

WWW	WW	WWW	OOOO	RRRRR	DDDDDD	SSSS
WW	WW	WW	OO OO	RR RR	DD DD	SS SS
WW	WW	WW	OO OO	RR RR	DD DD	SS
WW	WW	WW	OO OO	RR RR	DD DD	SS
WW	WW	WW	OO OO	RRRR	DD DD	SS
WW	WW	WW	OO OO	RR RR	DD DD	SS
WW	WWW	WW	OO OO	RR RR	DD DD	SS
WWW	WWW		OO OO	RR RR	DD DD	SS SS
W	W		OOOO	RR RR	DDDD	SSSS

LLL	III	KKK	KK	EEEEEE	
LL	II	KK	KK	EE	
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LL	II	KK	KK	EE	
LL	II	KKKK		EEEE	
LL	II	KK	KK	EE	
LL	II	KK	KK	EE	
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LLLLLLL	II	KK	KK	EEEEEE	

DDDDDD	YYY	YY	NNNN	NN	A
DD DD	YY	YY	NNN	NN	AAA
DD DD	YY	YY	NNNN	NN	AAAA
DD DD	YYYY		NN NN	NN	AA AA
DD DD	YY		NN NN	NN	AA AA XXXX
DD DD	YY		NN NN	NN	AAAAAAA
DD DD	YY		NN NNNN	AA	AA
DD DD	YY		NN NNN	AA	AA
DDDD	YY		NN NN	AA	AA

MMM	MM	III	TTTTTTTTTT	EEEEEE	
MMM	MMM	II	TT	EE	
MM MM	MM MM	II	TT	EE	
MM	MMM	MM	II	TT	EE
MM	MM	MM	II	TT	EEEE
MM		MM	II	TT	EE
MM		MM	II	TT	EE
MM		MM	II	TT	EE
MM		MM	II	TT	EEEEEE

WORDS	LIKE	DYNAMITE
WORDS	LIKE	DYNAMITE
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WORDS	LIKE	DYNAMITE

JAN KRZYSZTOF KELUS

WITOLD ŁUCZYWO

JAN WALC

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Jan Krzysztof Kelus

A POMPOUS SONG

a  
History assigned us  
D  
a life in a time  
C  
of protests and dissent  
E a  
or "isolated incidents."

After ten years of waiting  
now again is the time  
to set some things straight  
and correct some lies.

Some say it just started  
some say it lost ground  
our paper revolution  
a duplicator underground.

In a strange turn of  
events  
our exams we did write  
in words that resounded  
loud as dynamite.

No urban guerillas  
a dynamite prohibition  
we advanced our cause  
firing paper ammunition.

Today's high-school grads  
may scorn our rule  
to keep telling the truth  
instead of smashing skulls.

They just said to me  
it's like Good Soldier Svejk  
to put words against tanks  
to lure and to scare.

Independent, self-governing  
in our circle game  
we don't see how our words  
turn to more of the same.

So attuned to our words  
full of our ideals  
for the young we'll make

room  
form a vet's club on wheels.

/1981/

Jan Walc

## WE, THE FREE-ROLLER PRESS

Friday

Zenek called and said he wants to meet me on Monday at 11 in the morning.<sup>1/</sup> If you think this means that there are still three days left until the meeting, you are wrong, and that's the point. We just informed the wire-tapping sergeant about our meeting. But I don't think he knows with

whom I am meeting. I know Zenek's voice and I also know, unlike the sergeant, that you always have to subtract two. Thus I actually will meet Zenek at Cafe Wiklina on Saturday at 9 in the morning. The meeting place is always the same. Then I will pack up the stuff that any independent printer needs /the most important things are

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The translated texts in this book are formatted so as to evoke the look of underground publications from the period. Typewriters /often manual/ used for preparing stencils did not allow italics or bold characters, they often had no curved parentheses which were substituted with slashes, the fonts could not be scaled, etc. All footnotes are by the editor.

This text was originally published in Biuletyn Informacyjny no. 4/1980. Biuletyn Informacyjny /Information Bulletin/ was a shorthand name for Komunikat KSS KOR-Biuletyn Informacyjny. The official statements and declarations of the Committee for Social Self-defence KOR were published as Komunikat KSS KOR jointly with the Information Bulletin that contained journalistic materials. Henceforth BI.

<sup>1/</sup> Zenon Pałka, b. 1952, dissident activist and printer. Imprisoned /"interned"/ under martial law, since 1982 he has been living in Germany.

clothing, a small portable stove, headphones, a sponge and hand cream/ and will disconnect from normal life for a week. It is crucial not to cancel any previously arranged appointments, and it's even advisable to remind the sergeant about Monday's llam appointment. It is easy to get in touch with the sergeant; all I need to do is call a friend like Kuroń, Michnik or the Romaszewskis,<sup>2/</sup> and tell one of them that I would love to see them but can't now because of urgent business at home, but that I will try to pop in on Monday since I'm planning on coming to Warsaw. Lastly it's important to go through my pockets and wallet and get rid of all unnecessary scraps of paper, and then put away my notebook with phone

numbers that I won't be using for the week. And that's all it takes.

### Saturday

In the morning I take a good bath since it is uncertain if the place we are going will have anything even close to a bathroom. Then I leave instructions on how to deal with any issues that may come up when I'm gone. My little son protests, "Daddy, daddy, take me with you, I want to print too! Will you take me when I'm big?" My wife gives me a certain kind of look, and I'm off.

Once again I am going into battle. From now on, the safety of our printing shop depends on my alertness and vigilance: of the machine I know so well from countless days of printing; of the several hundred reams of paper that were

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<sup>2/</sup> Jacek Kuroń /1934-2004/, Adam Michnik /b. 1946/, Zofia /b. 1940/ and Zbigniew /b. 1940/ Romaszewski, activists of the Committee of the Defense of Workers KOR /henceforth KOR/, were the most recognizable personalities in the 1970s Polish dissident movement.

procured with so much effort and transported to the shop with so much caution; and of the stencils that were smuggled from abroad by someone who obviously did not want to have his or her passport taken away,<sup>3/</sup> yet on the way back from an entomology conference in Madrid or a business trip to the Benelux for the Handlopol import-export company, he or she decided to put a hundred or two thin duplicator stencils bought for a couple of francs from a corner stationery store, at the bottom of a suitcase. In addition, the safety of the people who have decided to host our mobile printing shop for the next week lies on my shoulders; and I haven't even met them yet. There's nobody suspicious near my house so the way is clear. As a rule, you

don't usually find a "tail" on the street; the "specialized agencies" usually wait in assigned places and do not just roam the streets in search for an opportunity. Nonetheless, while walking down a narrow, empty street, I look behind me to make sure nobody is following. I reach Cafe Wiklina undetected. I order a coffee, and soon my boss and independent printing mentor Zenek, comes in. He does not bring a "tail" with him either, which is more difficult for him since he is a good six-foot tall and sports a red afro and beard. I ask, "Is the place far from here?" Zenek of course doesn't answer, but writes on a napkin, "Rembertów, 25 Zielona St., Nowicki," and immediately burns a hole in the paper with a cigarette. We are

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<sup>3/</sup> Passports were kept in regional passport offices, a part of the Ministry of the Interior, and released for individual travel abroad after which the citizen had to return his/her passport to the office. At any time the office could refuse to release a passport.

sure nobody is watching us, but you never say an address out loud, and you definitely never leave it written down.

"A new place?" I ask.

"Yes."

"Who's the guy?"

"A retiree, Krystyna's uncle. You know, she's Paula's friend."

"I don't know her. What's the place like?"

"So-so. Her uncle built the house himself. He lives alone and is writing a book on Piłsudski.<sup>4/</sup> The water comes from a well, there's an outhouse, and so on."

"Is everything there?" I ask doubtfully. "Will we need to bring anything?"

"We need to bring turpentine with us, and of course food," says Zenek, who must have learned this from the person who delivered our machine there.

We could not rely upon the uncle to provide food /we already were calling that unknown man "the uncle."

Every place had its name, and this obviously was going to be "the uncle's"/. We would have to bring a large food supply with us, especially since we were going to be working for at least 16 hours a day, and would need to eat a lot.

Zenek is a vegetarian out of choice, a follower of Indian philosophy; and out of necessity I am almost a vegetarian. Within an hour our bags are packed with cheeses, eggs, sour cream, etc. It turns out there is no way we can also squeeze in 10 bottles of turpentine without which we cannot even start working. We are near the house of one of our dissident friends, so we decide to borrow a bag from him.

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<sup>4/</sup> Marshal Józef Piłsudski /1867-1935/ was a revolutionary, military leader and politician, and considered the founding father of the interwar independent Poland. In the 1970s, writing a monograph on him was by itself an act of defiance towards the communist authorities.



This is a mistake. We get a bag, but we also learn that the apartment has been under surveillance for a couple of days. We are not positive of this information because people often see agents in innocent passersby, or they puff up their importance by telling stories about being constantly under observation. But as we leave the place, a grey Fiat sedan starts following us. It stops or slows down, so as to move at a walking pace. Now it's important that they should not notice that we see them; this is time for cold-blooded calculation. We walk to a tram stop. The Fiat turns into a side street and stops at the corner, in a way just begging for a traffic ticket /which is one of the ways to identify secret police cars at work/. A tram arrives and we get on it. Two agents sprint out of the car, cross the street and get on the back car. Only the driver is left in

the sedan and he drives next to the tram in the left lane. In fact there's nothing to worry about-we will shake them. We watch the agents following us. We certainly won't go to the printing shop until we know we have lost them. The tram heads towards the commuter rail line. We calculate our options. We arrive at the Zawisza Square stop. The Fiat in the left lane is stuck between the traffic lights, other cars, and the tram tracks. This is an opportunity to get rid of the car. We wait almost to the moment that the doors are closing, and then we exit the tram. Alas, the agents following us have been alert and also jump out of their car. The tram moves on, and so does the gray Fiat since it has no other option. At least the car is out of the picture. We run down to the train platform. Zenek makes a decision: the "French connection," and then in a half an hour, the "bypass bridge."

These are our favorite tricks connected with the commuter rail line. Police walkie-talkies don't work in underground stations and tunnels. The "French connection" means jumping out of a starting train and leaving the tail inside. This time only one of us can do it because of the bags hampering our movements. The "bypass bridge" is a fail-proof maneuver but it requires outside assistance. So the train arrives and I ostentatiously put the bags on the luggage rack. Zenek blocks the closing door with his leg and jumps out. I am left with two agents. I am a bit nervous, even if my task is simple. I have to drag them behind me for another half-hour. I am sorry they did not jump out after Zenek-then he would be the one to travel with them, and I would be the one to prepare "operation bypass

bridge." When the train arrives at Centralna Station, I exit along with the agents who are glued to me, and enter the labyrinth of underground passages. I have to spend at least a quarter of an hour here without letting them go up to the ground level, so they aren't able to use their radios. I drink a coke in a bar, buy some cigarettes; some time passes and I visit some shops. Finally almost 20 minutes have passed.

Now I go up to the taxi stand. The queue isn't long, but we are already on the ground level, and one of the agents starts talking into his lapel. Who will be faster? A taxi comes, and alas, two more come behind it. The agents follow me down Aleje Jerozolimskie towards Praga.<sup>5/</sup> I check the time-I have five minutes left, just enough to reach my destination. I ask the driver to stop by the

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<sup>5/</sup> Praga is the part of Warsaw across the Vistula River.

stairs that go from the by-pass bridge down to Solec Street. There's no car exit there. My caretakers run behind me down the stairs, and Zenek is waiting for me in a taxi. We drive off. The agents move nervously like a hen in a pond when her ducklings take off. The taxi makes a turn, and another, and after riding just a few hundred meters, we get out. Going farther in the same cab would make no sense; the agents naturally have taken down its number. We tip the driver and he leaves. When he's gone, we get into another taxi ordered by Zenek over the phone, and waiting nearby. Zenek says to the driver, "Kowalski, 11:50?"

"That's right," says the driver, and Zenek gives him a distant address.

We reach Rembertów<sup>6/</sup> by commuter rail only around 3 in the afternoon, because

after such an operation one always should loiter around Warsaw just to be on the safe side. Of course we do not visit any of our friends even if it would have been pleasant to sit and have some tea, because we do not know if they are being watched by the police. We need to get from the train station to the house, and we cannot ask anyone about Zielona Street or Mr. Nowicki. So we pass the kiosk, turn left and go straight to the gas station, take the third street on the right, and then take another one on the left by an electric sub-station. It is a long way. Our bags are heavy and our shirts are sweaty, and there will be no bathroom when we get there. People are returning home from work. For us work is about to begin, even if we have already worked a good shift. Finally we reach No.

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<sup>6/</sup> A district at the eastern outskirts of Warsaw; administratively it is a part of the city, but in popular perception it is regarded as a separate town.

25. The location is perfect; there is a large overgrown garden with a house at the end, far from the street. Dogs are barking furiously as we wait for the uncle to open the gate. There is no doubt we are in the right place; the driveway is furrowed as if tanks had rolled over it. No wonder, a day or two earlier five cars loaded with paper and a sixth with the machine, drove in here. That means 500 reams of paper, nearly 1.5 tons. You cannot load a car with more than a hundred reams in the trunk and back seat-the chassis will practically scrape the pavement, and instead of illuminating the road, the headlights will act like anti-aircraft searchlights. The dogs stop barking and the uncle shows up. He is a large man, not very old, and he looks like your average farmer. Somehow I imagined that a retiree writing a

book on Piłsudski in a remote place would look quite different. But in this line of work one gets used to surprises.

"We are Krystyna's friends," I introduce us.

"I figured it out," the uncle responds with a strong Vilnius accent and lets us in. There are three small rooms with a large kitchen. The dining room table is spread out with papers and a typewriter which contrast with the uncle's overalls; a picture of Our Lady of the Gate of Dawn hangs above the cupboard. <sup>7/</sup> More than anything we would like to sit down and have a cup of tea, but first we need to see the place. We leave our stuff in the kitchen, and the uncle shows us the room designated for the printing shop. Tapestries, car-pets, two ancient beds, dried flowers-there's no room to turn around. We

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<sup>7/</sup> A famous icon of the Virgin Mary from the Chapel of the Gate of Dawn in Vilnius, in present-day Lithuania.

look at each other with trepidation.

"Where are the machine and the paper?" we ask.

"Oh yes, they are in the sviron," the uncle calmly states a fact obvious to him.

"Where?" Zenek asks quizzically.

"In the shack," I translate into standard Polish and immediately feel much more at home and calmer. I feel like I'm in the middle of one of Konwicki's novels.<sup>8/</sup> We go to the sviron. The machine is there, the paper too, almost up to the roof. 500 reams make a huge pile. I open a ream. Of course the paper is damp, but in a sviron nothing else can be expected. We return to the house.

Now we must completely ruin the uncle's oasis. We must empty the room assigned to us, take out the furniture, and turn the entire house upside down.

Luckily the uncle takes it all stoically. The beds go in the dining room, the tapestries on the top of the cupboard, the chairs wherever they can fit; we only leave the table and bring in two kitchen chairs. In a few hours every-thing will be smeared with ink, so we try to leave out only things that can be washed. We bring in the paper. There will be some extra work; we will have to carry it from the sviron to the house and back, because only some 100 reams can fit into the little room. We make some 10 trips before the paper, the machine, the ink, and the solvents are in place. Now we need to paper off the floor and the walls-if you touch anything with a dirty hand, unless it is eggshell paint, there is no way to remove the stain.

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<sup>8/</sup> Writer Tadeusz Konwicki, b. 1926 near Vilnius. Reminiscences of his childhood and adolescence frequently appear in his novels and films.

I take the sponge that we brought with us and moisten the strips of adhesive tape. My experience allows me to quickly wrap butcher paper around all the furniture left in the room. Zenek prepares the "rag." It is a piece of flannel that covers the duplicator's perforated drum, and distributes ink onto the stencil. It gets worn very quickly and is a basic disposable item, but since we have virtually no access to disposable materials, we must improvise. It has to be the right kind of flannel with the proper number of threads, thickness and fluffiness; all this affects how the ink seeps through it. When we have been unable to find the right kind of flannel in stores, we have frequently taken our friends' shirts, examined them against the light, and if a shirt was right, we would mercilessly tear it off the owner's back "for the greater good."

We are very tired. 5pm has already passed and it is high time for dinner. I prepare tea, and Zenek makes our staple dish: scrambled eggs printers' style, i.e. fried cheese, eggs and whatever spices are at hand. The dish is ideal: it is nutritious, easy to prepare, and uses ingredients that are almost always readily available. We eat it at every printing session until we're sick of the smell of fried cheese, but now it smells wonderful.

The uncle silently watches our cooking. When we finally start eating he casts a critical look at our tea that is nearly black, and prepares his own meal. He cuts old bread into small, one-centimeter cubes and places them on a plate next to margarine. Then he pours a pale-yellow liquid that can't be called tea into a glass, puts the bread cubes into this tea, and eats the margarine straight.

We are so different than the uncle, and it is not a pleasant thought. First of all it feels weird to us--supposed idealists who are stuffing ourselves while he is living on old bread and margarine. What does he think about us? We are always afraid that people imagine underground printers as revolutionary saints, whereas during our few days of printing, we deal almost exclusively with mundane details instead of lofty ideas. We don't scrimp on food because it simply does not make sense. We are paid a stipend of 75 zlotys a day, and if we chip in some of our regular salaries, we have enough even for chocolate and fruit. Zenek crowns this meal with a big grapefruit. Conversation stumbles, and since the uncle does not want us to smoke in his room, we quickly retire to the printing shop. I light a cigarette and start preparing the ink,

and Zenek unwraps the paper. I open a five kilo can and find out that luckily the ink is Swedish. This is much better than the Polish ink you can get on the constantly growing black market. It is so thick that it is hard to stick a spoon into it. I put on rubber gloves and place a glop of ink in the pot we brought in with the machine; many kilograms of ink have been mixed in it before. I add varnish and oil /it must be linseed varnish and sunflower oil--when you encounter illegible pages with print seeping through the paper you can be sure that someone prepared ink with soy or canola oil/. I turn the mixer on. This is our second mixer; its trusted predecessor was confiscated by the police. The Swedish ink dissolves so well that I only strain it through a sieve in order to mollify Zenek. In the meantime he sorts the unpacked paper. To a

layman all reams may seem the same, especially since they are from a single factory and a single series. Yet since any Polish "standard" is a very flexible notion and loosely interpreted by the technical controls, reams may vary quite substantially. The ink is ready. I light another cigarette and help Zenek sort the paper. I separate out the soft sheets; these are lighter than the others because the paper is thinner and will cause problems. If held by their corners, they drop limply and they lack the stiffness necessary to pass smoothly through a duplicator. Another issue is the size of reams. Normally they should be 297 x 210 mm, but in practical terms they vary as much as 3 cm, so we sort the paper according to size in order not to have to adjust the machine during work. Another issue is shaking. Each ream needs to be held

by its corners and firmly shaken to remove paper dust and small pieces of paper that stick to the stencil during work and clog the holes through which the ink flows. This shaking also serves to separate the pages stuck together so that they run through the machine one at a time. Only 20 more reams are left to shake and I do it by myself while Zenek prepares the machine. I just help him take it out of the box. It is an old American duplicator, an AB Dick, model no. 438, improved and tweaked by us. Its box turned upside down serves as the base, but we need to place a piece of thick rubber foam under it to partially muffle the noise. While I finish shaking, Zenek puts on the first stencil. Of course it is not the title page but page five, because finding the correct thickness of ink for a particular paper is a matter so complicated that we don't even trust



our own experience-the only method is trial-and-error, and we do not want to experiment with the most prominent page. Our movements become more and more regular, and the place loses its unique character. It turns into just another printing shop. The tension eases and we start talking-this time the main topic is Mirek Chojecki's trial that starts on Thursday.<sup>9/</sup> We both would like to be in court for it, but there is no way we can finish printing in time, and we firmly adhere to the principle of not leaving the printing shop in the middle of a job, especially for a place that would certainly be

full of secret police. We still feel the thrill of our successful escape. Long ago we were much more respectful of the police because we expected them to work much more effectively. Two years ago Zenek had a huge fight with a printer who insisted on leaving the shop for Good Friday Mass. Nowadays we go out for grocery shopping if needed, but going to court would involve risking unwelcome attention, or even a 48-hour work delay.<sup>10/</sup> But we still have plenty of time to decide. Zenek installs the stencil and plugs in the machine-we begin printing. I pour the ink into the duplica-

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<sup>9/</sup> The trial of Mirosław Chojecki, the director of the Independent Publishing House NOW-a, accused of stealing a duplicator and arrested in March 1980, took place on June 12, 1980. He and another NOW-a printer, Bogdan Grzesiak, received a 1.5 year suspended sentence.

<sup>10/</sup> 48 hours was a maximum period of "zatrzymanie," lit. "hold," a temporary detention by the police that did not require them to present an official arrest warrant. This was routinely applied to dissident activists, sometimes consecutively, i.e. after 48 hours a person would be "released", and after couple hundred yards detained again.

tor's drum. During its rotations centrifugal force splashes the ink onto the drum's perforated wall covered with flannel, while the rubber roller that presses the paper moving under it pushes the ink through the letters cut out on the stencil. The ink needs to be of a certain thickness so that the right amount of it goes through the stencil.

Zenek did not mix the ink, however he makes the comment, "too thick," which luckily does not necessitate any further action. We have known each other long enough for me to know that his comment really was not about the ink, but just to underscore Zenek's leadership, which I fully accept. His leadership is based not only on his long printing practice, but also on his skill in flawless feeding.

Each electric duplicator, including the one we are working on, is equipped with an automatic feeder

that for each rotation of the drum inserts one sheet of paper. Alas, a feeder is a very subtle device that reacts especially poorly to deviations from standard paper dimensions and weights. It reacts with a blind machine-stubbornness. A moment of distraction and crumbled pages pile up, unable to go through the feeder-just because a single uneven sheet got stuck. The feeder is like the broom from the Sorcerer's Apprentice which keeps going and going, until it is switched off.

In addition, our old AB Dick and its feeder were not intended to process such enormous quantities of paper, and the machine worked way too slowly for our needs. So we reset the transmission in the motor in order to achieve the speed of three pages per second. The feeder cannot operate at such a speed, so Zenek has to take over this task manually. Every second he feeds the ma-

chine with three pages, hour after hour. A single issue of the BI is created with some half-million of his movements

The duplicator is rolling. The first pages are illegible since the ink saturates the flannel slowly, but then the image gradually becomes more and more visible, like a developing photograph, and finally the page becomes legible. Even if millions of pages have already passed through our hands, our eyes are still glued to the pages as they rhythmically fall into the receiving bin. The ream of white paper visibly shrinks, and at the same time the stack of printed pages grows. It is time for a new ream.

Attracted by the rhythmical tapping of the duplicator, the uncle shows up at the door. As we do, he stares at the stream of pages running through the machine. He takes his gaze

off the machine and looks around the room, now transformed beyond recognition. His eyes drop to the floor covered with misprints. He picks up a page, reads it, and concluding that it is acceptable, tries to insert it back into the bin. He does this quite quickly, in about a second and a half, so that during that time only five pages produced by Zenek land on the floor, blocked by the uncle's movement.

"Holy smoke," he mumbles disapprovingly, but with some respect, and just in case, sticks his hands into his pockets.

We understand him perfectly because there was a time when we manually typed and retyped issues of the Komunikat KOR, and each wasted page meant one copy less.<sup>11/</sup> However today one page equals 0.004 of the paper processed by us during the printing of an issue of the BI, and even

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<sup>11/</sup> See the initial note.

if 10 full reams end up on the floor, they represent only two percent of misprints. We cannot even dream of greater efficiency.

It is almost dark, so we ask the uncle for a blanket to cover the window so that the light that will be on continuously over several nights does not draw any unnecessary attention. All the preliminary work seems done, and only the tapping of the machine, mixing ink, packing and unpacking paper await us over the next few days.

The uncle leaves us, and Zenek turns on his radio as usual to some light music at full blast. This is the source of one of the worst conflicts in our shop. I don't have an ear for music, which almost does not exist for me, especially the kind that Zenek likes /and he is not alone in this/. For me it is actually physical torture\_the speakers always

blasting away at full volume. The rhythmical banging of the percussion drills in-side me; I feel it in my head, in my stomach, every-where. That is why I always bring the headphones with me-not for myself, but for Zenek. He is used to me being weird, even if he doesn't understand it, so he shrugs and smiles, and puts on the headphones. I am left, not with true silence, but with the rhythmical tapping of the duplicator. It is not a pleasant sound, but I am already so used to it that for me it is like silence. The work goes on monotonously. Every few minutes Zenek gets a new ream; he stops only when they start talking in his headphones. Then he turns the machine off, turns the knobs of the radio until I again hear the familiar percussion booms coming muffled from the headphones. Zenek feeds the paper and I straighten the reams. The pages landing in the bin do not fall

evenly one on top of another. Even if they stick out to the sides only by a few millimeters, they can't run through the machine again to print the other side. The edges need to be even and look like they have been cut with a knife. Anyone who has typed several copies at once knows how difficult it is to straighten out just a few sheets of paper, and we have 500 at one time.

Since a ream is almost never a perfect cube, the pages in it are by no means the same size. Therefore during straightening you can't change their sequence, not to mention putting together pages from two different reams. Every such mistake causes an uneven edge of the ream and results in misprints-pages start running through the machine two or three at a time, and of course only one of them is printed. It is also important not to turn the pages upside down /to "jack" them/ which can

easily happen because of the monotony of the work-then the even pages will print the wrong way.

I continue to straighten; Zenek is already running the third stencil. The pile of reams printed on one side grows steadily. They are evenly gathered in columns of 12 reams each. These columns are very unstable, ready to fall at any moment. Alas, we can't print the other side because the ink needs to dry enough not to smear. I check the first printed pages with my finger; they are still wet. That means something is not right with the ink. We stop the machine and I add some varnish, of course by feel, like any self-respecting cook. A few more reams and it will be fine.

I leave for the outhouse. The stars are shining and a nightingale sings somewhere in the lilacs. The dogs come to me wagging their tails. This is the regular world. I return

very slowly, throw some sticks to the dogs and stare at the sky. But I have to get back. In the door I am hit by the smells: oil, varnish, petrol, and the turpentine that Zenek uses for washing stencils-a truly poisonous concoction. Despite our shaking the reams, after two thousand copies a stencil gets covered by a thick layer of dust. We have learned the impact of that mix on the human organism very well, most painfully when we printed at the house of a certain professional moral philosopher; that lofty scholar made us sleep in the same basement room where we printed.

It is nearly 11pm, and our radio changes its purpose. We're through with music; now there will be an hour of political indoctrination. I take the headphones from Zenek and start turning the radio to Radio Free Europe.<sup>12/</sup> For me this is the main purpose of dragging the radio with us. It is a Soviet-made transistor Spidola that always can be tuned to the RFE. There's nothing unusual in today's news: Afghanistan, oil, EEC, Carter, and Khomeini. Then Józef Ptaczek talks about growing repressions against dissident activists in Poland.<sup>13/</sup>

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<sup>12/</sup> Radio Free Europe /RFE/ was a broadcaster funded by the US Congress that provided news, information and political commentary to countries behind the Iron Curtain. The Polish Section, based in Munich, Germany existed from 1952 to 1994; it was the most widely listened to /and most jammed/ foreign radio in communist Poland.

<sup>13/</sup> Józef Ptaczek /1930-2001/ was an RFE Polish desk editor, speaker and political commentator. According to the RFE Polish Section's long-time director Jan Nowak-Jeziorański, he was a mole implanted by the communist counterintelligence.

Sunday.

Midnight. We have finished the fourth stencil /out of 79/ and now we will print the back side. We take a short break. I make tea for myself, and Zenek drinks a jar of light cream. We add more ink and keep going.

This time I don't straighten the paper; I have a different job. I wrap up the printed reams, unpack fresh paper, and sort and shake it. The machine runs smoothly. At night the voltage jumps to the almost nominal 220 V /in the afternoon it drops as low as 170 V, and the drum rotates much more slowly/.

Zenek again listens to his music and I have little to do. The first crisis is inevitably approaching. There is nothing one can do to prevent it. With growing experience in printing, the role of the conscious mind decreases, and our actions become automatic, devoid of any unnecessary elements. The machine is placed so that we can reach the paper

without moving from the chair, the sponge is wet enough to dampen the adhesive paper and not to wipe off the glue. While feeding the paper, Zenek moves just one finger. In a word, if we were printing something indifferant to us, we would go crazy after one day of work. This is why we print the BI, the periodical we consider to be the most important in Poland /but my opinion is hardly objective since I publish my own texts in it/.

It's already 3am and we both start to drift off, but Zenek tries not to admit it. He used to be much more resistant to fatigue—he could go up to 40 hours without sleep. Today it is much harder. Perhaps the "sturm und drang" period is over, or perhaps his age is getting to him, or perhaps he feels all these late-night printing sessions in his bones, and the days spent in police stations /only last March he was locked up for 10 days, and in April

for six days; he was beaten up so badly that he wasn't able to print the previous issue of the BI/-most likely all of the above. In this situation the only option is for me is to make "kogel-mogel".with hot cocoa-one cup provides the calories equal to half of the daily ration of an average office clerk.<sup>14/</sup> We will last on this for another two to three hours.

We wake up a little and start talking. The eternal never-ending topic returns: the authorities' policy towards dissidents, and our opponents' objectives. The first and most immediate thing we talk of: why were they following us yesterday? They apparently did not want to lock us up; otherwise they would have done so. They should have known by now we would not lead them to the printing shop. And then the question we ask over and over: how much

are we worth to them? What award would an agent who finds a printing shop get? But this is purely an abstract question. There is a more practical issue: if the group that followed us was covering that apartment at which we dropped in by chance, then they would have had to report to their dispatcher that they left their post to follow us. Subsequently, a few minutes later the driver of the car would have had to report that he lost us. They probably were not commended for that.

"Don't worry about him," Zeknek interrupts, "he probably lied to them to make himself look like it wasn't his fault."

"You're probably right. That would explain their inability to learn: a result of working with false assumptions." I do have an unhealthy inclination to find a rational explanation for absurdities.

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<sup>14/</sup> Kogel-mogel is an egg-based homemade dessert made from egg yolks, sugar, and flavorings such as cocoa.



"Janek, watch the ink," Zenek brings me back to reality.

During this debate the text on the bottom corner of about 20 pages becomes dangerously faint, and now it reaches the edge of legibility. We add ink. I feel guilty, so I put on gloves and mix a full pot of ink. It is 5:30am, and Zenek is finishing printing the eighth ream-10 percent of the entire job.

Again we are printing the first side. The packing is done, and again I straighten the disheveled reams. The cocoa is still working and so I return to the topic of the police. What is their purpose in pursuing Mirek Chojecki's trial? According to the old principle "qui podest," it is Mirek who should be interested in it rather than the police, since instead of hampering the work of

NOW-a, it's great advertising. Indeed, right now at the beginning of this very issue of the BI, we are printing a large section on the hunger strike.<sup>15/</sup> The writing is very calm and not self-congratulatory; as a result it does not capture the euphoric mood that characterizes the strikers, their friends and the thousands of visitors coming to the church. We are not alone; thousands of people will fight for each of us if necessary. With such an injection of hope, life is easier. Well, it makes it easier, and not. Thinking of the hunger strike does not speed up the drum, the pages do not jump onto the machine by themselves, and the reams still need straightening. But we do remember that after Mass people literally run to grab "bibuła," and there

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<sup>15/</sup> A week-long hunger strike in defense of Mirosław Chojecki and other political prisoners was held in the St. Christopher Church in Podkowa Leśna near Warsaw. 28 persons from different dissident circles took part in it.

are never nearly enough copies.<sup>16/</sup> Finally we come to the end of the 10th ream. It is morning-8am. For some time already the uncle has been busy in the yard feeding chickens and fixing something. We begin preparing our breakfast, but it does not go too well. Everything around us seems disgusting, starting with our own hands that we laboriously clean the ink off using "Puch," a liquid detergent for delicate woollens. We do not eat much, but after some tea we are seized by a wave of warmth and heaviness. The only solution is to go back to work right away.

Zenek leaves for the outhouse, and for a moment I practice feeding the paper. It does not go too well because I am unable to catch up with the machine's rhythm. Since we are always in a hurry, Zenek never lets me

learn how. I put on a rubber finger cut off from a glove, take a new ream, and begin. Ta-tata-ta-ta-tata-ta. My rhythm is uneven and for most of the time I run a page every other revolution. The ream spreads, and I notice two or three pages run at once. In a word, it is a disaster. I am at the end of a ream when Zenek returns. I hand him the rubber finger and turn to straightening my output. The ream I produced is not only more uneven than those made by Zenek, in addition I am forced to remove the pages that entered the machine at the wrong time so their text is cut off at the bottom. There are about 50 of these pages. Zenek resets the counter back by 60 and sleepily keeps feeding. One more stencil and we will switch to printing on the other side. We doze off more and more. Finally I tell the boss that I am going to sleep. That is the

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<sup>16/</sup> Bibuła, literally "blotting paper," also a common term for underground publications.

only solution, since Zenek won't leave the machine unless he is forced. We put on the twelfth stencil. It goes somewhat easier, like a horse sensing the stable nearby. Then I pour in another bottle of oil so that the ink won't dry, and we wash as much as we can and go to sleep.

It is almost noon, the sun blasts but nothing can stop us from falling asleep. For a moment under my closed eyelids I see running pages, then nothing.

"Herr Doktor, aufstehen!"<sup>17/</sup>  
I open my eyes-what the hell? It is the uncle calling from his typewriter. Zenek is already busying himself in the kitchen; he must have told the uncle about me. I have a hard time getting up but I drag

myself up, and for encouragement I start singing the song from ITR, appropriated by us:

"Przez cały kraj  
idziemy dwaj  
Czy słońce czy upał  
czy śłota,"

Zenek joins in:

"Potrzebna jest  
czy chce ktoś czy nie  
W pionie usług  
fachowa robota..."<sup>18/</sup>

Zenek skillfully navigates among the dirty dishes making scrambled eggs printers' style again. I start washing the dishes. We have supper. My head is heavy, and I go out for a cigarette. Now it feels a little better. I top it off with a coffee. Zenek does not drink coffee; it is bad for him. To make up for it, I will drink double por-

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<sup>17/</sup> Doctor, get up!

<sup>18/</sup> ITR was a popular satirical radio show; one of its segments featured two "fachowcy," self-appointed "skilled specialists" fixing all kinds of botched products of the socialist economy. The text roughly translates: "We two go through Poland / rain or shine / Because want it or not / our skilled handicraft is essential."

tions. Our abused physiologies slowly return to normalcy—we are ready for work.

Zenek prints the second sides. The paper supply is low, so I swing between the printing shop and the "svi-ron." I take back printed paper and bring in fresh reams. The dogs jump at me; they want to play. Zenek is printing without a break. It's the 15th ream. I unpack several new reams and wrap up the ready ones. The radio broadcasts "Fakty, wy-darzenia, opinie."<sup>19/</sup>

#### Monday

Coffee, cocoa, tea, light cream, the 22nd stencil, tea, light cream, the 26th, dinner and the 30th. We go to sleep even before the uncle's chickens.

#### Tuesday

We sleep for 12 hours. The uncle brings fresh bread for breakfast. The place is

hot and it stinks. We have 49 stencils left to run, and it is two days since the beginning of the process. There is no way we can finish it before two more days at least. Should we interrupt our work or not? I straighten, pack, and carry reams back and forth. Suddenly a strange elegant man stands in the door and smiles at me. Hold on, this is the uncle in a suit and tie. He is going to Warsaw to a meeting of the Philosophical Society of which he is a member. We talk for a moment, and the uncle praises Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Suddenly the tapping of the machine behind the wall stops and we hear Zenek cursing. I interrupt the uncle's lecture and run to the printing shop. If Zenek curses, something must have happened. Smeared up to his elbows, he is trying to fix a broken stencil.

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<sup>19/</sup> "Facts, Events and Opinions" was a political commentary segment broadcasted by Radio Free Europe, anchored by Józef Ptaczek; see note 13.

"What's going on?" I ask.  
"I cut off another finger" - a frustrated Zenek begins to explain.

"A kab to na rojsty? Tak ja mówię, drenemu do roboty nie brać się"<sup>20/</sup> - yells the frightened member of the Philosophical Society, who just moments ago talked to me in the most refined Polish.

The tension breaks, and Zenek and I start laughing. "He cut off a finger from his glove," I explain to the uncle who relaxes. The thing is simple: Zenek accidentally ran a worn rubber finger through the machine together with the paper, and the stencil broke. It can't be fixed because the hole is almost in the center. Fortunately, the uncle is going to Warsaw.

I put aside a half-printed page 37, and Zenek puts a

new stencil on the machine. Now I have to give the uncle a task. He needs to call the typist, introduce himself as Mr. Kwiatkowski and ask if she still wants to buy the velvet fabric she ordered a while ago. When she asks how much he has, the uncle is to answer "37 meters." I write the phone number on a piece of paper and repeat the story; the Uncle repeats it after me. Tomorrow we should have a new stencil delivered. He leaves. Soon it will be dark. For a change we listen to the news from Radio Warsaw. They are talking about Spychalski's death.<sup>21/</sup> "Maybe we should send that wreath of yours," suggests Zenek.

At first I don't understand what he's talking about, but then I remember one of my old ideas born in the

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<sup>20/</sup> The uncle uses dialect expressions from the Vilnius region. The approximate translation: "Where's your brain? Didn't I tell you not to work when you're tired?"

<sup>21/</sup> Marian Spychalski /1906-1980/ was a prominent communist activist with the rank of marshal. Between 1957-1968 he was the minister of defense.

printing shop. When a police general, a high ranking official in the Ministry of the Interior, died during one of our printing stints, I thought about going to the funeral with a beautiful wreath with a ribbon saying "To the most valuable collaborator, from the Committee for Social Self-defense /KOR/."22/ Inventing all the possible scenarios for the subsequent investigation of the general's underlings enabled us to while away the boredom of several hours of printing.

This idea does not apply particularly to the retired Marshal, but Zenek has stirred my imagination.

"Do you know anyone who speaks Italian?" My question surprises him.

"Why do you need that?"

Perhaps someone from the Church does," he responds.

"The Church won't do. It should be a friend. My idea is quite simple. Call General Krzysztoporski the night before the trial and say, 'Buona sera' /alas I speak no Italian beyond this/, is this the head of the Secret Police? This is the Red Brigades-we are coming to Warsaw for the trial. You surely know that we do not care for judges who jail innocent people. Good night."23/

Now we have fun until midnight. We concoct scenarios

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22/ The Committee for Defense of the Workers /Komitet Obrony Robotników, abbreviated KOR/ was formed in 1976 by eminent intellectuals. Its original mission was to provide legal, medical and financial aid to workers persecuted by the authorities after the June 1976 strikes; its scope soon expanded to include independent press and publishing, and education, among other activities. The following year, KOR was renamed the Committee for Social Self-defence /KSS-KOR/.

23/ Adam Krzysztoporski, b. 1932, was a police general and head of the Secret Service from 1973-1980.

with the Secret Police in a panic: searching for Italian tourists in hotels, the court building surrounded by the army, Judge Aleksandrow taking tranquilizers by the glass, etc.<sup>24/</sup> Zenek does not listen to his radio anymore, and in no time we reach the 44th stencil. It is 11pm-time for the news. Chojecki is everywhere: an interview in "The Times;" a long article in "Le Soir;" American printers and British lawyers are protesting; in a statement KOR declares that it will use all available means; a representative from Amnesty International is on his way to the trial; and the WWII veterans' union speaks

warmly about printers. A great day is coming, and we are stuck in a printing shop!

Wednesday.

Shortly after midnight the uncle returns, and immediately starts a discussion about Brzozowski.<sup>25/</sup> I interrupt him abruptly to ask about the stencil. The uncle shrugs: "You must have confused something. I called and asked for Mrs. Kwiatkowska, and she answered, saying that I had a wrong number. I double-checked the number, called again and asked her for the number. You have the correct number, she said, but there is no Mrs. Kwiatkowska here. So I tell

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The Red Brigades /Italian: Brigade Rosse, often abbreviated BR/ was a Marxist-Leninist terrorist organization, based in Italy, which was responsible for numerous violent attacks, assassinations, and robberies during the 1970s and early 1980s.

<sup>24/</sup> Piotr Aleksandrow, judge of the Warsaw District Court, was known for his servility to the authorities and for harsh sentences against dissidents.

<sup>25/</sup> Stanisław Brzozowski /1878-1911/ was a Polish philosopher.

her I was to call and ask if she has 37 meters of velvet fabric. She got interested then and started asking about the velvet, so I hung up."

Both Zenek and I try to keep our faces straight; we thank the uncle and assure him that everything will be fine, even if we are not entirely sure that Ela had understood him. Still, on a fresh dose of cocoa, we reach the 50th stencil and go to sleep at 5am.

At noon we are awakened by Jurek who brings the stencil. He also brings two stencils for a page of Puls, because it turns out that when they were collating it, they found that we had printed a hundred copies less of that page, so now we need to print it again.<sup>26/</sup> The reason that Jurek was sent to us is that he had never been in

a printing shop and wants to learn the skill. He is wearing white jeans, and of course does not have any work clothes with him. He claims he will be careful and won't stain his pants, but Zenek and I know that's impossible. Fortunately we manage to borrow some more suitable clothing from the uncle. An apprentice is nothing new to us; we have had several of them before, but very few last. One of the most talented of them was a guy named Tadeusz; he was an unpublished writer who learned everything very quickly and then established his own crew.

The uncle shows up with a color picture of the Marshal.<sup>27/</sup>

"With just two of you, anarchy was fine, but with three, the Commandant must be present," he explains and

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<sup>26/</sup> Puls was a literary journal published underground between 1977-1981.

<sup>27/</sup> Marshal Józef Piłsudski /1867-1935/ was a Polish politician, military leader, and Chief of State.



hangs the picture on the wall. "Now you're truly named after J. P.," he adds looking pleased at his work.<sup>28/</sup>

We slowly introduce Jurek to the job. Initially things go rather halingly, but we have another participant in our conversation. We don't know him, so telling about ourselves takes some time.

We finish with the 37th stencil that had been put aside, and now we are working on the 52nd. Jurek asks if we are aware how the paper with which we are working has reached this place. It's a fascinating story. During a search of an apartment the police had found a piece of paper with three addresses. Nothing was on that paper to

indicate what these addresses were for. In fact, they were the places where paper was stored. In this situation in order to save the paper it was important to act quickly before the police bureaucracy processed the information and made a decision. "And indeed, we were able to rescue the paper from one of the apartments without a problem," Jurek tells us. "The second lot was at Agnieszka's who lives in a building next to one of the KOR members. When we went there, secret agents were on the street. We hoped they were watching her neighbor's apartment, and not Agnieszka's, who by the way, was out of Warsaw. Quietly and with our lights out, we took the paper and loaded it into our car. Unfortunately two cars

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<sup>28/</sup> The full name of the printing enterprise, acknowledged in its publications, was "Wolna Wałkowo-Bębnowa Drukarnia Polowa im. J.P."-the Free Roller-and-Drum Field Printing Factory named after J. P., i.e. Józef Piłsudski. In the early 1900s, Piłsudski was the editor and publisher of the clandestine socialist periodical *Bibuła*, i.e. "blotting paper"; that title later became a term for all underground literature.

started following us. After a short time on the Wiskostrada, a fourth car joined the caravan.<sup>29/</sup> Clearly the police did not want to stop us, but as always they were hoping that we would lead them somewhere. They pretended they weren't following us at all, acting as if a car was following another just by chance. This was the general idea, at least," Jurek continues excitedly. "At a certain moment the fourth car passed the two police cars and drove right behind the car with the paper. The police did nothing; apparently they thought this was better for them since they still could see us but someone else was directly behind us. Abruptly we turned into a narrow street with cars parked on both sides. And at the narrowest place, the car following us broke down. It stopped and we saw the

driver getting out to open his hood. The agents ran from behind him. We pressed pedal to the metal, took one turn and another turn, and we were gone." "The third lot of the paper unfortunately was lost to us. The police told the owner of the apartment that if he gave it to them they wouldn't search his place. They emptied the basement and drove off," Jurek concludes the story. It is already night. We talk we have 20 reams to go. Tomorrow at 9am Mirek's trial begins. We can make it to the second day of the trial. Jurek already can straighten reams, and is quite good at packing. Now the second sides are to be printed, so I am able to catch a few hours of sleep.

Thursday

Jurek wakes me up shortly after midnight. After a glass of tea and a piece of

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<sup>29/</sup> Wiskostrada, a principal artery in Warsaw along the Vistula River.

sausage, I feel almost rested. I try to persuade Zenek to rest for a while so that we can finish without any breaks. I examine the 15 remaining stencils. It seems that the last two are typed shorter than a full page, so we won't need to cut off the lower parts. I managed to convince Zenek. He grumbles as usual, but goes to sleep.

I work along with Jurek. The mess in the shop grows. I feed paper much more slowly than Zenek, but Jurek as a beginner cannot keep up with the straightening anyway. Around 6am I am half way through my third stencil, and Zenek wakes up. He is furious at me because I promised to wake him up at 3am. We send Jurek to take a rest. He claims he is fine, but he is clearly very tired. We have breakfast-the last one we will have in this shop. We cannot stand eggs anymore, so we munch on bread and cheese. I eat a can of sprats, and Zenek

fixes himself cornflakes and milk. We top it off with the remaining cucumbers and return to work. Now every new stencil is a tangible step towards returning to the world. At noon there are seven stencils left. Jurek wakes up, and we move to gradually straightening up the place. I mix some more ink. We wash and pack up the mixer, sieve and one of the pots. Then we pour all the remaining ink into the drum. Zenek keeps feeding the whole time and I straighten the last reams. This is it now only the back sides are printing. It's time to pack up. We still need to organize all the packages in the "sviron" because each full set of 500 copies of the BI will be collated in a different place so the reams should not get mixed up. It's nearly 8 in the evening. Zenek is finishing the last stencil. I collect the misprints from the floor into a paper bag and make

a bonfire in the garden. Zenek is done with printing. Now we have to clean the machine. We pour the in the remaining ink from the drum, and pour in oil and slightly watered-down "Puch" detergent. The last phase of cleaning is the most disgusting, using turpentine. But Zenek cleans the drum very thoroughly because residues of dried ink would make the next job very hard.

At the same time I clean the parts of the machine that are covered with a thick layer of paper dust. The machine needs to be disassembled, washed in mineral spirit, lubricated, and put back together. We are rushing in order to get back to Warsaw before night. Radio Free Europe is broadcasting some vague news about the trial; all we learn is that Mirek pleaded not guilty. We finish washing the machine. Jurek collates 50 copies of the BI that we had set

aside in an hour or two, they will be out.

The machine goes back in the box and to the "sviron." The furniture returns to its place. We wash, and say goodbye to the uncle. We leave him two copies of the BI, put our stuff in bags and leave for Warsaw. With heavy bags we walk towards the train station but a taxi shows up. We have earned it--there is no need to be thrifty. We drive all the way to Warsaw, drop Jurek near his house, and make arrangements to meet tomorrow at the trial. Then we go to a known address to report we have finished the job, and last but not least, collect our pay. We arrive. It is just after 11pm, a very decent time by underground standards. In the apartment we find a crowd of people, including practically half of the BI editors. They did not expect us tonight. They congratulate us, look at the new issue, and take almost

all the copies from us. We ask about the time of the trial and the room number. We get a big surprise-the trial is over. The sentence was read an hour ago. Sewek just returned from the court.<sup>30/</sup>

We feel deflated. Again printing took us away from something. Zenek and the BI's accountant compute our wages; they are high because of the rush. Five percent is taken for the Guild of Independent Printers. Zenek deducts Jurek's part, and divides the rest in half. But this time the money gives us little satisfaction. A feeling of disappointment predominates. For Zenek, it is just because of his insatiable energy; for me it is about yet another journalistic opportunity lost. But everybody around us rejoices. Tomorrow Bogdan<sup>31</sup> is getting out, the BI is

ready-it needs to be transported from the printing shop to the collating points. With our sleepy eyes we see the scraps of paper on which Sewek writes the delivery addresses. Someone treats us to cold beer. It's midnight. It's time to go home and into the bathtub!

PS. We wish to let our readers /including those who are reading because of their professional obligations/ know that the relationship between the presented events, facts and persons, and reality is not accidental but deeply premeditated, and the author assumes full responsibility for it. He only failed to check one thing-whether there is a Zielona Street in Rembertów /where in fact he has never been/ and if anyone named Nowicki lives there.

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<sup>30/</sup> Seweryn Blumsztajn, b. 1946, dissident activist and journalist, was one of the editors of the BI.

<sup>31/</sup> Bogdan Grzesiak, see note 9.

# THE PRACTICAL PRINTER

By "enen"

From the author

Among the known printing technologies /i.e. planographic, relief, intaglio, and stencil/ only the latter method has been used successfully in improvised conditions. Attempts at printing from type, cast fonts, or offset have usually ended in failure. Therefore I discourage readers new to underground printing from trying any ground-breaking innovations. A well-executed print made by a simple, tried and true method will give more satisfaction. However, remember that the simpler the printing method, the more precision it requires.

In order to avoid repetition, this manual is written so that each topic is covered in separate chapters, as the topics can be combined in different ways: building a duplicator; preparing stencils; and matching ink and paper. Therefore before starting to print, the entire manual should be read carefully. What method you chose depends on the purpose: a pocket duplicator can be used for printing small runs of leaflets or posters /ca. 200-300 copies/; a copyframe produces runs of 500-1,000 copies, and in its developed form /see fig. 4/ up to 5,000 copies; screen printing is the most versatile and produces runs of over 10,000 of drawings, posters, and zines with photographically-reduced type. You also need to take into account the availability of materials in selecting the best method. If you have wax stencils, you should chose a copying frame; if you have film /and a skilled photographer/ you should select screen printing.

Good luck!

enen

## THE POCKET DUPLICATOR

A 25 x 35 cm piece of heavy flannel /baja flannel/ or lighter flannel folded double, is sewn along the shorter edge together with a piece of chiffon /nylon or some other sheer material taken from scarves or blouses/. Make sure that the longer length of the chiffon runs along its less stretchy edge. This prepared "padding" is then affixed at the seam to a piece of 32 x 45 cm thick foil /polyethylene, vinyl, polyester, oilcloth, or old x-ray film/ with a strong adhesive tape. The stencil is then attached to the same edge with tape so that the printed surface faces the flannel and the text displays as a mirror image. The whole thing is attached with tape or pushpins to a flat surface, such as a kitchen table or a sheet of glass.

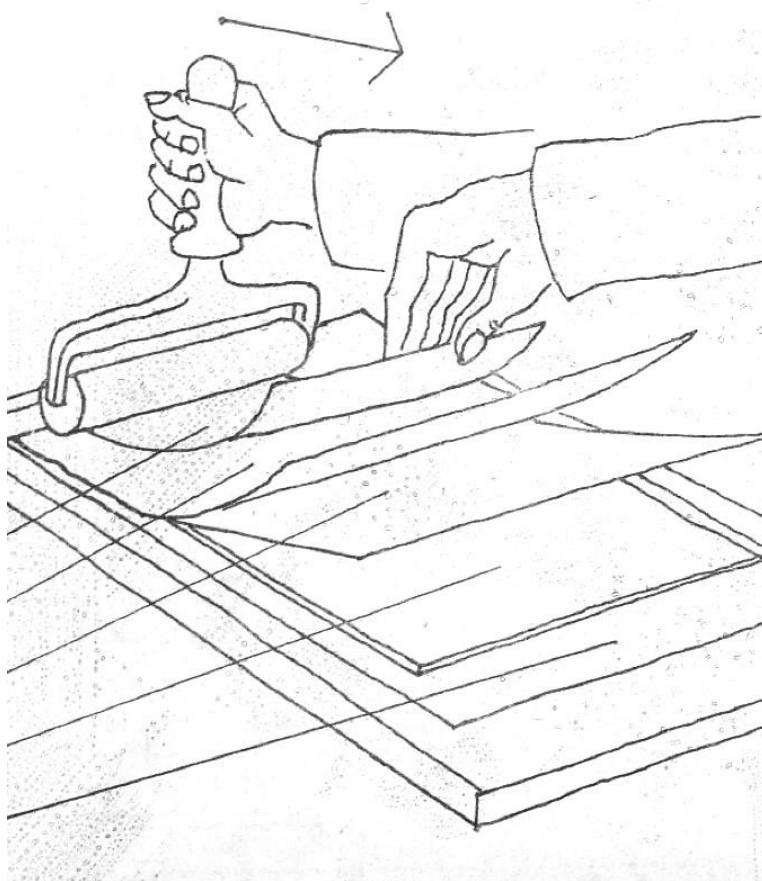


Fig. 1

Lift up the stencil and chiffon, and apply a thin, even layer of ink onto the flannel with a spatula or ruler. If

this is the first application, some of the ink will immediately soak into the flannel. After the ink is applied, replace the chiffon, being careful not to create air bubbles, and then replace the stencil.

Then place a sheet of paper on top of the stencil and roll the roller over it. A heavy metal roller 4-5 cm thick and 20-21 cm wide, with rounded edges, works best. A photographic /rubber/ roller can also be used, although you need to compensate for its lighter weight by applying more pressure.

After making a few trial copies, mark the place on the stencil where the upper corner of the paper should be placed. The best results are achieved when two people work together-one person placing the paper starting from the top corner, and the second person rolling the roller and removing the page. At the same time the first person reaches for a new page. Part of a rubber glove, or a rubber band wrapped around the finger helps to grab the paper more easily.

As the ink is used, the print will fade. You can gradually increase the pressure of the roller, but at some point even this won't help. Unfortunately this will happen after printing several dozen copies. Then you must stop your work, lift the stencil and chiffon and apply a new layer of ink /first removing the ink that has squeezed out from the edges of the flannel/. Then carefully replace the chiffon and stencil, etc.

### THE COPYFRAME

The simplest model of a copyframe /fig. 2 and 3/ has for its base a 48 x 20 x 1-2 cm piece of plywood or particle board. The frame itself is built from four slats /minimum 2 cm thick x 3 cm wide/ so that the outer length is 46 cm, and the inside opening is 22



cm. A painter's canvas frame of similar size can be used. Cover the frame with chiffon or sieving cloth, making sure to keep the less stretchy edge of the cloth on the longer side of the frame.

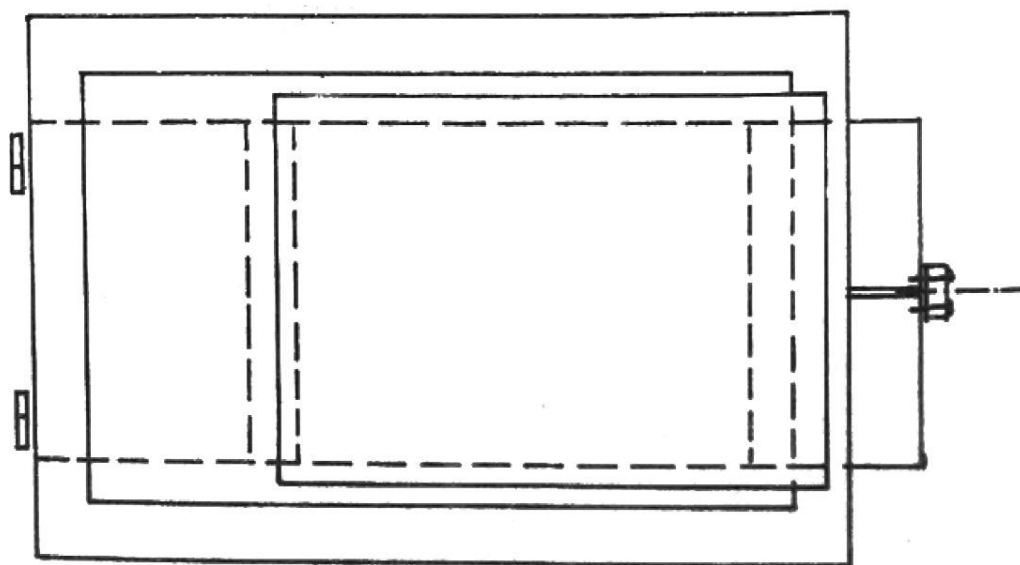
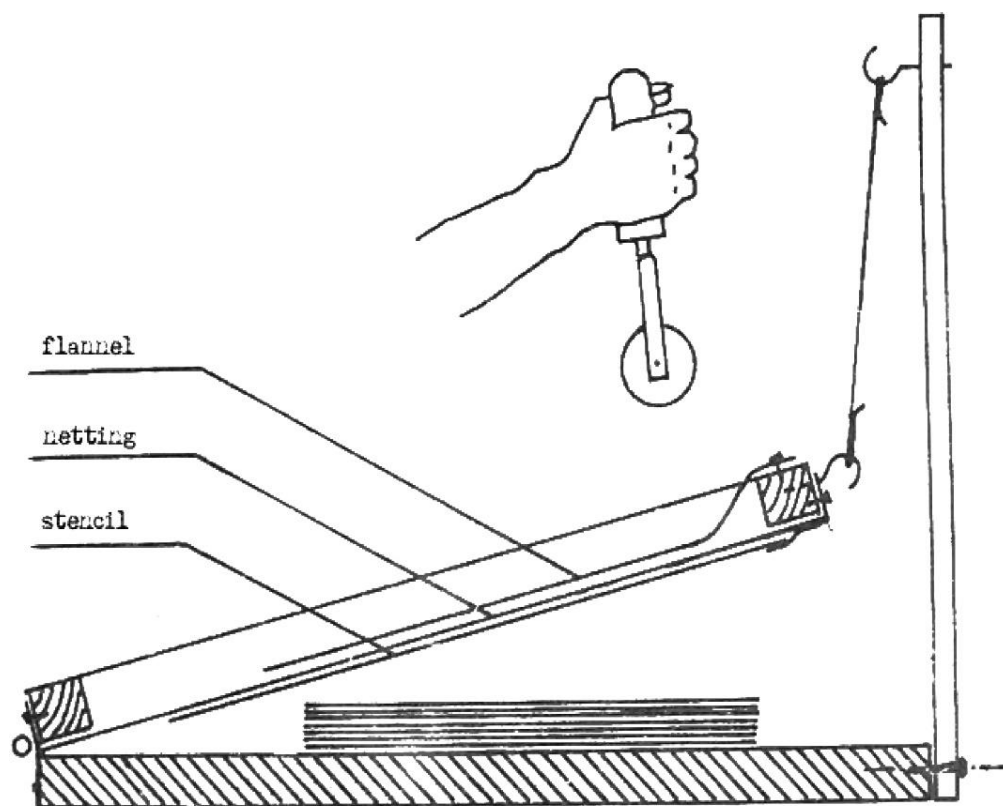


Fig. 2

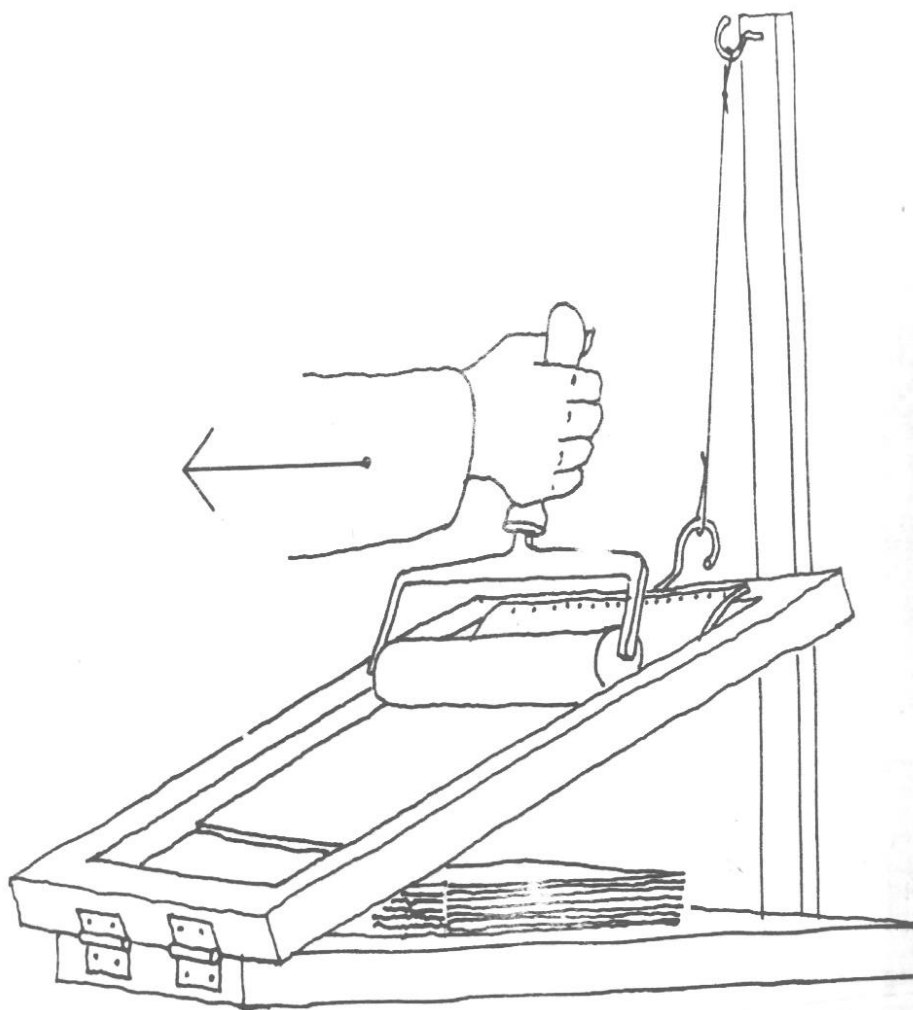


Fig. 3

This 50 x 40 cm piece of chiffon is first soaked in water and then nailed to the outer edges of the frame with pushpins or staples /you can do this by tapping an open stapler with the palm of your hand/. Begin in the middle of the longer side and proceed in both directions. Next, stretching the chiffon, similarly attach the other long side, and then two shorter sides. While covering the frame make sure that chiffon does not get dry. After the chiffon is in place and has dried, impregnate the outer surfaces attached to the frame with Butapren airplane glue or other rubber-based adhesive, and cover the other parts of the chiffon with varnish. The surface of the chiffon outside the printing area should be coated with a chlorinated rubber or acrylic paint-this is not essential but

helps the process later. Then attach the prepared frame to the base on its shorter side with hinges /that can be opened/. At the opposite side in the middle, nail or screw in a small hook, and in the middle of the shorter side of the base, attach a 40 cm-long ruler drilled with several small holes. The ruler should be connected to the base in such a way that it can be easily unscrewed. Through one of the holes, drag a 25 cm long piece of doubled underwear elastic, and knot it /or loop it on a hook placed in the hole/. Tie the other end of the elastic to the hook in the frame. The length between the elastic and the hole is determined so that you feel resistance when the frame is pressed against the base, and there is no vibration when the frame is released.

Now spread some ink over the netting with the roller, and attach the top edge of the stencil to the bottom of the frame with adhesive, and carefully lay the rest of the stencil on the netting /the ink will serve as glue/. If the ink does not hold the stencil strongly enough because it's too runny, attach it with adhesive tape along the two longer edges. Never glue the fourth side. Make sure that the text on the stencil is as close as possible to the upper edges of the frame.

Place a stack of about 100 sheets of paper on the base of the frame. The actual printing process depends on the kind of ink you have at hand. If the ink is thick and sticks easily to the roller, spread it in small batches over a 25 x 25 cm sheet of metal dulled with sandpaper; roll the roller on it, and then roll the ink-covered roller over the netting, pressing the frame to the paper with the roller. If your ink is runny or does not stick to the roller well, attach flannel inside the frame /attached with thumbtacks to the top edges of the frame/. Soak the flannel with ink and run the roller on it.

Two people should work together. One rolls and the other removes the paper. If the paper is to be printed on both sides, then the person removing paper needs to stack the sheets evenly. Beforehand you need to make sure that the ink does not bleed through to the other side. If it does, you must thin the ink. If this does not work, you will need to change the paper to one that is more absorbent. Start printing the second side only after making sure that, under pressure, the text does not leave an impression on the previous sheet. Sometimes paper will cling to the stencil. This may have two causes: static electricity where you hear a crackling sound from the paper and your arm hair may stand up; or the ink may be too thick. In the case of static electricity, add one spoonful of liquid "K" fabric softener from a standard "twist-off" container. In the latter case, increase the tension of the elastic, and if this does not work, dilute the ink.

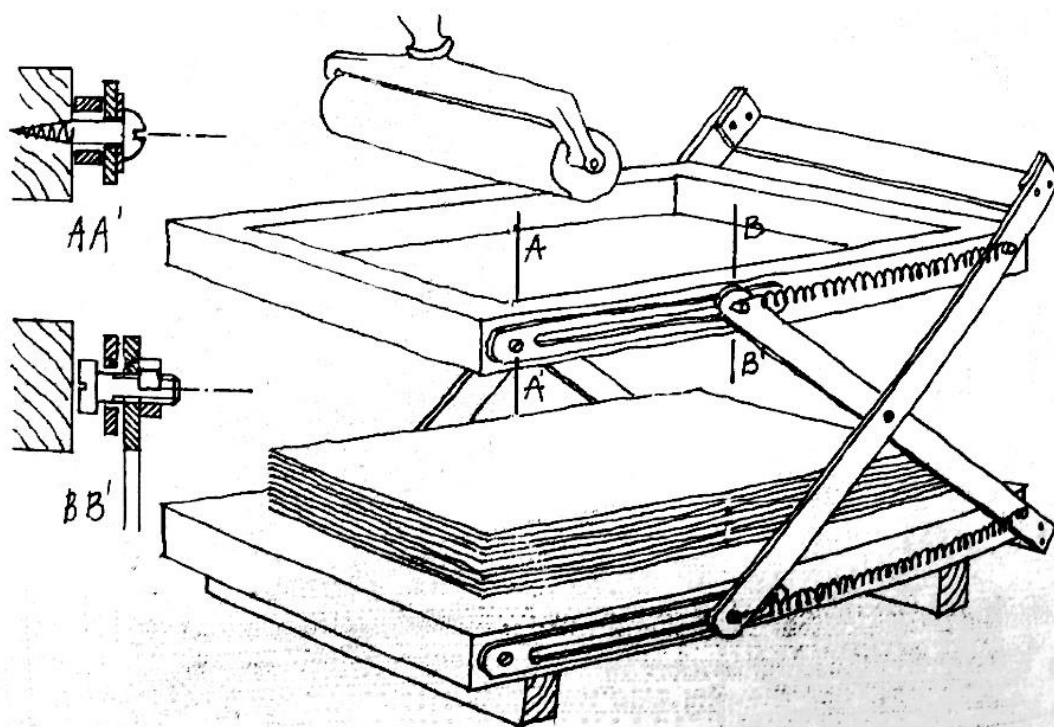


Fig. 4

The frame in fig. 4 does not have these drawbacks; it is

built by a more advanced handyman. The inner dimensions of the frame are 22 x 34 cm, and the dimensions of the base are equal to the outer dimensions of the frame. The contraption that lifts the frame is made from steel flats, 2-3 mm thick, 15-20 mm wide, and about 30 cm long. The holes are drilled only after marking how far the flats are to stick out beyond the frame in order to rivet the cross supports. One of the supports needs to be twice as long as the width of the flats so that the mechanism won't jam. The rivet joining the cross-joined flats should make it possible for them to rotate. Slides are attached to the frame with washers /fig. 4, detail AA/. The free ends of flats with attached screws will move in the slides /detail BB/. The reciprocal movement of the frame is secured with two or four springs; their number and length are determined by trial and error. Don't use too much pressure when pressing the frame against the paper; the purpose of the springs is only to make possible a jam-free return when the roller is lifted. Working with this type of frame is no different than with the one described earlier.

## SILKSCREEN PRINTING

A silkscreen printing device is the same as a copyframe; however the difference is that the fabric has more exacting specifications. This is because in this technology the netting also serves as the stencil. First the holes in the netting are sealed with a water soluble light-sensitive emulsion that is exposed to light through a diapositive film touching it /a non-transparent text on a transparent background/. The emulsion hardens in the places exposed to light. After rinsing off the non-exposed part you have a netting that the ink only penetrates the places where there was text on the film. The best fabric

for netting is one with a density of 120-140 threads per cm, made of nylon or polyester /Eng., silkscreen; Ger., Siedbrückgewebe/. Fabric with the density of 80-100 threads per cm can be purchased in GDR or Hungary. As a last resort "kryształek" "cristal" chiffon or sieving gauze can be used, but in order to seal the threads the material needs to be coated with a 2% solution of formic acid and allowed to dry. In silkscreen technology, rollers are not used; instead, you use a squeegee /fig. 5/

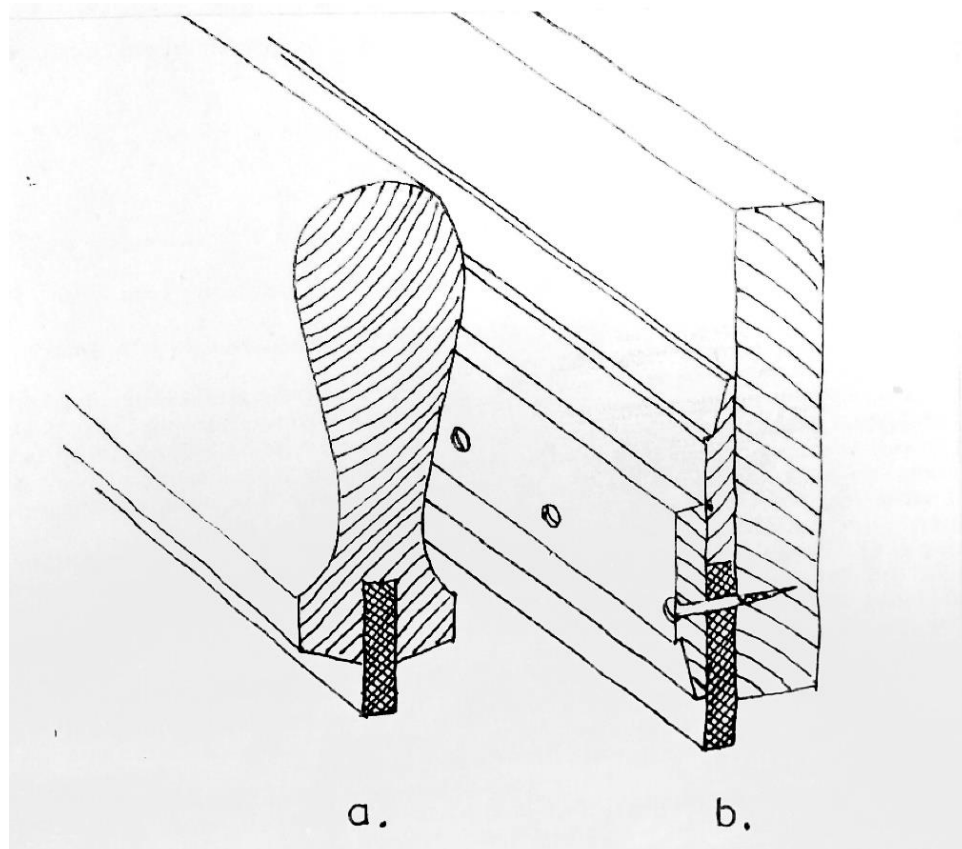


Fig. 5

A squeegee /fig. 5a/ can be purchased in GDR or Hungary. Otherwise you can make your own /fig. 5b/. The most important part of a squeegee is the strip of hard rubber /so-called cobbler's rubber/ that is 4-6 mm thick and 20 mm wide at minimum. You can use an anti-static strap from a car for this. A piece of wood is glued to a 21 x 10 x 1 cm piece of plywood, so that the strip of rubber sticks out about 7 mm, and then another piece of wood to keep the rubber place. The whole thing is joined together with

screws, just to be on the safe side. When the glue is dry, you sand the rubber sidewise with 80-100 grit sandpaper glued to an even surface /a sheet of glass/ until it leaves a continuous trace on the glass. Round the sharp corners of the rubber. Next, cover the netting with the photosensitive emulsion that has been prepared the previous day.

The ingredients:

- 12 grams polyvinyl alcohol
- 100 ml water
- 0.8 g ammonium dichromate

Pour the water in the polyvinyl alcohol and leave it for a few hours to expand. Dissolve this in a water bath /immerse a jar in a pot of boiling water/ until all the air bubbles have disappeared. After it has cooled down, remove the skin. Dissolve the ammonium dichromate in a very small amount of hot water, and pour it into the alcohol solution stirring vigorously. Protect this emulsion from light, heat, or cold /the optimal temperature is 5°C/. It can be stored in this environment for several months. The emulsion can also be made from gelatin or carpenter's glue. Here are the recipes.

- 9 g gelatin
- 80 ml water
- 2 g ammonium dichromate
- a few drops ammonia
- 1 ml glycerin

Proceed as with the polyvinyl alcohol except that you add ammonia and glycerin to the cooled solution.

- 100 g carpenter's glue /measure after soaking for 24 hours and removing excess water/
- 2 g ammonium dichromate
- a few drops ammonia

- 5 ml denatured alcohol

Both emulsions are applied warm /40°C/. Unfortunately neither emulsion is stable, and you should be aware that they will change their properties.

The best results are achieved by using western dual-cure emulsions like Ulano, Deca-diazo, or Azokol.

Covering the silkscreen with the emulsion is done in a darkened room; neither sunlight nor artificial light should directly hit the screen.

The frame is placed almost vertical /fig. 6/.

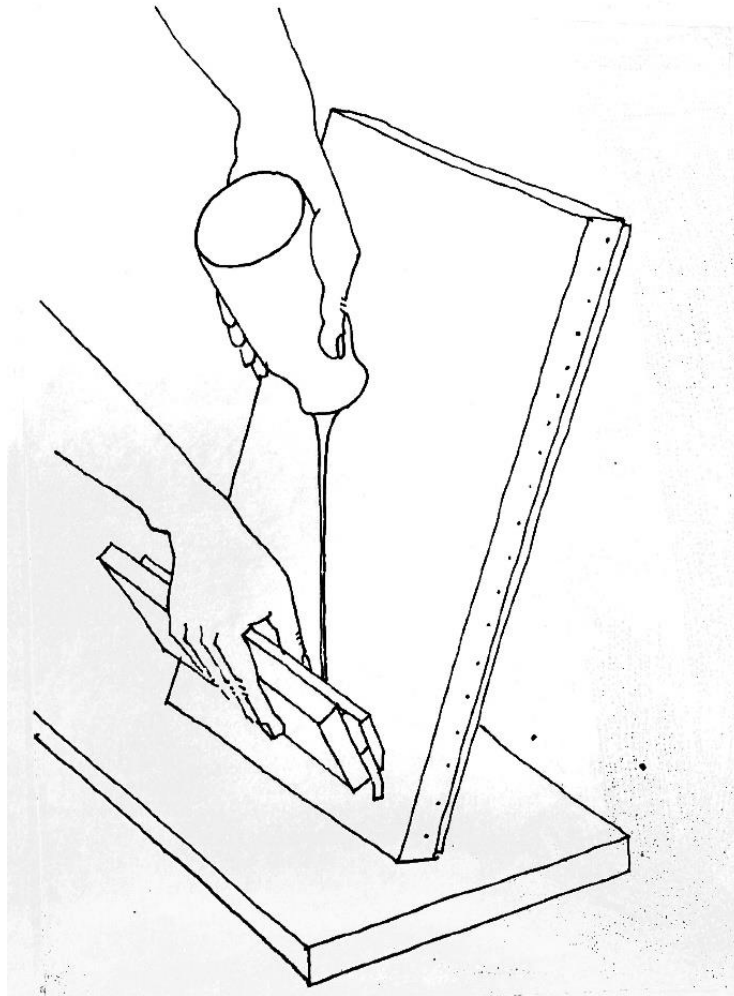


Fig. 6

The squeegee /cleaned of ink/ is pressed against the fabric at an 80°angle /approximately/. Pour the emulsion over the whole width of the squeegee, and with a steady movement drag the squeegee from bottom to top. Turn the frame upside down, and repeat the action at the same time



removing any excess emulsion, or adding more if there is not enough. Dry the frame with a blow dryer, but go no closer to the fabric than 20 cm. The dried silk screen should be exposed immediately-if you need to store it, it must be placed in a dark room for no longer than 24 hours.

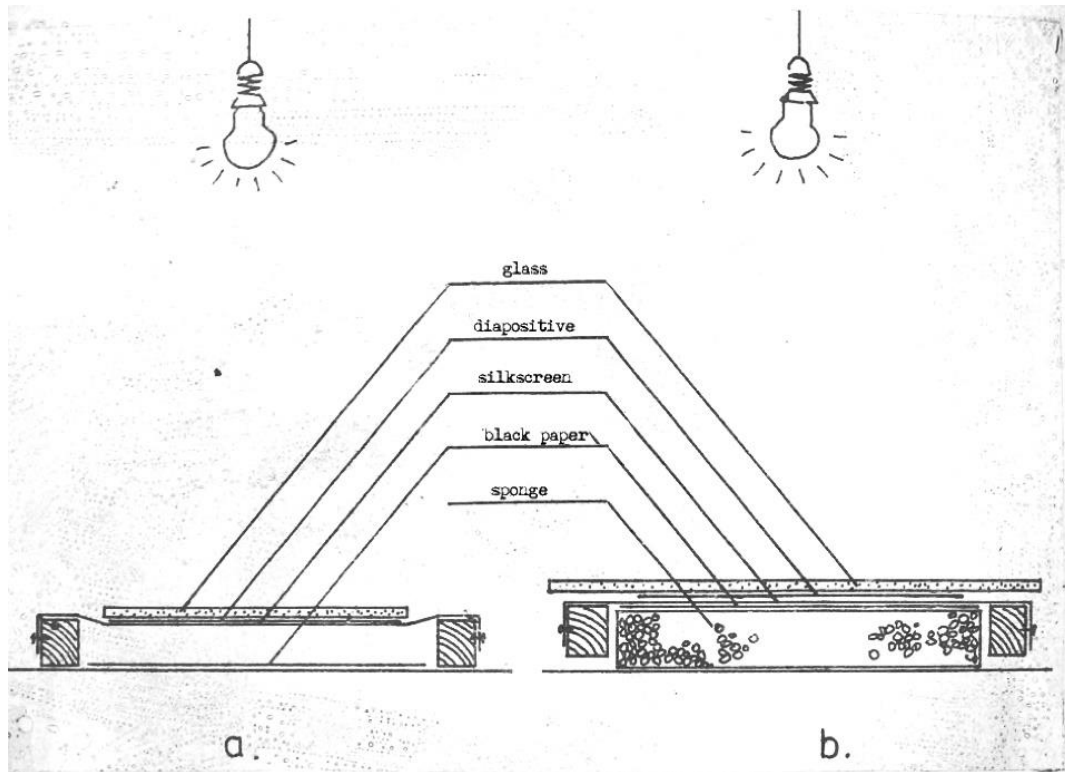


Fig. 7

Fig. 7 shows two possible methods for exposing the silk-screen depending on the kind of glass you have. The best is glass that is 6 mm thick, slightly smaller than the inner dimensions of the frame /fig. 7a/. The edges of the glass should be polished. The silkscreen is exposed from a distance of 50 cm using a 1000 W halogen /about 4 min./ or a 500 W Nitraphot or NARVA incandescent lamp for about nine minutes. Before the initial exposure you should do a small trial run at the edge of the frame to figure out the appropriate exposure time.

The silkscreen then is developed with cold water; preferably in a bathtub with a strong hand shower. When the text "bleeds through" you should also rinse the other side of the silkscreen. Excess water is removed with cotton

balls which also allows you to check the quality of the exposure. When you run a cotton ball over the inner surface of the frame placed at a low angle against the light, you should see a clear relief image of the text. A good quality check can also be produced by rubbing a cotton ball soaked with writing ink. When the dry silkscreen is placed against the light, the spots that will print should appear translucent. You dry the silkscreen with a blow dryer and then start doing touch-up. You place the silkscreen against the light, and with a small brush apply the emulsion in the translucent places that you do not want to print. After touch-up the silkscreen is dried and again exposed to light without the glass /it can be put in the sun/. If the edges of the silkscreen have not been sealed /see p. 40/ you reinforce the outer edges of the silkscreen with two strips of adhesive tape /or you can use gray paper tape/ alongside the entire length of the frame at about 1 cm from the edge of the text.

The silkscreen then is ready to print, and you can attach the frame to the base. A strip of ink is applied above the whole width of the surface to be printed. Hold the squeegee with both hands /the wooden strip serves as a support for your thumbs/. Place the squeegee above the surface to be printed at an 80° angle /approximately/ and press the frame against the paper, keeping the squeegee at the same angle as you drag it with a steady movement down the frame. After three or four drags you should get a full page printed. It is important to keep an even pressure. After each drag across the frame, rotate the squeegee in order to collect the excess ink on the squeegee to bring it back to the top of the frame. A second person removes the paper.

You should avoid breaks in your work, as the ink dries quickly in the translucent areas. If a break is to last

just a few minutes, cover the silkscreen with an even layer of ink. For a longer break, remove the ink from the silkscreen and cover it thoroughly with oil on both sides. After a longer break first resume your printing on scrap paper until the silkscreen "clears."

After you are finished wash the silkscreen thoroughly. First collect the excess ink using the squeegee and scrap of cardboard. Then place the silkscreen on newspaper and rub the top with a cotton ball soaked with mineral spirits. Then place the silkscreen in a bathtub and removed the remainder of ink with a water solution of Pasta BHP, or Pasta Komfort, or other laundry detergent.<sup>1/</sup> If you printed with water-based ink, you can wash the silkscreen directly in the bathtub. The remnants of dried ink /if present/ are washed with Javox.<sup>2/</sup> You should start to peel off the emulsion without drying the frame /for which rubber gloves are recommended/. To make this possible, smear the silkscreen for five minutes with the following solution:

- 3 g potassium permanganate
- 100 ml /1/2 teaspoon per half a glass/ water

Then rinse the silkscreen with water and wash out the emulsion /you can use a toothbrush/ with the following solution:

- 4 g sodium metabisulphite /or potassium metabisulphite/
- 100 ml /1/2 teaspoon per half a glass/ water

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<sup>1/</sup> Pasta BHP was a hand cleaner used in mechanical shops; pasta Komfort was an easily available laundry detergent. Henceforth BHP paste and Komfort paste.

<sup>2/</sup> Javox was a household cleaner similar to Ajax.

/Sodium metabisulphite is used to control pH in photo developer, and as a sulfite for wine/.

Vigorously rinse the silkscreen using a showerhead. Make sure that water can flow through the entire surface of the silkscreen; if not, the procedure of peeling off the emulsion needs to be repeated. The dried silkscreen then can be used again.

Please note: some kinds of emulsion, such as gelatin and carpenter's glue, are best removed with liquid bleach /sodium hypochlorite/ or calcium hypochlorite; and the emulsion Azokol T is best removed with cyclohexanone.

Inexperienced silkscreen printers may encounter problems, so the most common mistakes and their causes are listed below.

- Some letters will disappear, and there will be blank spots in the text. The cause could be that the negative did not have enough contrast or had been made from a faulty original, or the exposure time was too long, or perhaps during the exposure the negative was not completely flat against the silkscreen, or the emulsion was overheated during the drying or exposure.
- The silkscreen "sows" /displays regularly distributed grey spots/. The cause could be too short exposure time, poorly applied emulsion /the silkscreen will sow both in the places where the emulsion did not seal the fabric netting, and in the blotches/, or a dim negative.
- Random gray stains appear. The cause could be a poorly degreased silkscreen /in which the emulsion does not moisten greasy spots/.

Sometimes it is convenient to work with a A3 frame size. In this case the frame's outside dimensions are 46 x 60

cm, the width of the squeegee is 32 cm, and the base dimensions are 30 x 62 cm.

## STENCILS

### 1. Albumen stencil

Other names are albumen, wax stencil, regular stencil, collodion stencil; the name commonly used in the West is stencil. This is a thin, flaccid onion skin that is somewhat sticky when touched. Usually it is factory-joined with a cardboard base and double-sided carbon paper. If the stencil you are using comes without the base or carbon paper, put it together with a piece of carbon paper with the copying side turned towards you, and put a sheet of thick paper at the bottom. Type the text on the stencil with a typewriter with the ribbon disengaged. Typewriters with bold characters are not suitable for typing stencils. You need to type avoiding mistakes, and striking the m, w, M, and W keys harder, and at the same time trying not to knock out holes with the O, o, e, etc. keys. Fix typos with correction fluid or dissolved nail polish, and then correct them by retyping or piercing with a needle. While typing avoid long continuous lines, underlining, etc. Drawings are drawn with a marker and then pierced point by point with a needle. A correctly prepared stencil is clearly transparent against the light in the spots where the key struck /the ink will penetrate only the transparent places/. Do not fold or crease the stencil; carry it rolled up, and protect it from drying out.

### 2. Diapositive for silkscreen printing

A good diapositive can be made only from a good original. Type on white matte stock /xerox/ paper with a good ribbon /i.e. carbon tape, silk tape, or cotton tape that is new and has seen little wear/. Before typing, clean the keys with a toothbrush and denatured alcohol. Having an even

shade of text is more important than the depth of the black. Make the layout so as to keep the proportion of the text on the page 18 x 26. A typed text should not be reduced by more than 3/2 /in line/. Remember that the letters will get thinner as well. Therefore in order for the script to be thicker, type with 2 or 3 sheets of paper in the typewriter.

The negative is made with a reproduction frame on an enlarger with a decent lens. The aperture must be fully open, or if you are using a 6 x 6 camera, use ORWO NP15 or FU3 film. If you use a microfilm negative 35 mm film-transl. you will produce inferior results. Illuminate the original with two or four 500W lamps positioned at a 45° angle and approximately one meter away. If possible, you should not use glass to flatten the original. The diapositive is made with ORWO FU5 or FO5 film or an equivalent from Kodak or AGFA. Good results are achieved by using phototypesetting film. Expose it with the aperture set to open /the enlarger's bulb should be strong/ and develop it in ORWO A71 or another hydrochinon developer. You can use a developer mixed at home as long as it contains approximately 10g per liter of hydrochinon.

Cure the diapositive /if necessary/ with "farmer's reducer" with reduced potassium ferricyanide.

### 3. Handmade diapositive

Short texts can be written with india ink on transparent foil with one side matte /astralon/ or tracing paper which has been impregnated on both sides with fixative after writing. You can use Acutol /liquid bandaid/, hair spray, or /as a last resort/ mineral oil, in order to enhance the transparency. Slogans or posters can be laid out with letraset. Diapositives for silkscreen printing should not contain large black surfaces /these would need to be rasterized, i.e. broken into regular black dots./

#### 4. Cutout stencils

A slogan /poster/ is written on thick paper. Then carefully cut out each element and post it on netting using a water-based glue /such as carpenter's or office glue/. After it dries, cover the lettering side of the netting with nitro varnish. When the varnish dries, soak off the stencil and rinse the netting with water. When the netting is dry the stencil is ready for printing. Later the netting can be restored with nitro solvent.

- a. A text or a drawing can be placed directly on the silkscreen with a lithographic crayon, a soft wax crayon, or with oil paint using a small brush. Then the netting is covered with a thin layer of a gelatin, dextrin, gum arabic, or polyvinyl alcohol. The solution needs to be thick enough to seal the netting, but not so thick as to cover the greasy drawings. Then the netting is dried, and the drawings are washed off with mineral spirit with a piece of newspaper placed under the silkscreen. If you are printing with water-based inks, use silkscreen emulsion, and after washing out the drawing, expose it to light; otherwise you can only print with non-water-based inks.

#### INKS

Improvised printing usually uses so-called printing inks that have been modified.

1. Typographic ink for rotary presses /newspaper or machine ink/-this is a thick oily liquid smelling like tar; it can be used as is.
2. Typographic ink for illustrations, or offset ink\_ these inks are as thick as butter, and are thinned with oil, preferably sunflower oil or varnish. Good

results /double-sided printing/ can be achieved only with absorbent paper.

3. Thick duplicator ink\_this is recommended for printing with wax stencils. Unfortunately it also requires absorbent paper.
4. Liquid duplicator ink\_this is recommended for printing with wax stencils using the copyframe method with flannel padding.
5. Silkscreen ink for glass or PVC-despite the name this can't be used for silkscreen printing at home. Experienced printers can try printing with silkscreen fabric dyes.
6. Rotogravure /intaglio/ inks-these are thick liquids containing toluene and acetone; just for this reason alone they cannot be used.

Ink prepared with Komfort paste can be broadly used with all the print technologies described above and in printing on paper of any quality: a heaping spoonful of offset ink or typographic ink is diluted with kerosene or painter's naphtha to the thickness of sour cream. A jar of Komfort paste is strained through a small mesh sieve /it can be pushed through cheese cloth/. Pour the ink into the prepared paste stirring vigorously. It is advisable to prepare the ink a day in advance. Also, the ink can be dyed with stamp ink /but only if you do not have printing ink/. Using BHP paste or diluted gray soap yields worse results. However, excellent results can be achieved using partially saponified varnish made by boiling varnish with a solution of caustic potash in an enamel pot until it turns into a glassy substance; the proportions need to be figured out by doing trial-and-error with a small sample. The Komfort paste-based ink can be diluted with water. This needs to be done cautiously by adding no more than a small spoon of water at a time.



Oil-based /alkaloid/ paint for painting wood or walls can be used for silkscreen printing on any kind of paper. It is seldom of adequate quality. Before printing it needs to be thoroughly stirred by hand or with a food mixer /as the pigment tends to fall to the bottom/. Sometimes the paint contains mechanical contaminants /such as sharp clumps of pigment that can rip the silkscreen/ therefore it needs to be strained through a piece of dense chiffon. If the paint is too runny /which is most often the case/ dissolve 2-3 spoons of Komfort paste, BHP paste, or gray soap in a small amount of water and mix it with the paint. This ink usually is prepared a day ahead.

## PAPER

I will describe the paper available in Poland in terms of suitability for underground printing.

1. Xerographic paper A and B is the best stock; it is absorbent yet not translucent, and smooth.
2. Common writing paper, class III, is absorbent and transparent; inks that are too liquid may bleed to the other side.
3. Common writing paper, class V, has poor absorbency and is not transparent; only well matched inks /usually water-based/ will allow double-sided printing.
4. Stationery paper has poor absorbency, and is transparent and very smooth. This only allows for single-sided printing /and the ink smears anyway/. Highly experienced printers may attempt double-sided printing.
5. Paper for offset duplicators and thermocopiers, classes VII, V, and III- these lower class papers are smoother but less absorbent. In general they are suitable for printing with wax stencils. They are not suitable /especially class VII/ for silkscreen printing when the text has been photographically reduced

/the uneven spots in the paper are the same size as letters/.

6. Offset paper, classes III or V, is rarely available in stores; its characteristics are similar to xerographic paper.

Before printing, you should grab each ream of paper from its shorter side and vigorously shake it; then turn it 180° and repeat the motion. This is in order to separate the pages that may be stuck together /or pressed during cutting/ and aerate the paper; as a result of this procedure the sheets will slide on each other more easily. Paper can be stored in dry rooms-it should not directly touch concrete walls or floors. Paper reacts very poorly to rapid and frequent changes of humidity.

Bibliography: A. Jurkiewicz, "Podręcznik metod grafiki artystycznej."

## AFTERWORD

These three texts are testimonies and, at the same time, contributions to one of the greatest miracles of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (or maybe even of all human history): an almost bloodless transition from a totalitarian regime to a more or less functional democracy, which then triggered similar changes in half the European continent. This transition did not happen overnight; the apparent oxymoron “peaceful revolution” was actually realized during a more than decade-long process initiated by a few scattered individuals. Their efforts initially seemed utterly quixotic and hopeless, destined for the communist’s “garbage can of history” or at best, to bear fruit in tens if not hundreds of years. Only during the very last phase did this process assume a break-neck speed that surprised all the participants. Almost overnight they found themselves in an entirely different world. Nobody predicted the full extent of the change, even as it was happening. Only in retrospect can we perceive and appreciate the dynamics of the change. There were many rational and irrational factors at play: international politics; the economy; personalities at the heights of power; calculations and miscalculations; and good will and ill will. Paper and words written on paper were not the least of the factors; and Poland was a place where this was particularly significant.

After World War II Poland found herself in the Soviet sphere of influence. It was nominally an independent state, and never communist by name. A period of dogmatic, oppressive Stalinism lasted between 1948 and 1956; and after the 1956 workers’ protests the ruling party effectively abandoned its principal goal: to “reforge souls” of the Poles and turn them into true communists. Instead, the communists settled for the resigned acquiescence by Polish society to the political and economic “facts on the ground,” in exchange for limited cultural freedom. As a result, while succumbing to what was

mockingly described as “our petty stability” by the poet Tadeusz Różewicz, and with an increasingly insolvent and backward economy, Poland became “the merriest barrack in the communist camp.” It allowed semi-open public discourse in spheres that the authorities did not consider politically sensitive. This tacit “social contract” was periodically interrupted by waves of protests. In most cases these protests were sparked by the communist authorities’ attempts to salvage the sinking economy through draconian price increases for basic consumer goods. These protests were brutally suppressed, after which the authorities, desperate to mollify the people, promptly revoked the price hikes, thus further deepening the economic debacle.

One of these protests took place in the summer of 1976. Its pacification was harsh. The court trials of the arrested protesters (both the actual rioters and some incidental passersby) resulted in numerous long prison sentences. In response, a group of prominent public figures—writers, artists, scholars, lawyers—formed the Committee for the Defense of Workers, or KOR, in order to provide legal and material aid to the victims and their families, and to inform public opinion in Poland and internationally. Since the founding members were themselves victims of censorship and publishing restrictions, the issue of free circulation of not just information, but also ideas, emerged immediately.

However, to meet these goals was by no means easy. Not only were the large circulation press and the media under complete control of the communists, but everything, including wedding invitations and obituaries, had to be cleared by the censor. All printing shops, even the smallest ones that produced nothing more than restaurant menus and utility bills, were under lock and key. Thus independent publishing in communist Poland began with whatever was at hand: onionskin paper

typed and retyped with carbon paper, and passed among friends.

KOR's initially limited activities were soon expanded; subsequently it changed its name to KSS-KOR: the Committee for Social Self-defense KOR. A literary journal *Zapis*, (a wordplay on several meanings of the word "entry" as in a diary entry, but also a censor's ban) was initiated in early 1977. The first issue appeared in 12 copies—each of its 250 pages was created by typing twice an assembly of six onion-skins. From that modest beginning, several duplicating techniques were developed; printing machines were "organized" (most often smuggled from the West) and the whole infrastructure was established—from obtaining paper and ink, to the actual printing, collating and binding, and to the distribution networks. By 1980 independent publishing was running at full speed, though never able to meet the growing demand for uncensored information and literature.

Printing without state permission was strictly prohibited and punishable,<sup>1</sup> but the authorities, increasingly dependent on Western loans, were reluctant to apply harsh measures against well-known intellectual figures from KOR and the people associated with them. The Communists limited themselves to petty, albeit often painful, harassment such as bans on publication in state-owned media, frequent house searches and short-term "preventive" detentions (in addition to confiscating materials and equipment). In February 1980, two underground printers, Mirosław Chojecki and Bogdan Grzesiak, were jailed and accused of stealing a discarded duplicator. After protests in Poland and internationally, they were given suspended sentences.

This "incubation period" changed almost overnight on August 31, 1980, when the Polish Communist authorities signed an agreement with the striking workers at the Gdańsk Shipyard. "Solidarity" came to

life, nominally a trade union, but in fact a social phenomenon on an unprecedented scale. It was an expression and emanation of a self-organizing society. In the communist bloc this was the first mass movement independent of the communists. Within a few weeks, some eight million people, more than half of Poland's workforce, joined "Solidarity." This made it the largest trade union in the world. The need for reliable information was but a fragment of the thirst for independent, uncensored publications. Every scrap of paper printed outside official venues was immediately snatched up by anxious readers. Union cells demanded and gained access to their factories' printing facilities. In no time a large cadre of independent editors and printers emerged. They started producing bulletins with information pertaining to current local and national union affairs, but also materials of general interest, and literary and historical topics that could not be published in official media because of their alleged anti-communist nature.

At the same time the regional offices of "Solidarity" ran their printing shops 24/7. They were equipped with machines that "surfaced" from the underground, soon augmented with equipment sent by sympathetic organizations in the West.

Yet not all underground printing structures went above ground. Sensing the instability of the situation, and fearing that the Communists would try to restore the previous order by force, some underground publishers decided to hide at least some of their equipment.

This caution turned out to be warranted. On the night of December 13, 1981, the authorities declared martial law "to restore law and order." The military action was swift and very efficient; within a few hours Poland was effectively paralyzed. All phones were disconnected, all lines of communication were blocked, and most of the "Solidarity" leaders were detained. All independent organizations were

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<sup>1</sup> It could be classified in several different ways, for instance as a felony under Article 271 §1 of the 1969 Penal Code, punishable up to 3 years in prison for "distributing false information that can cause serious harm to the interest of the Polish

People's Republic;" of course what was or was not false, and what would or would not constitute information, was at the sole discretion of the authorities.

suspended. Isolated strikes in factories and coal mines lasted for several days, and several dozen people were killed. During raids on the "Solidarity" offices, virtually all printing equipment was either seized by the authorities or vandalized, with the exception of a very few machines saved amidst the chaos by the "Solidarity" staff.

Yet the shock for the society was short-lived. Almost immediately the activists who managed to survive the initial wave of repression started organizing resistance. Independent publishing went back underground. During the initial days and weeks it resumed in the hand-copied onionskin form, but very soon returned to all methods of printing, and on a much larger scale than before 1980. Also, the foresight of those independent publishers who decided to keep their equipment hidden proved invaluable. Their machines survived the initial wave of repression and almost immediately went back to work. As it turned out, the previous sixteen months, aptly dubbed "the carnival of Solidarity," created an irrepressible need for independent information in society, and created a large cadre of providers as well. No state force could stop it.

Technically martial law was lifted in 1983; yet this was not perceived as a breakthrough. The entire 1980s in Poland can be regarded as a period of a creeping disintegration of the system, from initial fear at the introduction of martial law, to a cat-and-mouse game with an increasingly toothless cat. In February 1982, Ewa Kubasiewicz was sentenced to 10 years in prison for distributing a leaflet calling for resistance to martial law.<sup>2</sup> By 1986 or 1987, you still could be arrested for underground printing and sentenced to a few years in prison, but there would be a good chance that by the next major state holiday amnesty would be declared, and within three to six months from the arrest, you would be released, often even before the trial began. The ordeal gradually became an acceptable deal.

This ended in August 1988 when another wave of strikes engulfed Poland, and

the government bowed to the demand to restore the legal "Solidarity." In March 1989 the Round Table Talks started resulting in partially free elections in June that turned into a referendum effectively voting the communists out of power. In August 1989 Tadeusz Mazowiecki became the first non-communist head of government (Prime Minister) in the Soviet bloc. In April 1990 the office of censorship in Poland was disbanded. Printing underground was no longer necessary.

According to the most recent bibliographies, over the 14 years between 1977 and 1990, about 6,500 books were published underground in Poland. Books were published in runs as high as 40,000 copies (such as a "how to" booklet *When A Citizen Faces the Secret Service* by Czesław Bielecki and Jan Krzysztof Kelus) or 15,000 copies (such as full-length novels like *A Minor Apocalypse* by Tadeusz Konwicki or *The Great Fear* by Julian Strykowski). At the same time, some 6,000 periodicals were published including weeklies, monthlies, quarterlies and irregulars. There were all kinds of periodicals, thin and thick, with circulations up to 70,000 copies per issue. Many of them were ephemeral, but more than a few lasted for several years, or, like *Tygodnik Mazowsze*, eventually transformed themselves into mainstream newspapers after the fall of communism.

There can be little doubt that this paper revolution breaking the state monopoly of information was one of the principal factors in the ultimate success of "Solidarity." The scale of the independent word was astounding: hundreds of underground presses, innumerable tons of printed paper, and tens of thousands of people involved in all aspects, including writing, editing, organizing, printing and distribution. The underground presses ran for 14 years, 365 days a year, 24/7. It took more or less 120,000 "duplicator-hours" to dismantle communism in Poland, and per extension, the whole Soviet bloc.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> She was released from prison in May 1983.

<sup>3</sup> The third stanza of "The Pompous Song" in a word-for-word translation reads: "Some say it just

The three texts published here for the first time in English translation are emblematic to that phenomenon in more than one respect. First of all, they give a snapshot of the reality of underground printing in its multiple aspects: the homespun solutions and inventions, the cat-and-mouse games with the police, and the larger moral and historical issues that ensued. They also represent all three periods of printing mentioned above, although not in chronological sequence, with Jan Walc's narrative being the earliest. Walc's text dates from 1980, towards the end of the first heroic period of underground printing.

The song by Jan Krzysztof Kelus that opens the volume is not unlike an American anthem of social protest, both in style /a 4-chord guitar tune plus a scratchy voice/ and message. This single song contains two powerful metaphors that capture the essence of what happened in Poland in the period between 1976 and 1989: "our paper revolution," and "words that resound loud as dynamite"—the latter used as the title for this volume. The song was written during the 16 months of "carnival" between August, 1980 and December, 1981. Already by then the author perceived the vestiges of petrification and "veteranism" slowly developing in the revolutionaries. Martial law delayed the fulfilment of his diagnosis by almost a decade. Then the song circulated on clandestinely produced cassettes—the audio equivalent of underground printed literature.<sup>4</sup> Today it is freely accessible on YouTube.<sup>5</sup> The translation is such that the song can actually be sung. This necessitated from the translator inevitable compromises and changes. The

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started / others say it is passing / the paper revolution / of our duplicator-hours." The neologism "duplicator-hours," in Polish "powielaczogodziny" was coined by Kelus like the bureaucratic term "roboczo-godziny," "work-hours," a communist unit for measuring time of labor.

<sup>4</sup> The following text was written by the author and was on the cover of the cassette: "As an independent artist working outside of the state entertainment monopoly, I reserve the copyright to the songs on this cassette [...]. I approve copying this cassette for the payment of 100 zlotys, or \$10 US dollars per copy outside of Poland [...]. If the pay-

immediacy of some phrases had to be sacrificed while fitting into the original's rhythmical pattern and the accurate rendition of the historical ramifications were the most important objectives.

The narrative by Jan Walc was first printed (likely by himself) in 1980 in *Biuletyn Informacyjny* No. 4/38. Rather than being a continuous narrative from a single event, it is an extract distilled from numerous printing situations, and not necessarily all were personally experienced by the author. This does not take away anything from the factual or psychological credibility. For instance, the description of recovering the paper by cutting off some police cars is recollected in greater detail by Mirosław Chojecki in an interview with Wiesława Grochola.<sup>6</sup>

The Printer's Manual has no date or place of publication.<sup>7</sup> According to the records of Poland's National Library, two separate editions were published in Wrocław in 1984. The Manual belongs to the third printing period, that under martial law, when underground printing became widespread, prompting a need for instructional materials for printers. The author signed the manual "enen," today it is known that the author was Witold Łuczywo, one of the founding fathers of independent printing in Poland. Read today, his manual is both awesome in its ingenuity and inventiveness, and at times hilarious. With all the details provided, some of these procedures are not replicable today. It is not just that typewriters from which ribbon can be removed in order to type a stencil are obsolete (although you can still find them in thrift stores), but the stencil itself is a problem. The author assumed it was readily

ment cannot be delivered to the author, please contribute its equivalent to aid for the persecuted or for independent culture."

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hW4ciqzw1sg>; accessed on Jan. 8, 2014.

<sup>6</sup> W. Grochola, "Słowo jak dynamit," *Karta* no. 49, 2006, pp. 114-115.

<sup>7</sup> This was the original title: *Podręcznik drukarza*. *The Practical Printer* is the translator's bow to the late 19<sup>th</sup>-century *The Practical Printer: A Book of Instruction for Beginners; A Book of Reference for the More Advanced* by Henry Gold Bishop.

available so he did not dwell on it much; however today a blank wax stencil is virtually impossible to find. And nowadays underwear waistbands use elastic that has been sewn-in and not elastic inserted into fabric tubes; therefore underwear elastic would be completely useless for lifting a frame.

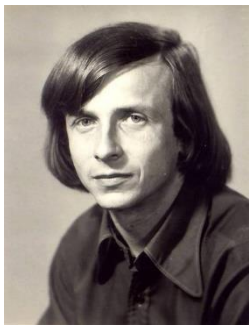
In the epoch of the internet, underground printing may seem as far removed as pre-history, and we likely will never return to its methods. But ultimately, who knows? It is comforting to know that when all our servers fail or are taken down, there is a way to spread information using four slats and a piece of silk mesh.

Finally, it is undoubtedly true that funds allocated by the United States Congress to aid Polish dissident movements in the 1970s and 1980s played an important role in supporting underground publishing. This support, among others, secured equipment and supplies smuggled from the West, and paid printers like Jan Walc.

Without that money, producing and firing paper ammunition would have been still possible, but much harder, and the paper revolution would have taken a much longer time to win.

However this present book would not have come to being if not for the generosity of American taxpayers who through a Fulbright fellowship provided me with almost a year of comfortable living and working in free and democratic Poland—the outcome of the wisdom of using words instead of dynamite.

Gwido Zlatkes  
Warsaw, January 2014



**Jan Krzysztof Kelus** (born, 1942) is a singer, poet, composer, and a member of the democratic opposition in Poland between the 1960s and 1980s. A professional sociologist, Kelus is best known for a number of ballads which gained him a nickname "the Polish Woody Guthrie."

After a brief period at Warsaw University's College of Law, Kelus graduated from the College of Sociology. Arrested in 1969 for his involvement in smuggling Polish books published in Paris through the Tatra Mountains, he was sentenced to imprisonment in the so-called Tatra Climbers' Trial. In 1976 Kelus became involved in the Workers' Defense Committee (KOR) where he organized legal and financial aid to workers and labor activists persecuted by the communist authorities. About that time, his songs, passed in copies produced outside of the official market and without acceptance of the censorship, became one of the symbols of the opposition. During that time he also translated several songs by Czech artist Karel Kryl. After the imposition of martial law in Poland in December 1981, Kelus was interned in Białołęka prison. After his release, he was among the founders of the Independent Publishing House CDN, and later organized its audiocassette branch. At the end of the 1980s, Kelus withdrew from public life to a house near Poland's north-east border, where he owns a small beekeeping farm.



**Witold Łuczywo** (born, 1946) is a Polish engineer and dissident activist. After graduating from the Department of Electronic, Warsaw Polytechnic University in 1970 he worked at the Institute of Industrial Chemistry, and then from 1979-1980, at the Warsaw Color TV Development Center.

He was involved in student protests of 1968, and in 1976 organized aid to the persecuted workers of Ursus and Radom. In 1977 he and his wife Helena, and others started an independent journal *Robotnik* published until 1980. During that time he developed several simple improvements of printing techniques, among them a technology for making printing ink out of shoe polish. During the period of legal Solidarity from 1980 to 1981, he organized and headed the printing facilities of the Mazowsze chapter of Solidarity in Warsaw. After the imposition of martial law he remained in hiding until October 1984; at that time he organized the printing of *Tygodnik Mazowsze*. In 1989 he was a member of the Citizens' Committee advising Lech Wałęsa; in 1991-1994 he worked for the Bureau of Informatics at the Council of Ministers, and in 2002 he headed the Department of the Implementation of the Complex Computer System at the state insurance agency ZUS. In 2003 he co-founded Stowarzyszenie Wolnego Słowa (Association for Free Speech).



**Jan Walc** (1948-1993) was a Polish literary critic and historian, and a journalist. In the March 1968 events he was a member of the Warsaw University Strike Committee, and was arrested in March of that year. He spent three months in detention and from then on was under constant surveillance by the Security Service. A member of democratic anti-communist opposition, he was one of the organizers of the Independent Publishing House (NOW-a), an underground publishing company for which he also operated a printing press. His works were published in official and independent journals, among them *Polityka*, *Kultura*, *Literatura na świecie*, *Głos*, *Krytyka*, *Biuletyn Informacyjny*, *Kultura Niezależna*, *Puls*, *Zapis*, and *Życie Warszawy*; he also wrote books on the works of Tadeusz Konwicki and Adam Mickiewicz.