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POLISH-AUSTRALIAN RELATIONS IN THE ERA OF SOLIDARITY 1980–1981: PERSPECTIVES REVEALED IN WARSAW’S OFFICIAL DIPLOMACY

In February 1980, the Second Department of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MSZ) in Warsaw, which dealt with Asian and Pacific states, accepted its work plan for that year. Priority was given to such countries as Vietnam, Afghanistan, China, India, and Japan. Australia, alongside members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and states such as Pakistan and Bangladesh, found itself in a second category, that is among countries that were still considered politically and economically important for the Polish People’s Republic (PRL) but considerably less than members of the first group. Australia was to be the object of Warsaw’s diplomatic interest, chiefly in economic matters. As the document stated, “political dialogue serves first of all to create political premises for further economic relations”¹.

Given the political and economic limitations within the framework of the supposed community of socialist states, the PRL’s diplomacy could claim some qualified successes in low-level bilateral Polish-Australian relations. Regardless of worsening Soviet-Australian relations and expected Australian retaliatory actions against the USSR in the wake of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, future cooperation between the two nations was expected.² Soon, the PRL’s diplomacy faced new challenges resulting from the international impact of the rise of the Solidarity movement, for which it was entirely unprepared.³ Canberra did not anticipate any important changes in its relations with

¹ Archiwum Ministerstwa Spraw Zagranicznych (AMSZ), DII 28/85, Og023-1-80, Plan Pracy [...] 1980, p. 6. All translations of quotations are by the author.

² *Ibidem*, p. 53–54; AMSZ, DII 28/85, Og220-4-80, Departament II to Henryk Łaszcz, 12 XII 1980.

³ For the foreign policy of the PRL in 1980–1981 see: A. Paczkowski, *Polska czasów kryzysu (1980–1989)* [in:] *Historia dyplomacji polskiej*, t. VI: 1944/1945–1989, red. W. Materski, W. Michowicz, Warsaw

Poland, either. As John Burgess, Australian Ambassador in Warsaw between 1980 and 1984, recalled in his short memoir published in 2010, the USSR, not to mention Poland, or any other country in Eastern Europe, did not figure among the priorities of Australian foreign policy.⁴ Despite the USSR's status as a superpower, as well as the considerable number of immigrants from Eastern Europe, there was little institutional expertise on the region in the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), and junior diplomats did not seem to consider positions there as important stepping stones in their careers. The dominant view among Australian foreign service officials was "that the future of this part of the world was fixed and not much could be done about it".⁵ Burgess admitted that neither he nor his colleagues were aware that they had a chance to witness the beginning of the great geopolitical turning point. As late as 1989, Francis Stuart, the first Australian ambassador residing in Warsaw (1973–1977), in his memoirs *Towards coming of age*, quoted by Burgess, expressed the opinion that "Poland and like countries can expect no more freedom in the future than the circumscribed autonomy they have now".⁶

However, such assessments went hand in hand with pro-Solidarity sympathies, clearly seen in Burgess' writings but also reflected in the activities of his staff, most notably Second Secretary Kate McGovern. Burgess, who experienced the communist political system first-hand in the Embassy in Moscow between 1975 and 1977, was impressed at how welcoming and outspoken Poles were. He admitted that he was inclined to take sides as "it was hard not to be drawn to a people so dismissive of the odds stacked against them".⁷ In his new book, Burgess gives a wide panorama of developments in Poland during 1980 and 1981, as he experienced them at the time, juxtaposed with the present historical research, and supplemented by selected documents, mainly cables from the Embassy in Warsaw. Some attention is given to bilateral diplomatic relations seen from the Australian perspective, while this article concentrates on the Polish Communist side and is, in a sense, complementary to Burgess' volume.⁸

Australian reactions to the strikes on the Baltic coast in August 1980 and the events in the wake of the Gdańsk Agreement, most notably the formation of the Independent Self-Governing Trade Union "Solidarity", were closely monitored by Polish diplomats. As early as 22 August, when the strikes were underway and, as the editorial in *The Canberra Times* considered, the situation was such that "the rest of the world may yet have to wring its hands"⁹, the counsellor of the Polish Embassy in Canberra, Waclaw Kapuściński, sent a cable to the MSZ. He informed his superiors that the fence of the Polish Consulate in

2010, p. 834–845; A. Skrzypek, *Dyplomatyczne dzieje PRL w latach 1956–1989*, Pułtusk–Warsaw 2010, p. 302–329.

⁴ On very limited Canberra's interest in the affairs of East-Central Europe see T.B. Miller, *Australia in Peace and War. External Relations 1788–1977*, Canberra 1978, pp. 353–356. For Australia's priorities in foreign policy see G. Smith et al., *Australia in the world: an introduction to Australian foreign policy*, Melbourne 1996.

⁵ J. Burgess, *Poland, 1980–1984: A witness to history*, "Humanities Research" 2010, v. XVI, no. 3, p.14.

⁶ F. Stuart, *Towards Coming of Age. A foreign service odyssey*, Nathan 1989, quoted in J. Burgess, *Poland...*, p. 13.

⁷ J. Burgess, *Poland...*, p. 15.

⁸ *Idem, The Solidarity Challenge: Poland 1980–81. An Australian Diary*, Redland Bay 2019.

⁹ *Détente and the Future*, "The Canberra Times", 23 VIII 1980.

Sydney had been defaced with slogans and symbols. More importantly, he reported on Minister for Foreign Affairs Andrew Peacock's statement expressing his solidarity with "the economic and political difficulties of Polish workers" and insisting that other states should allow Poland to solve its problems on its own.¹⁰ The message must have been taken seriously, as it was conveyed among others to the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers Party (PZPR) Edward Gierek. A week later, Kapuściński asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs Józef Czyrek whether to issue a visa to Bob Hawke, the president of the Australian Council of Trade Unions and future Prime Minister, who had wanted to arrive in Poland together with a camera crew to meet union leaders, government representatives, and strikers. Kapuściński recommended granting the visa, as Hawke was popular and could present the situation in a positive light for the Communist government. He warned that "a refusal will deepen distrust".¹¹ However, Ryszard Fijałkowski, the director of the Second Department of the MSZ, thought that Hawke was notorious for his demagoguery and that he would use his visit for personal publicity, so he advised the Minister to the contrary, and Hawke did not come to Poland.¹²

In the following weeks, Warsaw diplomats noticed that unlike in most countries of Asia and Oceania, where the political crisis in Poland did not attract much attention, in Australia and, ironically, in China, "antisocialist" positions featured prominently.¹³ Polish officials were particularly concerned by Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser's speech in Washington, D.C. on 1 September, when he "marvelled" at the courage of people in Poland and referred to "an oppressive and ubiquitous security service" and "institutional structure of the country [...] unchanged since Stalin's time".¹⁴ Fraser, who led the coalition government of the Liberal Party and the National Country Party (1975–1983), had a dominant role in the formulation and execution of Australian foreign policy. Under his leadership, not without strong controversies, it became, in Paul Kelly's words, an "unusual blend of Cold War pessimism and Third World empathy".¹⁵ Australia, as a middle power, tried to support and represent the underdeveloped countries of the South (for example Zimbabwe's independence) and at the same time reacted resolutely against the Soviet threat in Asia (such as the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan). This strengthened the alliance with the US and brought about some improvement in relations with Beijing.¹⁶

Polish diplomats were also critical of Peacock's press release on 21 September and the response given by Senator John Carrick, representing the government in the Senate, to questions concerning Poland. Peacock reiterated Australia's position in the House of Representatives on 18 September in a speech on human rights in the Soviet

¹⁰ AMSZ, DII 29/85, WI, Austr.0-22-1-80, Kapuściński to Fijałkowski, 22 VIII 1980.

¹¹ AMSZ, DII 29/85, WI, Austr.0-30-1-80,1, Kapuściński to Czyrek, 29 VIII 1980.

¹² AMSZ, DII 29/85, WI, Austr.0-30-1-80,2, Fijałkowski to Czyrek, 29 VIII 1980.

¹³ AMSZ, DII 28/85, Og.-50-4-00, Reakcje w krajach Azji i Australii na wydarzenia w Polsce.

¹⁴ AMSZ, DII 28/85, Og.-50-4-80, Reakcje australijskie na wydarzenia w Polsce; M. Fraser, Speech to B'nai B'rith International, 1 IX 1980, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, PM Transcripts, <https://pmtranscripts.pmc.gov.au/release/transcript-5431>.

¹⁵ P. Kelly, *John Malcolm Fraser* [in:] *Australian Prime Ministers*, ed. M. Grattan, Sydney 2000, p. 371.

¹⁶ P. Weller, *Malcolm Fraser PM. A study in ministerial power*, Ringwood, Vic. 1989, pp. 313–354; Ph. Ayres, *Malcolm Fraser. A biography*, Port Melbourne 1987, pp. 329–352, 375–401, 435–446.

Union. In his opinion, the developments in Poland were significant for the security of Europe. He expressed the hope that the authorities would meet their commitments which they had agreed upon with workers. As Peacock saw it, such workers' success would have far-reaching implications for Poland and other countries in Eastern Europe.¹⁷ These pronouncements occasioned PRL Ambassador in Canberra Ryszard Frąckiewicz's interventions in the DFA and his suggestion to his superiors to intervene with the Australian chargé d'affaires in Poland Paul Bryden. At that time, former ambassador Rob Laurie had already left Warsaw and new appointee Burgess had not arrived yet, so Bryden presented the official Australian position and – according to the Second Department's report – added that the Australian Government found itself under pressure from different ethnic groups, including the Polish one.¹⁸ Frąckiewicz noted a positive change in the tone of official statements in Canberra and conveyed the good atmosphere during the talks with David W. Evans, the First Assistant Secretary for Europe, America, and New Zealand in the DFA, and other foreign service officials on the occasion of Burgess' farewell meeting before his departure for Warsaw. In Frąckiewicz's account, Evans stated that the situation in Poland was bound to attract Australia's attention because of international and human rights consequences. Beyond these concerns, there was political pressure to use these problems with an aim to win over trade unionists and Polish ethnic voters. However, Evans was reported to insist that the DFA had informed the government objectively and did not advise using expressions that smacked of interference in the internal matters of Poland. After a long discussion over the wording of the DFA press release, which in the Ambassador's estimation was misleading and perhaps even unfriendly, Evans promised not to use pejorative terms such as "regime" in relation to the government of the PRL.¹⁹

On 7 December 1980, during a time of growing international unease about a possible Soviet military intervention in Poland, US President Jimmy Carter sent a message with a statement which was to be released immediately along with a summary of intelligence to US allies, including Australia.²⁰ Carter expected them to issue similar declarations.²¹ Four days later, Director Fijałkowski talked to Burgess, whom he evaluated as particularly interested in speculations on the Soviet invasion. Fijałkowski had previously complained about newly appointed Foreign Affairs Minister Anthony Street's pronouncement in the House of Representatives on 2 December. Street stressed the serious implications of such an action upon East-West relations and reiterated what his predecessor had said, namely, that "the Polish government and people should be allowed to resolve peacefully their own

¹⁷ *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates (CPD)*, House, no. 38, 1980, 18 IX 1980, p. 1488.

¹⁸ AMSZ, DII 28/85, Og-50-4-80, Reakcje na wydarzenia w Polsce (Azja i Australia), 27 VIII 1980.

¹⁹ AMSZ, DII 29/85, WI, Austr.0-22-1-80, Frąckiewicz to Fijałkowski, 23 IX 1980.

²⁰ For the policy of the US and other Western states towards Poland in the early 1980s see: J. Tyszkiewicz, *Rozbijanie monolitu. Polityka Stanów Zjednoczonych wobec Polski 1945–1988*, Warsaw 2015, p. 397–453; P. Pleskot, *Kłopotliwa Panna „S”. Postawy polityczne Zachodu wobec „Solidarności” na tle stosunków z PRL (1980–1989)*, Warsaw 2013, p. 18–199; *Świat wobec Solidarności 1980–1989*, red. P. Jaworski, Ł. Kamiński, Warsaw 2013, p. 210–604; H. Sjørusen, *The United States, Western Europe and the Polish Crisis*, Houndmills 2003.

²¹ D. MacEachin, *U.S. Intelligence and the Confrontation in Poland, 1980–1981*, University Park 2002, p. 59.

difficulties”.²² The Communist diplomat argued that such comments, regardless of their intent, unnecessarily exacerbated the international climate around Poland and would not help to solve the crisis. He wrote to the Ambassador in Canberra that Burgess had received his remarks with understanding and promised to convey them to his government.²³

At the same time, Frąckiewicz informed Minister Czyrek about his conversation with Soviet Ambassador to Australia Nikolai Sudarikov, who related how he had been called to the DFA. The secretary of the Department Peter Henderson handed him Street's statement and explained that it was the official position of the Australian government. Sudarikov answered that the “USSR had never intervened [militarily] nor invaded [Poland] and the Polish-Soviet relations were developing in line with signed treaties”.²⁴ Frąckiewicz also received signals from the Australian side indicating Canberra's determination to continue warning Moscow against any aggressive actions adverse to Poland and to stress the state's sovereignty. Frąckiewicz interpreted this as congruent with general Australian policy towards the Soviet Union. The 1980 Polish Embassy's Report observed that, despite lucrative Australian grain exports to the USSR, Canberra nonetheless treated that country as a hostile power. Expectations of some rapprochement after the October 1980 parliamentary elections were thwarted by media and government circles' speculations over the possibility of a Soviet invasion of Poland and of subsequent new sanctions. The report claimed that after the elections the Labor Party effectively did not question the anti-Soviet policy of the government.²⁵

Like the government, the Australian Labor Party (ALP) ostentatiously demonstrated its respect for Poland's sovereignty and independence. At the end of March 1981, Labor leader Bill Hayden informed Frąckiewicz about his appointment with Sudarikov and, as he planned to discuss some matters related to Poland with the Soviet Ambassador, he attached a letter that he had sent to him.²⁶ This message expressed the ALP's “strongest opposition to any intervention by Soviet armed forces or any other Warsaw Pact countries in the internal affairs of Poland” and warned that such action would endanger world peace. Hayden added: “Relations between the Soviet Union and Australia, which have already been damaged by the invasion of Afghanistan, would further deteriorate should armed intervention take place”.²⁷ Sen. Kerry W. Sibraa restated the ALP's position during the Senate debate on the food aid for Poland on 17 November 1981. Sibraa pronounced Labor's “belief that Solidarity is a genuine workers movement and that what has been occurring in Poland has been a genuine workers revolution”.²⁸ At the same time, he criticized US policy in Europe and expressed the conviction that it was not the “liberalised Polish Government” led by Jaruzelski but food shortages and price increases that threatened Solidarity.

²² CDP, House, no. 49, 2 December 1980, p. 220–221.

²³ AMSZ, DII 29/85, WI, Austr.22-1-80, Fijałkowski to Frąckiewicz, 13 XII 1980.

²⁴ AMSZ, DII 29/85, WI, Austr.0240-1-80, Frąckiewicz to Czyrek, 5 XII 1980.

²⁵ AMSZ, DII 38/86, WI, Austr.242-1-81, Raport polityczny ambasady PRL w Kanberze za 1980 r., p. 12–13.

²⁶ AMSZ, DII 38/86, WI, Austr.22-2-81, Hayden to Frąckiewicz, 25 III 1981.

²⁷ AMSZ, DII 38/86, WI, Austr.22-2-81 Hayden to Soudarikov, 25 III 1981.

²⁸ CPD, Senate, no. 91, 17 XI 1981, p. 2201–2202.

Amid growing speculation about imminent Soviet aggression at the turn of December 1980, Frąckiewicz objected to the statement signed by over fifty ALP parliamentarians in support of the establishment of independent trade unions in Poland. In order to protest what he saw as interference in Poland's internal affairs, he arranged a meeting with some Labor politicians, including Deputy Leader of the Opposition Lionel Bowen, who was responsible for foreign affairs, and Senator James Mulvihill. The MSZ instructed the Ambassador to raise the issue with the DFA. Frąckiewicz was received by Laurie, who after his return from Warsaw replaced Evans as the First Assistant Secretary. In a cable to Warsaw, the Communist diplomat informed about his interlocutor's concurrence with the assessment that the ALP's letter was not helpful and that it created the impression of taking advantage of internal Polish matters in conflicts between Australian parties. However, he maintained that the intentions of Labor parliamentarians were good. According to Frąckiewicz's memo, Australian diplomats assessed that Poland's situation had deteriorated because of the confrontational political demands put forward by the "fraction of trade unions" and the deepening anxiety of Poland's neighbours. "L[aurie] counts himself among optimists, but pessimists prevail," the Ambassador concluded.²⁹

In the same conversation, Laurie was to assure Frąckiewicz that he would "try to delay and drown in a drawer" the resolution prepared by independent Senator Brian Harradine, who strongly supported changes in Poland. However, Laurie warned that he could not guarantee to block it, as the Senate was suspicious of external pressure.³⁰ In fact, on 4 December, the Senate agreed upon a watered-down version of the resolution. The document welcomed an independent trade union, stressed the importance of negotiations without external intervention, and called upon the Australian Government to warn the Polish and Soviet authorities against the use of armed forces.³¹

The MSZ also noticed Australian communists' critical assessments of events in Poland. Nevertheless, their criticism was seen as doctrinal and as such implicitly dismissed. The pro-China Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist), which broke away from the Communist Party of Australia loyal to Moscow following the split between the Soviet Union and China in the early 1960s, was noted to claim that the events in Poland justified its decision to form its own organization. The pro-Soviet Communist Party of Australia (CPA) changed its political course after the invasion of Czechoslovakia, criticized the Soviet Union, and soon adopted Eurocommunism. Its pro-Soviet activists saw this as a betrayal of Marxism-Leninism and founded the Socialist Party of Australia (SPA) in 1971. The former party claimed that the explosive situation in Poland and Poles' (i.e. Polish communists') cynicism were well-known among the European Left. In the opinion of its secretary, the peasant origin of workers and the downfall of the Communist authorities' standing had led to the rise of nationalistic ideology, while economic chaos had brought about political crisis. The SPA lashed out against Polish Communists in much more unambiguous terms. It maintained that the protest of the working class was in part

²⁹ AMSZ, DII 29/85WI, Austr.22-1-80 B-20, Frąckiewicz to Fijalkowski, 2 XII 1980.

³⁰ *Ibidem*.

³¹ CPD, Senate, no. 49 1980, 4 XII 1980, p. 366; cf. CDP, Senate, no. 48, 26 XI 1980, p. 26.

justified and stemmed from the deviation of relations between the Party and trade unions, although the CIA had also played a fundamental role. In their view, the Pope encouraged Polish nationalism, the existence of private farms revived a capitalistic worldview on a massive scale, and Lech Wałęsa's real aim was to create an oppositional centre and then transform it into open counterrevolution. "A demand for free and independent zz [trade unions] in KS [socialist countries] is counterrevolutionary" [underlined] and in this respect the Polish Party vacillated and tolerated too much, Australian Comrades rebuked their Polish counterparts.³² However, when asked about possible rapprochement with the less critical CPA, and following the directions of the Foreign Department of the Central Committee of PZPR, the party body overseeing the MSZ, the latter instructed the Ambassador to maintain only limited contacts with this party because of its attitude towards the USSR and the limited scope of their mutual relations.³³ A year later, Frąckiewicz reported that owing to the Embassy's efforts, the SPA better understood Polish affairs, and its Congress eventually adopted a more balanced position on Poland. The CPA, in the Ambassador's view, also adopted a largely positive stance with only some nuances deriving from its imitation of the policy of the Communist Party of Italy.³⁴

By the end of 1980, PRL diplomats had developed a broader insight into the official Australian standpoint on the situation in Poland. It was perceived "through the prism of anti-Soviet hysteria", whereas the position of the Australian authorities Warsaw officials saw as in principle consistent with that of the US and Western Europe.³⁵ Official statements and informal opinions presented by both the government and the opposition were initially interpreted in the context of the upcoming federal election, which fell on 18 October 1980. The MSZ concluded that in Australian domestic politics, the Polish crisis was first used in electioneering and afterwards continued to emerge in day-to-day squabbling between political parties. Its political solution was alleged to be received with disappointment in some Australian political circles, as they expected that Soviet military action would make it easier for the Fraser government to conduct the election campaign.³⁶ In mid-September, Frąckiewicz cabled to Warsaw that the government was "interested in our [Polish] events, since their dramatic evolution, notably with the participation from outside [Poland], would ensure victory for Fraser in the October elections".³⁷ In the meantime, Labor politicians continued pointing to what they perceived as similarities in the situation of the Solidarity movement in Poland and trade union movements in Australia and elsewhere, and underscored the perceived hypocrisy in government policies. When speculations over a possible Soviet invasion reached their peak and the ALP parliamentarians issued their aforementioned statement, Frąckiewicz interpreted it as an attempt to position themselves in opposition to the confrontation in Poland and a pacification action against Solidarity, expected here

³² AMSZ, DII 28/85, Og.-50-4-80, Reakcje australijskie, p. 3.

³³ AMSZ, DII 38/86, Austr.023/81, Fijałkowski to Frąckiewicz, 28 I 1981.

³⁴ AMSZ, DII 42/86, Austr.242-1-82, Raport 1981, p. 20.

³⁵ AMSZ, DII 28/85, Og.-50-4-80, Reakcje australijskie, p. 3.

³⁶ *Ibidem*.

³⁷ AMSZ, DII 29/85WI, Austr.0-22-1-80, Frąckiewicz to Fijałkowski, 16 IX 1980.

yesterday. The opposition wanted to weaken the propaganda that would turn this “new Afghanistan” to the government’s advantage. Hence, among other things, they claimed an ideological kinship with Solidarity and jumped on the bandwagon.³⁸

In a confidential memo on the ALP sent to Warsaw in August 1981, Frąckiewicz referred to changes in the attitudes of internal factions regarding the situation in Poland. According to his account, the position of the orthodox Left had shifted from strong suspicion of Solidarity, motivated by alleged CIA and Vatican influence, to a positive or even enthusiastic approach. Such activists as Tom Uren affirmed Solidarity’s extremism and rejected the possibility of a compromise between this movement and the government. The centre and right circles in the ALP were judged to hold more balanced views. They conveyed understanding for the efforts of the Communist authorities to normalize the situation and renew the ruling party. However, as the memo admitted, they joined the anti-Soviet campaign and were sceptical about the reform of the political system in Poland. Frąckiewicz stressed that Labor, out of power for years and portrayed as weak on efficient administration and economic policy, feared any analogies between the breakdown of the nationalized economy and its planned management in Poland with “the bankruptcy of the Labor bureaucracy under [Gough] Whitlam”,³⁹ who ruled Australia between 1972 and 1975. They worried that the government and the press would take advantage of severe economic problems in the PRL to frighten Australian society with “bureaucratic socialism” and the “dictatorship of trade unions”.⁴⁰ PRL diplomats took note of the ACTU’s support for the Solidarity Trade Union and Hawke’s attempts to present himself as “super-arbitrator in industrial disputes”.⁴¹

Many of above-mentioned general assessments were reiterated in a confidential memo “The attitude of Australian political circles towards ‘Solidarity’”. Prepared in the first half of April 1981 by Frąckiewicz in connection with a possible visit by Wałęsa to Australia, it stressed great media and public interest in the Solidarity leader. Despite political and ideological support for Solidarity on the part of conservative and governmental circles, the author did not expect demonstrations of official support for Wałęsa in the event of his arrival. Frąckiewicz argued that the Australian government understood the necessity of an agreement between the Communist authorities and Solidarity and was consequently restrained by the awkward analogy with Australian trade unions and their popular leaders. Regarding the opposition and the trade unions, Frąckiewicz emphasised the diversity of their positions based on their political and ideological orientations. The Ambassador claimed that, notwithstanding strong Labor sympathies among centre-left activists, reservations about Wałęsa’s religiosity and clerical influence on the Solidarity movement predominated. He suggested that this resulted from still widespread anti-Catholic sentiments in Australia as well as the role of Bob Santamaria and Catholic activists in the 1950s ALP Split.⁴² Even though the

³⁸ AMSZ, DII 29/85WI, Austr.0-22-1-80, Frąckiewicz to Fijałkowski, 28 XI 1980.

³⁹ AMSZ, DII 38/86, Austr.2412-3-81, Australijska Labour Party w poszukiwaniu zwycięskiej formuły wyborczej, p. 3.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 4.

⁴¹ AMSZ, DII 28/85, Og.-50-4-00, Reakcje w krajach, p. 2.

⁴² AMSZ, DII 38/86, Austr.30-2-81, Stosunek australijskich kół politycznych do „Solidarności”.

leader of Solidarity did not accept any invitation, the MSZ cautiously listed actual and suspected invitations sent to him from Australia, focusing on one issued by Bob Hawke via Stanisław Ciosek, the Polish minister for trade unions. In this context, Hawke was described as universally regarded as a future ALP leader and Prime Minister who did not hide his pro-Solidarity sympathies.⁴³

At first, the MSZ assessed that its Australian counterpart had taken a cautious position. Australians emphasised their understanding of the situation in Poland and its significance for peace and security in Europe, as well as the exclusive right of the Polish authorities in solving the crisis. Australian diplomats claimed to inform their government objectively and refrain from statements that might suggest any interference in Polish internal affairs. The MSZ acknowledged that in the first months of the Polish crisis, the Australian media covered it at length and its assessment was nuanced. The general tone of press comments was judged to be critical but not virulent, usually attuned to official statements, although not free from speculation and sensation.⁴⁴ Moreover, in its annual report for 1980, the Polish Embassy asserted that against the background of events in Poland, a deep change had occurred in Polish-Australian political dialogue. This change was to be seen in the revision of the dominant image of the Polish internal situation, as well as in Polish-Soviet relations and the role of Poland in Europe. The document further argued that even such stereotypes as that of the Polish communist party and its government's vassal position to the Soviet Union and their totalitarian character, the persecuted church, captive intellectuals and enslaved workers were seriously shaken. It was hoped that although the changes in Australian perspective on Poland had developed in harmony with the American position and in the context of anti-Soviet propaganda, the new perception of Polish affairs did not result from external influence and it might have permanent character and consequently facilitate Polish-Australian relations in the future. In conclusion, the report advised to maintain dialogue, in particular with the Prime Minister Office, the DFA, and people from Fraser's circle, notably Owen Harries, senior adviser to both the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Prime Minister, and suspected by Polish diplomats to have been promoted in the DFA by Laurie because of his strong pro-American position. With a view to the future situation in the Liberal leadership, it was thought advisable to "cultivate" Peacock and Michael MacKellar, as well as Hayden, Hawks, and Paul Keating in the ALP.⁴⁵

A positive atmosphere in Polish-Australian diplomatic contacts continued in 1981. In April, Frąckiewicz reported that Poland had gained credibility even in conservative and previously hostile groups. He found a great increase in political sympathy for Poland in all opinion-forming circles, pro-government and opposition alike. The Governor General had even attended a concert of a Polish orchestra and its following reception. There were no difficulties in access to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, who was inaccessible to the majority of the diplomatic corps, while other ministers readily accepted invitations to the residence of the Polish ambassador. Therefore, Frąckiewicz suggested:

⁴³ AMSZ, DII 38/86, Austr.30-2-81, Australia i Nowa Zelandia.

⁴⁴ AMSZ, DII 28/85, Og.-50-4-80, Reakcje australijskie.

⁴⁵ AMSZ, DII 38/86, Austr.242-1-81, Raport [...] 1980 r., p. 15–16, 20.

It seems appropriate to reciprocate such facilitations in relation to Ambassador Burgess, who according to reliable sources belongs to leading intellectual members of their foreign service and whose information are valued here and received with attention.⁴⁶

On the other hand, the Ambassador had long criticised Australian politicians for what he saw as their inconsistent and simplistic approach to Polish affairs: “Lacking a long-term concept, in their perception of East European affairs they follow their anti-communist instincts, short-term interests (electoral, trade) and British (to a lesser extent American) assessments”.⁴⁷ In retrospect, he claimed that until mid-1981, he had been able to influence the government’s assessments despite Burgess’ pro-Solidarity reports, while readiness to cooperate with the US and NATO against the USSR was rooted in Fraser’s personal bias. Since then, American suggestions transmitted by the Australian ambassador to Washington Nick Parkinson and Harries had increasingly shaped the position of the DFA.⁴⁸ On 18 September 1981, Frąckiewicz informed the Ministry that the DFA and the Prime Minister Office had distanced themselves from the Polish government’s attempts to stabilize the situation and had fully adjusted their position to that of the US. In Frąckiewicz’s view, the unrest in Poland suited the Americans in their game with the USSR and Western Europe.⁴⁹ In this light, PRL diplomats saw Fraser’s move to discuss the situation in Poland at the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Melbourne in October 1981 and the inclusion of the issue in the final communique.⁵⁰

The MSZ correspondence with its embassy in Canberra reflected their attempts to create a positive picture of the Communist authorities and their domestic policies as well as to refocus Polish-Australian relations on economic matters. They hoped for the continuation of a “business as usual” approach. When Burgess presented his credentials to Henryk Jabłoński, the Chairman of the State Council, on 15 October 1980, the two spoke about further collaboration in fishery, the possibility of an increase in Polish export to Australia, and general cultural cooperation.⁵¹ From Canberra, Frąckiewicz passed on what he referred to as Burgess’ “perhaps sincere” declarations of eagerness to develop cultural and scientific relations. Burgess indeed organised a festival of Australian Cinema in February 1981, attended by both MSZ and Solidarity representatives. The Polish Embassy warned that the Australian Department of Trade expected the new Ambassador to monitor the competitiveness of the Polish coal exports.⁵² Apart from a potential Soviet invasion, and its implications for Australian-Soviet relations, as well as a recruitment of qualified immigrants, Frąckiewicz considered the potential collapse of Polish exports of coal as a main reason for increased Australian government attention to Poland, which until then had been in the peripheries of Canberra’s foreign policy.⁵³ However, he

⁴⁶ AMSZ, DII 38/86, Austr.23-2-81, Frąckiewicz to Majkowski, 16 IV 1981.

⁴⁷ AMSZ, DII 38/86, Austr.023-1-81, Projekt planu na 1981, p. 4.

⁴⁸ AMSZ, DII 42/86, Austr.242-1-82, Raport 1981, p. 16.

⁴⁹ AMSZ, DII 39/86, Austr.0-22.1-81 A, Frąckiewicz to Mulicki, 18 IX 1981.

⁵⁰ AMSZ, DII 38/86, Austr.22-6-81, Notatka informacyjna dotycząca spotkania szefów państw Commonwealthu, p. 6.

⁵¹ AMSZ, DII 29/85, Austr.0-20-1-80, Fijałkowski to Frąckiewicz, 17 X 1980.

⁵² AMSZ, DII 29/85, Austr.0-22-1-80, Frąckiewicz to Fijałkowski, 23 IX 1980.

⁵³ AMSZ, DII 42/86, Austr.242-1-82, Raport 1981, p. 15.

recognised that Poland was not a rival to Australia, as Australian exports went mainly to Asian markets, and suggested collaboration in technology and prices. In June 1981, the MSZ assessed that the Australian Embassy was considerably active and had close and numerous contacts with Solidarity.⁵⁴

While Canberra showed a growing interest in the political aspects of bilateral relations, Warsaw, as in previous years, focused on economic cooperation. Trade and credits for urgent purchases, remained the priority of PRL diplomacy in Australia and elsewhere.⁵⁵ The aim of the political dialogue both with the Australian government and the opposition, as the Embassy reported to Warsaw, was to take advantage of the general interest in the situation in Poland and to facilitate trade and obtain credits.⁵⁶ Between 1970 and 1980 Polish-Australian trade increased fivefold, but because it had started at a very low level, the results in absolute numbers were not satisfactory. In 1977, turnover amounted to 129 million USD,⁵⁷ and fell slightly in the following years. In 1981, the trade was worth 111 million USD. Poland exported mainly textiles, chemicals, footwear, and other leather products, and in small quantities it also sold glass, crystal, electric motors, and machine tools. Its import was dominated up to 95% by wool and rawhide, mostly cowhide to produce leather.⁵⁸

What concerned the Polish authorities most was the trade balance between the two countries, which was extremely unfavourable for Poland. The disproportion of Polish exports and imports had been constantly increasing and by the end of 1977 was at a ratio of 1 to 13. That year, Poland exported 9 million USD worth of products while importing that of 120 million.⁵⁹ In 1981, Poland's export in absolute numbers was worth 15,235,000 USD – due to inflation, this was 10% less than a year earlier. Because of Poland's financial difficulties, the state's purchases decreased and were worth 96 million USD, whereas sales slightly rose, which meant that the proportion of Polish export to import was 1 to about 6.3. This improvement in the balance of trade was caused by Poland's inability to pay for Australian goods. Because of the severe economic crisis and foreign debt difficulties, the Polish government had difficulties in financing the import of Australian raw materials. For this reason, purchases of wool and hides were suspended in the second quarter of 1981.⁶⁰

Polish diplomacy strove to convince the Australian government to underwrite commercial credits in Australian banks. In autumn 1980, the MSZ noticed that the Australian government understood Poland's economic situation but that it did not declare readiness for help.⁶¹ The Department of Trade and Resources (DTR) in Canberra did not take a definite stand, whereas the DFA expected a political request for economic help from

⁵⁴ AMSZ, DII 38/86, Austr.023-1-81, Mulicki to Frąckiewicz, 3 VI 1981.

⁵⁵ AMSZ, DII 38/86, Austr.023-1-816932, Majkowski to Frąckiewicz, 1 IV 1981.

⁵⁶ AMSZ, DII 42/86, Austr.242-1-82, Raport 1981, p. 15.

⁵⁷ AMSZ, DII 5/84, Og-220-12-78, Australia. Materiały do wizyty min. E. Wojtaszka w Australii, p. 16.

⁵⁸ AMSZ, DII 38/86, Austr.220-1-81, Informacja na temat wymiany handlowej Polski i Australii, p. 1-2.

⁵⁹ AMSZ, DII 5/84, Og-220-12-78, Australia. Materiały do wizyty min. E. Wojtaszka w Australii, p. 16; DII 54/84WI Austr.23-10-79, Sprawozdanie z pobytu Misji Handlowej PIHZ w Australii.

⁶⁰ AMSZ, DII 42/86 Austr.242-1-82, Raport 1981, p. 21.

⁶¹ AMSZ, DII 28/85 Og.-50-4-80, Reakcje krajów.

Warsaw. Despite initial reservations in the DTR and Treasury, which were afraid to set a precedent and did not want to give the European Economic Community any arguments for subsidizing agricultural exports, the Government accepted the Polish request.⁶² In Frąckiewicz's opinion, this was possible because of Fraser's personal position, as well as the action taken by Burgess, Evans (before he left Canberra as Ambassador to the USSR), and Street. Australian wool exporters and Labor parliamentarians Bowen and Kim Beazley were also helpful in this process. DTR officials Jim Scully and D. Hunter figured out how to evade some legal restrictions and prepare unprecedented government guarantees for the credits in Australian banks for purchasing wool, skins, and hides.⁶³ Street announced the decision to respond positively to the Polish request in the House of Representatives on 29 April 1981. He stressed that it related to "Poland's traditional purchases" and argued that, as in case of some other Western countries, Australia's assistance "was designed to help the Poles resolve their current internal difficulties in their own way and without external intervention".⁶⁴ Warsaw was officially advised that the Australian Government has agreed to take the exceptional step of underwriting through the Export Finance and Insurance Corporation, any credits that the Australian banks may extend at commercial rates of interest and for periods not exceeding 180 days to finance purchases of wool and hides and skins up to a total amount of 40 million Australian dollars.⁶⁵

The MSZ praised the Embassy in Canberra for obtaining the government guarantees for credits and called it "an unprecedented success".⁶⁶

Food aid for the Polish people was discussed several times in the Senate.⁶⁷ On 17 November, Minister for Finance Margaret Guilfoyle declared that "Polish importers had made very good use of the facility provided through this assistance" but the government expected that Street's upcoming visit to Warsaw would clarify the needs for credits as well as assistance flowing to Poland from private and community sources.⁶⁸ The total aid from the Polish community in Australia was estimated at \$A 5 million in the last year.⁶⁹ Guilfoyle assured the Senate that the government would support an appeal to coordinate such help for Poland. On 22 November 1981, Prime Minister Fraser launched the "Help Poland Live" appeal with the aim of organising humanitarian help for the people of Poland, to which the federal government donated one million Australian dollars. The Appeal was conducted by the Australian National Committee for Relief to Poland, which was chaired by Frank Galbally. The food, medicines, and other supplies purchased were to be distributed in Poland by the Church and Solidarity⁷⁰, such humanitarian

⁶² AMSZ, DII 38/86, WI, Burgess to Wójcik, 4 V 1981; Aide Memoire; Pro Memoria, 19 III 1981.

⁶³ AMSZ, DII 42/86, Austr.242-1-82, Raport 1981, p. 16–17.

⁶⁴ CDP, House, no. 122, 29 IV 1981, p. 1692.

⁶⁵ AMSZ, DII 38/86, WI, Aide Memoire.

⁶⁶ AMSZ, DII 38/86, WI, Austr.023-1-81, Mulicki to Frąckiewicz, 3 VI 1981, p. 2.

⁶⁷ CPD, Senate, no. 91, 15 X 1981, p. 1266–1267; no. 92, 10 XI 1981, p.1929; no. 92, 19 XI 1981, pp. 2348; no. 92, 25 XI 1981, pp. 2498–2499; No.92, 26 XI 1981, p. 2605.

⁶⁸ CDP, Senate, no. 92, 17 XI 1981, p. 2205.

⁶⁹ AMSZ, DII 38/86, WI, Australian National Committee for Relief to Poland, Help Poland Live.

⁷⁰ AMSZ, DII 38/86, WI, Prime Minister, Launching of "Help Poland Live" Appeal. Melbourne, 22 XI 1981; *Street meets Solidarity*, "The Canberra Times" 29 XI 1981.

and propaganda action bypassing the PRL government supplemented political and diplomatic activities and responded to the expectations of the Polish community.⁷¹ The MSZ viewed with concern the political mobilization of Australian Poles, particularly anti-Communist demonstrations and other events, such as collections of money for the Solidarity movement. The Consulate General, although ignored by the Committee, concluded that this organisation would contribute to real help for Poland, while the participation of notable personalities and the involvement of the government guaranteed its success.⁷²

Arrangements for credits and humanitarian assistance for Poland were running parallel to the preparations for Street's visit to Warsaw. This was preceded by a meeting between Street and Czyrek in New York on 23 September during the 36th Session of the UN General Assembly. In preparation for the meeting Burgess stressed Street's role in the decisions concerning governmental guarantees for Polish import of wool and hides. He declared his government's intent to widen the scope of economic and financial help to Poland. The Ambassador explained that his Minister was chiefly interested in Czyrek's assessment of the general situation in Poland and wondered how Australia, being a part of the West, could help in conveying Polish postulates to Western governments. New Director of the Second Department in the MSZ, Tadeusz Mulicki, concluded that the proposed topics were in line with Polish expectations and recommended accepting them.⁷³

The Polish Ambassador in Canberra was of the opinion that the Czyrek-Street meeting was necessary not only because of Street's role in granting credits but also to continue the political dialogue that would create positive conditions for the prolongation of credit guarantees. He argued that such a meeting could lead to Street's visit to Warsaw and improve the international position of the PRL. It might help to maintain the favourable attitude of the DFA, which was important in solving such issues as immigration from Poland and the low level of Polish export. As Street had earlier been Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations, and was accordingly responsible for contacts with trade unions, Frąckiewicz advised the MSZ to emphasize the government's conciliatory approach towards Solidarity and the problems created by "extremist and irresponsible tendencies" within the trade union. He affirmed that Street expressed sincere recognition for the prudence and moderation of the Polish government. If the Minister [Czyrek] presents him our socio-economic dilemmas, it may seriously influence the Australian government's attitude towards the further development of events in Poland. [...] Minister Street, in contrast to his predecessor, is very unassuming and appears to be shy. He is characterized by determination, insight and solidity. He is also, unlike Peacock, a very close and trusted associate of the Prime Minister and may help a lot as far as Polish affairs are concerned.⁷⁴

⁷¹ P. Pleskot, *Solidarność na Antypodach*, Warsaw 2014, p. 206–216; M. Klatt, *The Poles & Australia*, North Melbourne 2014, p. 70–71.

⁷² AMSZ, DII 38/86, WI, Marian Bark, Notatka informacyjna [...], 25 XI 1981.

⁷³ AMSZ, DII 38/86, WI, Mulicki, Notatka informacyjna, 11 IX 1981.

⁷⁴ AMSZ, DII 38/86, Austr. 22-4-81, Uwagi do ewentualnej rozmowy [...] podczas 36 Sesji ZO ONZ.

When Street was about to visit Warsaw, this description was enclosed in his dossier prepared for his Polish interlocutors.⁷⁵

After the ministerial meeting in New York, the MSZ informed Frąckiewicz that the discussion had focused on Polish affairs. Czyrek sketched the economic situation of Poland, stressing the importance of help from abroad. Street responded with an assurance that Australia was aware of the situation and had tried to be helpful in the past.⁷⁶ In his letter directly addressed to the “Comrade Minister”, Frąckiewicz wrote to Czyrek, “I do not know how you have judged Street. He acknowledged your presentation of economic disproportions [in trade balance] and other Polish problems as open and convincing. He also took the hint about credits correctly”.⁷⁷ On 2 November Deputy Foreign Minister Tadeusz Olechowski in conversation with Burgess raised the possibility of an official visit by the Australian Foreign Minister to Warsaw in 1982. After reporting the issue to Canberra, Burgess was instructed to see if Minister Street could come to Poland during his planned trip to New York and Brussels at the end of this month.⁷⁸ The MSZ informed Wojciech Jaruzelski, by then not only the Prime Minister, but also the First Secretary of the PZPR, about the plan. Pointing to economic interests, diplomats strongly recommended accepting it. Burgess was reported to explain that Street wanted to continue the dialogue started in New York. A new meeting would give an opportunity to discuss the possibility of further credits – Burgess foresaw an increase of up to 100 million USD – as well as issues related to migration.⁷⁹ From Canberra, Frąckiewicz cabled that the DFA underscored the fact-finding character of Minister’s mission.⁸⁰ Street’s visit was promptly accepted as a return visit following Polish Foreign Affairs Minister Emil Wojtaszek’s talks in Canberra in 1978.

Street, accompanied by his wife Valerie, Laurie, Bob Gordon from the DFA, and his secretary Sue Stone, arrived in Warsaw at noon on 25 November. The Minister was joined by Burgess at the meetings and by Bryden and Trade Commissioner Bill Brigstocke in the MSZ. Because of financial constraints in the MSZ, Frąckiewicz could not come from Canberra. Antoni Grzelak, counsellor in the Second Department of the MSZ and former Polish Consul General in Sydney, was responsible for the preparations of speeches and other issues pertaining to the content of the talks. The meeting in the MSZ took place the same day, and the next day, Street was received by Zbigniew Madej, Deputy Prime Minister and the Chairman of the Planning Commission, then by Jabłoński, and finally by Jaruzelski. Outside the official program, Street also met with the President of the Polish Bishops’ Conference archbishop Józef Glemp, as well as Wałęsa himself.⁸¹

⁷⁵ AMSZ, DII 38/86,WI Austr.220-1-81, Nota biograficzna o Ministrze Spraw Zagranicznych Związku Australijskiego.

⁷⁶ AMSZ, DII 39/86, Austr.0-22-1-81, Mulicki to Frąckiewicz, 14 X 1981.

⁷⁷ AMSZ, DII 38/86,WI, Austr.0-22-1-81, Frąckiewicz to Czyrek, 20 X 1981.

⁷⁸ J. Burgess, *The Solidarity Challenge...*, p. 291.

⁷⁹ AMSZ, DII 38/86,WI, Olechowski, Notatka Informacyjna, 4 XI 1981; Olechowski, Pilna notatka, 6 XI 1981.

⁸⁰ AMSZ, DII 38/86, Austr.0-22-1-81, Frąckiewicz to Majkowski, 16 XI 1981.

⁸¹ AMSZ, DII 39/86, Austr.0-220-1-81, Majkowski to Frąckiewicz, 9 XI 1981; DII 38/86 WI Program wizyty oficjalnej [...] Streeta.

Street's interest in Poland's internal situation was no surprise to the Polish side.⁸² The MSZ had instructed Frąckiewicz at the beginning of June 1981 that "the socio-political and economic situation of our country has constituted and will constitute for a long time to be a decisive factor influencing our relations with Australia."⁸³ Both Jaruzelski and Jabłoński were briefed on Street's intent to become familiar with the situation and its assessment by the authorities. During the "sincere" conversation with the Communist leader, the guest was particularly interested in the possibility of national reconciliation. Jaruzelski brought him up to date with the latest developments, seen from the Communist perspective.⁸⁴ Despite the ceremonial nature of the audience given by the Chairman of the State Council, Street inquired about the "Polish experiment" and asked whether political changes could lead to the transformation of the system. Not surprisingly, Jabłoński explained that democratization was taking place within the socialist system.⁸⁵ Similarly, the economic and political crisis took up a lot of time at the meeting in the MSZ a day earlier. Czyrek stressed how difficult and tense the situation was and even referred to Wałęsa's appeal for calm, which he assured "was not inspired by us". The Minister envisaged the formation of a Front of National Accord, which he presented as a decisive moment in current developments.⁸⁶ The concept had been put forward by the communist authorities and pushed vigorously by their propaganda machine in opposition to the idea of a Social Council for National Economy, proposed by Solidarity. The Communist authorities' project had been discussed by Jaruzelski, Wałęsa and Głemp three weeks prior but was rejected by Solidarity. It served to divide Solidarity and camouflage the ongoing preparations for a crackdown, which were in the final stage.⁸⁷

Given the framework of this article, to sense the backdrop of the Polish-Australian talks, it must suffice to note that the document prepared by the Ministry of Internal Affairs describing different scenarios of the suppression of the Solidarity movement was dated 25 November, the same day Czyrek entertained the Australian delegation at the dinner given in Street's honour. The day the Australian Minister left Warsaw, military operational groups were deployed in all voivodships.⁸⁸

Polish officials had carefully planned for the economic aspect of the talks. In line with instructions prepared in the MSZ, their importance was signalled in advance by the semi-official newspaper *Życie Warszawy* and the organ of the PZPR, *Trybuna Ludu*. The latter claimed that in contrast to relations between other countries, Polish-Australian political relations were clearing the path for the development of economic cooperation,

⁸² AMSZ, DII 38/86, WI, Draft Agenda by Canberra Foreign Ministers' Meeting, 12 XI 1981.

⁸³ AMSZ, DII 38/86, Austr.23-1-81, Mulicki to Frąckiewicz, 3 VI 1981, p. 2.

⁸⁴ AMSZ, DII 38/86, WI, Austr.220-1-81, Notatka z rozmowy [...] Jaruzelskiego.

⁸⁵ AMSZ, DII 38/86, WI, Austr.220-1-81, Notatka z rozmowy [...] Jabłońskiego.

⁸⁶ AMSZ, DII 38/86, WI, Rozmowy polsko-australijskie [shorthand notes].

⁸⁷ A. Paczkowski, *Revolution and Counterrevolution in Poland 1980–1989*, Rochester, NY, 2015, p. 21–53; *idem*, *Droga do "mniejszego zła". Strategia i taktyka obozu władzy, lipiec 1980 – styczeń 1982*, Cracow 2002, p. 226–271.

⁸⁸ *From Solidarity to Martial Law. The Polish Crisis of 1980–1981*, eds. A. Paczkowski, M. Byrne, Budapest–New York 2007, p. 405–408, xliii.

not vice versa.⁸⁹ At the first meeting, Czyrek handed Street proposals to conclude new contracts for purchase of wool, hides, and skins in 1982, which were to depend on new credits from Australia estimated at 110 million A\$. Considerable improvement of the terms of credits was also requested. Additionally, Warsaw was ready to import grain from Australia at the cost of 100 million Australian dollars for fodder production and queried whether Canberra “could consider these purchases as an urgent food aid on preferential terms”.⁹⁰ The significance of credits for Polish economy and the urgency of the matter were emphasized by both Madej and Jaruzelski, who twice underlined the necessity for the maintenance of Polish import from Australia. The General remarked that in coping with the crisis, Poland depended to considerable degree on the help from “our friends and partners in the East and in the West alike”.⁹¹ Street promised to present the Polish request to his government and the question was directed to the session of the Polish-Australian Mixed Commission due to meet in the first half of 1982. Among other economic issues discussed was the problem of huge Polish trade deficit in relations with Australia.⁹²

As immigration and consular matters played a certain role in Polish-Australian relations, the Consular Department briefed Polish diplomats on migration and family reunions before the talks. Since the late 1970s, increasing numbers of Polish citizens had been arriving in Australia. Some came by way of Western Europe, as part of the Australian Humanitarian Programme, whereas others had arrived directly from Poland, to visit their families. Many of them soon claimed Australian permanent residency and then citizenship. As the problem of dual nationality remained unsolved, the Polish side was interested in a possible consular convention and despite a negative Australian reaction in 1977, the Consular Department in the MSZ wished to discuss this issue.⁹³ According to Polish estimates, between 1979 and 1981 up to 6,000 Polish citizens entered Australia as political refugees, whereas only in the first ten months of 1981, about 300 people did not return to Poland from their tourist visits. The activities of the Department of Immigration and its attitude towards Poles (including their transport, accommodation, employment and the enlargement of the personnel of the Immigration Office in Vienna) led Communist officials to conclude that the Australian Government was interested in immigration from Poland. In fact, in November 1980 the Office of National Assessment, in a report *Poland. Some Implications of Soviet Intervention*, advised Fraser to be prepared to this contingency. In such situation, “Australia should be able to attract more of the highly qualified people who could be expected to be available than was the case in either 1956 or 1968, when our arrangements suffered by comparison with those of the United States, Canada and Britain”.⁹⁴ In the memo, the MSZ prepared for the highest officials in the lead-up to Street’s visit to Warsaw, and suggested discussing the subject of the recent immigration of Polish citizens, who were considered by the PRL authorities as

⁸⁹ *Rozwój współpracy polsko-australijskiej*, „Trybuna Ludu”, 24 XI 1981.

⁹⁰ AMSZ, DII 38/86, WI, Austr.220-1-81, Zał. 16, Aide Memoire.

⁹¹ AMSZ, DII 38/86, WI, Austr.220-1-81, Notatka z rozmowy [...] Jaruzelskiego z [...] Streetem.

⁹² AMSZ, DII 38/86, WI, Austr.220-1-81, Drugi dzień [Czyrek-Street talks, shorthand notes].

⁹³ AMSZ, DII 38/86, D.Kons.I.220-13-81, Pichla to Mulicki, 20 XI 1981.

⁹⁴ J. Burgess, *The Solidarity Challenge...*, p. 51.

economic migrants.⁹⁵ At the same time in conversation with Tadeusz Olechowski, Burgess suggested a sort of gentlemen's agreement which would loosely regulate the sensitive and complex problem of immigrants from Poland who were classified in Austria and other transit places as refugees.⁹⁶

Following protests organized by Polish associations in Australia,⁹⁷ Warsaw accepted 272 out of 522 applications for family reunions in 1981 until Street's visit. The Consular Department maintained that all cases were treated in a liberal manner, even though most Poles going to Australia were economic migrants and could neither claim refugee status nor demand family reunions. The Department complained that according to its sources of information, Polish arrivals to Australia found themselves under pressure to adopt Australian citizenship.⁹⁸ Burgess handed over to the MSZ a list of 30 families containing 72 persons who were waiting for passports to join their husbands and fathers in Australia, with a request for them to be examined on an individual basis and treated positively.⁹⁹ At the meeting in the MSZ, Street raised the problems of immigration, stressing the interest of Australian public opinion while also referring the issue to the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs (DIEA). Czyrek urged caution to avoid an emigration mass panic and wanted to leave the matter out of the propaganda game. Polish officials were ready to host the DIEA delegation, whose visit was signalled by Frąckiewicz. They hoped that it would be possible to achieve an informal common position, including direct transit from Poland to Australia.¹⁰⁰ This was met with Street's acceptance, who also mentioned family reunion and the question of migrants with qualifications sought after in Australia. In the end, these issues were left for further discussions.¹⁰¹ The PRL Embassy's report for 1981 insisted that the Secretary of the DIEA John Menadue recognized that the alleged refugees going to Australia via refugee camps in Austria were overwhelmingly economic migrants, which resulted in a stricter selection based on occupational criteria.¹⁰²

At the Ministers' meeting the international situation was addressed at length. The MSZ prepared documents for the occasion, including a summary of premises and principles of the PRL foreign policy. Although concentrated mainly on European matters and East-West relations, the MSZ was ready to discuss the situation in South-East Asia.¹⁰³ The plenary session began with a half-hour speech by Street, who emphasized Canberra's interest in South-East Asia and the Pacific region. Street condemned the occupation of Kampuchea by Vietnam, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and Moscow's military presence in the Indian Ocean. Welcoming China's growing political and economic openness in relations with other countries, including Australia, Street opined that dialogue between North and

⁹⁵ AMSZ, DII 38/86, Austr.220-1-81, Notatka informacyjna dotycząca spraw polonijno-konsularnych.

⁹⁶ AMSZ, DII 38/86, 268/81, Olechowski, Notatka informacyjna, 4 XI 1981, p. 2.

⁹⁷ P. Pleskot, *Solidarność na Antypodach...*, p. 237-247; M. Klatt, *The Poles...*, p. 65-69.

⁹⁸ AMSZ, DII 38/86, WI, Austr.220-1-81, Wyjazdy zarobkowe do Australii, 26 XI 1981.

⁹⁹ AMSZ, DII 38/86, WI, Austr.220-1-81, Zał. 1. Założenia programowo-organizacyjne wizyty w Polsce [...] Street'a, p. 6.

¹⁰⁰ AMSZ, DII 38/86, WI, Austr.220-1-81, Wyjazdy zarobkowe.

¹⁰¹ AMSZ, DII 38/86, WI, Austr.220-1-81, Drugi dzień [Czyrek-Street talks, shorthand notes].

¹⁰² AMSZ, DII 42/86, Austr.242-1-82, Raport 1981, p. 18.

¹⁰³ AMSZ, DII 38/86, WI, Austr.220-1-81, Zał. 1. Założenia programowo-organizacyjne; Zał. 2.

South could help in East-West relations. In his response, Czyrek claimed, contrary to what the MSZ work plan for 1980 stated, that Australia had priority in relations with the PRL. He pointed to marked differences between Canberra and Warsaw on such issues as Afghanistan, Kampuchea, and North Korea. Czyrek also mentioned mounting tension in relations with Communist China and warned against any attempts to form an American-Chinese-Japanese alliance potentially directed against the USSR. He ended the meeting by remarking that Poland's bilateral relations with Western states were largely not suffering despite the return of the Cold War.¹⁰⁴

On the last day of the visit, Street met “privately” with the Archbishop of Warsaw and the leader of Solidarity, who was accompanied by adviser Bronisław Geremek. In the Embassy report for 1981, Frąckiewicz contended that Street's talks with Jaruzelski, Czyrek, and Glomp helped him to form a view on the situation in Poland, whereas Wałęsa struck him as an impetuous and irresponsible.¹⁰⁵ Burgess, who participated in these meetings, relayed that the Primate of the Catholic Church in Poland stressed the gravity of the situation and gave the strongest warning of things to come. The Ambassador found the conversation with the leader of Solidarity “by far the most interesting of the Minister's meetings” but “the hardest to follow and to understand”, because of his “elliptical” style. He also included in his book a cable describing conversations with Jaruzelski, Glomp, and Wałęsa, prepared by the Warsaw Embassy but changed by Street and sent from Brussels. To Burgess' surprise, the Minister characterized Solidarity's leader as “egocentric” and “not much interested in opinions other than his own”, yet “with great drive, energy and determination”, while in the embassy draft he was described as “assured but without airs – energetic, quick-minded, and witty”.¹⁰⁶ In an interview with Adrian Rudziński 30 years later, Street repeated his impressions of the Solidarity leader as an “extraordinary man” with an aura who “found it difficult to sit still” and “wasn't interested in me, not a bit. I was a vessel to be pumped full of whatever it was that he wanted me to know”.¹⁰⁷ More importantly, the Minister was left with the feeling that Solidarity was a powerful movement for change, whose leader, although cautious not to press the communists too hard, was determined to make further gains, albeit at a slower rate. However, according to Burgess, Wałęsa's confidence of the final victory of Solidarity was qualified by the timescale “that this might take 10–15 years”.¹⁰⁸

In contrast, Street was very impressed with the Archbishop, whom he remembered as a “measured, sensible man”.¹⁰⁹ However, most interesting was Street's perception of the Communist dictator. He reported to Fraser: “I found Jaruzelski a quiet but authoritative figure and gained a sense of the enormous strain he must be under”.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁴ AMSZ, DII 38/86, WI, Austr.220-1-81, Rozmowy polsko-australijskie; Drugi dzień.

¹⁰⁵ AMSZ, DII 42/86, Austr.242-1-82, Raport 1981, p. 18.

¹⁰⁶ J. Burgess, *The Solidarity Challenge...*, p. 294–295, 301–302.

¹⁰⁷ A. Rudziński, Tony Street interviewed 20th June 2012 by Adrian Rudziński [stenographic record]. I would like to thank Adrian Rudziński for giving me permission to use this interview.

¹⁰⁸ J. Burgess, *The Solidarity Challenge...*, p. 295.

¹⁰⁹ A. Rudziński, Tony Street..., p. 9.

¹¹⁰ J. Burgess, *The Solidarity Challenge...*, p. 301.

The Australian minister seems to have taken Jaruzelski's explanations at face value and wrote that the General "outlined his hopes that, through a Front of National Reconciliation, Poles could find a unity based on the need to protect the Polish state and to bring about economic recovery".¹¹¹ In an interview with Rudziński, Street maintained that although he had been briefed on Wałęsa and Solidarity, he "knew more about it than the foreign affairs people".¹¹² He also recollected his contacts with US diplomats, who were very interested in his trip to Poland, and experts on the Eastern bloc. Street recalled the Americans having thought that Jaruzelski was a Soviet willing pawn, whereas he was of a different opinion. He further insisted that "the impression I got – well it wasn't – it was more than an impression it was fact, I'm certain; he [Jaruzelski] was deeply concerned for Poland if the Russians invaded; and he put to me this terrible dilemma he had to accede to some of the Russian requests, as far as martial law, or call it what you like, or the clear alternative was invasion".¹¹³ To what extent this reflects ideas that Street developed later is hard to tell, but he definitely sympathized with Jaruzelski. The negotiating strategy based on Street's profile prepared by Frąckiewicz seems to have worked.

The first visit of an Australian Minister of Foreign Affairs to Poland was widely reported in Polish media and ended with a press conference and a joint communique.¹¹⁴ Both sides were happy with its results. Street was aware that Warsaw wanted him to pass on his impressions to other Western capitals and was ready to do so. He cabled Fraser that Poland sought Western economic support in order to avoid complete absorption into the Soviet system and the West should take political and economic decisions to respond to these expectations and that in such situation political consideration should be paramount.¹¹⁵ At the same time, Olechowski wrote to Frąckiewicz that Polish diplomats emphasized the political nature of Australian credits. He summarized his cables: "The visit useful. Matter-of-fact exchange of opinions. S[treet] made an impression of a solid partner. All his Polish interlocutors informed him about the situation in Poland. He treated our problems with understanding and promised to present particular topics to the appropriate ministries".¹¹⁶

The imposition of martial law on 13 December changed the situation and put bilateral relations to the test. The report of the PRL Embassy for 1981 gave a general appraisal of Polish-Australian relations and described Street's visit as their "climax". In Frąckiewicz's opinion, "it was a reconnaissance but also signalled acceptance for the constructive efforts of our government in solving the crisis. From the point of view of later events, it turned

¹¹¹ *Ibidem*.

¹¹² A. Rudziński, Tony Street..., p. 2.

¹¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 3, 17–18.

¹¹⁴ AMSZ, DII 38/86, Austr.220-1-81, Visit to Poland by Minister for Foreign Affairs, 30 XI 1981, cf. *Minister spraw zagranicznych Australii przybył z oficjalną wizytą do Polski*, "Życie Warszawy", 26 XI 1981; *Wojciech Jaruzelski i Henryk Jabłoński przyjęli ministra Anthony A. Streeta i Stosunki polsko-australijskie w ocenie ministra Anthony Austina Streeta*, "Życie Warszawy", 27 XI 1981; *Minister spraw zagranicznych Australii zakończył wizytę w Polsce*, "Życie Warszawy", 28–29 XI 1981.

¹¹⁵ J. Burgess, *The Solidarity Challenge...*, p. 299.

¹¹⁶ AMSZ, DII 39/86, Austr.0-220-1-81 Olechowski to Frąckiewicz, 27 XI 1981.

out to be inconvenient for the local [Australian] government and delayed taking a stand by Australia on martial law in Poland”.¹¹⁷ The Australian cabinet, informed by Street on his recent talks in Warsaw, procrastinated in its reaction when faced with the suppression of Solidarity by the PRL security apparatus and military, rather than by a Soviet invasion. Following the cabinet meeting on 15 December, Prime Minister issued a statement in which he presented the government’s belief that it was too early to reach “any hard assessment of the situation”. Fraser warned against an external interference in Poland’s affairs and expressed the hope that “extreme and repressive measures would soon end and that they would not lead to the reversal of the main elements of reform which had been achieved in Poland”. Regarding economic support for Poland, the cabinet agreed not to decide on this matter until the situation is clear. However, as the statement put it, “cabinet was mindful of the close interrelationship between economic recovery and the achievement of political stability through conciliation and consensus”.¹¹⁸

The DFA developed a rather cautious, if not optimistic approach, whereas Burgess’ assessment of the situation was more pessimistic.¹¹⁹ According to Frąckiewicz, Street initially recognized that the motives for the imposition of martial law were weighty and it was under his influence that the Prime Minister expressed the hope that extraordinary measures would end and that the main elements of the reforms would be maintained.¹²⁰ The Polish Ambassador informed Czyrek, who passed the message among others to Jaruzelski, about Fraser’s statement that it was too early for a general assessment of the situation in Poland and decisions concerning credits. The Australian leader still insisted that it was a Soviet intervention that would change the Western approach to economic help for Poland. Frąckiewicz reported his conversation with Bowen, the ALP spokesman on foreign affairs, about conditions in Poland and the application for credits: “He promised to help me and as promised, he appealed to the government for the fast increase of the credit guarantees to 110 million, despite martial law, which he condemned”.¹²¹

On 17 December Frąckiewicz talked to Street, who asked for an official explanation of why such dramatic measures proved necessary. The Minister did not comment on the response, in which the PRL Ambassador stressed that Wałęsa had lost control and that extreme elements in Solidarity were pushing for confrontation. The Ambassador underlined the temporary character of restrictions and the government’s willingness for compromise along with Solidarity’s participation in the so-called front of reconciliation. As Frąckiewicz perversely put it, the fact that people had been interned under martial law prevented them from committing offences for which they would have had to be punished more severely. The Ambassador assured his interlocutor that the progress of normalization would lead to the release of internees. He pointed out that Australia

¹¹⁷ AMSZ, DII 42/86, Austr.242-1-82, Raport 1981, p. 18.

¹¹⁸ National Archives of Australia, A1838 48/1/3 PART 17 Poland – Relations with Australia, Poland – Prime Minister’s Statement 15 December, Cablegram from Canberra to all posts, 16 XII 1981, p. 41–42.

¹¹⁹ Burgess, *The Solidarity Challenge...*, p. 330–339.

¹²⁰ AMSZ, DII 42/86, Austr.242-1-82, Raport 1981, p. 18.

¹²¹ AMSZ, DII 39/86, Austr.0-22-1-81, Frąckiewicz to Czyrek, 16 XII 1981.

might constructively influence the situation by mitigating pro-Solidarity actions, which fed illusions and political resistance in Poland. If Canberra recognized the need for normalization in Poland and in the world, it might also help economically. According to the report, Street declared that Australia did not intend to interfere in Polish affairs but was concerned about the spirit of compromise fizzling out in Poland. He suspected that normalization might take more time and that temporary measures would become permanent. He also asked for information about Wałęsa.¹²²

However, the Polish Embassy assessed that the Australian position on martial law had changed under pressure from the US State Department. Fraser recognized that a demonstration of Western unity was more important than Polish-Australian relations. This prompted Australia's decision to follow the policy of West European members of NATO and, if possible, to limit itself to political and propaganda pressure on Poland without disturbing economic relations.¹²³ Director Tadeusz Mulicki believed that because of the evident trade interest, it was unlikely for Australia to impose an effective embargo on trade with the USSR and Poland.¹²⁴ He proved to be right. The Polish request for new credit guarantees was not considered nor rejected outright, which Frąckiewicz regarded as the best option.¹²⁵ Simultaneously, the previous guarantees were maintained. Consequently, as the Embassy reported, in 1982 trade between the two countries continued without greater disruptions,¹²⁶ even though the meeting of the Polish-Australian Mixed Commission was postponed. Talks on agreement or informal understanding on immigration from Poland were not resumed either, and travel restrictions reciprocal to those applied to the Australian Embassy in Warsaw were imposed on the PRL Embassy and Consulate-General between the beginning of February and mid-March 1982.¹²⁷

Given the political impasse, Frąckiewicz perceived the Labor position as very positive and promising in the context of next elections and the possible victory of the ALP. In his opinion, Hayden took a reasonable stance when he condemned Ronald Reagan's sanctions and declared that the "restoration of elementary order is better than bloodshed in Poland".¹²⁸ Also, the attitude towards martial law on the part of the SPA and CPA in the eyes of the PRL Embassy was balanced and in the main positive, unlike the overwhelmingly negative reactions of trade unions, including a boycott of some Polish ships.

In his report for 1982, Frąckiewicz asserted that it was the most difficult year in the history of Polish relations with Australia, as after four years of successful development, relations had been unilaterally frozen in the political sphere.¹²⁹ However, despite the

¹²² AMSZ, DII 39/86, Austr.0-22-1-81, Frąckiewicz to Czyrek, 18 XII 1981.

¹²³ AMSZ, DII 42/86, Austr.242-1-82, Raport 1981 p. 19; P. Pleskot, *Kłopotliwa...*, pp. 200–376.

¹²⁴ AMSZ, DII 42/86, Austr.Og-22-1-82, Mulicki, Notatka informacyjna [...], p. 3.

¹²⁵ AMSZ, DII 43/86, Austr.o-2412-1-82, Frąckiewicz to Mulicki, 13 I 1982.

¹²⁶ AMSZ, DII 42/86, WI, Austr.242-1-82, Raport polityczny [...] 1982, p. 16.

¹²⁷ AMSZ, DII 42/86, WI, H. Łaszcz, Notatka, 5 II 1982.

¹²⁸ AMSZ, DII 42/86, WI, Austr.242-1-82, Raport 1981 p. 20.

¹²⁹ AMSZ, DII 42/86, WI, Austr.242-1-82, Raport polityczny [...] 1982, p. 16.

intensity of the Polish crisis, international tensions and domestic political pressures, the PRL authorities and the Australian government managed to maintain diplomatic dialogue facilitated by earlier contacts. Their belief in the long-term stability of the geopolitical situation in Soviet-dominated Central Europe, the lack of apparent areas of conflict, and some common economic interests helped to rebuild their relations by the mid-1980s.

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Polish-Australian Relations in the Era of Solidarity 1980–1981: Perspectives Revealed in Warsaw’s Official Diplomacy

In the 1970s Polish-Australian relations were seen as marginal both in Warsaw and Canberra. From the perspective of Australian foreign policy the plight of Poland was fixed under Soviet control and, in bilateral relations, only limited trade and the Polish immigrant group constituted points of some interest. The diplomacy of the Polish People’s Republic strove to improve political relations with a view to developing economic cooperation. This static picture was complicated by the rise of the Solidarity movement in Poland.

This study seeks to identify and document the most important areas in official Polish-Australian relations, as defined by the Foreign Ministry in Warsaw and the Embassy in Canberra, during the legal functioning of Solidarity in 1980–1981. Drawing on sources from the Archives of the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the article examines how Polish communist diplomacy attempted to achieve its aims and to what extent it was successful. It argues that Warsaw managed to exert some influence on the Australian perception of the situation in Poland, particularly at the time of Minister Tony Street’s visit in November 1981, and consequently mitigated the immediate Australian reaction to the imposition of martial law.

KEYWORDS

Polish-Australian relations 1980–1981, diplomacy of the Polish People’s Republic, Australian foreign policy, Solidarity movement, martial law in Poland

Stosunki polsko-australijskie w okresie Solidarności w ujęciu polskiej komunistycznej dyplomacji, 1980–1981

W latach siedemdziesiątych XX w. stosunki polsko-australijskie były postrzegane jako marginalne zarówno w Warszawie, jak i w Canberrze. Z perspektywy australijskiej polityki zagranicznej położenie Polski pod kontrolą sowiecką zostało trwale ustalone, a w stosunkach dwustronnych jedynie ograniczony handel i polska grupa imigrancka stanowiły zagadnienia o pewnym znaczeniu. Dyplomacja PRL dążyła do poprawy stosunków politycznych z myślą o rozwoju współpracy gospodarczej. Ten statyczny obraz skomplikowało powstanie Solidarności w Polsce.

Artykuł ma na celu wskazanie i udokumentowanie najważniejszych obszarów w oficjalnych stosunkach polsko-australijskich, tak jak definiowały je Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych w Warszawie i ambasada w Canberrze, w okresie legalnego działania Solidarności w latach 1980–1981. Opierając się na źródłach pochodzących z Archiwum MSZ, autor bada, w jaki sposób polska dyplomacja komunistyczna starała się osiągnąć swoje cele i w jakim stopniu odniosła sukces. Dowodzi, że Warszawa zdołała wywrzeć pewien wpływ na australijskie postrzeganie sytuacji w Polsce, szczególnie w czasie wizyty ministra Tony'ego Streeeta w listopadzie 1981 r., a w konsekwencji złagodzić reakcję Australii na wprowadzenie stanu wojennego.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE

stosunki polsko-australijskie 1980–1981, dyplomacja PRL,
australijska polityka zagraniczna, ruch Solidarność, stan wojenny w Polsce

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