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CODE NAME  
"HORIZON".  
PREPARATIONS  
FOR THE INTRODUCTION  
OF **A STATE OF EMERGENCY**  
IN THE  
**POLISH PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC**  
**1988–1989**

**Abstract**

This article discusses the actions undertaken by the authorities of the Polish People's Republic to regulate the institution of a state of emergency within the communist dictatorship, as a result of the experiences of martial law (1981–1983), as well as the practical implications of these preparations in the context of the crisis in Poland in 1988 and the political process leading to the transformation of the political system in 1989. The worsening economic crisis in Poland in 1988 and, as a consequence, two waves of protests and strikes (in the spring and summer of 1988), prompted the authorities to move from formally creating the legal and organisational framework for a state of emergency to making preparations for its actual introduction, intended

to pacify society. The threat of introducing a state of emergency was also used as a means of exerting pressure on the self-organising social resistance and on opposition representatives who had entered into dialogue with the authorities, seeking to increase civil liberties and human rights and to reform the political and economic system.

**Keywords:** state of emergency, martial law, crisis, 1988, 1989, transformation

## Introduction

The literature on the final years of the Polish People's Republic is extensive, as the amount of material that historians face when analysing the turning point of 1988–1989 is enormous. Many years of research on the course of political change have been devoted by renowned experts on the complexities of the Polish People's Republic, such as Antoni Dudek (Dudek 2004), Andrzej Paczkowski (Paczkowski 1999; Paczkowski 2007), and Andrzej Friszke (Friszke 2005), while the broader issues of the late 1980s have also been addressed by Paweł Kowal (Kowal 2012), Jerzy Eisler (Eisler 1992), Paulina Codogni (Codogni 2012), Jan Skórzyński (Skórzyński 2009), and, more recently, Tomasz Kozłowski (Kozłowski 2019). It is also impossible to overlook collective works, such as the materials from the international conference held in Miedzeszyn in 1999 (*Polska 1986–1989... 2002*) or the recently published collection of studies edited by Robert Spalek (*Dekada Jaruzelskiego... 2024*). However, it appears that, amid discussions on talks with the opposition, the Round Table, the June elections, the dissolution of the Security Service, and many other issues related to the political transformation, the topic of preparations for the introduction of a state of emergency, which took place in the second half of the 1980s, has long been overlooked. A formal and legal analysis of the state of emergency was carried out, among others, by Michał Brzeziński, Lech Mażewski, and Jerzy Stembrowicz, a pioneer in research on the subject, constitutional lawyer, and opposition activist in the Polish People's Republic (Brzeziński 2007; Mażewski 2010; Stembrowicz 1988, pp. 95–113). The background to these events, based on the archives of the Ministry of National Defence, and in particular the Secretariat of the State Defence Committee, has been presented in several works by Lech Kowalski (Kowalski 1993, pp. 13–28; Kowalski 2011; Kowalski 2015, p. 636 ff.), while continuing interest in the topic

is evidenced by, for example, two further anthologies published by the Institute of National Remembrance (*Transformacja ustrojowa...* 2022; *Kryzys w partii...* 2023; the latter was unavailable at the time of writing). A special place in this field is occupied by Piotr Hac's recently published monograph (Hac 2023; see Przeperski 2024; Benken 2024), which was prepared in parallel with this author's research on the subject. This text is an abridged version of an unpublished study on the preparations for the introduction of a state of emergency in Poland in 1988.

Documents deposited in the archives of the Institute of National Remembrance, declassified in recent years, provide insight into the complexities of this period. They indicate both the degree of progress made in the preparations for a state of emergency in the second half of the 1980s and the totalitarian ambitions of the state. The operation was planned at a time when Soviet policy had shifted to such an extent that representatives of the Kremlin were independently attempting to establish contacts with some opposition figures, seeing them, as Antoni Dudek suggested, as "potential partners for future talks on a new balance of power on the Vistula" (for information on the actions of the Soviet authorities towards the opposition in the People's Republic of Poland, see Dudek 2009, p. 16; and his account in the editorial discussion of *Stół bez kantów...* 2004, pp. 8–10). The USSR's willingness to engage with the Polish opposition and its desire to improve relations with the United States were so pronounced that it would appear the leaders of the Polish People's Republic were unable to keep pace with changes on the international stage. Could it be, then, that the threat of martial law was a "tough measure" of domestic policy, an additional lever, or the other side of *perestroika*? The very fact that preparations for a state of emergency had been initiated has long been known to historians, yet for many years the narrative concerning the specific actions taken by the authorities as part of the operation codenamed *Horyzont* ("Horizon") lacked firm documentary foundations. It should be noted that the codename "Horizon" referred to a table of signals that meticulously defined the measures associated with the introduction of a state of emergency. This codename had not been used in any earlier documents relating to preparations for the introduction of a state of emergency – those files bore no codenames and were titled simply, for example, "State of Emergency." For the sake of clarity, I use the name "Horizon" throughout this text to refer to all the actions undertaken by the Ministry of Internal Affairs in preparation for a state of emergency. This situation was influenced by a number of factors that are already

well known. Above all, it stemmed from the deliberate destruction of ministerial documents (see Musiał 2006; Kozłowski 2019) at the turn of the 1980s and 1990s, but also from a form of official cover-up. This destruction encompassed a significant part of the documentation of the ministry and its subordinate units, so it should be emphasised that the destruction of materials concerning the possible introduction of a state of emergency in 1988 was merely an element of a much broader campaign. All documents relating to the state of emergency, which had been distributed according to the circulation list, were to be returned to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and this process was still being monitored in 1990. It seems that this was one of the key aspects of the transformation, showing that the communists sought to conceal both the elements of the processes leading to change and most of the mechanisms of governance itself – which, incidentally, was characteristic of the organisational culture of the dictatorship.

## General Remarks on States of Emergency

In discussions on states of emergency, one often encounters the argument that preparing for them is not reprehensible, since every state must have contingency plans for various situations. This is self-evident – defence planning and maintaining a state of readiness have been natural features of statehood throughout history (in the People's Republic of Poland, there existed a constant, heightened, and comprehensive state of defence readiness. Defence plans were regularly updated: the 1970 plan was replaced by a new one in 1976, which in turn was superseded by the 1985 plan; plans were codenamed PM-1970, PM-1977, and PM-1985) to contribute to a heightened sense of security among citizens. Nevertheless, the fact remains that the plans for the introduction of a state of emergency in 1988 contained lists of individuals designated for internment – which, on the one hand, reveals the oppressive nature of the system and, on the other, shows that these plans were highly specific. The fundamental difference from 'normal' contingency planning for exceptional situations lies in the fact that totalitarian and authoritarian regimes operate under the conditions of a permanent state of emergency. Moreover, the formal introduction of a state of emergency in such regimes stems from a deliberate deprivation of citizens' rights and the ad hoc implementation of extraordinary measures directed against the subjugated population. In this context, formal and legal matters are

primarily of procedural significance. Situations that might objectively justify the introduction of a state of emergency (for instance, natural disasters) are of secondary importance.

The Constitution of the Polish People's Republic of 22 July 1952 provided only for the introduction of martial law (*Dziennik Ustaw*, Polish Journal of Laws, hereinafter: *Dz.U.* 1952, no. 33, item 232). Its authors did not anticipate that social unrest or antagonisms could arise within a socialist state; therefore, a state of emergency – perceived by the communists as an unambiguously negative institution – was deemed unnecessary (the model of state functioning, incidentally, was already highly repressive). The literature on the subject points to the aversion of communist activists to such institutions, as they remembered that before the Second World War those had been used to combat political opponents, suppress revolutionary movements, and quell social protests (Mażewski 2010, p. 132; Brzeziński 2007, pp. 128–129). This was also the prevailing tendency in the so-called people's democracies (Smoliński 1982). The situation changed after martial law was imposed in the Polish People's Republic on 13 December 1981. There was, of course, an awareness of the legal doubts surrounding the imposition of martial law (see the judgement of the Polish Constitutional Tribunal of 16 March 2011, file ref. no. K 35/08, *Wyrok...* 2011; Martial law was introduced in violation of the law, although its scope remains a matter of dispute, see Mażewski 2012), which is why a decision was made to revise this part of the constitution. The proposal to include a state of emergency in the constitution was put forward at a meeting on 4 May 1982 by MP Edmund Osmańczyk. From that point onwards, the issue of a state of emergency was to cease being a “shameful matter” in the Polish People's Republic (cited in Smoliński 1982, p. 120).

Article 33 of the Constitution of the Polish People's Republic was amended on 20 July 1983, two days before the formal end of martial law (*Dz.U.* 1983, no. 39, item 175; this was the thirteenth amendment to the Constitution of the Polish People's Republic, which came into force on the day of its promulgation, 22 July 1983). The legislator introduced the concept of a state of emergency (paragraphs 3 and 4 were added to Article 33), which was linked both to internal threats to the state and to natural disasters (for a broad discussion of the introduction of a state of emergency due to a natural disaster, see Institute of National Remembrance Archives, hereinafter AIPN, 1510/2397, Master's thesis by Captain Andrzej Zwoliński, written under the academic supervision of Lieutenant Colonel Dr Teofil Bielecki, Warsaw 1989, pp. 81–105).

It may be assumed that, by referring to natural disasters, the authorities were to some extent masking the fact that the state of emergency could be used as an instrument of confrontation with society. However, it is equally plausible to assume that this was presented as a separate, independent extraordinary circumstance justifying the introduction of a state of emergency, rather than a mere façade. Certainly, during their speeches in the Sejm, the deputies supporting the new law were eager to emphasise this condition. Given the superficial nature of parliamentarianism in the People's Republic of Poland, this may be seen as an evasion of the obvious fact that the martial law introduced in 1981 was unconstitutional, even within the legal framework of the communist dictatorship.

## The Act of 5 December 1983 and Its Delegations

Work on a draft act intended to specify and elaborate the constitutional provisions concerning the state of emergency began – or perhaps only truly began – in August 1983 at the Ministry of Internal Affairs, when Karol Sławik, Director of the Organisational and Legal Bureau of the Ministry, approached the heads of Department III (responsible for combating the opposition), Department IV (for controlling the Church), Department V (for combating opposition among workers), the Investigation Bureau, the First Directorate (the ministry's unit responsible for defence preparations and mobilisation), the Social and Administrative Department (responsible for the supervision of legally operating social organisations), and the Chief Commander of the Citizens' Militia (head of the criminal and public order police), asking them to submit their requests and proposals for inclusion in the draft (AIPN, 1098/22, vol. 32, Draft decree on the state of emergency, Letter from Director Lt. Col. Dr. Karol Sławik, 1 August 1983, n.p.). In the following weeks, the Bureau received their responses (AIPN, 1098/22, vol. 32, Proposals of individual units of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, n.p.). The consultations were conducted in an accelerated mode, but as a result, a preventive measure already used during the 1981 martial law – in the form of 'warning interviews' – was formally incorporated into the draft. On 22 November 1983, the Sejm held the first reading of the draft bill presented by the Council of State and the Council of Ministers (*Sprawozdanie stenograficzne z 42 posiedzenia...* 1983; see also *Prace nad ustawą...* 1983). After the first reading, the draft was referred to the parliamentary Internal

Affairs and Justice Committee and the Legislative Committee. The final version of the bill returned to the Sejm on 5 December 1983 (*Sprawozdanie stenograficzne z 43 posiedzenia...* 1983; also Dz.U. 1983, no. 66, item 297; AIPN, 1098/15, vol. 1108).

The bill vested the Council of State – a collective body acting as the head of state – with the power to act by way of resolution and, in urgent cases, by way of decision, which could be taken by the Chairman of the Council of State on his own initiative, but also at the request of the Council of Ministers or the State Defence Committee. This provision had not been foreseen in the constitutional amendment adopted a few months earlier. In its first chapter, the bill repeated the general provisions contained in the constitution, while in the subsequent chapters it specified the rigours of a state of emergency. It provided for restrictions on citizens' fundamental rights, including personal inviolability, inviolability of the home, and confidentiality of correspondence, as well as the rights of association and freedom of assembly (with the exception of religious services and ceremonies of churches and religious associations), rallies, artistic and sporting events, marches, and demonstrations. The right to strike and the activities of associations, trade unions, and social organisations (with the exception of churches and religious associations) were to be suspended.

Other restrictions included the introduction of a so-called curfew, the obligation to obtain permission to change one's place of residence (both permanent and temporary), and the requirement to register at the new address within twelve hours of arrival. Citizens were obliged to carry an identity document when in a public place. The Council of Ministers could introduce censorship of correspondence and other postal items. The censorship authorities also had the right to interrupt telephone and telex calls. In addition, the use of printing presses and any sound or image recording devices required the consent of the publication and entertainment control authorities. Naturally, this was accompanied by a ban on photographing and filming certain places and objects. The right to suspend teaching activities in secondary and higher education institutions for a specified period of time was also retained. The Minister of Finance, in consultation with the President of the National Bank of Poland, could introduce restrictions on the circulation of cash and foreign currency (Dz.U. 1983, no. 66, item 297).

The administrative functions in matters of state security and defence during a state of emergency were assigned to the State Defence Committee and to the relevant local units, specifically the

provincial defence committees. Certain enterprises could be subject to militarisation, and citizens could be required to provide personal and material services for the defence of the state. The legislator provided for fines or imprisonment for non-compliance with these restrictions. Many provisions of the Act were almost identical to those of the Decree of 12 December 1981 on martial law (Dz.U. 1981, no. 29, item 154).

As in 1981, internment of oppositionists was to be the most important factor in the successful (and rapid) introduction of a state of emergency. The operation carried out at the time of the introduction of martial law had been considered so effective that the Act essentially replicated the guidelines from two years earlier. Even seventeen-year-olds could be interned if a warning interview with them proved ineffective, and warning interviews could be conducted with persons over the age of fourteen (in the presence of their parents or guardian).

A state of emergency could be introduced for a predetermined period of time; however, depending on the development of the situation, the Council of State could either shorten or extend it. There was also an ambiguous clause – open to broad interpretation – stating that internment could be revoked when the reasons justifying it ceased to exist, which, during martial law, had allowed the authorities to detain trade union and opposition activists indefinitely. A provision stipulating that during a person's internment in a detention centre their employment could not be terminated unless circumstances justifying such a step had already existed was likely intended as a demonstration of the regime's supposed 'legality.' All legal acts related to the introduction of a state of emergency were to be published in the Journal of Laws, announced in the mass media, and posted in publicly accessible places. Furthermore, the Minister of Foreign Affairs was required to notify the UN Secretary-General of the introduction of a state of emergency by means of an official note.

## The Year 1987

Paweł Kowal wrote in his monograph on the policies of General Jaruzelski's team in 1986–1989: "Only the leaders of the bloodless insurrection and well-informed representatives of the Church knew that within the walls of the ruling camp, preparations for change had been in full swing several years earlier, before the world learned about the Round Table" (Kowal 2012, p. 9). It is generally accepted by historians that the first visible signs of change in the policies of General



Wojciech Jaruzelski's team appeared in 1986–1987 (among others, see Dudek 2004, p. 17). Various factors are mentioned: Gorbachev's rise to power in the USSR in March 1985, the amnesty announced in 1986, the very difficult and still deteriorating economic situation in the country, which Jaruzelski's team was unable to cope with (Jabłonowski 2009, pp. 183–211), and the events of 1987, such as the failure of the referendum on the "second stage of economic reform," John Paul II's subsequent pilgrimage to Poland (with Gdańsk on the itinerary), the visit of the Vice President of the United States, George Bush, the appointment of an ombudsman, and the establishment of the Polish Culture Foundation (Kowal 2012, pp. 22–23). Years later, General Kiszczak presented this process differently in an interview with Monika Olejnik and Agnieszka Kublik:

"What happened in the USSR also happened under our influence. We influenced Gorbachev; we were at least three years ahead of him. I have the impression that sometimes people greatly exaggerate when talking about the influence of Gorbachev and perestroika on the changes in Poland. Gorbachev came to power in 1985, when dialogue with the opposition and the Church was already very advanced in Poland" (*Pożegnanie z bronią...* 2001).

However, the former minister did not mention that these changes also coincided with a significant acceleration of work on preparing

General Wojciech Jaruzelski (right), General Czesław Kiszczak (second from right), with the Ministry of Internal Affairs officials: Deputy Minister General Władysław Pożoga (left), Deputy Minister General Bogusław Stachura, (1981–1983). Photo: Institute of National Remembrance Archives, ref. no. AIPN, 024/52.



General Czesław Kiszczak. Official photo (1973–1979). Photo: Institute of National Remembrance Archives, ref. no. AIPN, 2174/7098

for a state of emergency. The credibility of Kiszczak's statements is also undermined by the fact that there was no dialogue with the opposition in Poland in 1985, and the dialogue with the Church was very cautious (especially after the murder of Father Jerzy Popiełuszko by Ministry of Internal Affairs officers in the autumn of 1984 and the trial of the murderers, which was used to attack the Church).

On 10 February 1987, the Secretary of the State Defence Committee, General Tadeusz Tuczapski, sent the Minister of Internal Affairs a *Schedule of formal and legal measures related to the introduction of a state of emergency due to a threat to the internal security of the state*. The document was sent, among others, to the Organisational and Legal Office of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, following which, in March 1987, preparations began for the relevant draft implementing legislation for the State of Emergency Act. The drafts were to be submitted to the Secretariat of the State Defence Committee by mid-April 1987 (working drafts were prepared in the Organisational and Legal Bureau of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, then sent to the First Directorate of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, where they were consulted with the Secretariat of the State Defence Committee on a working basis; see letters from February and March 1987 and drafts in files ref. AIPN, 1098/14, vol. 905/1, and AIPN, 1098/14, vol. 905/2, undated, n.p.). Moreover, in 1987, the First Directorate of the Ministry of Internal Affairs prepared documents entitled *Guiding Principles for Counteracting the Growing Threat to the Internal Security of the State and Procedures in the Event of the Necessity to Introduce a State of Emergency* (AIPN, 174/22, Records concerning the state of emergency, the First Directorate of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Guiding principle ..., 11 September 1987, pp. 12–26) and *Framework Plan of Measures to Be Taken by Political Bodies, Authorities, and State Administration in Connection with the Introduction and Functioning of a State of Emergency Due to a Threat to Internal Security of the State* (AIPN, 174/22, Records concerning the state of emergency, the First Directorate of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Framework Plan ..., 11 September 1987, pp. 33–41), which outlined the steps to be taken in the event of a threat to state security. The first document stipulated that the introduction of a state of emergency would be a final and extraordinary measure to protect the fundamental interests of the state and its citizens, and would only take place after “all other

ordinary means of influencing society and the national economy have been exhausted without success.” Work was planned on the legal acts and other documents necessary for the formal and legal introduction of a state of emergency. Preparations were divided into two levels of threat: “the first level, meaning an increased threat to the internal security of the state, which will be countered by measures resulting from generally applicable legal provisions,” and “the second level, covering a serious threat to the internal security of the state, which will be countered by measures resulting from specific legal provisions concerning a state of emergency” (AIPN, 174/22, Guiding principle..., 11 September 1987, pp. 14–17). The first level of threat included, among other things, intensified opposition activities such as placing drawings and inscriptions hostile to the authorities in public spaces, distributing illegal publications, broadcasting illegal radio and television programmes, holding unauthorised meetings and gatherings, and organising illegal strikes. In the event of an escalation and intensification of these activities, combined with the organisation of street riots, ‘sabotage actions’ in the economy, or the threat of a general strike, the introduction of the second level of threat was envisaged. At both threat levels, the political decision to introduce a state of emergency was to be made by the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers’ Party (AIPN, 174/22, Framework Plan..., 11 September 1987, pp. 33 and 37). Although many of the legal acts necessary to implement the measures specified in the Act were still in the drafting stage (among others AIPN, 1098/14, vol. 905/2, n.p., n.d.), the document set out many specific measures to be taken in response to particular situations, including the broadcast of a pre-recorded address to the nation by the President of the Council of State (AIPN, 174/22, Guiding principle..., 11 September 1987, p. 19). Work on preparing the necessary documentation in the ministries was coordinated and supervised by the Secretary of the State Defence Committee, General Tadeusz Tuczapski.

Moreover, in 1987, the First Directorate of the Ministry of Internal Affairs also prepared a document entitled *Intention and Guiding Principle for the Implementation of Tasks by the Ministry of Internal Affairs in the Event of a State of Emergency Being Declared in Part or All of the Country* (AIPN, 136/3, Intention and Guiding Principle..., 26 January 1988, pp. 300–323; also in other files: AIPN, 0808/3; AIPN, 174/22). This provided an ideological basis for detailed regulations, which had been developed over several months and approved on 26 January 1988 with the signature of General Kiszczak. The document

established a general framework, to be further elaborated by the relevant units of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, with the proviso that it applied solely to a state of emergency introduced in response to a threat to internal security of the state, while guidelines for action in the event of a natural disaster were to be developed separately. The document clearly conveyed the authorities' intentions. Their concern was related to the country's deteriorating economic situation, but above all to the social consequences of this state of affairs, notably the public mood shaped by declining real wages and rising prices – in other words, the fear of protests, strikes, and street demonstrations breaking out (AIPN, 136/3, Intention and Guiding Principle..., 26 January 1988, p. 302). It was assumed that underground activists would join spontaneously organised forms of pressure and would attempt to take over leadership, assert control, or strengthen their positions in workplaces, secondary schools, and universities in order to conduct political propaganda, calling for political and trade union pluralism and demanding the legalisation of opposition groups and Solidarity trade union structures. The perceived threats were not limited to “the opposition and Solidarity seeking to exploit economic discontent for their own political gain,” but extended to EEC and NATO countries. There were concerns about intensified intelligence and “politically inspiring” activity on the part of diplomatic, cultural, and trade representatives, whose actions, according to the authorities, were also intended to destabilise the socialist system and facilitate the seizure of power by the opposition.

In light of these concerns, if the threat escalated to a point where ordinary measures of state protection proved insufficient, a state of emergency was to be introduced, encompassing all the restrictions described above. Ordinary measures of internal security were understood to include intensive operational activities by the security police, preventive and political measures, and restrictions on the activities of the opposition and illegal structures through liquidation, warning interviews, and administrative repression. Disintegration and disinformation activities were to be carried out.

Two procedural variants were prepared, depending on whether the threat affected the entire country or only part of its territory. However, it was emphasised that it would be both more likely and more advantageous to conduct the operation on a broader scale. As was noted, while a curfew could be introduced in one region without significant harm to the overall plan, in the case of internment, for instance, it was feared that restricting it to a single region would enable

opposition activists to re-establish leadership structures elsewhere and would also cause many of those designated for detention to go into hiding. The main burden of action was to fall on the forces of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, but if they proved unable to control the situation, the State Defence Committee could decide to deploy the Armed Forces of the People's Republic of Poland. However, it was assumed that such a decision would only be taken in an extreme situation (AIPN, 136/3. *Intention and Guiding Principle...*, pp. 304–305). *The Intention and Guiding Principle...* was supplemented by appendices: *Concept for Strengthening the Forces and Resources of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in the Event of an Increase in the Threat to the Internal Security of the Polish People's Republic* (AIPN, 136/3, *Concept for Strengthening...*, Appendix to the *Intention and Guiding Principle*, pp. 320–323) and *List of Executive Legal Acts to the Act on the State of Emergency, developed by the Ministry of Internal Affairs* (AIPN 136/3, *List of Executive Legal Acts ...*, Appendix to the *Intention and Guiding Principle*, pp. 328–331). At the first level of threat, the ministry's forces were to be reinforced by approximately 160 companies of the Citizens' Militia Reserve Units (ROMO), with three to four companies for each provincial office of internal affairs (around 13,000 reservists and 1,100 permanent officers). Within the Border Protection Forces, it was planned that over 3,000 reservists and about 100 specialists (drivers, cooks, and others) would be called up, and within the Military Units of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (*Nawiślańskie Jednostki Wojskowe Ministerstwa Spraw Wewnętrznych*, hereinafter NJW MSW), around 600 reservists (AIPN 136/3, *Concept for Strengthening...*, pp. 324–327). In the event of a nationwide state of emergency, the mobilisation of the Ministry of Internal Affairs forces was planned on a scale similar to that undertaken in wartime (AIPN 136/3, *Intention and Guiding Principle...*, p. 310). The forces of the Citizens' Militia (MO) and the Volunteer Reserve of the Citizens' Militia (ORMO) were to be quartered and concentrated in the areas most exposed to threat. It was also deemed necessary to militarise the Security Service, the Citizens' Militia, the KONSUMY Catering and Trade Company [Ministry's of Internal Affairs supply net – editor's remark], and the Prison Service.

General Kiszczak's signature on the document in January 1988 marked the completion of the general conceptual work. However, this did not signify the end of preparations for the introduction of a state of emergency, as the efforts undertaken went far beyond the creation of a mere conceptual framework. In the second half of

1987, the First Directorate not only drafted all the legal documents related to the introduction of a state of emergency but also prepared the relevant forms, which required only the insertion of a date. The documents covered various eventualities, depending on who would be responsible for declaring the state of emergency. These were not ordinary administrative templates but were addressed to specific, named individuals at the highest levels of the state—for instance, Roman Malinowski, Marshal of the Sejm of the People's Republic of Poland; Zbigniew Messner, Prime Minister; and Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, Secretary-General of the United Nations—all prepared for the signatures of Wojciech Jaruzelski, Czesław Kiszczak, Zbigniew Messner, Tadeusz Olechowski, Lech Domeracki, and Florian Siwicki. The only redacted elements were the date and the information specifying who was introducing the state of emergency and at whose request. It should be noted that, in January 1988, the government announced price increases that were to take effect from 1 February. Having learned from the experiences of previous years, the authorities had to anticipate a strong public reaction to these measures, which raises the question of the coincidence of these dates—particularly since, as is evident from the content of the *Intention and Guiding Principle...*, it was recognised that social unrest would likely erupt against an economic backdrop. The acceleration and refinement of documentation related to the possible introduction of a state of emergency may therefore be interpreted not only as a genuine readiness to implement it but also as the creation of an effective instrument of state control. The mere existence of such an instrument provided the authorities with additional leverage over both the opposition and society as a whole.

## 1988 – Full Readiness

In the spring of 1988, a wave of strikes swept across the country. Workers protested in Stalowa Wola, Bydgoszcz, and Kraków (see note by OPZZ, i.e., All-Polish Trade Unions Cooperation [regime-controlled trade union headquarters – editor's remark] Chairman Alfred Miodowicz on the strike at the Lenin Steelworks in Kraków on 1 May 1988, submitted to the meeting of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party on 3 May 1988, in *Polska 1986–1989...* 2002, vol. 3, *Dokumenty...*, pp. 82–86), while students demonstrated in Wrocław, Kraków, Warsaw, and Gdańsk. On 29 April, a strike broke out at the Stalowa



Wola Steelworks, where the workers once again demanded pay rises and the reinstatement of colleagues dismissed for their trade union activities. Among their demands was also the legal registration of Solidarity. Were the authorities on the verge of declaring a state of emergency? They reacted swiftly and efficiently. Around one thousand striking workers were cut off from food supplies, surrounded by a cordon of the Motorised Reserves of the Citizens' Militia (ZOMO), and threatened with the deployment of the army. The following day, the strikers left the plant. The strike at the Lenin Steelworks took an even more dramatic turn when, during the night of 4–5 May, an anti-terrorist brigade stormed the plant, followed by ZOMO units, which brutally crushed the protest. The repression did not end there: further punitive measures were taken against the strikers. Members of the Strike Committee who had not been detained at the site were dragged from their homes at night, with their doors broken down in the process. On 2 May, the Lenin Shipyard in Gdańsk also went on strike (Codogni 2009, pp. 63–93; Dudek 2004, p. 138; Kowal 2012, pp. 368–373).

Demonstrants clashing with riot police, Nowy Świat Street, Warsaw, 1 May 1988. Photo: Jan Hausbrandt (1988). Institute of National Remembrance Archives, ref. no. AIPN, 3260/2, photographic collection of Jan Hausbrandt.

Coincidentally, on 29 April 1988, General Kiszczak issued a *Decision concerning the implementation of tasks by the Ministry of Internal Affairs in the event of a state of emergency caused by a threat to internal security of the state* (AIPN, 2858/116, Decision of the Minister of Internal Affairs of 29 April 1988 concerning the implementation of tasks by the Ministry of Internal Affairs in the event of a state of emergency caused by a threat to internal security of the state, 29 April 1988, pp. 2–3; see the same document in file AIPN, 01587/14). The coincidence of this date with the outbreak of the strike in Stalowa Wola is striking, yet it is difficult to regard it as accidental – preparing the documentation for the minister’s signature must have taken more than a few hours. At that time, a detailed schedule of work was drawn up for all units of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and for the provincial internal affairs offices involved in the preparations (AIPN, 2858/116, Schedule for the implementation by organisational units of preparatory work related to ensuring the implementation of tasks by the Ministry of Internal Affairs in the event of a state of emergency caused by a threat to internal state security, 29 April 1988, pp. 4 ff.). The basis for this work was to be the 1983 State of Emergency Act and the 1988 *Intention and Guiding Principle...*, though it was also recommended that reference be made to the defence plans codenamed “PM-85” and to the experience gained during the period of martial law. The work was to be carried out in strict secrecy, and the number of officers involved in the preparations was to be kept to the minimum necessary. Importantly, for each task listed in the table the deadline column reads “immediately,” which supports the conclusion that the preparations – which had been under way for several months – were not merely routine activities; even if they had been, they ceased to be so in April 1988. Supervision and coordination of the work were entrusted to the Undersecretary of State, Brigadier General Zbigniew Pudysz, who on the same day circulated the minister’s decision to the relevant units and requested that they proceed with the implementation of the tasks without delay (AIPN, 1098/15, vol. 1108).

At the same time, the possibility of dialogue with representatives of the opposition was being explored; on the other hand, a decision was taken to pacify the Steelworks and another option for resolving the crisis was prepared – the introduction of a state of emergency. According to the preserved materials, the heads of the Provincial Office of Internal Affairs (*Wojewódzki Urząd Spraw Wewnętrznych*, WUSW) and the Capital City Office for Internal Affairs (*Stołeczny Urząd Spraw Wewnętrznych*, SUSW) began to prepare voivodeship timetables

related to the implementation of the task (this was part of official practice and did not mean an automatic transition to further measures) (among others Oddziałowe Archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej w Rzeszowie, Institute of National Remembrance Branch in Rzeszów Archives, hereinafter: AIPN Rz, 01/402, vol. 7, Decision no. 02/I/88 of the Head of the Provincial Office of Internal Affairs in Krosno of 5 May 1988 on the implementation by the Provincial Office of Internal Affairs in Krosno of tasks in the event of a state of emergency due to a threat to internal security of the state, 5 May 1988, p. 40 ff.; AIPN, 0808/26; n.p.); Oddziałowe Archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej w Lublinie, Institute of National Remembrance Branch in Lublin Archives, hereinafter: AIPN Lu, 0107/3, part 26; AIPN, 0808/99, Letter from the head of Division V-2 of the Capital City Office of Internal Affairs in Warsaw to the head of the Special Division of the Provincial Office of Internal Affairs, 20 May 1988, p. 19 ff.). It should be noted that reconstructing the past from the documentary legacy of bureaucracy means that descriptions of office workflows and activities contained in the files tend to stand in for the actual course of events and create the impression of an inevitable process being set in motion. In reality, this documentation represents primarily bureaucratic activity – in procedural states such as communist dictatorships, such paperwork often served as a smokescreen for political action, without necessarily reflecting it fully.

In the days following the issuance of Kiszczak's April decision, special meetings were held in individual provincial offices during which the heads of office were briefed on the minister's decision and the other referenced documents. They were then obliged to develop immediately the following plans and measures: plans for internment and for conducting warning interviews; procedures for disconnecting communications and for establishing emergency communications to direct the Provincial Internal Affairs Offices; arrangements for the physical protection of facilities essential to provincial functioning; plans for city blockades and for securing selected sectors of the economy; schemes for organising censorship; preparation of barracks for units earmarked for deployment; plans for the use and quartering of ORMO forces; reinforcement of the Provincial Internal Affairs Offices units by selecting an appropriate number of reservists and preparing documentation for their conscription and a mobilisation base; plans for requisitioning the necessary numbers of transport vehicles from the national economy; as well as contingency plans for medical and sanitary security.

The plans were prepared in both descriptive and graphic form, marked on maps and city plans indicating detention centres or containing numerical data such as the number of people to be interned or facilities to be secured (see e.g., Oddziałowe Archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej w Poznaniu, Institute of National Remembrance Branch in Poznań Archives, hereinafter AIPN Po, 06/278, vol. 41, Rules for the organisation of tasks performed by the Provincial Offices of Internal Affairs in the event of a state of emergency being declared in a province or throughout the country, 28 June 1988, p. 129). Although most of these documents were destroyed, the surviving materials provide sufficient evidence of how advanced the preparations for the introduction of a state of emergency had become. As in 1981, the smooth execution of the state of emergency was to be ensured by securing communications – communication devices were to be switched off late in the evening or at night, prior to the commencement of the internment operation (AIPN Po, 06/278, vol. 41, p. 244) – and by establishing the Main Office of Censorship along with its provincial and regional branches. The authorities empowered to open correspondence, confiscate it, or obscure specific content were to operate openly, with censored letters marked accordingly. Once again, drawing on the experience of 1981, crowbars and handcuffs were regarded as essential for the success of the operation. Interestingly, it was recommended that communications personnel selected for participation be summoned to assembly points without being informed of the true purpose of the summons (AIPN Po, 06/278, vol. 41, p. 245). They were to be briefed on their tasks only immediately before the operation began, while those who refused to carry them out were to be isolated for its duration.

On 18 May 1988, Brigadier General Zbigniew Pudysz approved the *Instruction on the use of the signal table codenamed “Horyzont”* and the *Table of telephone and telegraph signals for the implementation of the measures specified in the Schedule, related to the introduction of a state of emergency due to a threat to internal security of the state, codenamed “Horyzont”* (AIPN, 2858/116, Instructions for the use of the signal table codenamed “Horyzont”; see also other references, e.g., AIPN, 1585/3486, with a handwritten note regarding the opening of the envelope, as described below). The table, comprising of 51 signals, was deposited in a specially secured (sealed) envelope with all undersecretaries of state and heads of services in the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the heads of its organisational units, the commanders of the Border Protection Troops (*Wojska Ochrony Pogranicza*, hereinafter

WOP) and NJW MSW units, the Chief Commander of the Fire Service, the heads of provincial offices of internal affairs, and the commanders of Ministry's schools and training centres. The decision to launch the operation and to implement individual measures was to be taken by the Minister of Internal Affairs or the Head of the Internal Affairs Staff, who would use the code word *Horyzont* to declare a state of emergency (AIPN, 2858/116, Instructions for using the code table codenamed "Horyzont", 18 May 1988, pp. 13–14). The order to implement the plan could encompass all of the measures listed in the table or only a selected subset. According to the guidelines, the operation was to commence at night, with the exact time to be determined by the Minister of Internal Affairs or the Head of the Ministry's Staff.

In mid-August 1988, further waves of protest erupted. On 15 August, a strike broke out at the *Manifest Lipcowy* coal mine in Jastrzębie-Zdrój, followed in the subsequent days by strikes in other mines and industrial centres: on 17 August, operations ceased at the Port of Szczecin, and the next day, at the Provincial Public Transport Company. On 20 August, the protest movement reached Gdańsk, and two days later, the largest strike of August 1988 began at the Stalowa Wola Steelworks. Inter-factory strike committees were established, and the protesters demanded, among other things, the restoration of Solidarity's activities.

It appears that Jaruzelski and Kiszczak came closest to repeating the manoeuvre of December 1981 at precisely that moment, in August 1988. From 3 August onwards, permanent duty rosters began to be



Riot police officers apprehending demonstrant, Gdańsk, 14 August 1988. Photo: Institute of National Remembrance Branch in Gdańsk Archives, ref. no. AIPN Gd, 73/6.

introduced in Provincial Defence Committees across the country (with the exception of Białystok, Warsaw, Łomża and Suwałki) (Kowalski 1993, p. 16). On 18 August, Colonel Bronisław Pawlikowski, Director of the First Directorate of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, convened a teleconference for directors, the commanders of the Border Protection Forces and the Internal Security Agency of the Ministry, the Commander-in-Chief of the Citizens' Militia, and the heads of the Provincial Offices of Internal Affairs, in order to personally review all plans relating to the introduction of a state of emergency – a fact that clearly demonstrates the real nature of the preparations, since the relevant documentation had already been completed. He instructed that by 9 p.m., via a high-frequency telephone line (available exclusively to government institutions), the First Directorate of the Ministry of Internal Affairs should be informed of the need to establish a ROMO unit, including the means of transport, accommodation and food requirements in Ministry of Defence military facilities, and the date of its formation. He reported that 400 WOP soldiers and 50 from the NJW MSW Military Units could be placed at the disposal of the Head of the WUSW in Katowice, 700 soldiers from the NJW MSW units could be made available to the Head of the Capital City Office of Internal Affairs, and 200 soldiers from the Pomeranian WOP Brigade could be assigned to the Head of the Provincial Office of Internal Affairs in Szczecin. The commanders of the WOP, the NJW MSW units, and the Chief Commander of the Fire Service were to organise reserves for possible deployment in law enforcement operations. He further reported that the Head of the Ministry of Internal Affairs Staff, General Henryk Dankowski, had already requested the Chief of the General Staff of the Polish Armed Forces to deploy military forces in the form of a battalion and helicopters equipped with smoke generators in the threatened urban areas. Their task was to provide support to the militia's operations. From the following day, air and land transport was to be prepared and ready to transfer 400 officers to the cities considered at risk. Equally important, Colonel Pawlikowski ordered that all members of the management be acquainted with the instructions for using the table codenamed "Horyzont" (to which access was to be granted to the duty officer) (AIPN, 174/28, Insert for the speech given during the teleconference on 18 August 1988 by the Director of First Directorate of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Lieutenant Colonel Br. Pawlikowski, 18 August 1988, pp. 62–63). Some – perhaps all – were then familiarised not only with the instructions on how to respond in the event of receiving a call from

the headquarters, but also with the contents of the sealed envelope itself. One of these envelopes bears a handwritten annotation in red ink by Lechosław Stemplewski, then Director of the Human Resources Department at the Ministry of Internal Affairs: "On 18 August 1988, in the presence of Comrade Colonel Borkowski, I received an order from Comrade General Chomętowski to open the envelope codenamed »Horyzont«". The note is initialled and dated 18 August 1988 (AIPN, 1585/3486, Instructions for using the table of signals codenamed "Horyzont", 18 August 1988, n.p.). Colonel Tadeusz Borkowski was at that time Deputy Director of the Human Resources Department, while General Józef Chomętowski headed the Ministry's Human Resources and Professional Development Service, which comprised the Human Resources Department, the Training and Professional Development Department, and the Ministry's education system (see *Aparat bezpieczeństwa...*, vol. 3, 1975–1990 2008, p. 15).

On 20 August 1988, a meeting of the State Defence Committee, chaired by Jaruzelski, was held. As mentioned in the introduction, this issue has been studied by Lech Kowalski. During the meeting, Kiszczak spoke about measures aimed at strengthening the ministry's units by calling up individuals with mobilisation assignments for training exercises and by requisitioning means of transport as part of national defence obligations (Kowalski 2011, p. 591; Kowalski 1993, pp. 16 ff.; AIPN, 167/5, vol. 2, Protocol no. 01/88 from the meeting of the Committee of Defence of the Country on 20 August 1988, 20 August 1988, p. 388). In fact, mobilisation was already underway (e.g., Oddziałowe Archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej w Gdańsku, Institute of National Remembrance Branch in Gdańsk Archives, hereinafter AIPN Gd, 430/26, Report on the ongoing campaign since 20 August 1988 to mobilise personnel and transport reserves under the first level of national security threat, 23 August 1988, pp. 23–24). By the end of 22 August, despite the holiday season, the ROMO subunits had been fully mobilised – over 12,000 people were called up to support the Security Service and ZOMO (Kowalski 1993, p. 17; Dudek 2004, p. 165). It should be noted, however, that ROMO was of rather limited operational value to the law enforcement agencies. Kiszczak also reported that the heads of the Provincial Offices of Internal Affairs and the directors of the Ministry's of Internal Affairs units had confirmed their readiness to implement the state of emergency tasks (AIPN, 174/28, Actions of the Ministry of Internal Affairs during the period of increasing internal threat – Draft speech by the Minister of Internal Affairs at the Committee of Defense of the Country [*Komitet Obrony*



Surveillance photo of Solidarity banner placed on Warsaw University's main gate, 23 August 1988. Photo: Institute of National Remembrance Archives, ref. no. AIPN, 01232/201

*Kraju*, hereinafter: KOK] meeting, 20 August 1988, p. 66). The Minister of National Defence, General Florian Siwicki, announced that military units were on standby and that the necessary documentation for the possible introduction of a state of emergency was being prepared. He also stated that measures had been taken to conscript striking miners for basic military service – in order to isolate and neutralise them – and to locate soldiers currently in service who could carry out cargo-handling work at the Szczecin–Świnoujście Port Complex (to replace striking workers), as well as to form a transport unit to ensure the operation of public transport in Szczecin (AIPN, 174/28, *Actions of the Ministry...*, pp. 64–66; AIPN, 174/28, *Preliminary proposals for counteracting strike actions*, pp. 67–69; Kowalski 2011, p. 592; Kowalski 1993, p. 17). Ultimately, General Jaruzelski ordered preparations to begin for the militarisation of selected workplaces and the organisation of military exercises enabling the conscription of individuals deemed dangerous (Dudek 2004, pp. 166 ff.; Kowalski 1993, p. 19). This episode demonstrates an attempt to resort to another scenario known from the past – successfully implemented in November 1982 – which involved conscripting into the army the trade union activists who might engage in strikes (*Inteligentna forma...* 2016).

The second half of August certainly warrants further in-depth study, as Kiszczak and Jaruzelski were acting on two fronts simultaneously. On 21 August 1988, at a meeting of the Political Bureau, also chaired by Jaruzelski, a decision was made to commence talks with a part of



Surveillance photo of Solidarity banner placed on the Warsaw University's main gate, 23 August 1988. Photo: Institute of National Remembrance Archives, ref. no. AIPN, 01232/194

the opposition, which in fact were already underway (Dudek 2004, pp. 166 ff.; Kamiński 2003, p. 31). A few days later, the 8th Plenum of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party formally endorsed the initiation of dialogue with the opposition. However, the beginning of talks did not in any way interrupt preparations for the introduction of a state of emergency. On the one hand, negotiations were underway; on the other, in close cooperation with the armed forces, the Ministry of Internal Affairs mobilised all its resources to implement measures appropriate to a first-level state of emergency, maintaining full readiness in case the state of emergency was declared (AIPN, 174/28, Actions of the ..., pp. 64–66). On the morning of 22 August, Jaruzelski convened a meeting of the so-called directorate, comprising Kiszczak, Siwicki, and KOK chairman and study group at the Council of State Chairman Wiesław Górnicki (see Przeperski 2022, pp. 133–144). Based on Górnicki's notes, Paweł Kowal assessed that Jaruzelski, despite being aware of the consequences of suppressing the strikes, was still leaning towards confrontation at that time. For instance, he announced the rapid suppression of the strike in the event of its spreading at the Lenin Shipyard in Gdańsk (Kowal 2012, p. 397). On the same day, the director of the Investigation Bureau of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Colonel Jerzy Karpacz, instructed the relevant local investigation divisions of the Provincial Internal Affairs Office to undertake the necessary preparatory work. This included establishing special operational groups to handle internees, selecting a number of secret collaborators who, as in 1981, would also be subject to internment decisions, and installing operational and technical equipment in detention centres (AIPN, 0808/108, Letter from the Director of the Investigation Bureau, Lieutenant Colonel Jerzy Karpacz, to the heads of the Provincial Offices of Internal Affairs, 22 August 1988, p. 18). Furthermore, on 22 August, Colonel Karpacz announced the locations of the detention centres.

As noted earlier, the internment of opposition activists was considered the most important factor for the successful implementation of martial law. While intended as a temporary measure, past experience had shown it to be the most effective method of silencing the opposition. It is worth recalling that Jaruzelski referred to the execution of this operation in 1981 as a “masterstroke of the staff,” without which the imposition of martial law would have been pointless (AIPN, 174/27, Speech by the Director of First Directorate at a meeting at the Territorial Defence Inspectorate during the events of August 1988, August 1988, p. 14). The authorities also intended to draw on other proven experiences. The matter was finalised on 29 August 1988, when General Kiszczak signed *Order no. 0059/88 of the Minister of Internal Affairs concerning the preparation and execution of internment and the conduct of warning interviews*, together with detailed instructions on the rules for implementing these activities (AIPN, 01094/449, vol. 21, Order no. 0059/88 of the Minister of Internal Affairs on the preparation and implementation, in the event of a state of emergency, of the internment of persons and the conduct of warning interviews, 29 August 1988, n.p.). The Director of the Investigation Bureau of the Ministry of Internal Affairs was tasked with coordinating and supervising the internment operation, while the operational work within the detention centres was to be carried out by the Investigation Bureau itself and the investigation divisions of the provincial internal affairs offices. The order retained the much-criticised wording from 1981, stating that internment applied to persons “in respect of whom there is reasonable suspicion that, if left at liberty, they would not comply with the legal order or would engage in activities threatening the interests of state security.” This basis was further specified with a regime-typical list of individuals to be subject to internment. According to the instructions, the following persons in particular were to be interned:

1. Opposition leaders known for their anti-state attitudes;
2. Active members of illegal opposition structures;
3. Persons who had been interned in 1981 and were suspected of resuming opposition activities;
4. Individuals exerting a ‘negative influence’ on their environment or inciting others to disobey the authorities;
5. Persons using their authority to support activities against state security or public order;
6. Organisers of strikes and other protests in workplaces;



Banner with the strike demands on the Gdańsk Shipyard gate no. 3: "Inter-Enterprise Striking Committee postulates: 1. Restore the legality of Solidarity Trade Union activity, 2. Restore those fired for Union activity, 3. Realign wages, retirement and health pensions to compensate price rises, 4. Secure the freedom of activity for associations, among them the Independent Students' Association and creative associations, 5. Secure safety guarantees for strikers and their helpers." Gdańsk, August 1988. Photo: Stanisław Składanowski (1988). Institute of National Remembrance Archives, ref. no. 3493/5.

7. Persons maintaining contacts with employees of NATO representative offices in Poland;
8. Persons suspected of committing 'serious economic abuses' or other crimes, where there were no formal grounds for temporary arrest;
9. Persons who had not ceased their 'negative activities' despite a warning interview;
10. Candidates for personal sources of information in detention centres.

(AIPN, 01094/449, vol. 21, Instructions on the detailed rules for the preparation and implementation of internment of persons and conducting warning interviews, 29 August 1988, n.p.)

The order came into force on the day it was signed. It is also significant that two days later, on 31 August, Kiszczak attended his first meeting with Lech Wałęsa since the imposition of martial law (Dudek 2004, pp. 172 ff.). The meeting, held in a secret facility of the Ministry of Internal Affairs – a villa on Zawrat Street in Warsaw – is considered a turning point in relations between the authorities and the opposition, especially since it was made public, but it did not influence the matter in which we are particularly interested. On 1 September 1988, the heads of the Provincial Internal Affairs Offices and the Capital City Internal Affairs Office were sent forms for internment decisions and orders for placement in detention centres, with a note that these were strictly confidential documents (AIPN Po, 064/33/1, Lieutenant Colonel Jerzy Karpacz, to the heads of the Provincial Offices of Internal Affairs, 1 September 1988, p. 323).

It is noteworthy that while developing their own solutions, they continued to monitor experiences from other countries, such as Canada. In September 1987, Colonel Jerzy Garlej requested translations from English and French of a draft state of emergency act, provided by the Polish People's Republic embassy in Ottawa. As he explained, the translations were "necessary as comparative material for work on draft legislation regulating the issue of a state of emergency in the People's Republic of Poland" (AIPN, 1098/15, vol. 745). In Canada, these acts were intended to replace the widely criticised Martial Law Act of 1914. The First Directorate of the Ministry of Internal Affairs received the translations on 7 November 1988, but the Canadian regulations could not be adopted by the communist regime, if only because of the numerous guarantees and safeguards against the government's abuse of special powers (both houses of parliament would have had the right to veto a government declaration of a state of emergency) and the provision of compensation for persons who might suffer physical or material harm as a result of its introduction.

The second half of 1988 was a period when internal and external conditions shifted kaleidoscopically. It suffices to note that, although talks with the opposition were becoming increasingly intense, Zbigniew Messner's government collapsed and Mieczysław F. Rakowski, described by Jaruzelski as the 'last resort,' assumed the office of prime minister (Rakowski 1991, p. 119; Przeperski 2021, pp. 321 ff.). As Łukasz Kamiński observed, the few weeks of October and November 1988 represented the last period when the authorities enjoyed the wind in their sails. The change in the prime ministership and the possibility of "turning back the tide" demonstrated the high stakes involved – evidenced not only by the continuation of preparations for the introduction of a state of emergency, in particular the decisions to deploy Committee of Defence of the Country (*Komitet Obrony Kraju*, KOK) representatives (military commissioners) to industrial plants (as Lech Kowalski aptly noted, in 1981, KOK commissioners, who played a significant role in the operation preparations, went into the field six days before the introduction of martial law, on 7 December; Kowalski 1993, pp. 24–25), but also by Rakowski's confrontational decision on 29 October 1988 to liquidate the Lenin Shipyard in Gdańsk (the cradle of Solidarity) and the brutal dispersal of the demonstration on 11 November 1988.

On 16 November 1988, explaining the decision to close the Lenin Shipyard to the GDR ambassador in Warsaw, Jürgen van Zwoll, M.F. Rakowski pointed out that the proposal did not originate from



him, but from the Economic Committee of the Council of Ministers (KERM), and added “in Poland, only through shock can a matter that has long been stuck in a deadlock be pushed onto a new track. Comrade Jaruzelski and the party leadership agreed. For the first time in years, the government showed that it had power” (Note by the GDR ambassador in Warsaw from a conversation with the Prime Minister of the People’s Republic of Poland, Mieczysław F. Rakowski, held on 16 November 1988, in *Polska 1986–1989...* 2002, vol. 3, p. 178). According to Kamiński, these decisions were clearly aimed at disrupting the talks (Kamiński 2003, pp. 31–32), and contemporary assessments supported this interpretation. In a letter to Kiszczak dated 5 November 1988, Wałęsa directly described the decision to liquidate the shipyard as “blocking the road to the Round Table” (Codogni 2012, p. 39, and footnote 142), and discussions on the procedural rules for the future Round Table were suspended as a result (Dudek 2004, p. 211; Codogni 2012, p. 39). One may, however, question whether the underlying motive was to humiliate the opposition and expose its weaknesses. This interpretation is suggested by the aforementioned conversation between Rakowski and Ambassador van Zwoll, in which it was noted that, as a result of this poker move, “Wałęsa must have

Surveillance photo of a demonstration in Gdańsk, riot police officers in the foreground, Autumn 1988. Photo: Institute of National Remembrance Branch in Gdańsk Archives, ref. no. AIPN Gd, 371/242

understood and come to the conclusion that the conditions for a strike do not currently exist. Just last week, he announced that there would be a demonstration once a week. Yesterday, he announced that the next one would take place in April 1989” (Note by the GDR ambassador in Warsaw..., in *Polska 1986–1989* 2002, vol. 3, p. 178). The aim was, of course, to present the talks with the opposition in a more favourable light and to gain a strategic advantage. At that point, a forceful solution was probably no longer a realistic option for the authorities. Following Kiszczak’s speech on 26 August 1988 announcing dialogue with the opposition (which distanced him from his publicly stated threat of introducing a state of emergency on 22 August), the public meeting between Wałęsa and Kiszczak on 31 August, and the conclusion of the largest strikes in early September, the likelihood of introducing a state of emergency as a viable solution had significantly diminished.

Lech Wałęsa (left) and Bishop Jerzy Dąbrowski (right) during talks with government representatives in Ministry of Internal Affairs venue at Zawrat Street in Warsaw, 31 August 1988. Photo: Institute of National Remembrance Archives, ref. no. AIPN, 3333/70



This was particularly true given that dialogue with the Polish opposition had already received public acknowledgement in Moscow, exemplified, for instance, by the Soviet authorities’ request conveyed through diplomatic channels for Lech Wałęsa to give an interview to *Literaturnaya Gazeta* in August 1988. On the other hand, M.F. Rakowski declared within the ruling circle that he was prepared to respond to strikes and protests with confrontation, for instance by closing universities (Dudek 2004, pp. 209–212), while state propaganda attacked Jacek Kuroń and Adam Michnik as ‘extremists’ (Dudek 2004, pp. 212–213; Codogni 2012, p. 39, footnote 143). The resistance of significant factions within the party apparatus and the authorities

was also crucial, not only in relation to possible concessions to the opposition or its tolerance, but also to broader changes in the political and economic system, and sometimes even to holding talks with the opposition at all (Dudek 2004, pp. 134, 145–146, 166–170, 206–207). The position of the Church, which acted as an intermediary in talks with the opposition, also had to be carefully managed, including through the build-up of intimidation measures. The confrontational decisions and actions of the authorities in 1988 were therefore part of a wide-ranging strategy to exert pressure on society, the opposition, and the Church, which involved not so much the actual introduction of a state of emergency as just the threat of doing so.

At the same time, although the authorities still refused to consider legalising the union, open founding committees of the Solidarity trade union began to appear across the country, new organisations were



Strike slogans painted on the roofs of the Gdańsk Shipyard buildings, seen from the suburban train: *Solidarność* (Solidarity). *Do zwycięstwa* (To the victory). *Zalegalizować* (Legalise). Gdańsk, August 1988. Photo: Stanisław Składanowski (1988). Institute of National Remembrance Archives, ref. no. 3493/5

established, the Polish section of the Pen Club resumed its activities, students organised themselves, and political clubs called *Ład i Wolność* (Order and Freedom) were formed. In early November, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher visited Gdańsk, where she laid flowers at the monument to the Victims of December 1970 and met with Lech Wałęsa. The political impasse was finally broken by a televised debate between Wałęsa and Alfred Miodowicz, a member of the party's Political Bureau and head of the party apparatus subordinate to the trade union headquarters, on 30 November 1988. The broadcast was live, and public opinion regarded Wałęsa as the victor (see introduction to the selection of documents *X Plenum KC PZPR...* 2018, p. 14).



Striking Gdańsk Shipyard, Northern Shipyard and Repair Shipyard workers going along Gdańsk Shipyard buildings to the 1970 Fallen Shipyard Workers Monument. Slogans on the shipyard buildings: *Głodny stocznowiec nie będzie pracował* (Hungry shipyard worker will not work), *Precz z cenzurą!* (Down with censorship!), *To nic ale mamy za to socjalizm* (It's all right, at least we have socialism), *Strajki to głos!* [...] (Strikes are the voice...). Gdańsk, August 1988. Photo: Stanisław Składanowski (1988). Institute of National Remembrance Archives, ref. no. 3493/5

In December, a Citizens' Committee (*Komitet Obywatelski*) was established under the chairmanship of the Solidarity leader (Eisler 2018, p. 461). Meanwhile, on 17 December 1988, the Director of the First Directorate of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Colonel Bronisław Pawlikowski, reported on the proper implementation of the decision of the Minister of Internal Affairs of 29 April 1988 concerning the implementation of tasks by the Ministry of Internal Affairs in the event of a state of emergency caused by a threat to internal security of the state (AIPN, 174/28, Report on the implementation of the decision of the Minister of Internal Affairs of 29 April 1988 concerning the implementation of tasks by the Ministry of Internal Affairs in the event of a state of emergency caused by a threat to internal security of the state, 17 December 1988, pp. 35–36). He assessed that both the First Directorate and all other units involved in the preparations had properly carried out the tasks assigned to them and thus confirmed his readiness to introduce a state of emergency. This report was submitted just before the first round of deliberations of the 10th Plenum of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party (20–21 December 1988), when party members were

informed of the inevitability of reforms (see the speeches by General Jaruzelski and Marian Orzechowski on the first day of the session on 20 December 1988, in: *X Plenum KC PZPR...* 2018, pp. 33–51).

In the context of preparations for the possible introduction of a state of emergency, it is important to consider the role of the armed forces. During preparations for the operation codenamed “Horyzont,” the Ministry of Internal Affairs repeatedly stressed that cooperation with the military was a *sine qua non* for the operation’s success. The martial law period of 1981–1983 had been military not only in terms of appearance, but, as is well known, a significant part of it had been implemented by the armed forces of the Polish People’s Republic (AIPN 174/28, Speech at a meeting at the Territorial Defence Inspectorate during the events of August 1988, August 1988, p. 24). As noted earlier, according to the *Intention and Guiding Principle...*, the main burden of the operations was to rest on the forces of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, but if they were unable to control the situation, the military was to assist on the basis of an appropriate decision by the Country Defence Committee (KOK). It was assumed, however, that such a decision would be made only under extreme circumstances, and until that point, the ministry’s forces were to be supported by ROMO – a measure which, given the inefficiency and ineffectiveness of this formation, seems to have been largely procedural (AIPN, 136/3, *Intention and Guiding Principle...*, pp. 305, 306).

The forces of the Provincial Internal Affairs Offices were also to be reinforced through the mobilisation of reserve soldiers assigned to internal affairs units. In accordance with the decision of the Minister of Internal Affairs of 14 April 1988 and the order of the Chief of the General Staff of the Polish Armed Forces of 11 January 1988, the relevant Provincial Recruitment Commands, using lists provided by the Provincial Internal Affairs Offices, were to issue and send reserve soldiers “Cards of call-up for active military service” (AIPN Po, 1162/14, Correspondence concerning the establishment of personnel reserves in the event of a state of emergency being declared, 14 April 1988, p. 11). The army’s operational plans in the event of a potential state of emergency in 1988 certainly require further investigation. It should be assumed that the advanced preparations of the Ministry of Internal Affairs were matched by equally thorough preparations on the part of the armed forces, reflecting the pragmatic nature of military operations. Only a portion of the armed forces could be involved in tasks such as blocking communications, securing territory and key sites, and demonstratively occupying public spaces, given their obligations under

the Warsaw Pact. Considering that the 1988 crisis was accompanied – particularly in the provinces – by the demonstrative deployment of armed forces to patrol towns and villages, it can be assumed that the armed forces of the Polish People’s Republic were preparing to participate in the imposition of a state of emergency.

However, the scale of this involvement was far smaller than during the introduction of martial law in 1981. By November 1988, individual Provincial Officers of Internal Affairs units, in submitting their plans, also requested military personnel, soldiers, and means of transport. On 25 November 1988, the deputy director of Department V of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Colonel Stefan Jedynak, asked the director of the First Directorate of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Colonel Bronisław Pawlikowski, to fulfil these requests. The attached list indicated that almost 3,990 soldiers were expected to be deployed, 3,887 assigned for protection, and 397 vehicles (AIPN, 174/28, Letter from the deputy director of Department V of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Lt. Col. Stefan Jedynak to the director of the First Directorate of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Lt. Col. Bronisław Pawlikowski, Demand for military forces to secure communications, 25 November 1988, pp. 28–29). While this might seem significant, approximately 80,000 soldiers had been involved in the imposition of martial law in 1981, so the figure did not appear excessive (Paczkowski 2006, p. 87). Up to that point, the situation seemed clear. It was not until 6 January 1989 that Colonel Pawlikowski informed the director of Department V, Brigadier General Józef Sasin, that the reported requirements for military forces exceeded the capabilities of the Ministry of Defence because “the armed forces are undergoing a serious reduction” (AIPN, 174/28, Letter from the Director of the First Directorate of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Lieutenant Colonel Bronisław Pawlikowski, to the Director of Department V of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Brigadier General Józef Sasin, 6 January 1989, p. 25). He suggested that the needs reported by individual Provincial Offices of Internal Affairs be verified and that military assistance be limited to provinces at particular risk. He referred General Sasin to two paragraphs of the document *Intention and Guiding Principle ...*, which emphasised that the main burden of tasks arising from a state of emergency was to be borne by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and that military assistance was to be restricted to specific, extreme circumstances (Cf. AIPN, 136/3, *Intention and Guiding Principle ...*, pp. 304–305). At the same time, referring to the relevant appendix, Pawlikowski announced that during periods of increased threat, an appropriate number of ROMO companies were to be formed.



The 'High Noon' placard.  
Warsaw, 1989.  
Fortepan / tm, ID 77346

During a state of emergency, all Provincial Offices of Internal Affairs (WUSW) were to develop MO battalions or manoeuvre regiments, some of which the WUSW chiefs could deploy to “secure the operation planned by Department V” and to protect selected communications facilities. The explanation – or rather, the distancing from the “operation planned by Department V” – was apparently understood, because on 24 January 1989, the deputy director of Department V of the Ministry of Internal Affairs informed the heads of all Provincial Offices of Internal Affairs that the First Directorate of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, after consulting the relevant military authorities, had announced that the reported demand for military forces exceeded the capabilities of the Ministry of National Defence and, therefore, the ministry would not assign soldiers for this purpose (AIPN, 01261/139, Case file no. 5. State of emergency, Division V of the Provincial Office of Internal Affairs in Ciechanów, Letter from the deputy director of Department V

of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Lieutenant Colonel Stefan Jedynak, to the head of the Provincial Internal Affairs Office in Ciechanów, Lieutenant Colonel Stanisław Koebcke, 24 January 1989, pp. 36–37). The letter sent to the heads of the Provincial Internal Affairs Offices closely mirrored Colonel Pawlikowski's letter to General Sasin, repeating the same arguments and recommendations. The army had no intention of participating in the forceful resolution of yet another socialist crisis and invoked a lack of funds to justify its position. The reasons for this decision are difficult to determine. Military historians often note that in the army, everything is 'in order on paper,' so perhaps it was preferable to report reductions rather than officially acknowledge awareness of institutional decline and falling morale. The absence of systematic research on army morale during this period (despite the preservation of relevant political documentation) precludes any definitive conclusions, although the results of the results of the 1989 elections in non-public polling stations – including in military units – do provide some indication. It should also be noted that throughout the entire preparatory period described, unlike in 1980–1981, the burden of preparing for a state of emergency rested not with the Ministry of Defence but with the Ministry of the Interior.

This point clearly warrants further research, but it seems likely that the opposite was true: the military command, aware of the mood among the troops, did not wish to risk such large-scale involvement.

## An Unaccomplished Task

In mid-January 1989, during the second part of the 10th Plenum of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party, a decision was made to legalise Solidarity (*Stanowisko KC PZPR w sprawie pluralizmu politycznego i pluralizmu związkowego*, in *X Plenum KC PZPR...* 2018, p. 583), paving the way for the Round Table talks (it should be remembered that the opposition itself had to reach a compromise on this issue, as not everyone shared the views of Lech Wałęsa and his advisers. This is evidenced, among other things, by the behaviour at that time of representatives of the *Konfederacja Polski Niepodległej*, KPN [Confederation of Independent Poland], *Solidarność Walcząca* [Fighting Solidarity], *Polska Partia Niepodległościowa* [Polish Independence Party], part of the *Wolność i Pokój* [Freedom and Peace] movement, and *Polska Partia Socjalistyczna – Rewolucja Demokratyczna* [Polish Socialist Party – Democratic Revolution]). However, even the deliberations that began on 6 February did not



Bishop Tadeusz Gościowski (left), Gen. Czesław Kiszczak (second from left), Lech Wałęsa (centre), Prof. Janusz Reykowski (second from right), Rev. Alojzy Orszulik (right), Prof. Jan Janowski, Bogdan Królewski, Władysław Frasyniuk, Lech Kaczyński in the background. Picture taken at the end of talks held in Ministry of Internal Affairs venue in Magdalenka near Warsaw on 27 January 1989. Institute of National Remembrance Archives, ref. no. 3333/90

interrupt the preparations in the ministry. On the basis of fragmentary documents from various Provincial Internal Affairs Offices, it can be concluded that another step was taken, consisting of assigning a specific number of operational and uniformed officers of the Ministry of Internal Affairs to all units involved in the ongoing preparations, as well as securing vehicles, communication equipment, radio transmitters, crowbars, torches, and handcuffs. It is, however, difficult to determine whether this was done merely to demonstrate formal readiness for action or in genuine expectation of intervention (see letters in the file ref. no. AIPN Po, 064/33/1, of 15 February 1989, pp. 346–348).

The situation changed – though not dramatically – on 9 March 1989, when General Czesław Kiszczak established a research team within the Organisational and Legal Office of the Ministry of Internal Affairs to examine the use of ordinary legal measures to counter threats to state security that could be applied before introducing a state of emergency (AIPN, 1098/16, vol. 1152, Decision no. 02/89 of the Minister of Internal Affairs of 9 March 1989 on the appointment of a research team to investigate the use of ordinary legal means to eliminate threats to internal security of the state (before the introduction of martial law), n.p.). Major Sławomir Barski was appointed chairman of the team, which was tasked with preparing a relevant analysis by the end of 1989.

Nevertheless, lists of persons designated for internment and for so-called warning interviews continued to be updated. The results of the partially free elections of 4 June 1989 did not halt the Ministry's preparations, even though Solidarity demonstrated considerable restraint in response to the Polish United Workers' Party's defeat. In practice, all instruments of coercive control (including state of emergency procedures) remained in the hands of the PZPR, which naturally encouraged caution. As is well known, even the legal recognition of NSZZ "Solidarność" did not put an end to secret operations against it. However, due to the new political circumstances, the Ministry of Internal Affairs emphasised the need for particular caution, strict adherence to the principles of conspiracy, and the application of so-called political sensitivity in its actions (Archiwum Delegatury Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej w Radomiu, Institute of National Remembrance Delegation in Radom Archives, hereinafter: AIPN Ra, 02/146, vol. 3, Letter from the Director of Department V of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Brigadier General J. Sasin, to the Deputy Head of the Provincial Office of Internal Affairs for Security Service in Radom, 28 April 1989, pp. 64–65; AIPN Ra, 02/146, vol. 3, Letter from the Deputy Head of the Provincial Office of Internal Affairs for Security Service in Radom, Lt. Col. Antoni Kopij, 10 May 1989, p. 63).

The partially free ('contractual') elections of 1989, agreed upon during the Round Table talks, in which only 35% of the seats in the Sejm were left to the free choice of citizens (thus effectively allowing Solidarity candidates to run for these seats), were conducted under a mixed electoral system. MPs and Senators were elected by a majority vote in constituencies, while the party reserved the right to put forward a national list for the lower house of parliament, voted on nationwide according to a proportional system. This list was unanimously rejected by voters, which – apart from the vast disproportion in the votes cast during the 4 June 1989 elections for candidates running for the 'free' 35% share of parliamentary seats compared with those for the party and its satellite organisations (only three candidates from the Polish United Workers' Party and its allies in the constituencies, and two from the national list received enough votes to obtain seats in parliament (Codogni 2012, pp. 259, 261) – contributed to yet another crisis. Faced with the failure to reach an agreement with the opposition on salvaging the national electoral list, which was intended to guarantee 35 seats in the Sejm for leading PZPR activists and their coalition partners but was lost in the election, General Czesław Kiszczak attempted to use the army and the

Ministry of Internal Affairs as a means of intimidation during direct talks with Lech Wałęsa (*Stenogram z trzeciego posiedzenia Komisji Porozumiewawczej 8 czerwca 1989*, in *Okrągły stół, dokumenty i materiały...* 2004, vol. 4, pp. 173–175). Eventually, the opposition agreed to transfer the voting for candidates from the national list to the second round of voting in the constituencies. In view of the PZPR's overall electoral defeat, this might appear to have been a secondary issue. However, it should be noted that the 33 seats from the national list were crucial for the planned election of the President of the Polish People's Republic by the joint chambers of parliament. This was a moment of crisis in the talks with the opposition, and it seems likely that this confrontation had a tangible impact on the pace of political transformation and on the subsequent policy of Tadeusz Mazowiecki's government. It also appears to have partially curbed the potential for a "triumphalist-confrontational" rhetoric (Michnik 1989) that could naturally have emerged within the opposition camp following its overwhelming electoral success on 4 June.

An open question remains regarding the impact of the situation in Beijing – specifically, the Tiananmen Square massacre of 4 June 1989 – on the mood in Poland. Did reports of thousands of deaths (which appeared on the front pages of newspapers on the same day as the election results) exert a calming, or perhaps sobering, effect on the attitude of the Polish authorities? On 11 June, Mieczysław F. Rakowski wrote:

"Terrible things are happening in Beijing. [...] Students who had been demonstrating for several weeks were shot and crushed by tanks. Chinese sources speak of 300 dead, foreign sources of several thousand. Another tragic act was the hunt for the leaders of the student demonstration. Eight young people have already been sentenced to death. TV shows beaten and arrested students who demanded political reforms. [...] What happened in Beijing testifies to a deep crisis in the entire system." (Rakowski 2005, p. 446)

On the other hand, the events in Beijing prompted the opposition to fear that the authorities might react with extreme measures in response to their electoral defeat. Bronisław Geremek later recalled: "... our victory [...] puts Solidarity in a situation with significant analogies to Tiananmen. This meant that on this day, which should have been a day of great triumph and happiness, I was mainly thinking about the threat" (Geremek and Żakowski 2008, p. 211).



Tadeusz Mazowiecki (left), Lech Wałęsa (centre) and Bronisław Geremek (right) during talks with government representatives in the Ministry of Internal Affairs venue in Magdalenka near Warsaw, 27 January 1989. Institute of National Remembrance Archives, ref. no. 3333/85

Similar apprehensions were expressed by other opposition activists, as cited by Paulina Codogni, who noted that many expected repression following the election results, or at least the annulment of the elections (Codogni 2012, pp. 278–280). All the circumstances – both internal (including the anticipated confrontation with the opposition even before the second round of elections) and external (notably the expected international reactions, including from the USSR) – undoubtedly contributed to General Czesław Kiszczak’s decision of 6 June 1989. On that day, he issued Decision no. 013/89 introducing a state of heightened readiness for action within the Ministry of Internal Affairs (AIPN, 0039/3, Decision no. 013/89 of the Minister of Internal Affairs of 6 June 1989 on the introduction of a state of heightened readiness for action in the Ministry of Internal Affairs, 6 June 1989, p. 504). This state of alert was to remain in force across all organisational units of the ministry from 8 a.m. the following day until further notice (AIPN, 0039/3, Decision no. 013/89..., pp. 504–505). On 7 June, the Ministry of Internal Affairs requested assistance from the General Staff of the Polish People’s Army, including the possible transport of Militia forces, the protection of key facilities, patrolling, and the activation of operational measures by the military security police. The state of heightened readiness was lifted on 23 June 1989, five days after the second round of elections held on 18 June (Codogni 2012, p. 282). The timing of the introduction of the alert – three days after the first round of elections, when the scale of the party’s electoral

defeat was already clear – led Paulina Codogni to conclude that these actions were not designed to suppress “spontaneous demonstrations” but rather to intimidate opposition leaders (Codogni 2012, p. 283).

Although at the turn of June and July 1989 the heads of divisions were still required to update the lists of persons designated for internment, certain changes in the scale and nature of these lists became apparent. In some letters from the heads of investigation divisions to those responsible for selecting activists for internment, new emphases appeared. For instance, the head of the Investigation Division in Włocławek, when requesting further assessment, referred to the ongoing socio-political transformations in the country, including the legal operation of the opposition and changes in criminal law, and gave instructions that only individuals from a limited circle – “the core leadership and decision-making structures of illegal organisations and groups with clear, radical anarchist and confrontational intentions directed against the fundamental interests of the state” (see e.g., Archiwum Delegatury Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej w Bydgoszczy, Institute of National Remembrance Delegation in Bydgoszcz Archives, hereinafter AIPN By, 078/31, Letter from the head of the Investigation Division of the Provincial Office of Internal Affairs in Włocławek, Lieutenant Colonel Andrzej Jędrzejczak, to the Head of Division III of the Provincial Office of Internal Affairs in Włocławek, 20 June 1989, p. 75) – should be included. It is also known that the list compiled by Division V of the Provincial Office of Internal Affairs in Rzeszów in mid-June 1989, which was two weeks after the elections, contained 18 names of activists designated for internment and 12 for whom warning interviews were considered sufficient (*Przeciw Solidarności...* 2000, pp. 330–332).

On 19 July 1989, the National Assembly elected General Wojciech Jaruzelski President of the Republic of Poland. On 1 August, the Sejm accepted the resignation of Mieczysław F. Rakowski’s government, and Czesław Kiszczak undertook the mission of forming a new cabinet. The Central Committee of the Polish United Workers’ Party (PZPR), led by Rakowski, declared that “the situation in Poland had become dangerously tense,” while Rakowski himself, in an interview with Soviet television, described attempts to form a government without the participation of the PZPR as a departure from the Round Table agreements (Łętowski 2016, p. 358; “Kalendarium”). However, this no longer carried any real weight. The deputy spokesman for the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Yuri Gremnitskikh, stated that “the USSR does not intend to interfere in Poland’s internal affairs in the slightest”

(Łętowski 2016, p. 359; Skrzypek 2009, p. 421). When asked about alternative scenarios for the development of events before and after the Round Table, Roman Malinowski, Marshal of the Sejm of the Polish People's Republic from 1985 to 1989, remarked during a discussion between historians and witnesses of history in Miedzeszyn: "It was possible, and one could even sense such a possibility, but there was no longer any power to act" (*Polska 1986–1989...* 2002, vol. 2, p. 38). Although the consequences of a possible decision to introduce a state of emergency were increasingly predictable, Rakowski, during the 14th Plenum of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party, held on 19 August 1989, raised the question of whether it might be appropriate to declare one, but concluded that such a step would amount to political defeat for the party (Note from the meeting between the PRL ambassador in Prague, Włodzimierz Mokrzyszczak, and the secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, Jozef Lenárt, drawn up at the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia on 21 August 1989, in *Polska 1986–1989*, vol. 3, p. 314).

It remains puzzling, however, that despite the authorities' awareness of the opposition's aversion to abrupt actions, the plan to introduce a state of emergency remained on the table for so long – for example, through the continued updating of internment lists. Perhaps the explanation was provided by Kiszczak himself, who, in a conversation with Bereś and Skoczylas, admitted: "And besides, we did not want to give up power" (Bereś and Skoczylas 1991, p. 273). Although this statement was made in response to a question about his willingness to assume the office of prime minister, it may also reflect a broader mindset within the ruling elite. The decisive signal of the authorities' final shift in position seems to have come with the order to withdraw relevant documents from the provincial and departmental offices. On 17 August 1989, the Director of Department I of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Colonel Bronisław Pawlikowski, referring to an order from Brigadier General Zbigniew Pudysz, requested that the directors of departments return to First Directorate of the Ministry of Internal Affairs the document entitled "Intent and Guiding Principle..." (AIPN, 2858/116, Letter from Lieutenant Colonel Bronisław Pawlikowski, 17 August 1989, p. 255; see also AIPN, 167/18, Documents concerning the state of emergency, 1989). On 19 August 1989, General Wojciech Jaruzelski accepted Czesław Kiszczak's resignation from the post of Prime Minister, entrusting Tadeusz Mazowiecki with the mission of forming a new government. Documentation preserved by some of

the Provincial Offices of Internal Affairs indicates that the plans for internment were definitively abandoned in the second half of October 1989, when division heads were asked for the last time to update the lists of persons designated for internment (AIPN, 01439/121, Letter from the head of the Investigation Division of the Provincial Office of Internal Affairs Office in Skierniewice to the head of Division III of the Provincial Office of Internal Affairs, 24 October 1989, p. 63). Despite the tremendous pace of political and social change in the country, the operation was not formally concluded until the end of 1989. *The order of 29 August 1988 on the preparation and implementation of internment and warning interviews in the event of a state of emergency*, together with the attached *Instructions specifying the detailed rules for the preparation and implementation of internment and warning interviews*, was repealed on 8 December 1989 (AIPN, 01261/240, Order no. 00101/89 of the Minister of Internal Affairs of 8 December 1989 on the repeal of Order no. 0059/88 of the Minister of Internal Affairs of 29 August 1988, p. 63). Within two weeks, all related materials were to be returned to the Investigation Bureau. At the same time, investigation divisions in the provinces began to destroy all documentation concerning internment and warning interviews drawn up on the basis of the repealed order and instructions. For instance, in Ciechanów, the destruction of these materials was carried out by a two-person commission composed of Captain Bolesław Romanowski, head of the Investigation Division, and Senior Inspector Captain Adam Nowakowski. Between 8 and 24 January 1990, a total of 2,606 pages were destroyed by burning them in the furnace of the local boiler house. Although the destruction of documents means that the detailed plans for internment will probably never be fully known, the preserved protocol allows us to reconstruct some figures: among other things, 70 arrest warrants and orders for placement in detention centres and 105 internment decisions were listed (AIPN, 01261/240, Letter from the deputy head of the Provincial Office of Internal Affairs for Security Service in Ciechanów, Lieutenant Colonel Stanisław Westwalewicz, to the Director of the Investigation Bureau of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in Warsaw, 20 December 1989, pp. 66 ff.; AIPN, 01261/240, Weeding Protocol no. 01/S/90, 8 January 1990, pp. 83–89). The Ministry of Internal Affairs instructed that the destruction of all materials relating to planned internment and the so-called “warning interviews” be treated as a “matter of great urgency”. Shortly beforehand, on 6 December 1989, *Instruction no. 01/84 of 25 September 1984 of the Director of the Investigation Bureau of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and concerning*

*organisational and operational measures for the preparation and implementation of internment of persons threatening state security during martial law or wartime*, had also been annulled (AIPN 01439/120, Letter from the Director of the Investigation Bureau of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Lieutenant Colonel Wiktor Fonfara, 5 December 1989, p. 2). The revoked instruction was to be returned to the Investigation Bureau within two weeks, and the heads of the Provincial Offices of Internal Affairs duly complied, withdrawing it from individual divisions of the Provincial Offices of Internal Affairs and Regional Offices of Internal Affairs (RUSW) and discarding the associated internment lists (see e.g., AIPN Gd, 0046/617, vol. 4, 2 February 1990; pp. 4–6; AIPN Rz, 00377/803, vol. 1, Letter from the Deputy Head of the Provincial Office of Internal Affairs to the Head of Division II of the Provincial Office of Internal Affairs in Rzeszów, 20 December 1989, pp. 54–57; AIPN Po, 064/33, vol. 1, Letter from the head of the Investigation Division in Konin to the Director of the Investigation Bureau of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Lieutenant Colonel Wiktor Fonfara, 19 December 1989, p. 393). The ministerial order was subsequently withdrawn from various units of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in April 1990 (at the request of Major General Henryk Dankowski) and in June 1990 (see AIPN, 01067/182, vol. 5, Letter from the Deputy Director of the Department of Protection of Economy of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Colonel J. Rzący, to the Director of the Investigation Bureau, Lieutenant Colonel Wiktor Fonfara, 20 April 1990, n.p.; AIPN, 01067/182, vol. 5, Letter from the Director of Bureau “C” to the Director of the Investigation Bureau of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Colonel W. Fonfara, 25 June 1990, n.p.). The cancelling of these orders and instructions, and above all the subsequent ‘cleaning up of traces’ of the preparations, also confirms that the threat of a state of emergency had been genuine – such measures would hardly have been necessary if these had merely been routine administrative procedures. All that remained at the former Provincial Office of Internal Affairs in Poznań were empty file covers; in many cases, historians can only study the titles of destroyed files and the protocols documenting their disposal (AIPN Po, 064/26, vol. 13, List of persons designated for internment; the file contains a number of empty covers. On the other hand, the documentation from Konin has been preserved quite well). At the same time, the ‘cleaning up of traces’ following preparations for the introduction of a state of emergency was undoubtedly part of a much broader campaign to destroy, conceal, or prepare for the destruction of numerous Security Service (SB) documents – not only administrative, but also operational

and agent-related – which could, at any moment, become politically or even criminally incriminating. Jan Tarnowski, an activist of the Szczecin branch of Solidarity and, in 1990, chairman of the Provincial Qualification Commission for former Security Service officers in the Szczecin Province, claimed that he had seen in 1990 a list of Szczecin activists designated for internment. According to his testimony, the first name on the list was that of Andrzej Milczanowski, who had participated in the Round Table talks in the subgroup on legal and judicial reform. Unfortunately, this list has not been found in the Szczecin branch of the Institute of National Remembrance. It is difficult to determine whether these lists also included other trade union and opposition activists who took part in the Round Table negotiations. What is certain, however, is that there were plans to intern several members of the clergy, including Father Hubert Czuma SJ and Bishop Roman Andrzejewski. For example, in addition to Bishop Andrzejewski, the list compiled by Division IV of the Provincial Internal Affairs Office in Włocławek included: Father Jan Nowaczyk, Father Michał Pietrzak, Father Antoni Poniński, Father Zbigniew Szygenda, Father Henryk Janiszewski (until his transfer to the parish of Przedecz in the Konin Province), and Franciscan Father Julian Szlachta (religious name Aleksander, until his transfer to the Skierniewice Province). As late as 4 July 1989, Fathers Poniński and Szygenda were still designated for internment, while the others had been reclassified for warning interviews (AIPN By, 078/40, Defence plan codenamed “PM-84”, Proposal concerning the list of persons designated for internment and warning conversations, 4 July 1989, pp. 126 ff.; see also AIPN Ra, 026/5, Supplement to the inventory of planning and defence documents of Division IV of the Provincial Office of Internal Affairs, n.d., pp. 215–216; Oddziałowe Archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej w Krakowie, Institute of National Remembrance Branch in Cracow Archives, hereinafter: AIPN Kr, 049/61, vol. 6, List of priests to be given warning interviews, 7 June 1988, pp. 18–23). Although Division IV of the Security Service dealt with various religious denominations, the surviving records indicate that only Catholic clergy were designated for internment. It is worth recalling that in 1981 the internment of priests had also been planned, and several clergymen were, in fact, detained for short periods – up to a week (on the subject of the internment of clergy and the removal from the Martial Law Decree, sent to provincial commanders of the Citizens’ Militia before 13 December 1981, of Art. 35, see, among others, *Dekret RP z 13 XII 1981*; Marcinkiewicz 2017, pp. 339–356; Piotrowski 2004; Żaryn 2003, p. 474).



Graffiti near the Solidarity election bureau in Constitution square in Warsaw, 1989. Fortepan / tm, ID 77348

## Final Remarks

In conclusion, it is necessary to address the question of whether the threat of declaring a state of emergency was real, whether it constituted merely routine administrative work, or whether it served as part of the authorities' negotiating strategy. Did General Kiszczak – bearing in mind that, despite his high position within the ruling elite, the decision to introduce a state of emergency was not his alone – simply wish to be prepared for any eventuality? The parallel conduct of negotiations and the simultaneous development of 'tough measures' would certainly suggest such an interpretation. Or did the authorities, who for a long time failed to grasp the depth of the transformation already under way in the USSR (although this seems doubtful), hope for political shifts within the ruling camp across the eastern border – which by 1988 appeared increasingly unlikely? The question of the army also arises. Would a potential – albeit improbable – refusal to provide support in the event of confrontation with the public have reflected the military's stance towards the political leadership (given that the armed forces of the Polish People's Republic were an integral part of the apparatus of power)? Or could it have been part of a prearranged scenario envisaging the 'pacification' of the Security Service itself,

according to the so-called Romanian scenario – which seems a rather far-fetched assumption? Could the many months of preparatory work have been nothing more than a façade, designed to channel the frustration and uncertainty of the army and the security apparatus? This seems equally unlikely, given that both the armed forces and the Security Service were essential pillars of the regime. Were the heads of the Provincial Internal Affairs Offices and their deputies for the Security Service, who were responsible for drafting plans, preparing detention centres, and compiling lists of potential internees, merely ‘pawns’ kept occupied so as not to interfere with Kiszczak’s political manoeuvring? Such a hypothesis would imply deliberate sabotage of an instrument of power under his own supervision – an improbable notion. Would Kiszczak have dared to treat provincial heads and department chiefs in such a detached and dismissive manner – although, admittedly, such an approach would not be unprecedented in a strictly hierarchical, military-style command structure? Or could these actions have served to reassure or appease the party – though it is difficult to determine what the party itself would have had to fear from its own security apparatus? Was it only the opposition that was monitored and, to some extent, manipulated – or were other institutions vital to the existence of the Polish People’s Republic also subject to a similar form of internal ‘control,’ with the game being played by those at the very top of the system? All these doubts – together with reservations about the doubts themselves – lead inevitably to a far more profound question concerning the complex motives that led the communist authorities to enter into talks with the opposition in the first place. Finally, is it possible to determine the precise moment when the leadership decided to abandon the implementation of the operation codenamed “Horizon”? It is difficult to attach much weight to Czesław Kiszczak’s later statements, given in 1990, that he had realised “it [was] no longer possible to continue exercising power in this way” (Bereś and Skoczylas 1991, p. 9). Even if we assume that this retrospective reflection accurately expressed his contemporary view, the key question remains: when exactly did Kiszczak come to this realisation? It is also difficult to pinpoint the exact moment when Kiszczak and Jaruzelski came to the conclusion that they lacked the capacity to steer the country out of crisis. Jan Skórzyński identified this turning point in the failed 1987 referendum (Skórzyński 2009, p. 98; cf. Dudek 2004, p. 106), but does not the suspension of talks with the opposition after Rakowski became head of government prove that they deluded themselves until the very

end into believing they could hold on to power? The reasons behind the Polish United Workers' Party's abandonment of the force-based scenario can be found in a combination of factors: the disintegration of the political and ruling apparatus, a sober assessment of its own capacities and potential, Soviet support for change, the depth of the economic crisis, and finally, public sentiment and the growing support for the opposition.

By the mid-1980s, the existence of the opposition had, in a sense, been accepted, since its elimination had proved impossible. Attention increasingly focused on the fact that it operated outside the political system and could therefore criticise freely without bearing any responsibility. It was thus deemed necessary to take steps to integrate it into the political system and make it accountable, primarily in economic matters.

How did General Jaruzelski behave in this complex situation? According to the author, the question of the turning point in his attitude remains unanswered. He appeared indecisive – Hamlet-like – prone to significant mood swings, clearly uncertain which path to take, playing for time and seemingly hoping until the very end for a sudden change of heart in the Kremlin. Incidentally, Jaruzelski's indecisiveness in numerous situations has not gone unnoticed by other researchers, and it seems to have been a constant feature of his style of governance, despite his unprecedented consolidation of power in post-war Poland (see Przeperski 2022, pp. 131–144; Dudek 2007, pp. 106–107; Kowal 2012; Suleja 2012, pp. 205–208). Nevertheless, he must have realised that it would be impossible to convince the public a second time of the legitimacy of such a radical move with the rhetoric of 'choosing the lesser evil'. Krzysztof Dubiński, Deputy Head of the Information and Reporting Division in the Office of the Minister of Internal Affairs from July 1988, who played a major role in preparing the Round Table talks, offered a similar assessment (see Cenckiewicz 2013):

“The authorities were still unable to decide what they actually wanted: whether to pursue dialogue, merely change the way they exercised power without altering their principles, or leave everything as it was, use force, and wait for matters to resolve themselves somehow. [...] The awareness of the need for change was at war with their ingrained habits” (Bereś and Skoczylas 1991, p. 260).

Until then, Jaruzelski had been able to use external pressure to reinforce or justify his decisions, as he had done in 1981. By the late

1980s, with Gorbachev's new approach, this was no longer possible. Not only could the USSR no longer serve as a convenient threat, but the signals coming from the East were pointing in an entirely different direction – and this could not be concealed anymore. Dubiński said: “Paradoxically, the Russians were the most favourably disposed [towards the Round Table talks – author's note] in our bloc” (Bereś and Skoczylas 1991, p. 266). Jaruzelski did not take advantage of the freedom of action afforded to him by Gorbachev (see Dudek 2009, p. 15; Transcript of a conversation between Mikhail Gorbachev, General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, and Gen. Wojciech Jaruzelski, First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party, in *Zmierzch...* 2009, vol. 1, pp. 263–268). Even after the first round of elections, on 16 June 1989, at a meeting of the Central Committee Secretariat, he asked: “We have a dilemma: whether to live in this state or to take drastic decisions that may have dangerous repercussions” (cited in *Polska 1986–1989...* 2002, vol. 2, p. 185). Jaruzelski's reluctance to act gave the superficial impression that decades of dependence on the USSR had undermined his ability to think independently. Whether this reflected loyalty or, more likely, a desire to retain power for as long as possible remains a matter for historians; for example, Michał Przeperski argues that the driving force behind Jaruzelski's regime was the desire to stabilise power (Przeperski 2022, p. 144). Krzysztof Dubiński observed in Miedzeszyn:

“In fact, the paradox of the actions of at least the Jaruzelski–Kiszczak tandem, which I had the opportunity to observe, was that they were aware of their weakness. But they could not admit this in any way, either to their base or to their opponents in the opposition. The capabilities of the security forces [...] were virtually non-existent. I share the view that neither of these forces were interested in, or capable of, any kind of violent intervention similar to martial law. There was neither the will nor the psychological climate for such a thing” (*Polska 1986–1989...* 2002, vol. 2, p. 192).

It seems, therefore, that Jaruzelski long obstructed the process, but he could no longer remain indifferent to the state's growing economic inefficiency. Since no one capable of saving the system could be found, it became necessary to share responsibility quickly. Thus, when the already very weak opposition was divided, talks began with a selected part of it.

Those in power were aware that forceful solutions were no longer viable, but they also recognised the significant decline in Wałęsa's political weight. Under these circumstances, it was perhaps the last, and certainly a very convenient, moment to reach an agreement with their weakening 'opponent' and, de facto, to offload responsibility for the economy. All that remained was to devise a new tactic for dealing with Wałęsa (Memorandum of the Social and Legal Division of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party of 15 May 1988 containing assessments of the situation in the post-strike period and proposals for rules of conduct towards the leaders of Solidarity, in *Polska 1986–1989...* 2002, vol. 3, pp. 92 ff.). However, worth noting is an analysis prepared by the Foreign Division of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR) in early 1989, which explicitly outlined several possible scenarios for the development of the situation in socialist countries. One scenario envisaged "a planned, ruling party-controlled shift of society towards democracy and a new form of socialism" (Study on relations between the USSR and European socialist countries prepared by the Foreign Affairs Division of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party in February 1989, in *Polska 1986–1989...* 2002, vol. 3, p. 218). This did not preclude significant concessions in terms of power, increased self-government, and the role of representative bodies, "involving the constructive opposition in the management of society, and perhaps even transforming it into one of the forces competing in the race for power." The authors of the memorandum considered this path the most appropriate for Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia. The second scenario was described as a 'rapid' development of events, implying a continuation of the current trajectory: after another minor crisis, the ruling party would agree to a further set of concessions. The third, conservative option assumed the suppression of social and political activity among the masses, which, according to the authors, could ultimately trigger a spontaneous outbreak of social discontent (Study..., in *Polska 1986–1989...* 2002, vol. 3, pp. 218–219). Jadwiga Staniszkis speculated that Vladimir Kryuchkov, touring Central Europe in 1988, allegedly gave personal instructions to create pluralistic party systems, although there is no direct evidence for this claim (Staniszkis 2001, p. 53). Meanwhile, members of Jaruzelski's inner circle – Ciosek, Pożoga, and Urban – wrote in a memorandum dated 10 August 1988:



“At the moment, our team’s assets boil down to Soviet support. However, this support must weaken and even disappear as the ineffectiveness of our actions becomes apparent. Moscow’s disappointment, sealing our end, may come as a result of the autumn wave of strikes” (Memorandum of 10 August 1988, in *Okragły stół, dokumenty i materiały...* 2004, p. 172).

Against this backdrop, the state of emergency appears as one of several alternatives – a governance option prepared in advance. The simultaneous development of a ‘hard measure’ alongside a range of ‘soft measures’ also allowed the authorities to leverage the threat, or mere suggestion, of its application. Although the necessity to implement it never arose, the ‘top-down revolution’ was secured at all levels.

The opposition lacked full knowledge of the authorities’ plans and calculations and remained convinced of the ruling camp’s superiority. Justifying his agreement to the Round Table talks, Jarosław Kaczyński stated: “A decisive battle with the communist authorities could not be won in those circumstances.” His brother, Lech Kaczyński, echoed this sentiment: “You cannot go up against armoured personnel carriers with two banners. The power was on their side” (*O dwóch takich...* 2006, pp. 151, 160).

Opposition activists feared that a state of emergency might still be declared even a month after the elections. On 1 July 1989, in connection with the public transport strike in Legnica, Władysław Frasyniuk reportedly told local trade union activists that he feared that “if the strikes are not brought under control, a state of emergency

Lech Kaczyński (left) and Jacek Kuroń (right) during talks with government representatives in Ministry of Internal Affairs venue in Magdalenka near Warsaw, 7 March 1989. Photo: Institute of National Remembrance Archives, ref. no. AIPN, 3333/66.

may be introduced, which would result in the crushing of Solidarity” (Oddziałowe Archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej we Wrocławiu, Institute of National Remembrance Branch in Wrocław Archives, hereinafter: AIPN Wr, 053/2524, vol. 3, Daily report on the situation in the Wrocław Province, 1 July 1989, p. 334). At the same time, Jaruzelski calmly explained to Erich Honecker his ‘strategic goal’ in initiating the Round Table talks: “The party has conducted a thorough analysis of the situation and has come to the conclusion that the old methods will not solve the existing and impending problems” (Minutes of the conversation between Erich Honecker, General Secretary of the SED Central Committee and Chairman of the State Council of the GDR, and Wojciech Jaruzelski, First Secretary of the Polish United Workers’ Party Central Committee and Chairman of the State Council of the Polish People’s Republic (excerpts), 22 May 1989, document published by Tomasz Mianowicz; Mianowicz 2000, pp. 132–133). Among the reasons for this change of course, he cited not only economic pressure from the West but also political and propaganda pressure. He added, “Previously, Solidarity called on the West to impose sanctions against Poland and urged it not to give anything to the communists. Today, she herself is asking the West to help Poland” (Mianowicz 2000, p. 133).

The evidence does not provide a definitive answer to one of the initial questions: whether preparations for the introduction of a state of emergency were solely a method of calming the Ministry of Internal Affairs or soothing the mood within the party. Consolidating ranks in the Ministry of Internal Affairs was certainly as important as engaging in talks with the opposition. However, preparing such a large-scale operation merely to occupy officers or lull them into a false sense of security about Kiszczak’s true intentions would seem exaggerated. That said, circumstantial evidence points to this possibility. In a conversation with Krzysztof Spychalski in 1992, General Marek Ochocki, Kiszczak’s trusted confidant who had headed the Legnica militia in the 1980s, recalled a conversation he had with Colonel Jerzy Maj, his deputy for the Security Service. Confused, Maj allegedly recounted a story related to the arrest of Władysław Frasyniuk:

“Listen, they talked to Frasyniuk and when they wanted to arrest him, he said to them: Gentlemen, what are you doing? Don’t you know that in six months you won’t be in power anymore? The talks are already well advanced. That was in August 1988. I thought about it and said to my deputy: Jurek, maybe someone has been playing us all this time. After all, it’s impossible for us to give up power.”

Ochocki was astonished to learn from Kiszczak's book that the latter had been conducting talks with the opposition since June 1988. His surprise must have been considerable, as by that time preparations for the introduction of a state of emergency had already been completed. Gen. Ochocki concluded:

"If we had known, there would have been no decision to take preventive action on 31 August 1988. There would have been no demand to prevent demonstrations [...] When we arrested Frasiński in 1988, it was the first sign. Other possibilities began to open up in our minds, that perhaps ordinary people had been manoeuvred into all this." (*Byłem człowiekiem Kiszczaka...* 1992, pp. 225–228).

It should be borne in mind that the preparations could not reassure anyone in the ruling camp, as they were kept strictly secret. Daniel Wicenty, in his work on the pathologies of the Security Service, stated that at the end of the 1980s the Ministry "seemed weak and affected by decay" (Wicenty 2018, p. 436). Discipline among officers had been relaxed to such an extent that various informal activities or alternative forms of earning money were overlooked. Writing about the dysfunctions of the Security Service, Wicenty also questioned the real control of communist decision-makers over the Ministry of Internal Affairs in the late 1980s. In the context of Kiszczak, he concluded: "It is difficult not to get the impression that he was only able to control and discipline his apparatus to a limited extent [...]" (Wicenty 2018, p. 445). This, of course, does not change the fact that he remained the sole ruler of the ministry (Kozłowski 2019). However, when we add to this the turmoil within the party, which after the elections of 4 June 1989 had already become politically bankrupt (*Z materiałów zespołu...* 2015, pp. 12 ff.; Gasztold 2019, pp. 693 ff.), we gain an almost complete picture of the decomposition of power. What emerges is a depiction of the end of a system in which the heads of the army and the security services had less and less influence over their surroundings. Were Kiszczak and Jaruzelski aware that the army and the security police were affected by inertia? Given the profound erosion of the apparatus of power, did they really need to fear the now-mythical dogmatic wing of the party in 1988 and 1989, as is so often suggested?

In 1991, Zbigniew Bujak rhetorically asked: "I am most interested in how the army and police were pacified around the time of the Round Table and afterwards. Jaruzelski and Kiszczak certainly did so"

(Bereś and Skoczylas 1991, p. 268). However, neither the army nor the militia were actually pacified by the party. The Security Service was on full alert, equipped with appropriate guidelines and plans. As for the military, both the plans for the enforcement of martial law – which assumed the use of armed forces only if the security and law enforcement services failed to act – and the shockingly unfavourable results of the 1989 elections in the military, described by Bolesław Balcerowicz as “a kind of anti-communist rebellion by the military” (Balcerowicz 2009, pp. 272, 279) (although it should be noted that the majority of voters in the military were conscripts who voted like the rest of society – and, due to their young age, perhaps even more radically) – indicate that there could be no question of confrontational sentiments within the uniformed services. Analyses of contemporary sources also do not support statements favouring the narrative of fear that “tanks [i.e., dogmatically minded elements of the armed forces and secret services] will come and chase them [the party leadership] away for their devotion to socialism” (including Kiszczak himself) (Bereś and Skoczylas 1991, p. 266; *Spisek Kiszczaka...* 1991, p. 3; *Byliśmy bardzo...* 1990). There are many examples of recollections full of pitfalls or ex post misinterpretations.

Michał Brzeziński observed that “a state of emergency has always been introduced for political reasons that cannot be legally described” (Brzeziński 2007, p. 43). As mentioned earlier, most constitutions around the world provide for the necessity of such measures; however, the difference lies in the fact that in democracies, states of emergency are introduced to defend democracy, the legal order, social peace, or to assist disaster victims, whereas in the Polish People’s Republic they served to defend the dictatorship. Declassified documents offer historians the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the activities of the security apparatus in the second half of the 1980s. The examined materials also indicate that Czesław Kiszczak and Wojciech Jaruzelski, at the end of their rule, not only had no intention of relinquishing power but were also making preparations to defend it, including through the use of extreme measures. Yet the question remains whether there was a real possibility of a state of emergency being declared in 1988 – and if so, at what point. We know for certain that it was prepared in detail, both legally and practically, and that its introduction was seriously considered. However, this potential scenario never materialised due to a combination of complex factors. It is also important to note the contemporary context of the experiences and governing philosophy in the People’s Republic of Poland. Just

a few years earlier, the communist dictatorship had not hesitated to introduce martial law, regarding it as a success of historical significance (e.g., see AIPN, 1585/1009, Minutes from the last meeting of the Military Council of National Salvation held on 18 July 1983, 1 September 1983, pp. 116–118, for an assessment of martial law). Later propaganda portrayed martial law as a ‘lesser evil’ (compared with a possible Soviet intervention). Kiszczak, authorising the book-length interview given to Bereś and Skoczylas, published in 1991, said the following about 13 December 1981: “Our conversations suggest that our allies were putting pressure on us, and we were defending ourselves tooth and nail. But that was not the case. After all, we also wanted martial law if the talks failed” (Bereś and Skoczylas 1991, p. 305). Of course, the situation in 1981 was different than in 1988, and yet again in 1989, yet these words remain a certain point of reference for reflections on the possible declaration of a state of emergency. The years 1988–1989 should not be viewed in isolation from this logic. The beginning of talks with the opposition coincided with decisions to pacify the strike in Nowa Huta and to liquidate the Gdańsk Shipyard, as well as with the mysterious murders of priests Stefan Niedzielak, Stanisław Suchowolec and Sylwester Zych (Solidarity chaplains murdered on 20 January 1989, 29 January 1989 and 11 July 1989, respectively, by so-called ‘unknown perpetrators’). The coincidence of these never-explained murders leads some historians to conclude that they were committed by Security Service officers; Żaryn 2003, pp. 547–549; Pleskot 2016; Łatka 2019). It can therefore be stated with certainty that the preparations described above were not merely a natural consequence of the introduction of the concept of a state of emergency into the constitutional order. The plans and orders of 1988–1989 were not accidental; they were characterised by a different dynamic and went far beyond purely conceptual arrangements. The documentation indicates that the forceful option, tested in 1981, remained under consideration for a long time. And although the archival material is incomplete, it appears sufficient to conclude that these were not routine preparations (although they were typical of the coercive style of a dictatorship). The preserved lists of persons designated for internment, though few in number, contain the names of specific individuals and the addresses of their intended places of detention. The preparations went beyond the drafting of relevant legislation, proceeding smoothly as a natural consequence of the functioning of the police state. The several years between the end of martial law and the peak of the crisis (1983–1988)

were marked by a state of constant readiness: throughout this period (up to and including 1989), lists of persons designated for internment were updated, new locations for potential detention centres were identified, and relevant legal acts were prepared. The authorities also emphasised that the introduction of a state of emergency should be regarded as a last resort (as in 1981; see Paczkowski 2002, p. 137) and that its individual restrictions were to be applied flexibly: “when it needs to be introduced, when the need ceases, it should be lifted immediately” (AIPN, 174/27, Speech at a meeting at the Territorial Defence Inspectorate during the events of August 1988, August 1988, p. 23; AIPN, 174/28, Speech by Director of the First Directorate, Lt. Col. Bronisław Pawlikowski, at a meeting at the Territorial Defence Inspectorate during the events of August 1988, August 1988, p. 80). The authorities came closest to introducing a state of emergency in August 1988. The show of force connected with the pacification of the strike in Nowa Huta, Kraków, demonstrated to the opposition that the authorities remained strong and would not hesitate to resort to radical measures. One cannot dismiss the assumption that this was not only a show of strength but also a kind of rehearsal. Of course, this does not mean that a state of emergency could have been successfully implemented. Perhaps the preparations were among the last signs of vitality of the security apparatus – an attempt to demonstrate strength or to close ranks; perhaps the authorities themselves were uncertain about the effectiveness of their own actions (Notes from a conversation with Captain Stefan Kardaszewski, inspector of Division IV in Department III of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, in *Zmierzch dyktatury...* 2009, vol. 1, pp. 421–422). Nevertheless, this does not change the fact that such a scenario had been prepared. The role of the army – which was to be involved in the operation only if necessary – might have proved crucial. It should also be remembered that even the best-constructed legal framework, in a state of emergency, did not necessarily guarantee success, prevent abuses, or stop the situation from spiralling out of control. The public reaction to the authorities’ actions in Nowa Huta meant that they did not dare to go any further. Confronted with the crisis and their own weaknesses, the authorities entered into talks with the opposition (which was not necessarily particularly strong) and ‘armed themselves’ with various instruments of pressure. The carefully drafted plan for a state of emergency became merely one of several options – a contingency plan, the use of which depended on how the situation developed. Naturally, the compromising attitudes of the opposition

and the Church, as well as the unfavourable international context for radical solutions, meant that a state of emergency was not declared. Undoubtedly, however, the authorities could have declared it – but what would have been the long-term benefits? Would the temporary neutralisation of the opposition have changed anything? Would deploying the army onto the streets and introducing postal and telephone censorship have healed the economy? In view of the state's bankruptcy, would this not have been a futile move, and would renewed repression of protests have altered the situation? It seems that the rulers themselves no longer saw any point in such actions, especially since the violence used against striking workers in May had failed to prevent further strikes in August. The public was increasingly weary and apathetic (Wnuk-Lipiński 2002, p. 13), but the argument of force proved ineffective. At a meeting of the Political Bureau on 21 August 1988, Władysław Baka stated that coercive measures could only postpone the next wave of strikes by a few months, and Jaruzelski agreed with him (Cited by Andrzej Friszke; Friszke 2002, pp. 83–84). The introduction of a state of emergency would merely have prolonged the authorities' agony, whereas negotiations could shift part of the responsibility for resolving the crisis onto the opposition. When, in July 1988, the Soviet side not only exerted pressure for change but also clearly indicated that the USSR was no longer able to sustain the dictatorships within the Soviet bloc and that they would have to secure their own conditions for survival, a kind of pragmatism and political opportunism finally prevailed within the Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR). Moreover, the talks with the opposition confirmed the ruling party's conviction that they did not have to be removed from power (which they did not wish for in any case), at least not immediately. Kiszczak himself later stated (his words should, of course, be treated with considerable caution, as they suggest a certain interpretation) that during the conversations preceding and accompanying the Round Table discussions, there occurred a "highly interesting process of enchantment on both sides," and that, after overcoming mutual prejudices and getting to know one another, it became psychologically impossible to use force (Bereś and Skoczylas 1991, pp. 263–264). The use of the instruments prepared was therefore abandoned, and the focus shifted from maintaining power at all costs to minimising personal losses. In the face of the realisation of total defeat in 1989, it was merely a matter of securing one's own interests – which, as it turned out, were also understood as ensuring long-term personal security, as evidenced in Kiszczak's case by, for example, the file of

TW “Bolek” found in his home. This file concerned a secret collaborator codenamed “Bolek”, who, according to the documents it contained, would have been Lech Wałęsa. These files were found in 2016 by prosecutors from the Institute of National Remembrance (IPN) in the home of Czesław Kiszczak, who had died a year earlier. Prior to that, the general’s widow, Maria Kiszczak, had offered to sell the documents to the Institute of National Remembrance for PLN 90,000. The authenticity of the discovered file caused enormous controversy in Polish society, which is why it was handed over to the Jan Sehn Institute of Forensic Research in Kraków. Experts confirmed the authenticity of the documents contained in the file. The Jaruzelski–Kiszczak duumvirate had no choice but to persuade the Central Committee of the party of the necessity of entering into talks with the opposition. This was done suggestively at the 10th Plenum of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers’ Party, held at the turn of 1988 and 1989. Of course, the offer extended to the opposition consisted in maintaining the party’s control over power while relieving it of responsibility for the failing economy – a fact that, it seems, should still be borne in mind (*X Plenum KC PZPR...* 2018, p. 30). Divided into ‘constructive’ (i.e., willing to negotiate on the party’s terms) and ‘non-constructive’ (putting forward broader political demands) factions, the opposition took part in this asymmetrical game. The opposition was tested by the threat of force after the party’s defeat in the elections of 4 June 1989 – as the documentation shows, the party possessed the necessary instruments to employ coercion, yet a compromise solution was ultimately reached. A similar test occurred during the election of the head of state, when some opposition MPs deliberately failed to attend the vote, thus enabling General Jaruzelski to be elected President of the People’s Republic of Poland. Negotiations with former opponents not only allowed the general’s circle to remove an immediate political problem but also secured for them a new place in history and, ultimately, impunity. Therefore, returning to the question of why a state of emergency was not declared, it appears that after September 1988 there was simply no longer any need for it (nor would such a state have guaranteed the resolution of any problems), and the argument of force remained merely a threat – a means of exerting political pressure on the opposition.

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