

Conscientious Objection and the Freedom and Peace Movement in Poland

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Part I: The Law and Conscientious Objection

There is no conscientious objector status in Poland. Article 92 of the Constitution states that "It shall be the sacred duty of every citizen to defend the country" and that "Military service shall be an honourable patriotic duty of citizens of the Polish People's Republic".¹ All men between the ages of 18 and 28 must perform up to two years' military service, unless exempted for personal or medical reasons. According to the bill relating to military service there is, however, provision for alternative service. Articles 140 and 141 of Section V of the *Law on the General Obligation to Defend the Polish People's Republic* (1967) stipulate that a conscript who is physically fit to perform military service can be directed by the commandant of the Military Recruiting Board to alternative service in the health services, to the protection of the environment or to social service or other institutions of public utility.²

On the basis of the above-quoted Law, the Council of Ministers issued on 29 September 1980 a *Regulation of the Council of Ministers concerning alternative service for conscripts*. It regulates in detail procedures for directing conscripts to such services and the manner in which they are to fulfil their obligations to the state. Section 1 paragraph 1 of this regulation establishes that conscripts are directed to such services at their request.³ These provisions for alternative service were described in two separate statements by Colonel Jaroslaw Bielecki, a representative of the GHQ of the Polish Army, and General Leslaw Wojtasik, Defence Ministry spokesman, in January 1987.⁴

¹ Constitution of the Polish People's Republic, 22 July 1952.

² *Dziennik Ustaw*, 1967 No. 7.

³ *Dziennik Ustaw*, 1980 No. 23.

⁴ Broadcast report by PAP, 16 January 1987. See *Zycie Warszawy*, 30 January 1987. General Wojtasik in fact expanded the provisions laid down in law and stated that

In practice, however, it appears that alternative conscript service is not available to all who request it. The wording of Article 140 is extremely vague and gives military recruitment officers extensive powers. The second paragraph of this article states that a person can opt for alternative service "if for reasons independent of the military organs" ("... z przyczyn niezależnych od organów wojskowych") he cannot do military service. The article concludes that alternative service conscripts must be "assigned by the military recruitment commander to perform this service at their own request". In practice, a conscript can never be certain whether his request will be granted. It is impossible to predict whether an alternative service conscript will be granted permission to do the alternative service, whether he will nevertheless be conscripted to a regular army unit, or whether his request will be treated as a refusal to do his service altogether. A court in this instance is likely to apply paragraph 3 of Article 231 of the *Law on the General Obligation to Defend the Polish People's Republic* against those who refuse military service, and the individual is subject to punishment (from one to eight years' imprisonment). Furthermore, a conscript's moral, religious and personal convictions are not clearly acknowledged as "reasons independent of the military" and the issue is left to the interpretation of the relevant recruiting officer.

There are also doubts as to whether the alternative conscript service is truly independent of the military system. Paragraph 3 of Article 141 states that "during alternative service, conscripts are subject to military instruction according to the programme determined by the Chief of Civil Defence of the country." Paragraph 2 of the above article stipulates that alternative service conscripts "may be confined to barracks". Alternative service with military overtones is not acceptable to many pacifists and some groups of religious believers — most notably Jehovah's Witnesses.⁵ According to former Religious Affairs Minister Professor Adam Lopatka, arrangements are being discussed for the implementation of an alternative service completely independent of the military system whereby a conscript would be drafted directly by the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Wages.⁶ This would eliminate direct contact with the military and be more

members of religious denominations which forbid the carrying of arms or all contacts with the military may serve in civilian organisations. There is no direct reference to religious creed in the 1967 bill relating to military service, or in the 1980 resolution.

⁵Freedom and Peace suggests there may be as many as 300 Jehovah's Witnesses serving prison terms in Poland for conscientious objection. It is extremely difficult to verify this estimate. *Serwis Informacyjny Ruchu WiP* (Information Service of the Freedom and Peace Movement), No. 10 (30 November 1986) lists 14 names. Freedom and Peace staged a demonstration in support of Jehovah's Witnesses imprisoned for conscientious objection in Gdańsk in December 1986.

⁶Personal interview with Minister Lopatka, Warsaw, April 1987.

acceptable to the above categories of objectors.

The issue is further complicated by the fact that some conscripts, though willing to do normal military service, refuse to take the military oath. In 1984 the High Court ruled that refusal to take the oath was synonymous with refusal to do military service and punishable by up to five years' imprisonment.⁷ The wording of the oath was modified in 1976 to include a pledge "to safeguard peace in fraternal alliance with the Soviet Army and other allied armies". This declaration of loyalty to the Soviet Union and, by implication, to communist ideology meant that many young Poles refused to take the oath on the grounds of personal conviction or religious creed. Piotr Niemczyk, a Freedom and Peace activist, highlighted misgivings felt by many about the role of the army in an interview given to the underground paper *Robotnik*: "The state needs soldiers not because it fears for the permanence of its boundaries but because the army in the country is part of the police force. History made this very clear in December 1970 and December 1981. The authorities use the army to maintain their privileges . . ."⁸ An increasing unwillingness amongst young people to be drafted into the army is borne out in official statistics. In 1960, 64.7 per cent of young people were willing to be drafted into the armed forces. In 1984, only 47 per cent of young men expressed a favourable view of military service. Among high school students, one in four had negative feelings about their impending draft.⁹

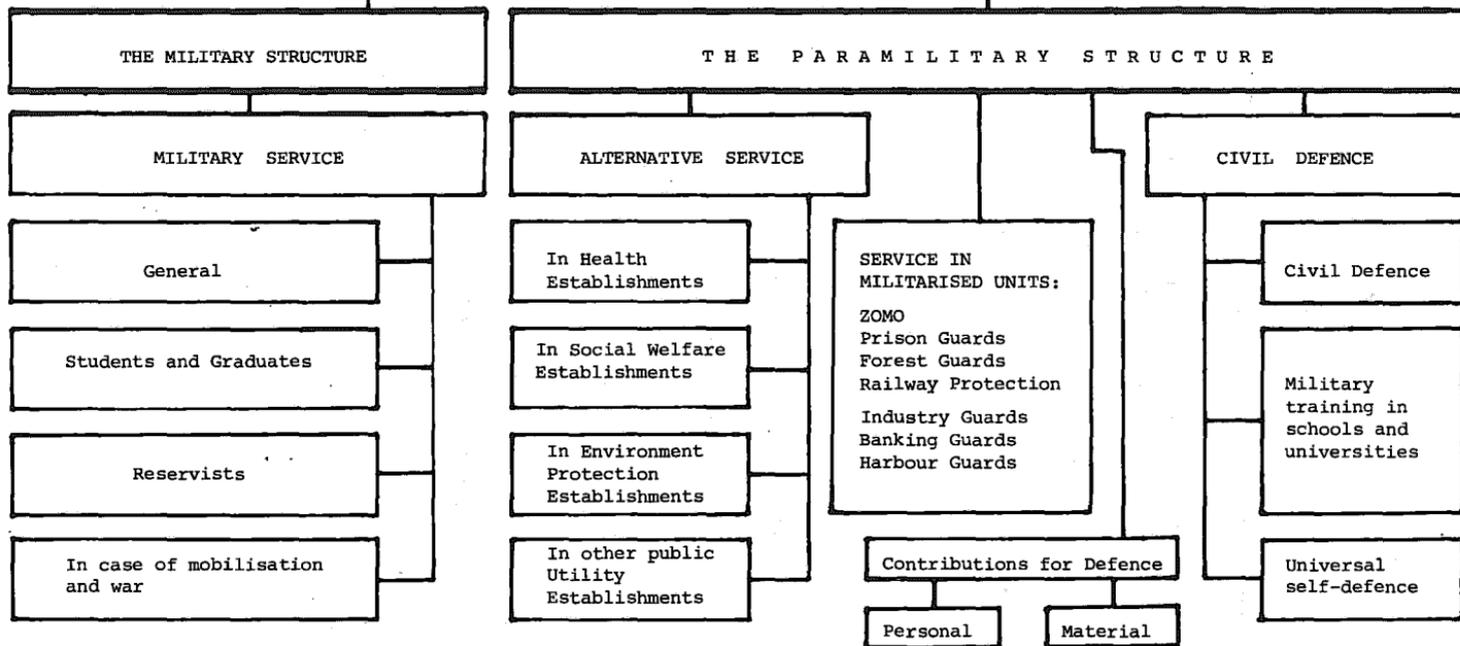
To sum up, then: problems arise when a conscript a) stands by his rights to perform alternative service after his request has been turned down, b) refuses to perform alternative service altogether because of its military character, or c) although willing to perform military service refuses to take the military oath. In each instance, the conscript is liable to be charged with refusing to carry out duties arising from military service. Those campaigning for a change in government policy therefore demand a) that alternative service be available to all that request it — in practice as well as in theory, b) that an alternative service truly independent of the military be implemented, and c) that the military oath, which should in any case be made voluntarily, be reworded.

⁷In October 1984 the Military Chamber of the Supreme Court ruled in the case of Mirosław Zablocki, a Warsaw University student who twice declined to swear the oath, that "the action of a soldier refusing to swear the military oath is synonymous with a refusal to carry out duties arising from military service and should be classified as an offence under Article 305 of the Penal Code."

⁸*Robotnik*, No. 113/114 (26 October 1986).

⁹Report by the Institute for the Study of Youth Problems, reproduced in the underground weekly *KOS*, No. 92 (30 March 1986).

THE GENERAL DEFENCE OBLIGATION



Part II: The Freedom and Peace Movement

Beginnings

The Freedom and Peace Movement (*Wolność i Pokój*, acronym WiP) emerged in the spring of 1985 following the trial of Marek Adamkiewicz, a young draftee who was sentenced in December 1984 to two and a half years' imprisonment for refusing to take the military oath. Though not the first of its kind, Adamkiewicz's case attracted considerable public attention. He personally received several hundred letters and a series of petitions was sent to the authorities. Unofficial sources say that a petition calling for his release was signed by 2,500 people in Wrocław alone.¹⁰ Sympathisers likened Adamkiewicz's stand to that of Otto Schimek, a Wehrmacht soldier who refused to take part in public executions of Polish citizens, deserted, and was executed by a German firing squad in 1944. (Schimek has become something of a patron saint of the Freedom and Peace Movement.) In support of Adamkiewicz, a week-long hunger strike incorporating a seminar on peace and human rights was held at a church in Podkowa Leśna, near Warsaw, during March 1985. Prominent intellectuals and opposition leaders such as Jacek Kuron, Bronisław Geremek, Jan Józef Lipski and Stefan Bratkowski attended. Participants discussed the possibility of creating an independent peace movement in Poland. The first Freedom and Peace group was formally organised in Kraków on 14 April 1985. A second group was established in Warsaw on 2 May. Similar groups were formed in Wrocław, Szczecin and Gdańsk. In April, a group of student activists from Kraków drew up a declaration setting out the aims of the movement. This was circulated and signed by supporters in the other groups.

We, the undersigned, inspired above all by the peace appeals of Pope John Paul II, have decided on this day to found in Kraków the Freedom and Peace movement.

1. The basic aim of the movement will be to propagate the true and unfalsified idea of peace among the Polish public. Pope John Paul II said in his peace appeal of 1979: "The word peace has become a slogan that puts people to sleep or misleads." It is a word most commonly used by those whose main purpose in proclaiming ideas of peace, cooperation, and world disarmament is to deprive free people throughout the world of the means and the will to defend their freedom. The scope of that practice results in the fact that for increasingly large masses of people — in

¹⁰*Gazeta Akademicka*, No. 2 (February 1986). See *RFE Press Review*, 1987 No. 3 (13 April).

Poland, too — the intentions of anyone using the word “peace” have become morally suspect and politically alien. For this reason, above all, we want to restore the moral and political worth of peace.

2. A condition of introducing peace into the political lives of states and nations is a successful guarantee of personal freedom for all. There is no peace wherever there exists a system of state aggression, of ideological coercion; wherever individuals have been deprived of their right to independent decisions, to initiative; where traditional political freedoms have been eliminated . . .

3. We want to cooperate with all movements, institutions, and individuals in Poland and abroad who want to devote their activities to the cause of peace implemented under conditions of true freedom. We shall condemn, on the other hand, the expressions of disdain for freedom — so frequent in the world today — particularly when they are justified by ideologies that have turned violence into a successful instrument. Particularly telling examples of this are the activities of international terrorism and the systematic extermination of the Afghan nation in the name of communist ideology. Elementary human solidarity demands that we cease being silent about these highly dangerous attacks against the idea of world peace.

We call on all who identify with our views to support our undertaking actively.¹¹

By November 1985, Freedom and Peace had produced a detailed programme of the movement’s objectives. The two main objectives were as follows:

1. To take action against the threat of war by calling for a change in militaristic ways of educating young people. Action in this area would involve promoting dialogue and understanding amongst citizens of Eastern and Western Europe, supporting the rights of conscientious objectors, and calling for a change in the form of the military oath.

2. To fight for fundamental human rights and for freedom of thought, freedom of association and prisoners’ rights.

In other declarations, Freedom and Peace stated that it sought the demilitarisation of central Europe and the declaration of a nuclear-free zone to reduce the danger of war, and that it supported the struggle of national minorities in Poland for an independent

¹¹ *Wiadomości Bieżące*, No. 164 (16-30 June 1986). See *RFE Press Review*, 1987 No. 3 (13 April).

cultural life. It also called for popular control of the production and use of weapons and of foreign policy.¹²

Membership

The common concerns that unite the movement's members are: an objection to the military oath; a concern with ecological issues; and a commitment to non-violence. Freedom and Peace is however an extremely diverse mixture of people of sometimes contradictory tendencies ranging from anarchists to anti-abortionists.

Jacek Czaputowicz, a former student Solidarity activist, and now spokesman for Freedom and Peace, asserts that anyone can join Freedom and Peace:

You don't have to sign anything. It is a movement and not some hierarchical organisation. There are no members. It is an open movement which revolves around people who identify with its aims, who participate in the protests it organises. The Freedom and Peace "identity card" is meaningful, tangible activity.¹³

It is, therefore impossible to talk of "membership figures" for Freedom and Peace. There may only be 200-300 Freedom and Peace "activists" in Poland but public support for the movement is large enough to cause the authorities growing concern. A yardstick for this concern is the increasing amount of space devoted to Freedom and Peace activities in the official media.¹⁴

Activities

Freedom and Peace concerns itself with clearly defined, concrete issues. At the start, admits Czaputowicz, the movement was facing a dilemma:

Should we organise a hunger strike to support Adamkiewicz alone, or should the strike be for the release of all political prisoners? We came to the conclusion — and this forms the basis of our strategy to the present day — that it is most important to have a tangible, specific goal. The strike was in support of Adamkiewicz.¹⁵

¹²Declaration dated 12 November 1985, Amnesty International report, 23 May 1986. For the full programme see *East European Reporter*, Spring 1986.

¹³Interview with Jacek Czaputowicz in the underground *Wola*, No. 6 (9 February 1987).

¹⁴See below, p. 19.

¹⁵Interview with Jacek Czaputowicz, *Wola* No.6 (9 February 1987).

The "specific goals" of Freedom and Peace have been as diverse as its membership. Demonstrations have been staged and petitions collected relating to issues ranging from conscientious objection to the use of asbestos in new housing estates.

The movement's interest in ecological problems was explained in one of its own publications:

If one decides to live in this country and is not suicidal, one cannot disregard the dirty rivers, the poisonous air, the damaged soil, the dying forests; nor can one fail to pay attention to chemically poisoned food. For this reason, environmental protection becomes a very important, perhaps the most important, area of interest and activity for Freedom and Peace.¹⁶

The movement has organised numerous protests relating to ecological issues. After the Chernobyl catastrophe, demonstrations were staged to draw people's attention to the dangers of nuclear power. Freedom and Peace has long been campaigning against the construction of a nuclear power plant in Zarnowiec and has recently been pressing the authorities to abandon plans involving the use of old Wehrmacht bunkers in south-western Poland for the storage of nuclear waste. A specific target for Freedom and Peace protests has been the Siechnice steelworks in Wroclaw, which opened ten years ago and emits toxic waste containing high levels of such carcinogens as chrome, arsenic and cadmium into the surrounding environment. The authorities have now announced that the steel works will close within the next five years.¹⁷

During such campaigns, the movement always employs passive methods of protest, some of which are unconventional — demonstrators sometimes wrap banners around themselves, so the police literally have to carry them away. Jacek Czaputowicz asserts that the police behave properly in such instances: "They know that we aren't going to attack them or run away. Indeed, flight from those situations would be in bad taste and often convenient for the police."¹⁸

Some Freedom and Peace protests have been organised within the sanctuary of churches. In September 1987 a week-long hunger strike was staged in the Jesuit church of St Andrzej Bobola in Bydgoszcz in support of those imprisoned for conscientious objection. Another hunger strike was organised later the same month in a church in Miedzyrzecz, east of the River Oder (south-western Poland). This was a protest against a court summons served on 26 people who had taken

¹⁶ *WiP*, No. 3 (17 November 1986).

¹⁷ *Uncensored Poland News Bulletin (UPNB)*, 1987 No. 5 (6 March).

¹⁸ Interview with Jacek Czaputowicz, *Wola*, No. 6 (19 February 1987).

part in a march against plans for storing nuclear waste in old Nazi bunkers.¹⁹ The best publicised and most ambitious Freedom and Peace event also took place in the sanctuary of a Warsaw church — an independent international peace symposium.²⁰

The activities of Freedom and Peace are reported in its own publications. The movement currently issues at least nine publications and since summer 1987 has had its own underground publishing house, aptly named *Dezserter*. Freedom and Peace publications (with the town of origin and date of first known edition) include: *A Capella* (Gdańsk — No. 2, 16 December 1987); *Agnus* (Bydgoszcz — No. 1, Summer 1987); *Biuletyn WiP* (Warsaw — No. 1, January 1986); *Pismo Ruchu Wolność i Pokój* (Szczecin — No. 1, March 1987); *Serwis Informacyjny Ruch WiP* (Title changed to *Dezserter* at issue No. 47) (Warsaw — No. 9, 23 November 1986); *Stan Cywilny* (Kraków — No. 1, 1987); *Tytuł Później* (Wrocław — No. 1, 1987); *WiP* (Wrocław — No. 1, 20 October 1986), *Wolność i Pokój* (Kraków — No. 1, May 1987).²¹ Plans are under way to publish an English-language Freedom and Peace bulletin. The venture will be jointly undertaken by European Nuclear Disarmament and Voice of Solidarity, in consultation with Jacek Czaputowicz in Warsaw.²² Freedom and Peace also receives considerable publicity in other underground publications. The Warsaw-based *Tygodnik Mazowsze* listed 11 different Solidarity organisations, industrial plants, clandestine clubs, underground publications and growing political parties that had issued a joint appeal in support of Freedom and Peace; the appeal stated that “together with Freedom and Peace, we want to struggle for Polish soldiers’ right to dignity.” Leaflets with the appeal were scattered in various places.²³

In line with its concern for human rights (as outlined in its programme issued on 17 November 1985), Freedom and Peace has, *on its own initiative*, been distributing a Polish version of the monthly Amnesty International newsletter since January 1986. It has also distributed a factsheet on Amnesty International describing the organisation’s aims and activities. Some of those responsible for distributing Amnesty International material have been fined by the authorities.²⁴

¹⁹ For the Bydgoszcz strike, see the BBC’s *Summary of World Broadcasts SWB*, Part 2 (Eastern Europe), EE/8686 (30 September 1987) and EE/8687 (1 October 1987); and *UPNB*, 1987 No. 19 (29 September). For Miedzyrzecz, see *SWB* Part 2 (Eastern Europe), EE/8688 (2 October 1987).

²⁰ See below, pp. 15-16.

²¹ Information received from RFE Polish Samizdat Unit, November 1987.

²² Information received from Voice of Solidarity, November 1987.

²³ *Tygodnik Mazowsze*, No. 161 (6 March 1986); See *RFE Press Review*, 1987 No. 3 (13 April).

²⁴ *UPNB*, 1987 No. 9 (30 March). On 15 January 1987 Malgorzata Gorczevska, a

Funding

A Freedom and Peace Movement Fund was created in November 1986.²⁵ The Fund Council consists of representatives from all the geographical areas in which the movement is active (Wrocław, Kraków, Bydgoszcz, Warsaw, Szczecin, Gdańsk). Sums were initially allocated to the Fund by the Committee for Social Resistance (Polish acronym KOS) and the Commission for Intervention and the Rule of Law, chaired by Zbigniew Romaszewski, one of the national Solidarity leaders. Other sources of income are private donors and the sale of publications. The fund finances the group's activities and also provides financial and legal aid to people suffering from repression, principally young men who refuse to serve in the military or refuse to take the military oath. The Fund does not, however, pay fines meted out to those who have participated in demonstrations — by February 1987, the sum total of such fines had amounted to almost three million zloty. The leaders say it would be stupid to take money from the Fund and deliver it to the authorities.²⁶

Links with Peace Movements in the West

From the outset, Freedom and Peace has attempted to forge links with western peace movements. Since 1985 the group has had a representative in the West: Jan Minkiewicz, based in Amsterdam. Initially, western peace activists tended to have difficulties with the belief of Freedom and Peace that there cannot be true peace without freedom. Moreover, some oppositionists in Poland frowned upon the idea of establishing contacts with groups in the West who were known to be pro-Moscow and who were seen as instruments of Soviet manipulation. Jacek Szymanderski of Freedom and Peace evaluated western peace activists harshly:

Western pacifists are disarmament freaks. We are not necessarily armament supporters, but it is people who shoot, not guns. Totalitarianism is more dangerous than missiles. It is not enough to supply a man with a uniform and a gun to make him shoot. He must also be supplied with a false idea, deprived of a part of his freedom — and this is what totalitarianism does. Those who only

Gdańsk Medical Academy librarian, was fined 50,000 zloty for keeping illegal literature, including a Polish version of the Amnesty International newsletter, with intent to distribute it.

²⁵ For full details see *RFE Press Review*, 1987 No. 5 (22 June).

²⁶ Interview with Jacek Czaputowicz, *Wola*, No. 6 (9 February 1987).

add up megatons prefer not to see this.²⁷

Jacek Czaputowicz, however, rebuked those who criticised Freedom and Peace for working so closely with western peace movements:

The pacifist movements in the West are often accused of having a pro-Moscow attitude. This overlooks their changing character. One proof of their evolution is the creation of the European Network of East-West Dialogue, an institution begun after a Congress in Perugia, Italy, in 1984, where several Western European pacifist organisations publicly supported independent social movements in Eastern Europe. This led to some cooling of relations with organisations officially approved [by Eastern European governments], and at the next Congress held in 1985, in Amsterdam, only the [official] delegations from Romania and China attended.

It was also at the Congress in Amsterdam that the Freedom and Peace Movement was created. It distributed an appeal to the participants [of the Congress]. The first demand stated: "Justice and civil freedoms should have a permanent place in furthering the idea of peace. Struggle against totalitarian systems should be given equal importance to disarmament efforts."

Even more important was the preparation of the so-called "Prague appeal" by people connected with Charter 77 in Czechoslovakia. This document (published in Issue 34 of the [underground] journal *Vacat* of September-October 1985) provoked numerous debates and polemics. It has become a milestone on the road of the struggle to include problems of freedom, democracy and human rights in any discussion of peace.

The crowning achievement of this discussion is a draft document entitled *Giving Real Life to the Helsinki Accords*. This long document of nearly 20 pages — quite controversial in its contents — is to be presented to the participants of the Helsinki Follow-Up Conference in Vienna in November [1986].

Poles participated in the drafting of several versions of this document; in the West, Jan Minkiewicz took part in the draft preparations; in Poland activists of Freedom and Peace, of the Helsinki Committee, and of KOS proposed some amendments which were mostly accepted. "A lasting detente cannot be bought at the cost of diminishing the problem of civil liberties and human — political and social — rights," states the document. "Peace and security, detente and cooperation, basic rights and self-determination of peoples have to be achieved together."

²⁷ *Przegląd Wiadomości Agencyjnych*, No. 32 (12 October 1986). See *RFE Press Review*, 1987 No. 3 (13 April).

That our Eastern European point of view has been accepted by Western peace movements cannot be overestimated. This makes it more difficult for the communist regimes to make use of pacifist movements [for their own interests]. The strength of these movements, although less than at the beginning of the 1980s, is still significant . . .

Disarmament is a living idea in the societies and the governments of the West. Despite the fiasco of the Reykjavik meeting, everything seems to point to the possible reduction of nuclear arsenals. This should not be ignored, as it often is in Poland. What we especially need nowadays is to escape from our political provinciality. One of the first steps in this direction can be to participate in a discussion over the most recent document showing Europe's problems in a wider perspective than we are used to seeing.²⁸

Freedom and Peace was instrumental in organising a meeting in Budapest from 3 to 8 August 1986 of representatives of peace groups from nine countries: Poland, the GDR, Hungary, the USSR, West Germany, Switzerland, France, the Netherlands, and Italy. At this meeting, representatives of the West German Network for East-West Dialogue prepared a memorandum "to the societies, organisations, and governments of states signatory to the Helsinki Agreements". In February 1987, Freedom and Peace members called upon those who had signed that memorandum to support the cause of Czech Catholic activist Petr Pospichal, a Charter 77 signatory from Brno, who had been arrested for allegedly attempting to overthrow the government. One of the charges against him was that he had maintained contacts with Solidarity in Poland.²⁹

Independent International Peace Seminar in Warsaw — May 1987

By far the most ambitious project organised by Freedom and Peace was the International Peace Seminar in Warsaw from 7 to 10 May 1987. The event was unprecedented in Eastern Europe. It was attended by more than 60 participants from the West, a few delegates from the Eastern bloc, and over 100 members of Freedom and Peace and Solidarity as well as opposition intellectuals in Poland. Twenty-two western delegates were refused visas.³⁰

The seminar was held in the vault of the *Milosierdzia Bozego*

²⁸ *Biuletyn Wolność i Pokój*, No. 1 (20 October 1986).

²⁹ *RFE Press Review*, 1987 No. 3 (13 April).

³⁰ *UPNB*, 1987 No. 10 (15 May). See also *RFE Polish Situation Report*, 1987 No. 5 (15 May).

(Divine Mercy) Church in Zytnia Street, Warsaw. The episcopate received a letter from the Minister for Religious Affairs, Professor Adam Lopatka, objecting to the use of church premises for the seminar. The secretariat of the episcopate apparently passed the letter to the parish priest who wrote a lengthy reply, stating that the event was not political. The episcopate returned this to the Religious Affairs Minister with an accompanying letter stipulating that the priest of Zytnia was competent and responsible for the matters concerned. Immediately before the seminar the episcopate delivered a letter to the priests of five parishes where some of the seminar events had been scheduled. The letter stated that the seminar could be construed as political and the episcopate was advising — not ordering — them not to be too deeply involved in political events, but that the decision and responsibility ultimately rested with them. Three parishes withdrew, but Zytnia and one other remained. In the event, however, the participants confined themselves to the Milosierdzia Bozego Church in Zytnia for fear of arrest whilst moving from one venue to another.³¹

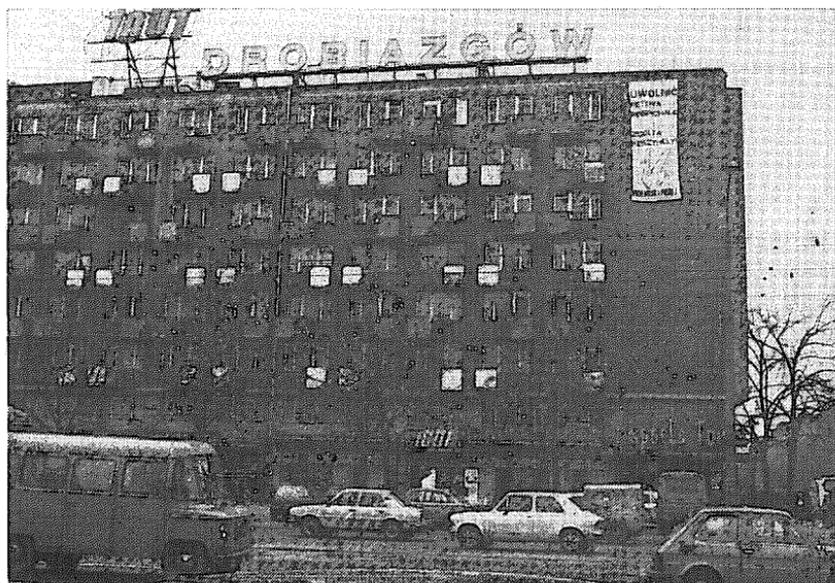
Although some twenty seminar organisers were detained for periods of up to 48 hours immediately preceding the event, the symposium was allowed to run its full course of three days. Some of the organisers, Jacek Czaputowicz among them, took refuge in the church for the duration of the seminar to avoid arrest. A wide range of topics was discussed under the general heading “Giving Real Life to the Helsinki Agreement”: themes included disarmament, human rights, democracy, cooperation outside the official state “peace” monopoly and environmental issues. One of the high points of the seminar was reportedly a speech by Polish Dominican priest Fr Jacek Salij, who spoke on the Vatican’s view of military service. Four joint documents were issued during the seminar. One of them concerned the setting up of a common information bureau for peace movements in Europe with the aim of defending members against persecution. The other statements took up issues of human rights observance and democracy, ways of improving the exchange of information and the status of conscientious objectors.³²

The Authorities’ Response to Freedom and Peace

As far as the government is concerned, a challenge to the military oath is a challenge to Soviet hegemony and the role the army has played in preserving communist power — military service is one form of

³¹ Interview with Jacek Szymanderski, *East European Reporter*, Summer 1987.

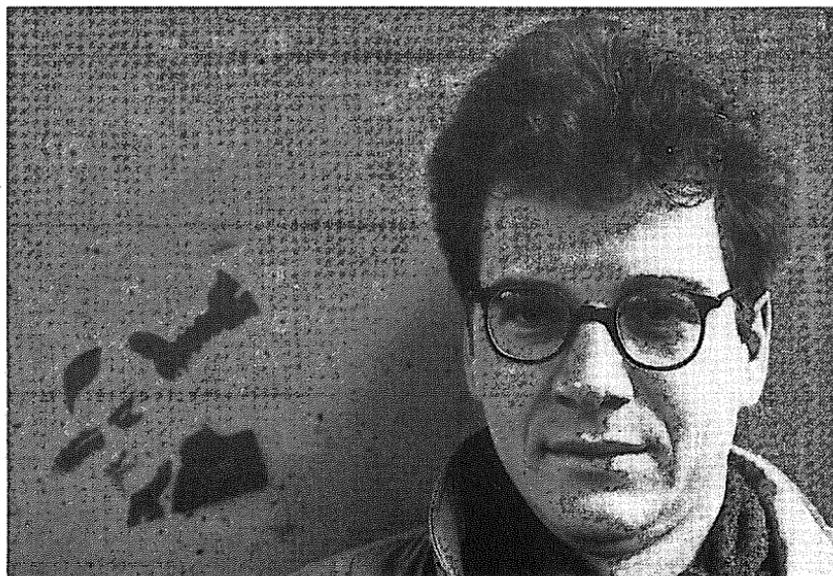
³² As footnote 31. Keston College has the full text of Fr Salij’s lecture, in English.



Leaflets being dropped from a Warsaw rooftop calling for the release of Czech prisoner of conscience Petr Pospichal and Hungarian conscientious objector Zsolt Keszthelyi.

See article on pp. 4-20 (Photos © *Voice of Solidarity*).

Jacek Czaputowicz.





Police break up a demonstration in Wrocław. Freedom and Peace staged the protest in support of Marek Krukowski who was denied re-admission to Medical College after refusing to take the military oath. He had earlier been released from prison under the 1986 amnesty. See article on pp. 4-20. (Photo © *Voice of Solidarity*)

political and ideological control. In its stand on behalf of conscientious objectors Freedom and Peace has, then, succeeded in touching a raw nerve. As the movement has gained support and momentum, so the authorities have utilised more and more subtle methods of discouragement. At the start, the authorities probably hoped the movement would burn itself out once the "eccentrics" at the helm had been locked up or fined. This proved not to be the case and during 1986 the government adopted a more repressive policy with long prison sentences for Freedom and Peace supporters. More recently, however, the authorities seem to have adopted a softer approach: there are now fewer Freedom and Peace members serving prison terms (though there are still a large number of conscientious objectors in prison), and the issue of conscientious objection has been debated widely in the press. The military authorities have even put forward fresh proposals for a substitute service — but this is to be twice as long as the normal military service.³³ Surprisingly, television coverage was given to the September hunger strike in Bydgoszcz — possibly with the aim of drawing attention away from Solidarity. The authorities may wish to emphasise the fact that the young generation has lost confidence in the veteran dissidents. It is also no coincidence that government handling of Freedom and Peace has gradually softened as the movement has been gaining wider appraisal from peace groups in the West.

When in September 1985 28 members of Freedom and Peace returned their draft cards in support of Marek Adamkiewicz, the Office of the Chief of Staff informed them that they could be sentenced to three months' imprisonment or fined up to 50,000 zloty. In the event, 16 Freedom and Peace supporters were sentenced and two received a prison term for refusing to pay the fine.³⁴

The first member of Freedom and Peace to be sentenced to a long prison term for conscientious objection was Wojciech Jankowski, a 21-year-old teacher from Gdańsk. Jankowski was arrested in November 1985 for refusing the call-up to military service and sentenced to three and a half years' imprisonment in December 1985. In February 1986 one of the founder members of Freedom and Peace, Tomasz Wacko, was sentenced to one and a half years' imprisonment for refusing to take the military oath. In March and May two other Freedom and Peace supporters, Jaroslaw Wojewódzki and Krzysztof Sobolewski, were sentenced to two and a half and three years respectively for refusing to take the oath. Firm statistics on other

³³ Announcement by government spokesman Jerzy Urban at a press conference for foreign journalists, Warsaw, 19 January 1988. For details see *SWB*, EE/0054 (21 January, 1988).

³⁴ Amnesty International report, 23 May 1986.

arrests are unavailable but early in 1986 the KOS journal reported a steady stream of sentences of Freedom and Peace supporters.

In February 1986 two prominent Freedom and Peace activists, Jacek Czaputowicz and Piotr Niemczyk, were arrested and charged under Article 278 of the Penal Code with membership of an illegal organisation. The official change to a policy of open repression against Freedom and Peace members and others who returned their draft cards or refused to take the military oath presented a serious threat to the pacifist movement in Poland. A refusal to serve in the armed forces automatically meant a prison term.³⁵

The government amnesty of September 1986 brought the release of all Freedom and Peace supporters, though not all were originally included in the amnesty. Only public pressure from within Poland and abroad ensured the release at the end of October of the last remaining Freedom and Peace pacifist, Wojciech Jankowski. The reluctant inclusion of conscientious objectors in the political amnesty was in itself a concession on the side of the authorities since refusal to do military service is a criminal and not a political offence. Since the 1986 amnesty, there have been fewer arrests of Freedom and Peace supporters, though a countless number have been fined for Freedom and Peace activities, ranging from distribution of literature to participation in demonstrations. At the end of 1987, the following Freedom and Peace activists were known to be in prison for refusing military service:

Piotr Rozycki	sentenced July 1987 to 2 years 6 months
Oskar Kasperek	sentenced August 1987 to 3 years
Jacek Borcz	sentenced November 1987 to 3 years
Piotr Bednarz	sentenced December 1987 to 3 years
Slawomir Dutkiewicz	sentenced December 1987 to 2 years 3 months
Wojciech Wozniak	sentenced December 1987 to 2 years 3 months
Wojciech Piotrowski	arrested August 1987; awaiting trial
Wieslaw Soliwodzki	arrested November 1987; awaiting trial
Mariusz Bajda	arrested December 1987; awaiting trial ³⁶

³⁵ Amnesty International report, 23 May 1986. Also *RFE Press Review*, 1987 No. 3 (13 April).

³⁶ Amnesty International report, 9 December 1987. Information also received from War Resisters International. This list is probably not complete — vague reports indicate more arrests but concrete details are not available.

The authorities' reaction to the international peace seminar in May 1987 was restrained. Although the organisers were harassed, questioned and detained for short periods before the seminar there was no undue obstruction on the part of the authorities during the event itself. One of the organisers, Jacek Szymanderski, says that if it had not been for the presence of western observers, the seminar would never have been allowed to get off the ground.³⁷ After the seminar Jacek Czaputowicz was fined 50,000 zloty for his part in organising "an illegal political gathering".³⁸

During recent months the authorities have been using more subtle methods to discourage would-be pacifists. This new approach has taken the form of an ideological campaign in the media. Articles on conscientious objection have been appearing more and more frequently in official journals. Most adopt a fairly crude and simplistic approach, inferring that Freedom and Peace is an espionage group, linked to Radio Free Europe, trying to undermine the Polish defence system and thereby overthrow communism. The official paper *Zolnierz Wolności* (Soldier for Freedom) carried an article coinciding with the commemorations of the outbreak of the Second World War on 1 September which described Freedom and Peace as "something that gets hooked to a ship (RFE) and cries 'We are sailing!' ". The article goes on:

We cannot accept what they say because they lack realism but abound in hatred of Poland and its traditions . . . Let's see how they fight for peace: frequently supporting American armament policies . . . propagating the idea that peace in Europe can only be achieved through disarmament of socialist countries and change in the political system . . . weakening the Polish defence system through refusing to perform the constitutional duty of military service.³⁹

Some articles use more intellectual arguments against conscientious objection: for example, an article in *Polityka*: "A young man who is genuinely concerned with moral standards in Poland, and who does not simply wish to demonstrate his own superiority . . . can do infinitely more good entering the army in one capacity or other . . . than assuming the role of a martyr"⁴⁰ The author asserts that the individual's convictions will influence the structure of army life. In short, the message here is that it is better to change the system from within than opt out altogether.

³⁷ Interview with Jacek Szymanderski, *East European Reporter*, Summer 1987.

³⁸ *From Below*, October 1987. See also *Dziennik Polski*, 28 May 1987.

³⁹ *Zolnierz Wolności*, 18 September 1987

⁴⁰ *Polityka*, 12 September 1987.

More generally, through such organisations as the Polish Scouting Association and the League for the Defence of the Country, the government has launched a "campaign for patriotic upbringing": a vigorous propaganda drive aimed at changing the attitudes of young people, for whom, as the government is aware, the army has lost its appeal. In February 1987 a directive was issued by the Committee for Defence of the Country emphasising the need to induce in the younger generation "the feeling of joint responsibility for the safety of the country, its independence, sovereignty and inviolability of borders."⁴¹

It is difficult to predict just where Freedom and Peace will go from here. It is not a political party with a clear-cut manifesto, nor is it a trade union seeking agreement on a long list of clearly-defined workers' rights. At the same time, it is ironically in the sheer diversity of its concerns that the strength of the movement seems to lie. The authorities would have to launch an ideological campaign on many fronts to combat support for Freedom and Peace effectively.

The government may share some of the ecological concerns of Freedom and Peace,⁴² but on peace questions the movement is challenging a state monopoly. The movement believes that the official concept of peace is tailored to suit the political needs of the party and that the general public has no influence over the state's peace policy. Pluralism in the preservation of peace is a notion which the government cannot tolerate. Bringing this fact to the attention of peace groups in the West has perhaps been Freedom and Peace's greatest achievement.

⁴¹ *RFE Polish Situation Report*, 1987 No. 9 (24 July):

⁴² The official press, in the past reluctant to provide information about the ecological crisis facing many areas of Poland, has recently been reporting disturbing developments. According to an official scouts journal there are no longer any forests in Poland uncontaminated by acid rain. Other government-controlled publications recently admitted that in some communities of Silesia (Slask), 90 per cent of the children suffer from chronic respiratory diseases and that life expectancy there is three years lower than the average in other parts of the country. (*Peace and Democracy News*, Summer-Autumn 1986).