

Abstract of the Thesis

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The purpose of the doctoral thesis is to analyze, through a broad overview and a transnational perspective, the role and diffusion of the underground press of the Solidarity movement in the years 1981-1989, as well as the impact of such activity on the European public opinion, with special attention to the Italian and French one. The founding core of the research in question does not focus as much on the development of the publishing machine in Poland, but rather on the strength of the European information network of the first independent trade union created in a Warsaw Pact country after the declaration of martial law in Poland in 1981.

For research purposes, the coordination of various types of opposition initiatives in Western Europe is taken into account, principally, the conspirational publishing activity as a specific form of mass resistance, struggling for freedom of expression, as well as applying pressure to obtain and maintain political support in the West.

In accordance with the above research assumption, in the first chapter, special attention is given to the analysis of the process of development of the Polish dissident movement in the period from 1956 to the establishment of Solidarity. The first chapter also describes the phenomenon of the birth of an independent and self-governing trade union in Poland in terms of the evolution of the social and political thought of the Solidarity movement, as well as the influence of Polish Catholicism in creating the so-called "parallel society". The second part of the chapter aims to analyze the structure of the editorial wing structure of the TKK (Tymczasowa Komisja Koordynacyjna NSZZ "Solidarność" - Solidarity's Provisional Coordinating Committee), the underground governing body coordinating the activities of the regional structures of the delegalized Solidarity under martial law, created on April 22, 1982.

The starting point for the considerations of the second chapter of the dissertation is the examination of the activities of the Coordinating Office of Solidarity Abroad in Brussels as the main institution representing Solidarity outside Poland, and also fulfilling the functions of the foreign affairs office of the national leadership of the Union, regulating foreign support structures of the TKK. In addition, it is inevitable to circumscribe the research field, by putting particular emphasis on researching the role of the Paris-based branch of the Brussels office, the Coordinating Committee of NSZZ Solidarność, specialized in the selection and diffusion of information in the West, as a forge of free thought and form of influencing public opinion beyond the Iron Curtain.

The first part of the third chapter presents a reconstruction of the permanent nature of Solidarity's foreign publishing activity by analyzing the content of the magazines "Solidarity News" and "Biuletyn Informacyjny", published in Western Europe. In the second part of the chapter, editorial materials from behind the Iron Curtain are analyzed as evidence of the dissemination of underground publications in Western Europe, with the intention of examining the level of dissemination of the independent press as the privileged and most structured channel of Solidarity's underground struggle.

In the fourth chapter, the subject of the study is the analysis of support for Solidarity by various Western European environments (individuals, associations, the Church, organizations, and support committees), with an attempt to answer the question of what effects Solidarity's foreign activity had on the public and political debate in Western Europe.

The final chapter of the doctoral dissertation analyzes the phenomenon of the Solidarity underground press in terms of the cause-and-effect relationship between its dissemination and its role in the years 1981-1989 in Western Europe. The last section of the chapter further emphasizes

the extent of Solidarity's contribution to the history of the transformation of the communist system in Poland and other countries of the Eastern Bloc.

In the final part, there is an annex containing documents and prints related to the underground information network of Solidarity, taking into account the need to illustrate the discussed issues.

As can be deduced, the innovation of the research project is in the will of undertaking a study on a more global character of the flow of information to the “free world” and vice versa, as well as the on role of the Solidarity movement in this respect. The accent is placed on the importance of alternative propaganda for an illegal opposition movement, of that “parallel society” and the counter-information during the Cold War, in terms of the struggle between propaganda systems. In addition to reconstructing the interconnections between the structures of the two information networks mentioned above - the foreign independent and the Polish underground- the dynamics of the information activity (distance support, information exchange and material assistance) and its European channels have been analyzed.

It is to be noted that, there is a significant gap in research on the importance of the European Solidarity information network. So far, no scientific study has been published in terms of transnational analysis of the Solidarity underground press in the years 1981-1989 and its impact on public opinion in Western Europe. This work aims to shed new light on aspects related to the functioning of the Polish underground press in the West and to fill a significant gap existing in the scientific literature on the subject. The dissertation uses the historical-comparative methodology, supported by the analysis of primary sources deposited in European archives and the use of the qualitative method of in-depth interviews.