demonstration in Tartu, activists of the Group for the Publication of the Ribbentrop–Molotov Pact announce the establishment of the Estonian National Independence Party (ERSP); its aim is to “regain the national independence of the Estonian state”. Clashes with the militia occur.

### 13th – 16th February

— The old opposition (Catholics and the Lithuanian Freedom League) organise national demonstrations following masses in Vilnius, Kovno, and Szawle. They end up clashes with the militia.



Ceremony commemorating the 49th anniversary of mass deportations to Siberia, Kovno, 14th June 1989.  
*Photo: Algirdas Sabaliauskas*

### **25th March**

— On the anniversary of the deportations of 1949, several official Latvian artistic/creative unions organise a 10-thousand strong rally. Soon after, social clubs, headed by the Club for the Protection of the Environment (VAK) are to be set up.

### **13th April**

— Marju Lauristin, Dean of the Department of Journalism in Tartu University, and Edgar Savisaar, a department head in the Planning Commission, make an appeal on television to set up a People's Front for the Rebuilding of the "Rahvarinne". On 30th April its declaration is published, together with the approval of the Politburo of the Estonian Communist Party. The aim of the Front is the sovereignty of the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic within the framework of the new Union.

### **3rd June**

— A Latvian People's Front Initiation Group for Renewal is set up. Of the seventeen members, only two are from the opposition.

— At a meeting of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences with the economics committee of the Central Committee of the Lithuanian Communist Party (KPL), in which five hundred representatives from the intelligentsia of Vilnius take part, "Sajudis" the Lithuanian Movement for Renewal Initiation Group is set up. Its manifesto, published officially on 16th June, points to its aims of "restoration of economic, cultural and political sovereignty to the Republics of the Union within the framework of the Leninist concept of the Soviet Union".

### **14th June**

— In Riga, 100 thousand people take part in a memorial to commemorate the victims of the deportations, which has been called by the creative unions and various parties.

— At a rally in Tallin, 150 thousand people gather. (This is the beginning of the so-called "singing" revolution — a three-month period of mass rallies in favour of perestroika and reforms. Similar rallies are soon to start also in Lithuania. With time, they will be accompanied by demands for independence).

### **16th June**

— Vaino Väljas becomes the new Secretary of the Estonian Communist Party; Brezhnev's people are pushed aside, while the new leadership declares its support for Rahvarinne.

### **26th June**

— The old opposition sets up an anti-Communist National Movement for the Independence of Latvia (LNNK); its aim is to restore the Republic of Latvia.

### **16th September**

— The Latvian National Assembly recognises the national symbols.

### **1st–2nd October**

— The I Rahvarinne Congress, declares itself against "separatist aims" and for the restoration of "national sovereignty" within the framework of "socialist national state", which will be achieved by "the transformation of the Soviet Union from a state union into a union of states". It postulates demands for the introduction of a new union treaty.

### **8th–10th October**

— I Congress of the Latvian People's Front in Riga. Communists form over 77% of its leadership. A resolution states that the Front acts "in accordance with the resolutions and motions of the XXVII Congress of the KPZR (Communist Party of the Soviet Union)".



**19th October**

— Algirdas Brazauskas becomes the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Lithuanian Communist Party and, similarly to Janis Vagris the First Secretary of the Latvian Communist Party (KPL), he declares support for the Lithuanian and Latvian Fronts; within the party structure, followers of Gorbachev replace Brezhnev's team.

**22nd–23rd October**

— I Sajudis Congress; Brazauskas calls for the withdrawal of a draft project of a resolution on Lithuania's right to secede.

**16th November**

— Estonia's National Assembly declares the sovereignty of the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic within the framework of the USSR and announces that a new union treaty will be signed.

**18th November**

— On Independence Day the Latvian People's Front organises a 300-thousand strong rally, at which it demands the independence of Latvia.

**19th November**

— Lithuanian becomes the official national language.

**1989**

**10th January**

— The Lithuanian Freedom League and the new anti-Communist Democratic Party organise a 50-thousand strong rally in Vilnius, demanding full independence.



Human chain stretching from Vilnius – Riga – Tallin, 23rd August 1989.  
*Photo: Algirdas Kayirys, from a collection in the Vilnius National Museum*

**18th January**

— Estonian becomes the official national language.

**16th February**

— A 300-thousand strong rally in Vilnius demands independence. Under pressure from the call for independence Sajudis declares it will fight for an independent and neutral Lithuania.

**24th February**

— The anti-Communist opposition organises a variety of civic committees, which aim to organise parliamentary elections among the citizens of the legal Republic of Estonia, and to restore its *status quo*. With this in mind, registration is commenced of all citizens, based on the registration status at 16th June 1940.

**10th April**

— The beginnings of a similar movement in Latvia.

**18th May**

— Lithuania's National Assembly passes a law on the sovereignty of the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic within the framework of the Soviet Union.

**26th July**

— The Latvian National Assembly accepts a declaration of sovereignty which, in effect, means economic autonomy.

**23rd August**

— 2 million people form a human chain between Vilnius, Riga and Tallin, in order to



protest against the consequences of the Ribbentrop–Molotov Pact.

**12th November**

— Estonia’s National Assembly recognises that Estonia’s incorporation into the USSR was illegal, and that Estonia is under occupation. This decision opens the way to a new union treaty, proposed by Gorbachev, who in this way wishes to assure the legitimate incorporation of Estonia into a reformed USSR.

**18th November**

— A 500-thousand strong rally of the Latvian People’s Front takes place in Riga on Independence Day.

**27th November**

— The National Assembly of the USSR grants economic autonomy to the Baltic Republics on 1 st January 1990.

**24th December**

— The Congress of People’s Deputies in Moscow declares the Ribbentrop–Molotov Pact invalid, which means that there are no legal grounds for the incorporation of the Baltic Republics into the USSR.

**1990**

**11th January**

— A 300-thousand strong rally organised by Sajudis demands the restoration of Lithuania’s independence.

**20th January**

— Sajudis declares itself against the sovereignty of the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic within the framework of the USSR, as proposed by the republic’s Party authorities, and demands independence.

**15th February**

— The Latvian National Assembly recognises the declaration in favour of an independent Latvian state, which concludes that the annexation of Latvia to the USSR was illegal, and that Latvia should become a member of confederate states (a new USSR) and should “tread the path of democratic socialism”.

**24th February – 1st March**

— Civic Committees conduct parliamentary elections to the legal Republic of Estonia, named the Congress of Estonian Citizens. 556 thousand registered citizens took part in the voting.

**24th February – 3rd March**

— Elections to the Lithuanian National Assembly; of the 133 members of parliament, 97 — including 16 communists — are supported by Sajudis.

**11th March**

— The Lithuanian National Assembly passes a resolution on the independence of Lithuania by 124 votes.

**18th March**

— Elections to the Latvian Soviet Socialist Republic’s National Assembly; supporters of the People’s Front gain three-quarters of the mandates.

— Elections to the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic’s National Assembly. The independence movement and Rahvarinne together gain 49 mandates, national Communists

— 29, those in favour of the USSR in its current form — 27.

**30th March**

— The Estonian National Assembly declares itself a temporary government for the period of “transition to independence” and recognises the Congress of Citizens as an “institution which will restore sovereign rights to the Republic of Estonia”.

**21st April**

— Latvia’s National Assembly restores the Constitution of 1922.

**8th–23rd April**

— Elections to the Congress of Citizens of Latvia, an alternative to the National Assembly; 707 thousand registered citizens take part in the voting. The congress warns that, if the National assembly signs a new union treaty, it will call for an alternative government.

**4th May**

— Declaration on the restoration of independence of the Republic of Latvia.

**1991**

**11th–13th January**

— Soviet armed forces launch an attack on Lithuanian government buildings, while there is an attempt at a coup by the “platformists” (supporters of the continuance of the USSR in its present form); 14 people die and 373 are injured.

— In Riga and Tallin, the people set up barricades.



Riga, January 1991. Photo: Henryk Prykiel / NAF dementi



### **JULIJA STASZELIENE:**

On 11th January an announcement was made on the radio that commandos had attacked the Press House in Vilnius and had taken it over at midday. Ten or fifteen minutes later I stood outside it. A thousand people, or more, had also gathered there. At the entrance in Kosmonautski Prospect, several rows of men stood on the stairs, holding hands. On the other side [...] stood the commandos. We, mostly elderly people, went up to the soldiers and tried to reason with them, telling them they were carrying out a very dirty task. We must have talked for about 20 minutes. At about 1 p.m. we saw seven combat trucks full of troops and five or six tanks with long cannon arriving. We all made for the central entrance. The men drew up ranks on the stairs whilst we stood at the side, staring at the tanks. [...] A commando standing near me jumped onto one of the tanks and removed the cover from the cannon. The soldier sitting in the tank, pointed the cannon in the direction of our heads and the first artillery shot boomed out. The gun-fire enveloped my head, I lost consciousness and fell. When I came to, I saw men picking up their caps. My head ached terribly, my tongue was badly swollen so I could not utter a word. I had just regained consciousness when I heard a round of machine gun fire at the entrance. Together with everybody else, I ran forward, towards the men guarding the entrance. A group of commandos attacked them, fired straight at their heads — or so it seemed to me. They used live ammunition, but did not shoot at them but over their heads, ruining the wall over the doorway. The men did not even flinch.

### **JURA BAUŽYTE:**

The nearer we approached the tower [television tower in Vilnius], the more cars there were. At the gate groups of people from all over Lithuania had gathered. One group was praying loudly. Further on some people were singing patriotic songs, shouting nationalist slogans and stamping to the rhythm.

Over the radio we heard voices: „*There are commando troops in our building, but we are still alive, still broadcasting. We are sure of victory...*” Snippets of information followed, that tanks were firing around Broadcasting House, that there are rifle shots in the corridors, the presenter kept saying: „*We’re still alive and we’re speaking to Lithuania.*”

At 2.10 Vilnius Radio went dead.

The presenter could still be seen on the television screen. She asked her colleagues to bar the doors to the studio and said: „*We will carry on transmitting until they throw us out with force.*” At 2.20 she too was silenced. On the television screen we could see armed commandos forcing their way down the corridors. A moment later the screen went dead. The television tower had been occupied.

Under the fusillade of shots I run to the tower. Artillery fire booms. In front of the tower about ten tanks are moving around back and forth, the crowds runs riot, chanting „Lith-u-ania! Lith-u-ania!”

### **NERUTE KLIGIENIE:**

We began to sing a hymn to *Mary*. The tanks came nearer to the crowds of people. They stopped perhaps three metres from the crowd. With no warning they began to fire over the heads of the crowd, at first with blanks. Shattered glass fell on people's heads. We began to retreat slowly, because it became obvious that they were now using live ammunition. Someone shouted: „Gas!” We moved further back. Around us smoking containers were falling but they did not explode. [...] The tank lowered its cannon, aiming straight at the retreating crowd.

(from a collection of memoirs of witnesses to the events of 11th – 14th January 1991, Vilnius 1993; compilation — here and on p.110 — Józef Darski)



During an attack on the Vilnius broadcasting tower, 13th January 1989. Photo: *Virgilijus Usinavicius / ELTA Agency*



Beneath the broadcasting tower in Vilnius, 13th-14th January 1989. Photo: *Sławomir Sierzputowski / Agencja GAZETA* (also p. 108)



### Extracts from instructions on the defence of Old Riga, 12th January 1991

[...]

#### **2. In the event of an attack by infantry and tanks**

- a) The command „To action stations” must be given.
- b) Everyone must take up position on the internal side of the barricades, including the drivers of the vehicles blocking [the entrances], after having left their vehicles in the [designated] areas.
- c) All women, children, teenagers and elderly men should find shelter inside the buildings, in the courtyards, in the Cathedral and other places of safety, whilst everyone else must form a cordon. The reserve must take up the positions allocated to them.
- d) Desist from making derogatory remarks and any action which might be seen as being provocative.
- e) In the event of direct contact with an attacker, use self-defence methods without resorting to the use of arms, while attempting to safeguard the rear cordons.
- f) Arms and ammunition taken from the attackers should immediately be passed back to the rear.
- g) In the event of an attack by tanks, if the attackers open fire — quickly and without panicking, take shelter behind the previously prepared screens. If at all possible, try to throw a cloth over the driver’s window and the sights, which are located at the side of the barrel. White smoke coming out of the tank is not gas, but a harmless smoke from the motor. Do not let yourself be intimidated by the loud, intensive crash of the tanks, which is intended to instil terror. They will try to achieve a similar effect through enormous speakers mounted on special vehicles.

#### **3. In the event of internal disorder, started by people in civilian dress**

- a) Whoever notices the commotion should shout „Help!”.
- b) Anybody finding himself in the midst of the commotion should immediately quell it and take those involved to the sector (barricade) commander.
- c) If several incidents occur simultaneously in different locations, then the first person to notice them, should shout „Alarm”; this watchword should be repeated by people positioned further on and over the speakers. [...]

#### **4. Giving first aid**

- a) In each defence sector (on each barricade) there must be people who are qualified to give basic first aid to the injured, those who have been burned or have suffered exposure to gas.
- b) After receiving first aid, the victim must be taken to the nearest shelter and then transported as quickly as possible to the sector hospital, which together with operating theatres has been located in the Cathedral.

Odisejs Kostanda, Operational Headquarters Commander,  
Defence Headquarters of the National Assembly of the Republic of Latvia



Outside Parliament in Vilnius, January 1991. *Photo: Zenonas Nekroszius, from a collection in the National Museum in Vilnius (top), Andrzej Łuc / NAF dementi (bottom)*





**13th/14th January**

— The President of Russia, Boris Jelcyn, recognises the national sovereignty of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania under international law.

**22nd August**

— Iceland is the first to recognise the independence of the Baltic States.

*Edited and compiled by Józef Darski*



Vilnius, 23rd August 1991. *Photo: Antanas Sutkus*

## Continued

### Chronology of Events in Central and Eastern Europe 1990–2004

BARTOSZ KALISKI

**1st January 1990** — The Polish state, called the Polish People's Republic since 1952, returns to its traditional name of the Republic of Poland.

**12th June 1990** — A declaration of sovereignty of the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic is proclaimed — the Russian Federation is established.

**21st June 1990** — Unanimous statements on the final nature of the border on the Odra and Nysa Rivers are adopted by parliaments of the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic.

**15th July 1990** — USSR's President Mikhail Gorbachev announces, during Chancellor of the Federal Republic Helmut Kohl's visit to the Caucasus, that united Germany will take sovereign decision on the military alliance it wants to be a member of.

**17th July 1990** — Polish Foreign Minister Krzysztof Skubiszewski attends the third round of the "2+4" talks in Paris (both German states plus Great Britain, France, US and USSR) that recommends Poland to settle all Polish-German issues — including the question of borders — by means of bilateral treaties. Moscow gives up its

key demand — to sign a peace treaty with Germany as the final legal act winding up the unification process.

**12th September 1990** — In Moscow, the participants in the "2+4" conference sign a treaty on the final settlement of German issues, abolishing the special powers exercised by Western superpowers in that country since 1945 and fixing the date for withdrawing the USSR troops from East Germany.

**3rd October 1990** — The unification of Germany that remained divided since 1945 becomes a fact.

**6th November 1990** — Hungary becomes the first Eastern bloc state to be admitted to the Council of Europe — a political organization founded in 1949 to group states that undertake to observe human rights, the rule of law and democratic principles.

**14th November 1990** — A Polish-German treaty stating the inviolability of the border on the Odra and Nysa Rivers is signed in Warsaw.

**1st January 1991** — Berlin again becomes the capital of Germany.

**15th February 1991** — A meeting of presidents, prime ministers and foreign ministers of Poland, Czechoslovakia and



2nd–3rd October 1990. Residents of Berlin celebrate the unification of Germany.

*Photo: Sławomir Sierzputowski*

Hungary is held in Budapest and Visegrad in Hungary — a declaration on the cooperation of the three states in striving for European integration is signed (the formal beginning of the “Visegrad Triangle”).

**31st March 1991** — The end of operation of the military structures of the Warsaw Pact — a tool of Soviet military domination over Eastern Europe existing since 1955.

**19th June 1991** — The last Soviet troops leave Hungary — the first stage of withdrawal of USSR’s troops from the former Eastern bloc countries.

**25th June 1991** — The last Soviet troops leave Czechoslovakia.

**28th June 1991** — the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance, which integrated the Eastern bloc countries under the USSR guidance since 1949, is dissolved.

**1st July 1991** — The last meeting of the Warsaw Pact Political Consultative

Committee is held in Prague — the Warsaw Pact is formally dissolved.

**19th–21st August 1991** — An unsuccessful Communist coup d’état by the Soviet bureaucracy in Moscow on the eve of signing a new federative treaty loosening ties between Soviet republics. The putschist forces take up positions in the centre of Moscow and put USSR President Mikhail Gorbachev under house arrest. Russian President Boris Yeltsin, remaining free, appeals to the people of Moscow to disobey the conspirators.

**24th August 1991** — The Ukrainian Parliament proclaims the state’s independence.

**25th August 1991** — The Supreme Soviet of the BSSR proclaims the independence of Belarus.

**28th–29th August 1991** — Foreign ministers of France, Germany and Poland hold consultations in Weimar. The Weimar Declaration on the future of Europe begins institutional cooperation



August 1991. A demonstration during the coup d'état in Moscow with Boris Yeltsin standing in the middle.  
*Photo: Andrzej Iwanczuk / REPORTER*

between the three states forming the Weimar Triangle since then.

**3rd September 1991** — Poland recognizes the independence of Belarus.

**17th September 1991** — The Supreme Soviet of the BSSR changes the name of the state to the Republic of Belarus and reinstates Belarusian national symbols.

**September 1991** — Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia are admitted to the UN.

**26th November 1991** — Poland is admitted to the Council of Europe.

**1st December 1991** — Ninety percent of those voting in a referendum in the Ukraine support the idea of the republic' independence, thus sanctioning the existing situation.

**2nd December 1991** — The Polish government recognizes the independence of Ukraine.

**8th December 1991** — The leaders of three largest USSR republics: Russian President Boris Yeltsin, Ukrainian President Leonid Kravchuk and the

Chairman of the Belarusian Supreme Soviet Stanislav Szushkevich meet in the Białowieża Forest to declare that the USSR ceases to exist as “an entity of international law and part of the geopolitical reality.”

**9th–11th December 1991** — The summit meeting of the European Community in Maastricht (the Netherlands) results in the signing of an agreement providing for the establishment of the European Union, the introduction of Euro as a common currency, and coordination of foreign and military policies.

**21st December 1991** — The establishment of the Commonwealth of Independent States grouping a majority of the former Soviet republics.

**25th December 1991** — USSR President Mikhail Gorbachev resigns, the USSR ceases to exist.

**7th February 1992** — The signing of a treaty on the European Union in Maastricht (the Netherlands).

**5th March 1992** — The establishment of the Council of the Baltic Sea States with Poland as a founding member.

**20th July 1992** — Prime Ministers of Russia and Belarus sign a treaty restoring close political and military ties between both countries.

**21st December 1992** — In Kraków, Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary sign the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA) on a gradual removal of customs barriers within the next 10 years.

**1st January 1993** — The “Velvet Divorce.” Czechoslovakia splits into two independent states — the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

**13th May 1993** — Estonia is admitted to the Council of Europe.

**14th May 1993** — Lithuania becomes a member of the Council of Europe.

**30th June 1993** — The Czech Republic and Slovakia are admitted to the Council of Europe.

**25th–26th August 1993** — Russian President Boris Yeltsin says, while on a visit to Poland, that Moscow does not object to Poland’s membership in NATO (later a Russian diplomat withdraws this declaration).

**31st August 1993** — The last Soviet troops leave Lithuania.

**17th September 1993** — The last Soviet troops leave Poland.

**7th October 1993** — Romania is admitted to the Council of Europe.

**1st November 1993** — The treaty on the European Union becomes effective.

**4th January 1994** — Lithuanian President Algirdas Brazauskas addresses a letter to the NATO General Secretary requesting that Lithuania be admitted to the North Atlantic Alliance.

**11th–12th January 1994** — In Prague, US President Bill Clinton presents the “Partnership for Peace” plan offering cooperation with NATO to countries that are not NATO members.



Farewell to Red Army soldiers leaving Poland. *Photo: Jerzy Undro / PAP*

**2nd February 1994** — Poland joins the “Partnership for Peace.”

**8th February 1994** — Ukraine joins the “Partnership for Peace” program as one of the first former Soviet republics.

**31st March 1994** — Hungary files a formal application for joining the European Union.

**8th April 1994** — Poland files a formal application for joining the European Union.

**11th April 1994** — During his visit to Poland US Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott confirms the existence of close relationship between the participation of Central European countries in the “Partnership for Peace” program and their possible NATO membership.

**5th July 1994** — Poland is the first participant in “Partnership for Peace” to agree its Individual Partnership Program with NATO.

**31st August 1994** — The last Soviet troops leave Germany, Estonia and Latvia.

**13th–16th September 1994** — Military exercises are held at the training ground in Biedrusko near Poznań under the “Partnership for Peace” initiative as the first manoeuvres of NATO forces on the territory of a state that is not a members of the Alliance.

**8th October 1994** — American Congress adopts the “Brown Amendment,” thus expressing its readiness to include the Visegrad Group states in NATO.

**10th February 1995** — Latvia is admitted to the Council of Europe.

**22nd June 1995** — Romania files a formal application for joining the European Union.

**27th June 1995** — Slovakia files a formal application for joining the European Union.

**13th October 1995** — Latvia files a formal application for joining the European Union.

**9th November 1995** — Ukraine is admitted to the Council of Europe.

**24th November 1995** — Estonia files a formal application for joining the European Union.

**8th December 1995** — Lithuania files a formal application for joining the European Union.

**17th January 1996** — The Czech Republic files a formal application for joining the European Union.

**22nd November 1996** — Poland is admitted to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), an organization grouping the most developed countries of the world (Hungary and the Czech Republic had already joined the OECD before).

**4th December 1996** — The European Parliament adopts a resolution condemning the anti-democratic policies of Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenka.

**23rd May 1997** — Presidents of Russia and Belarus sign a statute of the Union of Belarus and Russia; in June it is decided that the former USSR national anthem will become the UBR anthem.

**8th July 1997** — An official invitation to join NATO is extended to the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary during a NATO summit in Madrid.

**9th July 1997** — The Charter on a Distinctive NATO-Ukraine Partnership is signed during the NATO summit in Madrid with NATO members expressing their support for the Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity, considering the existence of independent Ukraine as a stability factor in Europe.



Independence, USA, 12<sup>th</sup> March 1999. Polish Foreign Minister Bronisław Geremek signs accession documents on Poland's membership in NATO. Standing behind him from the left: US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, Czech Foreign Minister Jan Kavan and Hungarian Foreign Minister Janos Martonyi.  
*Photo: Cliff Schiappa / PAP/ÉPA*

**31st March 1998** — The beginning of negotiations on the accession of Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Estonia to the European Union.

**12th March 1999** — The Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland join NATO.

**24th March – 10th June 1999** — NATO is launching bombing raids over Yugoslavia as part of its intervention aimed to prevent genocide in Kosovo (with the newly-admitted countries taking part).

**18th September 1999** — NATO's Multinational Corps Headquarters North-East (Denmark, Germany, Poland) are formed in Szczecin.

**15th February 2000** — Lithuania, Latvia and Slovakia begin negotiations on the accession to the European Union.

**28th April 2000** — During the millennium celebrations of the Gniezno Assembly prime ministers of Poland,

the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Slovakia and the chancellor of Germany meet in Gniezno to declare their will to create a “Europe of free nations living in peace, security and prosperity.”

**1st January 2002** — The Euro coins and banknotes come into circulation in twelve European Union's countries.

**27th September 2002** — The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe issues a resolution condemning human rights violations in Belarus (Belarus lost its observer status in the Council of Europe in 1997 and is the only European country remaining outside the Council).

**November 2002 – April 2003** — 14 member states of the European Union consider Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenka and his ministers *personae non gratae* in the European Union.

**11th–12th November 2002** — NATO members gathered at a summit meeting in Prague extend an invitation to Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Romania, and Slovakia to join the Alliance.

**13th December 2002** — At the summit meeting of the European Union in Copenhagen the Czech Republic, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, Slovakia and Hungary close negotiations on their accession to the European Union.

**9th April 2003** — The European Parliament agrees to admit new states (including the Czech Republic, Estonia,

Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, Slovakia, and Hungary) to the European Union; referenda held in those countries in the following months show that people there are for joining the Union.

**29th March 2004** — Bulgaria, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Romania, and Slovakia become NATO members.

**1st May 2004** — Seven countries of the former Soviet bloc: the Czech Republic, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, Slovakia and Hungary are admitted to the European Union.

*Edited and compiled by  
Bartosz Kaliski*



Warsaw, 8th June 2003. Warsaw residents celebrate the outcome of the referendum on joining the European Union in which more than 50 percent of the eligible took part; more than 80 percent of the voters came out in favour of Poland joining the European Union. *Photo: Maciej Macierzyński / REPORTER*



**The KARTA Centre** is an independent non-governmental organization, which documents and popularises – by means of publications, competitions, conferences and exhibitions – events and facts from the history of 20<sup>th</sup> century Poland and Central-Eastern Europe. Its official activity as a foundation began in 1990, but its beginnings date back to January 1982. At that time, in reaction to the imposition of martial law, an illegal newspaper entitled “Karta” was published and was gradually transformed into an almanac describing people’s attitudes to totalitarianism. In November 1987, “Karta” formed the “Eastern Archives”, an independent group dedicated to identifying recent historical facts falsified by the Communists. The year 1991 saw the first legal issue of the historical journal “Karta” and, since then, all the work involved in archives, documentation, as well as editorial and publishing activities are held at the KARTA Centre.

Today the Centre comprises:

“Karta” Quarterly (40 issues appearing between 1991–2004) showing contemporary history from the individual’s perspective by means of memoirs, diaries, letters and personal accounts, supplemented with documents, historians’ commentaries and numerous archive photographs, creating a kind of picture book history. The journal also deals with difficult subjects such as relations between the Poles and the Ukrainians, Germans and Jews.

**The Archives** – the Centre’s archive collections have been developed as a result of its comprehensive activities – from the very beginning of the “Karta’s” (1982) existence, and, in an orderly manner – from the time of the foundation of the Eastern Archives (1987). These resources document the whole “social” history of 20<sup>th</sup> century Poland and her immediate neighbours, and especially subjects that have not been researched or are barely present in collective awareness. The Centre puts special emphasis on gathering records by individual eyewitnesses (memoirs, diaries, and reports...).

The Centre’s archive collections include:

Eastern Archives – the fate of the Polish population in the Eastern Borderlands of the Second Polish Republic after the outbreak of WW II until the 1950s, including the documentation of the “Index of the Repressed” and copies from the post-Soviet and émigré archives (52 meters)

Opposition Archives – social resistance and opposition against the authorities, including everyday life in the Polish People’s Republic (PRL), including one of the largest and most comprehensive collections of underground periodicals and books, as well as other publications (posters, bills, leaflets), group and individual collections, museum pieces, and independent fine art works from the years 1980–89 (700 meters)

Photographic Archives – more than 100,000 photographs from the period 1890–1990, including more than 16,000 digitized ones; photographs from family albums, news photographer heritage, and amateur photographer archives; the collections are gradually being made available in the Internet.

**Oral history** – the aim of the programme is to record, archive and render available biographic reports by witnesses of the 20<sup>th</sup> century history – recorded by means of the oral history methodology. In the Eastern Archives and the Opposition Archives the Centre holds more than one thousand reports recorded since the end of the 1980s. In 2002, more than 160 reports by the former inmates of the Mauthausen-Gusen Nazi concentration camps were recorded as part of the international “Mauthausen Survivors Documentation Project”. Several dozen reports by female prisoners