

THE VISUAL POLITICS OF SUCCESS AND SOLIDARITY  
A CASE STUDY OF CHRIS NIEDENTHAL'S PHOTOGRAPHY FROM  
THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF POLAND 1978 – 1982

by

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## **AUTHOR'S DECLARATION PAGE**

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## ABSTRACT

*The Visual Politics of Success and Solidarity – A Case Study of Chris Niedenthal’s Photography from The People’s Republic of Poland 1978-1982*

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This thesis focuses on photographs from the Black Star Collection by photojournalist Chris Niedenthal, who did freelance assignments in Poland for *Newsweek*, *Time Magazine*, and *Der Spiegel* during the 1970s and 1980s. By looking closely at Niedenthal’s work, this thesis explores how these photographs respond to and engage with the rising tension in the People’s Republic of Poland (PRL) between the years 1978 -1982. The purpose of this investigation is to study the techniques Niedenthal devised to photograph Poland during a volatile time. Through a comparative analysis of selected images from the Black Star Collection, this thesis considers two phases of Niedenthal’s work in Poland, and examines both the way Chris Niedenthal’s photography attempts to negotiate the restrictions imposed by a totalitarian political system that sought to control its self-image, and how his approach to photography adapted to the rise of the Solidarity Trade Union and imposition of Martial Law in Poland.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

This thesis investigates photojournalist Chris Niedenthal's work for the Black Star Photo Agency between the years 1978 and 1982. Born in London England in 1950, to Polish immigrants who came to England after World War II, Niedenthal first visited his homeland with his family in 1963. He enjoyed this visit, recalling that the early trips were memorable and interesting. After finishing his studies, he travelled to Poland in 1973 as a photojournalist for *Newsweek*, and decided to stay.<sup>1</sup> Niedenthal recalls that:

As soon as I arrived in Warsaw in May 1973, I could see that my photographic possibilities were endless. Everything was different. Everything was interesting. And I admired the young people in Poland in those days – they had an amazing hunger for knowledge about everything, especially everything Western, so I found life in Poland far more interesting than it was in England at the time. Their political and economic systems were basket cases – but the people were wonderful!<sup>2</sup>

In the 1970s and 1980s, Niedenthal worked as a photojournalist in Poland on freelancing assignments for prominent Western publications such as *Time*, *Der Spiegel*, and *Newsweek*.

Niedenthal's position in Poland was unique. On the one hand he was a foreign photojournalist working for Western press agencies, which meant he was steadily employed, and catered to a foreign audience. On the other hand he was of Polish descent, which allowed, rather than limited, his access to key important events. Ultimately his Polish background led to a passionate involvement in the political revolutions that were at that time occurring all over the country. From this close and sometimes fraught vantage point, Niedenthal witnessed and photographically documented the country's tumultuous transition from a Soviet state to a fully democratic country.

This thesis presents a comparative analysis of two sets of photographs from the Black Star Collection, taken by Chris Niedenthal between 1978 and 1982, which entails a critical survey and cataloguing of 469 photographs out of 597 in the collection. I narrowed the scope of my research down to these five years because they coincide with key moments in Polish history, specifically the period of Success in the late 1970's, which emphasized the apparent triumphs of socialism, to Solidarity, which involved mass protests against the government that led to the collapse of communism in Poland in 1989. It is important to note that, because he worked for

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<sup>1</sup> Chris Niedenthal, "Fotoreporter Komunizmu" [Photo Reporter of Communism], *Biuletyn Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej*, no. 11 (2004): 80.

<sup>2</sup> Chris Niedenthal, e-mail interview by the author, Email, June 1, 2015.

Western publications throughout the years he photographed events occurring in Poland, the intended audience was outside the Eastern Bloc. The photographs taken by Niedenthal in 1978 depict subjects that highlight the prosperity and modernization of Poland, and portray an idealized version of life in which the state provided all the necessities for its citizens.<sup>3</sup> This representation was pushed by Edward Gierek, the First Secretary of the Polish United Workers Party, through his ‘propaganda of success’.<sup>4</sup> The second set of photographs (1980 – 1982) depict the early years of the Solidarity movement, strikes, protests, day-to-day hardships, and the state’s use of force against its own citizens.

By analyzing these two bodies of work, this thesis will examine both the way Chris Niedenthal’s photography attempted to negotiate the restrictions imposed by a totalitarian political system that sought to control its self-image, and the changes in this approach to photography in response to the rise of the Solidarity Trade Union and imposition of Martial Law in Poland. This thesis explores the visual and thematic elements that emerge during the periods of Success and Solidarity. The representative samples in this thesis have been grouped according to these two categories, with the photographs from 1978 belonging to the Success group, and the photographs from 1980-1982 in the Solidarity group. In a preliminary analysis, these two groups are primarily characterized by different content and compositions, and these differences line up with the historical events of that time. However, there is more to the story. Due to the oppressive and controlling nature of the communist regime, photography in the PRL needs to be examined from multiple perspectives. Photographs depicting life in the PRL range from quaint, happy depictions of festivals and youth, to angry, solemn depictions of the harsh reality of the PRL, to the absurdity of the regime. These varied depictions are equally important, as they represent myriad reactions to the system.

This thesis will explore the visual conventions developed as responses to the climates of Success and Solidarity, through Chris Niedenthal’s experiences as a photographer and through an analysis of his photographic production. I will explore how censoring regulations applied to photography, and how this photographer found a way to share photographs of Poland with the rest of the world. Between the years of 1975-1989 the country went through a period of great instability, which culminated in the collapse of the People’s Republic of Poland. During this time the Polish Solidarity Movement rose as a force challenging the totalitarian regime. Mass protests were held, Martial Law was imposed, and people’s rights were violated. The difficulties of this

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<sup>3</sup> Raymond Taras, *Ideology in a Socialist State: Poland 1956-1983* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 222.

<sup>4</sup> Jane Leftwich Curry, *Poland's Journalists: Professionalism and Politics* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 66.

period compelled citizens to find creative ways to protest and express themselves. An approach focusing on photography is important because, although the impact that the state had on film, theatre, and literature from this period has been extensively studied, scholars have yet to give the same level of attention to how photographers and photojournalists responded to changes in the political climate of the PRL. As I will show, photography helped to document reactions against the state.

The purpose of this thesis is to study the techniques Niedenthal devised to photograph Poland during a volatile time. Through a close exploration of selected images from the Black Star Collection, my aim is to examine the distinction between reporting and recording political topics and events, and actually promoting state ideologies.<sup>5</sup> This thesis will consider the state's influences on the media, and will explain how responding to these conditions shaped the content and style of his photographs, both of which differ across these two pivotal periods of Polish history. On the one hand, while the photographs taken in 1978 depict Poland in a favorable manner that the state sought, there is a clear departure from this mode of representation at the turn of the decade, in 1980. I examine how this shift aligns with more complex political and social events occurring in the country.

Surveying the work of Chris Niedenthal has prompted me to consider why his photographs have become iconic representations of communism in Poland during the 1980s.<sup>6</sup> Since he was working for Western publications, how and why did these photographs become so popular in Poland, when they had never been published or seen in the country at the time they were taken? This reception in Poland is significant as his work resonates with people who experienced the depicted events. In turn, a level of authenticity is attached to the work because they can be verified by witnesses to these events. Perhaps this authenticity stems from his Polish heritage and his connection with the Solidarity movement. In order to better understand the manner in which Chris Niedenthal's photography captures the essence of life in Poland, I intend to explore how important themes of the era are presented in his work.

Success and Solidarity were two prominent but contrasting themes that emerged around an important political turning point in communist Poland. My primary research question is: To what extent does the content and composition of Chris Niedenthal's photography from the years 1978 to 1982 engage with the themes of Success and Solidarity in communist Poland?

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<sup>5</sup> Sabine Kriebel, "Photomontage in the Year 1932: John Heartfield and the National Socialists," *Oxford Art Journal* 31, no. 1 (2008): 101.

<sup>6</sup> Dagmara Staga, "Communist Poland in 10 Astonishing Pictures," Culture.Pl, last modified October 3, 2014, <http://culture.pl/en/article/communist-poland-in-10-astonishing-pictures>.

Furthermore, in analyzing these two sets of photographs, I propose that for many of the photographs taken in 1978, there is a counter photograph taken in the 1980s. These counter photographs function as grittier and less clean cut representations of the subject matter in the 1970s, which undermines the veracity of the earlier photographs. Although it is unlikely that Niedenthal consciously took photographs that visually correspond to one another, a careful review of his work from this period reveals he revisited—and in effect re-photographed—common subject matter, although under different circumstances. The context within which these photographs were taken changes their impact on the viewer.

## 2. LITERATURE SURVEY

This literature survey is divided into four sections that are arranged thematically from general to specific themes. It begins with different perspectives concerning photojournalism that are relevant to Niedenthal's work, and is followed by an analysis of the PRL, and an examination of the rise of the Solidarity Trade Union. The survey then concludes with an overview of Polish photojournalists, including Niedenthal, and their experiences working in the PRL.

### a. Photojournalism

Historian Hendrik Neubauer's *Black Star: 60 Years of Photojournalism* (1997) provides insight into the work produced and published by the Black Star agency, the photographers that this agency employed, and presents Black Star as a major force in photojournalism. It is worth noting that while the book devotes a section to 'Moments of Revolution' citing David and Peter Turnley's work photographing the revolutions occurring in Eastern Europe, Chris Niedenthal's photographs do not appear anywhere in this book, nor is the photographer mentioned, though some of his work was commissioned by Black Star. This omission is perhaps understandable given the size and scope of Black Star and the number of photographers they employed.<sup>7</sup>

A reading of *Kiosk: A History of Photojournalism 1839-1973* (2001) by art historian Bodo Von Dewitz and photojournalist Robert Lebeck, and *Things as They Are: Photojournalism in Context Since 1955*, (2005) by Mary Panzer, a historian of photography, complements Neubauer's history of Black Star, by offering the reader the context within which images in the press were originally published. It is difficult to study the use of photographs in news publications and magazines without actually seeing how they were introduced, cropped, laid out, and the headlines and captions accompanying them.<sup>8</sup>

Professor of Communication Anna Bank's article *Images Trapped in Two Discourses: Photojournalism Codes and the International News Flow*, written in 1994, provides a more critical analysis of photojournalism. In her article, Banks addresses two interrelated issues, the illusion of objectivity that the press puts forward, and the power of institutional forces that "determine the production of meaning."<sup>9</sup> She describes the camera as a "political instrument",

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<sup>7</sup> Hendrik Neubauer, *Black Star: 60 years of photojournalism* (Köln, Germany: Konemann, 1997), 123.

<sup>8</sup> Bodo Von Dewitz and Robert Lebeck, *Kiosk: A History of Photojournalism 1839-1973* (Göttingen, Germany: Steidl, 2001).

<sup>9</sup> Anna Banks, "Images Trapped in Two Discourses: Photojournalism Codes and the International News Flow," *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 18, no. 1 (Winter 1994): 131.

rather than an objective recorder of events.<sup>10</sup> Along with Banks, Jason E. Hill addresses issues with objectivity that arise in photojournalism in his article *On the Efficacy of Artifice: PM, Radiophoto, and the Journalistic Discourse of Photographic Objectivity*. This article examines the presentation of photography in the press, and how viewers are intended to understand these photographs.

Taking a Polish perspective, historian Krzysztof Jurecki's article *The History of Polish Photography* dedicates an entire section to photography in Poland in the 1980's, which refers to Martial Law and its consequences for photography, one of the main themes to be explored in my thesis. After Martial Law was imposed on December 13, 1981, much of Polish culture, including art, film, photography, and literature went underground. It wasn't until 1984 that it gradually began to revive. This article details how key figures in Polish photography, including photojournalists, exhibited their work in organized exhibitions in churches of main cities all over the country.

#### **b. PRL: Life, Censorship, and Propaganda**

In order to gain a deeper understanding of the kinds of conditions Chris Niedenthal and other photographers were working under in the 1980s, it is necessary to examine life in the PRL. *The Final Curtain 1989*, edited by Piotr Głogowski at Ośrodek Karta (2014), was specifically prepared for a photographic exhibition of the same title. Along with the exhibition, this publication focuses on the role of Poland and other countries in bringing about democratic changes in Europe at the end of the 1980s.<sup>11</sup> Through the use of photographs, it traces events during this period chronologically, highlighting key figures and happenings.

Accordingly, censorship and State propaganda were key issues that Chris Niedenthal had to manage and work around in the PRL. These restrictions would have impacted Niedenthal's approach to photography, in particular how he got his work out of the country. Professor of Political Studies, Paweł Sowiński's *Kierowanie 'Propaganda Sukcesu' w Mass Mediach [Managing the 'Propaganda of Success' in the Mass Media]* (2009) describes the management of the 'propaganda of success', under the rule of Edward Gierek (First Secretary of the Polish United Worker's Party 1970-1980).<sup>12</sup> The article describes how journalists were controlled by

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<sup>10</sup> Anna Banks, "Images Trapped in Two Discourses: Photojournalism Codes and the International News Flow," *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 18, no. 1 (Winter 1994): 131.

<sup>11</sup> Piotr Głogowski, ed., *The Final Curtain 1989*, comp. Agnieszka Dębska, et al., trans. Barbara Herchenreder (Warszawa, Poland: Fundacja Ośrodka Karta, 2014).

<sup>12</sup> Paweł Sowiński, "Kierowanie 'Propagandą Sukcesu' w Mass Mediach" [Managing the Propaganda of "Success" in the Mass Media], *Studia Polityczne*, no. 24 (2009): 48.

means of the Central Committee functionaries editing, or rejecting controversial texts prior to their publication, or manipulating radio and TV programs right before their transmission.<sup>13</sup>

*The Black Book of Polish Censorship* (1984) translated by Jane Leftwich Curry (Professor of Political Science), and *The Linguistic Construction of Reality in the Black Book of Polish Censorship* (1997) by Dariusz Galański (Professor of Discourse and Cultural Studies) and Adam Jaworski (Professor of English Sociolinguistics), both deal with the Black Book of Polish Censorship - a key document of censorship practices in Poland in the 1970s, originally published by Tomasz Strzyżewski in 1977, a Polish censor who defected to Sweden. The book is a collection of censoring regulations, which were used to “silence or distort those aspects of Polish life that were uncomfortable for the communist establishment”.<sup>14</sup> *The Linguistic Construction of Reality in the Black Book of Polish Censorship* further explores issues faced by journalists in the country, by examining the linguistic mechanisms of censorship outlined in the book.

Krystyna Piątkowska's *Estetyka PRL - Teksty Wizualne i Znaki w Propagandzie* [*The Aesthetics of the People's Republic of Poland - Visual Texts and Signs in Propaganda*], further explores how in the totalitarian system of the PRL, propaganda was used to create a cohesive and fabricated world that was easily controlled.<sup>15</sup> This article is key to comprehending how the ‘propaganda of success’ functioned.

### **c. Solidarity**

An examination of the Solidarity Trade Union frames a moment in history that not only inspired people to demand change, but also prompted them to do so in creative and visual ways. This influence extended to Chris Niedenthal, whose photographs I suggest changed in content and appearance as the Solidarity movement grew. Agnieszka Dębska's album, *The Road to Solidarity. 1975-1980*, (2010) demonstrates how an important step forward in Polish consciousness came about, and how Poles collectively joined forces to weaken the communist regime in their country. The album presents the sequence of developments in Poland in the late 1970s to 1980, which depicts the social background that made it possible for the phenomenon of Solidarity to emerge.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Paweł Sowiński, "Kierowanie 'Propagandą Sukcesu' w Mass Mediach" [Managing the Propaganda of "Success" in the Mass Media], *Studia Polityczne*, no. 24 (2009): 52.

<sup>14</sup> Dariusz Galański and Adam Jaworski, "The Linguistic Construction of Reality in the Black Book of Polish Censorship," *Discourse and Society* 8, no. 3 (1997): 341.

<sup>15</sup> Krystyna Piątkowska, "Estetyka PRL - Teksty Wizualne i Znaki w Propagandzie" [The Aesthetics of the People's Republic of Poland - Visual Texts and Signs in Propaganda], *Konteksty*, no. 1 (2011): 75.

<sup>16</sup> Agnieszka Dębska, ed., *The Road to Solidarity. 1975-1980* (Warszawa, Poland: Osrodek KARTA, 2010).

It highlights the development of the underground press and publications in Poland, intended to challenge the official presentation of life in the PRL.

Dębska's album titled *Martial Law. Communism's Last Stand*, (2006) includes eyewitness accounts, ranging from dissidents, to 'ordinary people', to individuals involved in the Civil Militia, Security Forces, and the Central Committee's Propaganda Department. Included are statements from trials, arrest warrants, interrogation reports, as well as official and underground press reports, photographs, and posters. All of the records and objects serve to present the events surrounding Martial Law from different angles, and perspectives. The presentation of official and underground press reports emphasizes photography as a significant tool used to represent the times, and the difference between official and underground photographic representations of events.

Sociologist Barbara Szacka tries to find the place for the Solidarity movement and Martial Law in the collective memory of Polish history in her 2006 publication *'Solidarity' and the Martial Law in the Collective Memory of Polish History*. Her analysis, which is based on data from five sociological surveys, shows that Solidarity is largely seen as a positive event in Polish history, and Martial Law as a negative one.<sup>17</sup> However, she argues that there is no reason to think that ambivalence towards these two events in history will disappear completely.<sup>18</sup> This article lays the foundation needed in order to understand how people perceive and comprehend these events years after their occurrence.

#### **d. Polish Photojournalists**

The work of photojournalists in the PRL helps to contextualize Niedenthal's photography between 1978 and 1982. Historian and journalist Łukasz Modelski examines what it was like to be a photojournalist in the PRL, by interviewing key photographers working in that time period in his book *Fotobiografia PRL [Photobiography PRL]* (2013). Each of the photographers interviewed found their own distinct niche, within which they photographed life in the PRL. The author interviews photojournalists who reported on important events and people for the press at the time.<sup>19</sup> Given their experiences working for State approved publications, the interviewed photographers describe how restricted they were due to the agenda of the 'propaganda of success', which dictated the content that authorities deemed publishable.

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<sup>17</sup> Barbara Szacka, "'Solidarity' and the Martial Law in the Collective Memory of Polish History," *Polish Sociological Review*, no. 153 (2006): 86.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

<sup>19</sup> Łukasz Modelski, *Fotobiografia PRL (Photobiography PRL)* (n.p.: Znak, 2013), 10.

Taking the Solidarity movement's perspective, historian Łukasz Kamiński's *Erazm Ciołek, Solidarność, August 1980 – August 1989* (2010), presents over 250 photographs taken by Erazm Ciołek, a photojournalist working in Poland during the 1980s. This is a study of a photographer who had access to the secret meetings of the Solidarity movement, and who took a stance against State restrictions. By taking this stance, he ran the risk of provoking the authorities, which could land him in prison.<sup>20</sup>

A focused personal perspective on Chris Niedenthal's life and work is accessible through the book *Chris Niedenthal, Zawód: Fotograf* (2006), and article *Fotoreporter Komunisty [Photo Reporter of Communism]* (2004), both written by Niedenthal himself. *Chris Niedenthal, Zawód: Fotograf* is an autobiography detailing Chris Niedenthal's career as a photojournalist who came to Poland in 1973 to document the country of his parents' birth. Along the way he got swept up in the unfolding revolution, and photographed key moments in contemporary Polish history. *Fotoreporter Komunisty*, written in 2004, complements the earlier book by briefly describing his family, his early life, and stories about his work as a photojournalist working in communist Poland.<sup>21</sup> While many articles have been written on the photographer, his personal accounts provide insight into his motivations not only to photograph in communist Poland in the 1970s, but also to stay in the country and follow the events surrounding Solidarity in the 1980s. In these two publications, Niedenthal provides background information that contextualize his work, and shed light on the transition in both content and composition that occurred in his photography.

The album *Chris Niedenthal: Wybrane Fotografie (Selected Photographs) 1973-1989* (2014) presents selected photographs by Chris Niedenthal taken between 1973-1989. The introduction, written by writer and journalist, Jerzy Plich, highlights how, despite the fact that many of his photographs depict seemingly ordinary aspects of day to day life, Niedenthal's photographs can be understood as a "comic, dramatic and exceptionally potent depictions of real life."<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Łukasz Kamiński, *Erazm Ciołek, Solidarność, August 1980 – August 1989* (Warsaw, Poland: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2010), 31.

<sup>21</sup> Chris Niedenthal, "Fotoreporter Komunisty" [Photo Reporter of Communism], *Biuletyn Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej*, no. 11 (2004): 79.

<sup>22</sup> Chris Niedenthal and Jerzy Plich, *Chris Niedenthal: Wybrane Fotografie (Selected Photographs) 1973-1989*, trans. Caryl Swift (Olszanica, Poland: Wydawnictwo Bosz, 2014), 23.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

This project aims to analyze two sets of photographs taken by Chris Niedenthal between 1978 and 1982, and determine how changes in both the content and composition in his photography over this period of five years reflect the themes of Success and Solidarity. The first step in the research process was surveying the whole collection of Chris Niedenthal's photographs in the Black Star Collection. Consisting of 597 photographs, the collection ranges between 1977- 1985. By doing a review of the collection, I was able to get a sense of the entire scope and content of the photographs, and understand what kind of assignment work Niedenthal was doing for the Black Star photographic agency.

Of the 597 photographs taken by Chris Niedenthal in the Black Star collection, 264 have been digitized, and 336 have not yet been digitized. During the selection process, I was able to view the digitized images, both their rectos and versos on the Mimsy database used at the Ryerson Image Centre. I had to request that the photographs that have not been digitized be pulled out for me, so that I could go through them in person. Using these two approaches, I was able to view all 597 photographs, and get a sense of the subject matter these photographs depict.

Due to a number of reasons, I narrowed the scope of my research to five years, between 1978-1982. The first reason was brought up earlier, that these dates align with key moments in Polish history. The second reason is that because the majority of the photographs in the Black Star collection were taken during this time frame of five years, there is a large number of photographs to work with. Finding that there were key distinctions between the photographs taken at the end of the 1970s and the ones taken at the start of the 1980s, and that this shift in both content and composition in the photographs coincided with the political revolution occurring in the country, I was prompted to consider how these political events affected Chris Niedenthal's job as a photojournalist. After narrowing the scope of the photographs to the span of five years, the collection continued to be too large to be presented in this thesis. The body of work had to be further minimized.

To help me with the final selection of photographs, I decided to go through each photograph taken between 1978 and 1982, which in total adds up to 469 photographs, and identify the year, medium, location, and category that it belongs to. Using Excel, I entered the data onto a spreadsheet so that I could analyze the exact numbers for each year and themes that recur in the photographs. After initially grouping these photographs into two separate categories based on important moments in Polish history, corresponding to Success (1978-1979) and

Solidarity (1980-1982), I found that within these categories there are common themes and subjects that were repeatedly photographed by Niedenthal.

In the photographs taken in 1978, the common themes that emerge are of prosperity (architecture, landmarks, modernization, industry and workers), youth (festivities and amusement), and religion (pilgrimage and mass). In the photographs taken in the early 1980s, the key groups depict shortages (food, gas, and hunger march), revolutionary activities (strikes, protests, Solidarity, religion) and counter-revolutionary activities (violence, conflict, militia, and national parades). Identifying the two key groups from 1978, and the three from the early 1980s, allowed me to establish the main themes and subjects that Niedenthal photographed, and informed the selection process of the representative sample presented in this thesis. Rather than include hundreds of photographs, 45 have been selected as representative of the larger collection, with each theme represented within this sample.

In addition to the photographs in the Black Star Collection, 260 editions of *Newsweek* magazine were surveyed for photographic contributions by Chris Niedenthal between 1978 and 1982. By examining the original photographs alongside the photographs found in *Newsweek*, I am able to analyze the way in which the kind of photographs Chris Niedenthal was taking in the period of the 1970s and 1980s, would have been used in a Western publication. Since Niedenthal worked in Poland as a foreign photojournalist, I am interested in seeing what kind of photographs he took with the intention of presenting a Western audience with events happening in the country. An analysis of *Newsweek* will help to inform the Black Star photographs. Even though most of his photographs in Black Star would not have made it to the final publication, we can still see from these publications the kind of work he felt should be passed on to Western press agencies.

To add further context to this thesis, I conducted interviews with Chris Niedenthal, as well as Irena Hauck, a Polish photojournalist who had been trained in Poland and worked in this same period. While articles and books detailing the PRL and working conditions for photojournalists were useful in building the foundation for my arguments and the necessary background information to begin structuring the body of my work, these interviews provide both photojournalists' personal experiences regarding the decisions made in taking photographs and dealing with censorship at the time. While the interview with Chris Niedenthal further illuminates his personal experiences, the interview with Irena Hauck offers a counterpoint to Niedenthal's experiences, by providing the perspective of a homegrown Polish photographer working in the same climate.

This methodology, then, consists of three parts. First, I analyze a representative sample of photographs taken between 1978 and 1982. Second, I examine, the editions of *Newsweek* from

1978-1982. Third, I conduct interviews with Chris Niedenthal and Irena Hauck. Combining these three methods enables me to examine what it was like to work in the PRL, and to consider the nature of photojournalism under an oppressive regime.

#### 4. HISTORY OF THE MEDIA IN THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF POLAND

To understand photography coming from the People's Republic of Poland (PRL) in the 1970s, one must be aware of the circumstances that the press was working under at the time. All decisions related to media and communications were made by the Propaganda Department of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party. Photojournalists and journalists were controlled by means of the Central Committee functionaries editing, or rejecting controversial texts prior to their publications, or manipulating radio and TV programs right before their transmission. These processes, along with the censorship office's actions, prevented unapproved content from appearing in the media, whether it was TV, radio, newspaper, or magazines.<sup>23</sup> Regarding censorship in Poland, Jane Leftwich Curry wrote in the introduction of *The Black Book of Polish Censorship*: "For over thirty years Poles had lived with media that could not answer or address their questions or concerns because they either lied or told only part of the truth. People read newspapers and listened to radio and television, but they could not believe what they read and heard."<sup>24</sup>

Along with the censorship of the media in Poland, the state actively strove to produce propaganda. Propaganda can be defined as "the intentional and systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate thoughts, and to direct behaviours with the intention of bringing about reactions, which are consistent with the intentions of the creators of the propaganda."<sup>25</sup> As noted above, 'propaganda of success' was a term used in the 1970s, to describe an exaggeration of political successes and economic results in Poland.<sup>26</sup> It portrayed an idealized version of life in which everything is better than it was in reality, and in which the state adeptly provided for all the necessities of its citizens.<sup>27</sup> Encountering this form of propaganda would have been something new for Niedenthal, who had previously lived in a democratic Western country.

One the one hand, Poland "maintained a media system that was the most diverse in the Soviet bloc: for a population of over 30 million people, Poland had 56 different daily newspapers and 595 magazines, 4 radio stations, and 2 television channels, as well as 220 different factory newsletters and a lively world of theatres and cabarets."<sup>28</sup> On the other hand, the vast majority of

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<sup>23</sup> Paweł Sowiński, "Kierowanie 'Propagandą Sukcesu' w Mass Mediach" [Managing the Propaganda of "Success" in the Mass Media], *Studia Polityczne*, no. 24 (2009): 52.

<sup>24</sup> Jane Leftwich Curry, *The Black Book of Polish Censorship* (New York: The Rand Corporation, 1984), 4.

<sup>25</sup> Krystyna Piątkowska, "Estetyka PRL - Teksty Wizualne i Znaki w Propagandzie" [The Aesthetics of the People's Republic of Poland - Visual Texts and Signs in Propaganda], *Konteksty*, no. 1 (2011): 75.

<sup>26</sup> Jane Leftwich Curry, *Poland's Journalists: Professionalism and Politics* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 67.

<sup>27</sup> Raymond Taras, *Ideology in a Socialist State: Poland 1956-1983* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 222.

<sup>28</sup> Jane Leftwich Curry, *The Black Book of Polish Censorship* (New York: The Rand Corporation, 1984), 25.

the press in Poland at the time was essentially an organ of the ruling Polish United Workers' Party, and as such functioned as a propaganda apparatus.<sup>29</sup> Important articles were not published without having been screened by the Department of Propaganda of the Central Committee.<sup>30</sup> Both written and photographic information regarding the West was especially censored. The Central Committee would send out specific instructions to publishers, outlining how to deal with this kind of material, what they were to publish, and how they were to report on such topics.<sup>31</sup> Photographs depicting the most important dignitaries went through seven levels of control before publication, and portraits of leaders went beyond that, requiring consultation from high levels within the Central Committee.<sup>32</sup> All of this sheds light on how a seemingly simple task as taking a photograph at a public event could be turned into an arduous process in the PRL for Niedenthal's Polish colleagues.

The government of the PRL in the 1970s was run by Edward Gierek, First Secretary of the Polish United Workers' Party. At the beginning of Gierek's rule, the country appeared to be developing. Not only did the standard of living go up, the economy began to grow, and the cost of living even went down.<sup>33</sup> This had been achieved by borrowing from the West, with the intent of repaying creditors through "the improved extraction of raw materials and the export of goods produced in new factories built with foreign capital."<sup>34</sup> Not long after Gierek took control of the Polish United Worker's Party, most working groups in the country received higher wages and were promised that changes would be installed in both working conditions and benefits. These were all things that Poles had been fighting for when Władysław Gomułka, Gierek's predecessor, had been in power.<sup>35</sup> At this time, the media agenda functioned to convince workers that Gierek's economic plans were not only the best, but also the only alternative that would ensure the gains that were promised.<sup>36</sup> Unlike his predecessor Gomułka, Gierek embraced the possibilities of the press, offering "to treat the media positively both materially and ideologically."<sup>37</sup> Gierek's program of introducing rapid socioeconomic modernization to the PRL needed a working relationship with the media.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Paweł Sowiński, "Kierowanie 'Propagandą Sukcesu' w Mass Mediach" [Managing the Propaganda of "Success" in the Mass Media], *Studia Polityczne*, no. 24 (2009): 61.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

<sup>32</sup> Piotr Osęka, *Mydlenie Oczu. Przypadki Propagandy w Polsce [Cases of Propaganda in Poland]* (Kraków, Poland: Wydawnictwo Znak, 2010), 226.

<sup>33</sup> Adam Zamoyski, *The Polish Way* (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1987), 384.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> Jane Leftwich Curry, *The Black Book of Polish Censorship* (New York: The Rand Corporation, 1984), 18.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>37</sup> Jane Leftwich Curry, *Poland's Journalists: Professionalism and Politics* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 65.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

While initially the press were drawn to Gierek and supported his policies, specifically those aimed at modernizing the country and improving its economy, by the mid-seventies, as his policies began to fail, the initial enthusiasm of the press and journalists transformed into a systematic denial of actual unfolding events.<sup>39</sup> Despite the promising signs when Gierek first took office, the economic structure that he established began to break down. It was not long before shortages of staple goods and food were in short supply. When Gierek raised the prices of food by an average of 60% on June 24, 1976, strikes and protests broke out immediately.<sup>40</sup> While the price rises were rescinded immediately due to the large numbers of people protesting and rioting, the Citizen's Militia (ZOMO) was sent out to arrest hundreds of citizens, many of whom were beaten. What followed was the dismissal of hundreds of workers from their jobs, and in some cases people were sentenced to 10 years in prison.<sup>41</sup>

The 1980s are collectively considered to be one of the most significant periods in the history of 20<sup>th</sup> century Poland. At the start of the decade, a previously unseen number of strikes and protests led to the establishment of the Solidarity Trade Union (NSZZ 'Solidarność'), which enjoyed the support of millions.<sup>42</sup> The circumstances that led to these mass protests that culminated in the formation of the Solidarity trade union were a direct response to the failed leadership of Edward Gierek, which resulted in the fall of the economy.<sup>43</sup> Łukasz Kaminski describes the situation in *Erazm Ciołek, Solidarnosc August 1980 – August 1989*, "Standing lines in stores soon became a daily experience, while the 'winter of the century' at the turn of 1978 and 1979, when heavy snowfalls literally paralyzed the country, came to symbolize the bankruptcy of the system."<sup>44</sup> On a similar note, this point resonates with Chris Niedenthal's personal experience. He recalls that

Getting gasoline for your car was always a problem, so you always had to think about that when travelling. The roads were not very good but on the other hand, they had much less traffic on them in those days. Buying photo equipment in Poland was almost impossible, and the same applied to good western colour films. Having said that though, as a foreigner I could always take a car or train to West Berlin and stock up there. There were shortages of virtually everything, including detergents and even toilet paper, but again, for someone like me, West Berlin was the answer.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Jane Leftwich Curry, *Poland's Journalists: Professionalism and Politics* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 66.

<sup>40</sup> Adam Zamoyski, *The Polish Way* (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1987), 384.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 385.

<sup>42</sup> Łukasz Kaminski, *Erazm Ciołek, Solidarność, August 1980 – August 1989* (Warsaw, Poland: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2010), 25.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> Chris Niedenthal, interview, Toronto, June 1, 2015.

Throughout the late 1970s, Gierek continued to struggle with his economic strategies, and in July 1980, he once again ‘balanced the books’ by raising the price of food. In response to this action, strikes broke out immediately; however, unlike previously in 1976, “their tenor and their strategy were entirely new.”<sup>46</sup> Before Gierek was even out of power, strikers criticized the media, and those who had been in close ties with Gierek were charged with personal corruption. As the strikes went on, news spread that the economy had collapsed, thus contradicting what had been promoted through the ‘propaganda of success’.<sup>47</sup> “Even those who had been in the Gierek regime chimed in to attack the ‘propaganda of success’ as having done great harm.”<sup>48</sup> The ‘propaganda of success’ was blamed for much of the problems that had culminated in the late 1970s.<sup>49</sup>

When on July 1<sup>st</sup>, 1980 the authorities raised the price of meat products and the prices in factory canteens and kiosks, angry Poles took to the streets in protest, followed by strikes in several factories and plants, with various organizations and committees forming all over the country. In August 1980, the shipyard workers in Gdańsk, and other groups all over Poland achieved victory, and an agreement was signed between the government and the workers’ strike committee on August 31, in Gdańsk. The officials agreed to give Polish workers the right to strike, to have an independent union, and to have a media system that conveyed different viewpoints.<sup>50</sup> On September 17<sup>th</sup>, 1980 “representatives of founding committees from across the country decided to bring into being a single centralized union with headquarters in Gdańsk, built on a regional structure: the Independent Self-governing Trade Union Solidarity.”<sup>51</sup> However, these gains were short lived, as it became clear to the authorities that the negative reports being printed in the press were quite detrimental, and could no longer be tolerated. In response, General Wojciech Jaruzelski took measures to control the media. He stated at the time: “he who does not control the media, does not control power.”<sup>52</sup>

In reaction to the rise and large following of the Solidarity movement, the communist authorities under the leadership of General Jaruzelski imposed Martial Law on December 13<sup>th</sup>, 1981, in an attempt to defeat the momentum it had gained in the previous months. All public gatherings were banned, and any organizations and associations that were not officially recognized as political parties were suspended. No one was allowed to travel outside of their cities without a special permit. Moreover, the publication of most newspapers and periodicals was

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<sup>46</sup> Adam Zamoyski, *The Polish Way* (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1987), 390.

<sup>47</sup> Jane Leftwich Curry, *Poland's Journalists: Professionalism and Politics* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 67.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

<sup>50</sup> Jane Leftwich Curry, *The Black Book of Polish Censorship* (New York: The Rand Corporation, 1984), 421.

<sup>51</sup> Łukasz Kaminski, *Erazm Ciołek, Solidarność, August 1980 – August 1989* (Warsaw, Poland: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2010), 27.

<sup>52</sup> Jane Leftwich Curry, *The Black Book of Polish Censorship* (New York: The Rand Corporation, 1984), 421.

halted, and radio and television was limited to a single channel.<sup>53</sup> When Martial Law was declared, there was an end to the freedom the media had been awarded after August 1980. Solidarity leaders, journalists, and editors, “many of whom had worked in the system for years, were detained, fired and attacked as traitors and enemies. Many refused to further submit themselves and their work to the distortions of censorship and so left the field of journalism.”<sup>54</sup> This was true for photojournalists working in the country as well. Photojournalist Irena Hauck recalls how after Martial Law was declared, the offices of the publication she had been working for were closed and her co-workers could no longer enter the space. They were given their pay once a month, but didn’t have to show up at the office. The rolls of film from the office were confiscated when an individual was caught taking photographs during Martial Law.<sup>55</sup>

The choice of electing General Jaruzelski (in February 1981) as the head of the state was a strategic move for the Polish United Workers’ Party to consolidate power. He was faithful to Moscow, and was put in place to execute a new strategy to once again take control of the population.<sup>56</sup> On December 13, 1981, upon the declaration of Martial Law the majority of Solidarity leaders were arrested, thousands of people were dragged out of their homes and sent to prisons or internment camps. Both tanks and the Citizen’s Militia were deployed to patrol the streets. All media outlets were cut off, and a “State of War” was announced.<sup>57</sup> This is echoed by Niedenthal, who recalls that “the onset of Martial Law put a spanner in the works: at first we were neither allowed to shoot photographs openly in the streets, and nor were we able to ship our films out in the normal fashion. All air services to and from Poland were cut.”<sup>58</sup> Regarding the arrests of members of the Solidarity movement, “in all, some 10,000 of its members were detained, while another 150,000 were hauled in for ‘preventative and cautionary talks’.”<sup>59</sup> Overnight, Poland went from being the easiest country in Eastern Europe for foreign correspondents to cover, to one of the hardest. One of the most obvious changes in the media landscape was the disappearance of many news sources, particularly those who were Solidarity leaders, of whom, many were sent off to internment camps. Furthermore, the restrictions of Martial Law had completely stopped the activities of both photojournalists and journalists, who had previously held more freedom of movement in Polish society.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Lukasz Kaminski, *Erazm Ciołek, Solidarność, August 1980 – August 1989* (Warsaw, Poland: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2010), 31.

<sup>54</sup> Jane Leftwich Curry, *The Black Book of Polish Censorship* (New York: The Rand Corporation, 1984), 5.

<sup>55</sup> Irena Hauck, interview by the author, Guelph, May 1, 2015.

<sup>56</sup> Adam Zamoyski, *The Polish Way* (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1987), 393.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> Chris Niedenthal, e-mail interview by the author, Email, June 1, 2015.

<sup>59</sup> Adam Zamoyski, *The Polish Way* (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1987), 393.

<sup>60</sup> Howard Tyner, "Getting the Facts Has Become Tough Job in Poland," *The Day* (New London, CT), March 11, 1982, 14,

Photography had always been a sensitive subject in Poland; however, it became more so with the imposition of Martial Law, when it became illegal to photograph the military state that oversaw the country. Chris Niedenthal recalls, “The baddies were the militia, the ZOMO riot police and the secret police – they were the ones we learned to try and avoid as much as possible. In the end, as a photojournalist I realized that the only real danger was from those quarters, where they would think nothing of beating you up in situations such as street demos.”<sup>61</sup> Reporters and photographers had to be escorted by colonels in the Polish army, who dictated what could and could not be photographed. It was not obvious to the photojournalists why they were allowed to photograph one thing, and not the other. Foreign correspondents frequently had to seek clarification from the Foreign Ministry about the Martial Law regulations governing photography. In one instance, a correspondent looking for clarification received this response from a ministry official: “You have the right to take pictures, and the authorities have the right to take them away.”<sup>62</sup> If they did not cooperate with the authorities, they were threatened that their film and cameras would be confiscated. During this time, it was illegal to photograph Polish army officials, or any subject matter associated with the military.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Chris Niedenthal, e-mail interview by the author, Email, June 1, 2015.

<sup>62</sup> Howard Tyner, "Getting the Facts Has Become Tough Job in Poland," *The Day* (New London, CT), March 11, 1982, 14.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

## 5. CHRIS NIEDENTHAL'S EXPERIENCES IN THE PRL

Chris Niedenthal arrived in Poland in 1973 with the intention of working as a foreign correspondent. Before the government accredited him, he did not have the privilege to officially ship his work via airfreight, and could only send rolls of film to his agencies via mail, or deliver them personally. Upon being accredited by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, photographers would receive the identity card of a foreign correspondent, and be given the right to send the film the official way, with stamps from the Polish Interpress Agency, which looked after the correspondents.<sup>64</sup> Niedenthal was accredited in Poland as a photographer working for an unknown French agency *Team International*, despite the fact he was really working as a freelance photojournalist. This accreditation allowed Niedenthal to send undeveloped film to an office in the US, England, or Germany. However, it is important to keep in mind that photographers only had these privileges if the state granted them accreditation, thus this freedom to ship their film through official channels. It would often be the case that rolls of film belonging to unaccredited photographers, which were sent through regular mail, would not arrive at their destination, because they had been opened and inspected by the authorities prior to shipping out.<sup>65</sup> Hence, the regulatory system in place made it difficult to send out photographs that didn't meet the authority's standards. Thus, later during Martial Law, Niedenthal resorted to smuggling his rolls of film out by handing them to passengers boarding trains to Germany, in hopes that they would deliver them to the right agencies.<sup>66</sup>

One of the first moments of resistance that Niedenthal witnessed were the events in Radom, back in 1976. Although at the time he did not work for any publication, and did not want to get involved in any political events, he decided to drive to the factory where the demonstrations were taking place, accompanied by his wife Karolina and Krzysztof Bobinski, who worked for the *Financial Times*. Niedenthal hid cameras in a shopping bag. They drove up close to the factory in a bus, but as they mingled in with the crowd of workers, the militia immediately sent them away. They threatened Niedenthal's wife that she wouldn't be able to finish her university studies if they got involved in the agitation (a tactic often used to deter revolutionary activities). Niedenthal did not take a single photograph that day.<sup>67</sup> Arguably, in the late 1970s, he did not set out to provoke in his job as a photojournalist. However, he does note

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<sup>64</sup> "Chris Niedenthal," *Doc Magazine*, December 2012, 38, <http://www.docmagazine.com>.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> Chris Niedenthal, "Fotoreporter Komunizmu" [Photo Reporter of Communism], *Biuletyn Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej*, no. 11 (2004): 90.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

that, though he wasn't ideologically neutral, he was aware that as a foreigner, he was under constant watch of the secret service, and he didn't want to endanger anyone.<sup>68</sup>

The first photographs Niedenthal took for *Newsweek* were illegal churches built in the Białystok region in 1979 (Fig. 1). A correspondent from Bonn, Paul Martin, got him involved in this project, as he was writing a piece on the topic.<sup>69</sup> This project was quite dangerous, since many of these churches had been built along the border with the Soviet Union. Individuals, especially foreigners, were not allowed to take photographs on this territory. Many of the churches they saw were essentially regular single family homes, or homes that had a chapel instead of a living room. In that region, many churches were built in secret, in homes or barns, which would later be taken down by the state. Niedenthal describes this assignment as his first moment of rebellion.<sup>70</sup> From this point on, he did more assignments for *Newsweek*, photographing the Pope's first pilgrimage to Poland in 1979, which he worked on with Paul Martin again.<sup>71</sup> Niedenthal describes his career really getting jump started by this assignment. He describes how happy he felt that Poland would once again be on the map, stating; "it meant that people in the world would finally know where Poland was, and it would be easier for me to sell my reports from Poland, because my editor would know where it was."<sup>72</sup> Indeed, the Pope brought about a new interest in the country, and brought along with him great support for the Solidarity movement.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Chris Niedenthal, "Fotoreporter Komunizmu" [Photo Reporter of Communism], *Biuletyn Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej*, no. 11 (2004): 84.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

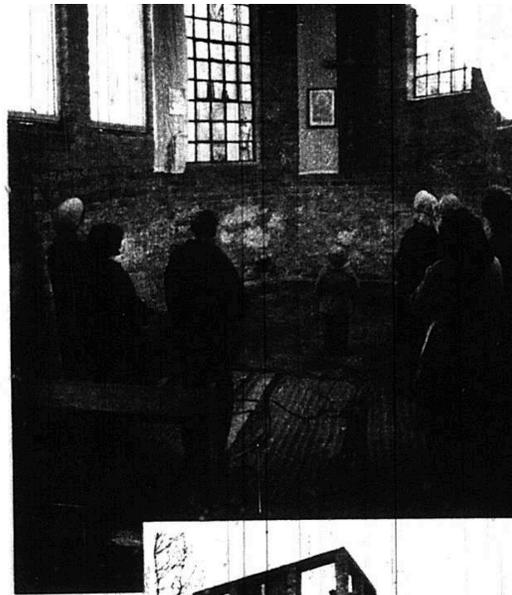
<sup>72</sup> Ewa Kasnik and Monika Nowicka, "Polish Freedom Through the Lens of Chris Niedenthal," Poland - Official Promotional Website, <http://www.polska.pl/en/experience-poland/history-poland/polish-freedom-through-lens-chris-niedenthal/>.

<sup>73</sup> Adam Zamojski, *The Polish Way* (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1987), 389.



Photos by Chris Niedenthal

Rebellious Catholics worship in two chapels of Opole Stare's illegal church: 'Our Pope will stand by us'



## The Church Defiant

By Paul Martin

When news reached the Polish village of Opole Stare that a countryman had been elected Pope, the simple folk responded with an eloquent gesture: they built a church. Overnight, two steeples rose over the rusted tin roof of a brick-and-weatherboard cottage. Thousands of Roman Catholics crowded the streets to dedicate the humble—and illegal—

problems." In Poland, Catholics are asserting their beliefs with a new boldness that has spread to Lithuania and the Ukraine, the neighboring Catholic strongholds of the Soviet Union. In Hungary, the faithful have renewed hopes that their church can regain its lost vigor. Even in Czechoslovakia, where the church has been broken by brutal oppression, there are glimmers of an

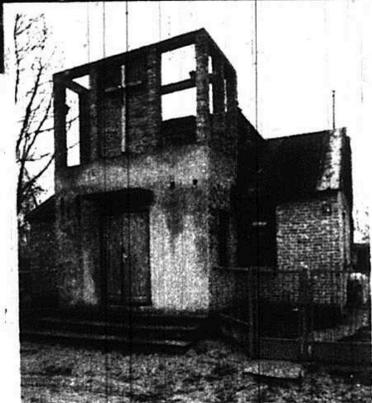


Figure 1. *Newsweek*, July 1, 1978, p. 36

A distinction worth noting when considering the work of Chris Niedenthal and other photojournalists in the 1970s, is that while many may have adhered to the censorship regulations set out by the state at the time, this does not imply intent to disseminate state ideologies. In many cases, photographers had to comply with certain restrictions in order to make a living at the time. Polish photojournalists had to deal with the fact that there was no such thing as the free press in the PRL.<sup>74</sup> They grew up with a media system that was not free and had to do their best to reconcile their own ideologies, and those of the state. When Niedenthal first came to Poland, he was treated as an outsider, as he was considered a foreign photojournalist. Having gone to school and been trained in England, he came from a different tradition of photojournalism than those who had grown up and studied in Poland. Thus, he had to develop an understanding of the media system, something those in Poland had been accustomed to for decades.

<sup>74</sup> Lukasz Modelski, *Fotobiografia PRL (Photobiography PRL)* (n.p.: Znak, 2013), 8.

Niedenthal describes Martial Law as being the most difficult time for him as a photojournalist, as he describes,

Looking back, I guess we had no idea what Martial Law really meant. War, real war is immediately obvious, I would assume. You realize straightaway that your life is in danger. Martial Law is different of course. The armed soldiers are there, the armoured personnel carriers, sometimes tanks – but your first reaction is uncertainty as to what can, will, or might happen. You naively hope that nobody is going to begin shooting. All the same, during the first few days of Martial Law I was worried about what could happen.<sup>75</sup>

Photographers couldn't freely send photographs to their editors in the West. Martial Law came into place literally overnight. *Newsweek* received the first photographs depicting Martial Law from French foreign correspondents, who managed to take some photographs before leaving Poland. Despite the difficulties in photographing during this period, it was still easier for Niedenthal to take the photographs, than to smuggle them out to the United States, as he noted; "In the first week of Martial Law, I was trying to figure out how to smuggle photographs out of the country."<sup>76</sup> This point was crucial, as the photographs were of no use if they didn't make it to his editors. He couldn't leave the country because he was worried they wouldn't let him back in. He decided to go to the train station in Gdańsk, and handed them over to a random student from Germany, who promised to get in touch with *Newsweek's* office in Bonn. Poles would have watched an edition on TVP warning them not to smuggle film out of the country, so they would have been hesitant to undertake such a task. There were severe restrictions put on foreign travel at the time, and very few Poles could have left in the first place, let alone smuggled material out of the country. However, the German student kept his word, as weeks later Niedenthal saw his photograph in the pages of *Newsweek*; the now famous image, "Czas Apokalipsy" (Fig. 2) which effectively portrayed Martial Law in one image.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Chris Niedenthal, e-mail interview by the author, Email, June 1, 2015.

<sup>76</sup> Chris Niedenthal, "Fotoreporter Komunizmu" [Photo Reporter of Communism], *Biuletyn Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej*, no. 11 (2004): 86.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

*Armor at a Warsaw theater: The movie was 'Apocalypse Now'*  
Chris Niedenthal

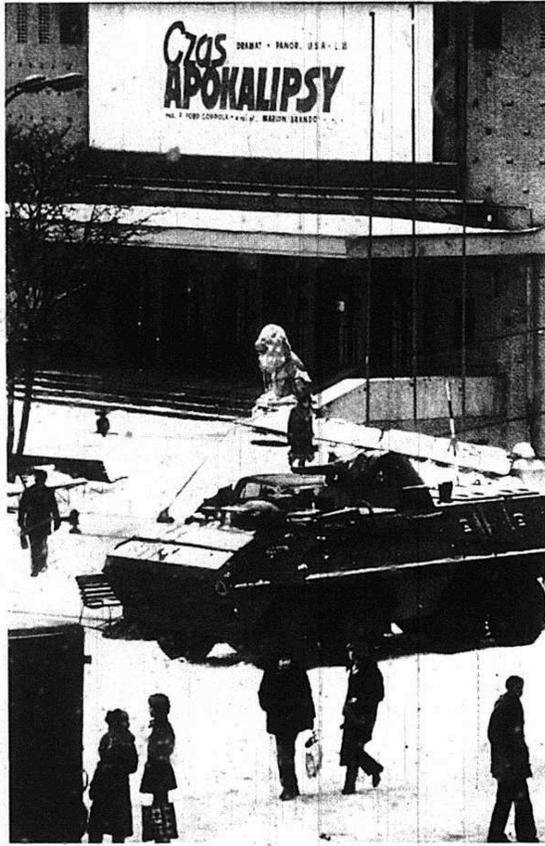


Figure 2. Newsweek, December 28, 1981, p. 1

All foreign correspondents were given until December 31 1981 to renew their accreditation and visa. When Martial Law came into place on the 13<sup>th</sup> of December, they only had two weeks before their visa expired. Moreover, during these two weeks and beyond, normal channels of getting material abroad were blocked, and any kind of trip in Poland had to be planned through the Polish Interpress Agency. The Agency would also often assign a chaperone. Tellingly, Niedenthal makes the point that he took the photographs of street gatherings and demonstrations without a chaperone.<sup>78</sup> It was only after his Polish visa was extended that he felt comfortable travelling to England the following January. On this trip he acted as a courier for foreign journalists. He brought over a large number of photographic rolls of film, films on cassette, and written texts that were later delivered to the *Newsweek* office. He also flew to New York, and there he got a permanent contract with *Newsweek*, which clearly valued his work.<sup>79</sup>

<sup>78</sup> Chris Niedenthal, "Fotoreporter Komunizmu" [Photo Reporter of Communism], *Biuletyn Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej*, no. 11 (2004): 90.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

For its part, the state was interested in his work, and Niedenthal was approached with invitations to cooperate with security forces on a number of occasions, by photographing gatherings and happenings for them. The authorities were keen to have photographs that depicted the faces of people involved in the demonstrations, in order to arrest them.<sup>80</sup> As Chris Niedenthal recalls,

They had confiscated one of my Nikon camera bodies at one point, and told me that they would return it to me if I would agree to supply them with photographs of people taken during demos. What they forgot to think about was that sure, for a Polish photographer, the loss of a Nikon camera was a big loss, whereas for a Western photographer it was, in those days, more or less the value of one, maybe two days work for a magazine. So I told them they could keep it.<sup>81</sup>

The photographs that he took throughout this time were taken on slide film, and he never developed them before publication. Instead, the publishers developed them. The Western agencies that he worked for demanded the undeveloped slide film and a guarantee that no one had taken copies of these photographs beforehand.<sup>82</sup> Customs officers searched tourists' luggage, and along with the Polish Postal Service, opened packages being sent to or from Poland, while a censor on duty would determine what printed, filmed, and taped matter should be confiscated.<sup>83</sup> Thus, Niedenthal worked under rigid constraints and took huge risks in getting his work out of the country; most of the time handing rolls of film to random people at train stations, who could bring the film to the West.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Chris Niedenthal, "Fotoreporter Komunizmu" [Photo Reporter of Communism], *Biuletyn Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej*, no. 11 (2004): 84.

<sup>81</sup> Chris Niedenthal, e-mail interview by the author, Email, June 1, 2015.

<sup>82</sup> Chris Niedenthal, "Fotoreporter Komunizmu" [Photo Reporter of Communism], *Biuletyn Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej*, no. 11 (2004): 86.

<sup>83</sup> Alexander Remmer, "A Note of Post-Publication Censorship in Poland 1980-1987," *Soviet Studies* 41, no. 3 (1989): 418.

<sup>84</sup> Magdalena Wróbelka, "Chris Niedenthal," Culture.Pl, last modified December 2011, <http://culture.pl/pl/tworca/chris-niedenthal>.

## **6. ANALYSIS OF PHOTOGRAPHS IN THE BLACK STAR COLLECTION**

In order to analyze how Chris Niedenthal portrayed Success and Solidarity in his photography, I conducted a thematic analysis of his work from the years 1978-1982 in the Black Star Collection, as well as a visual composition analysis of a subset of this body of work in the Black Star collection. In establishing the prominent themes of this body of work, I catalogued all 469 photographs from 1978-1982, and in cataloguing I found a set of 6 categories. These categories suggest that the overarching themes of Success were prosperity, youth/happiness, and religion, which were primarily taken in the late 1970s, and the themes of Solidarity were shortages, revolutionary activities, and counter-revolutionary activities, primarily taken in the early 1980s. In the following section I will provide an overview of each category.

### **1970s Prosperity**

In the 1970s, Edward Gierek set out to modernize the country. Significant changes were made in economic relations with the West, with millions of dollars in loans and credits being obtained from Western institutions. The borrowed capital used to begin new industrial projects, which included the Huta Katowice iron and steel works in Silesia, and coal mining in the southern and eastern Poland.<sup>85</sup> Chris Niedenthal's photographs that depict architecture, landmarks, industry and workers, convey a sense of prosperity and were congenial to the kind of images that the state wanted presented to the outside world.

### **1970s Youth / Happiness**

Festivals and revelers are frequently depicted in Niedenthal's work from the late 1970s, focusing on favorable aspects of life in the PRL. These types of representations were in line with the 'propaganda of success' insofar as they drew attention away from the failures of the party system. In turn, they emphasize escape and amusement as being a central part of life in the PRL.

### **1970s Religion**

Religion is depicted in Chris Niedenthal's photography as a central aspect of Polish life in the 1970s, and reflects not only the importance of Catholicism in this deeply religious country but also pride in the 1978 election of the Polish Pope John Paul II to this position. Chris Niedenthal has mentioned that the election of a Polish Pope in a sense put Poland on the map, and

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<sup>85</sup> Paul J. Best, "Poland's Politics in the 1970s," *International Journal of Politics* 9, no. 1 (Spring 1979): 6.

thus fostered interest in the country.<sup>86</sup> Taken within this context, many of Niedenthal's photographs from the 1970s highlight both the importance of religion in Poland, and how Poles celebrated their faith at that time.

### **1980s Shortages**

The apparent successes of the 1970s took a turn towards the end of the decade, leading to the shortages that occurred in the country during the early 1980s. Food shortages swept the country, which resulted in people protesting and organizing hunger marches. Essential commodities, such as medication, hygiene products, clothes, home products, and gas were also in short supply, resulting in large queues of people lining up for the opportunity to purchase these items, which were hard to come by. This state of affairs became a fact of life for the people of Poland, as the shortages were not temporary.<sup>87</sup> Moreover, this reality does not go unnoticed in Niedenthal's work, given that shortages becomes a major topic that he photographed in the 1980s.

### **1980s Revolutionary activities**

A significant category associated with the theme of Solidarity is that of revolutionary activities. This category includes depictions of strikes, many of which focus on the people striking at the Gdańsk Shipyard, students at various Universities throughout the country, as well as farmers in rural areas. Protests are another common subject in the revolutionary activities group, with photographs depicting masses of people of all ages and backgrounds coming together to protest living conditions, and the shortages that swept the country after the failings of the Gierek's economic policies. A third significant subject in the revolutionary activities group is politicized religion. As political historian Paul J. Best pointed out in 1979, "certainly a peculiarity of Poland is the existence of a strong counterbalance to full communist Party control – the Roman Catholic Church."<sup>88</sup> The combined influence that the church held in the country, along with its aggressive anti-communist stance, led to an interesting politicized religious role. This focus on politicized religion stands out in Chris Niedenthal's photography, and is very different from the representations of religion in the 1970s. Uniting strikes, protests, and politicized religion in this category is an overall strong visual presence of Solidarity banners, slogans, and symbols, which emphasize the immense support that the Solidarity trade union enjoyed throughout the country.

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<sup>86</sup> Official Promotional Website, <http://www.polska.pl/en/experience-poland/history-poland/polish-freedom-through-lens-chris-niedenthal/>.

<sup>87</sup> Lukasz Kaminski, *Erazm Ciołek, Solidarność, August 1980 – August 1989* (Warsaw, Poland: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2010), 25.

<sup>88</sup> Paul J. Best, "Poland's Politics in the 1970s," *International Journal of Politics* 9, no. 1 (Spring 1979): 10.

### **1980s Counter-revolutionary activities**

The category of counter-revolutionary activities goes hand in hand with that of revolutionary activities. This category encompasses the responses that the government took against revolutionary acts. Depictions of violence against citizens and conflict in the streets show how far the state was willing to go in order to maintain power and reinforce its control over the population. The military is another significant visual trope in this group, ever present in all aspects of Polish life during Martial Law, appearing in the photographs that depict conflict and violence, as well as those of national parades and May Day celebrations.

#### **a. DATA ANALYSIS**

After cataloguing all 469 photographs taken between 1978 and 1982, I examined the catalogue data and found a number of patterns and trends in Niedenthal's work. In the late 1970s, there is an absence of photographs that are critical of the situation in Poland and many of the photographs taken in this period appear to suggest that Poland is thriving. In the 1970s there are no photographs depicting strikes, protests, violence, conflict, or shortages. In contrast to this, in the early 1980s, 32 photographs depict strikes, 7 show protests in the streets, 13 depict violence and conflict, and 12 focus on various shortages that were prevalent in the country, including food and gas (Fig. 3) and (Fig. 32).



**Figure 3. Black Star Print 19-135, [Poland], 1981**

If one were to make an inference from the images in this collection, it might be assumed that indeed the period of the 1970s was a period of Success. Yet, we know from historical analyses that this was not the case. Strikes, protests, violence, conflict, and shortages were all present and significant during 1970s, but through the agenda of the ‘propaganda of success’ they were tucked away. Rather the media focused on minor, fixable issues, and effort was put toward convincing people of the success of the system.<sup>89</sup> Nothing in the photographs taken in the 1970s suggests that there is growing unrest and instability in the country, much like the authorities sought to convey through their propaganda.

Falling within the prosperity category, there are many photographs from the 1970s that focus on various Polish landmarks. I identified three types of landmark photographs: Architecture, Historic Sites, and Promotional. Relating to Architecture, there are depictions of significant

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<sup>89</sup> Jane Leftwich Curry, *The Black Book of Polish Censorship* (New York: The Rand Corporation, 1984), 19.

buildings in Poland with both old and new architectural styles. These depictions emphasize Poland's history as well as its modernization. Photographs of important Historic Sites in Poland include images of the Warsaw Ghetto Memorial and the Baroque summer residence of King Jan Sobieski III, Wilanów Palace. Furthermore, many of the Landmark photographs resemble promotional photography that one might find in a travel brochure, or a magazine, with the intended purpose of promoting the country and culture. Examples of this kind of photography include a scenic photograph of the center square in Kazimierz Dolny, (Fig. 4) or a photograph depicting the shifting sand dunes of Łeba, on the Baltic coast of Northern Poland. The total number of Landmark photographs taken in the 1970s is 49, while only 6 were taken in the 1980s. In the late 1970s, 14 photographs depict Architecture, 19 depict Sites, and 16 depict Promotional content. In comparison, in the early 1980s, there are 3 photographs depicting Architecture, 3 depicting Sites, and none depicting Promotional content. At this point, the absence of these photographs suggests this theme was unlikely to grab the attention of editors in the West, as they seemed irrelevant to the unfolding revolution.



**Figure 4. Black Star Print 19-486, [Kazimierz Dolny – The Square (Near Lublin, E. Poland)], 1978**

In contrast to the other subjects that Niedenthal photographed in the 1980s, his images of life in rural Poland stand out because they are to some degree removed from the political events

that were occurring in the bigger cities at the time. Interestingly, Niedenthal photographed rural Poland in both the 1970s and 1980s, and the subject can, in different instances, invoke themes of either Success or Solidarity. While the 9 photographs taken in the 1970s fall into the category of Prosperity, focusing on scenes described as “Old Style farming in Poland”, or a “Potato Harvest near Warsaw” (Fig. 5), some of the 16 photographs taken in the 1980s fall into the category of Revolutionary Activities, focusing on the village of Zbrosza Duża, (Fig. 6), where in 1978 the peasants defense committee was set up, which was the “first manifestation of rural Solidarity in Poland.”<sup>90</sup> Other photographs from the 1980s depict state run cattle co-ops, highlighting the State’s hand in setting up programs of collective farming in the PRL.



Figure 5. Black Star Print 19-1739, [Old-Style Farming in Poland], 1978

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<sup>90</sup> Keith John Lepak, *Prelude to Solidarity: Poland and the Politics of the Gierek Regime* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 131.



**Figure 6. Black Star Print 19-441,  
[The Village of Zbrosza Duża, where in 1978 the first peasants defense committee was set up], 1981**

Though these photos can be grouped under Prosperity, they reflect the state's program to hide the fact that many people living in these rural areas were poor and struggling.<sup>91</sup> Images of rural Poland with captions that read "Old Style farming in Poland", or a "Potato Harvest near Warsaw", take attention away from what is happening behind the scenes, and promote a nostalgic portrayal of agriculture in the country, suggesting prosperity in the agriculture sector. The 'propaganda of success' in the 1970s attempted to hide the fact that people in the country were poor. According to the official message, poverty had been eradicated.<sup>92</sup> As photojournalist Irena Hauck describes, the state would go to great lengths to keep up appearances of a prospering country when delegations drove through rural areas and small villages. There were stories told about formal travels of the First Secretary of the Communist Party. The route was prepared ahead of time and the so-called spontaneous visit to the farmer's homestead was well prepared in advance. In preparation, the authorities would go so far as to bring in animals to make it look like the farmers were prospering.<sup>93</sup> Irena Hauck was at the time photographing similar villages during

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<sup>91</sup> Irena Hauck, interview by the author, Guelph, May 1, 2015.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

her down time while on official assignments. Her photographs depict typical life in the Polish countryside, including shearing sheep (Fig. 7), country homes (Fig. 8), and the rural engagement in Solidarity (Fig. 9).



**Figure 7. Personal Print from Irena Hauck, *Sheep Shearing*,** Sheep shearing usually happened in the barn. This woman had only few sheep and preferred to do it in her kitchen.



**Figure 8. Personal Print from Irena Hauck, *Grudzięwszczyzna, Poland, 1977*, Mr. Kucharski, the mayor of this village and his family lived in a wood frame house with a straw roof. The inside is much the same as it was years ago. The exterior of the house has been redone and it is now used as a summer home by the mayors' grandson.**



**Figure 9. Personal Print from Irena Hauck, *Farmers meeting*, County of Świdnica, November, 1980 Farmers meet in the local community hall to nominate Solidarity representatives who will speak for them at the national level.**

With the advent of the Solidarity movement, Niedenthal's photography focused in on the movement, and those associated with it, as well as government officials that opposed Solidarity. These photographs fall under the categories Revolutionary Activity and Counter Revolutionary Activity, respectively. Between 1980 and 1982, there are 50 photographs in the Black Star Collection that depict personalities associated with the Solidarity movement such as Lech Wałęsa, the leader of the Solidarity movement, and 48 photographs depicting government personalities such as General Wojciech Jaruzelski, the head of state (Fig. 10). The numbers on both sides of the conflict are nearly equal, reflecting what appears to be an attempt to convey the perspectives of both sides, despite Niedenthal's strong leaning in support of the Solidarity movement.<sup>94</sup> In the 1970s his focus was not so much on political personalities or other noteworthy individuals, as there are only 14 such photographs. Due to the lack of photographs depicting personalities (from both government and opposition) in the 1970s, it would appear that Niedenthal stayed away from overtly political subjects, and focused his work on documenting the country from an outsider's perspective, one that is discovering aspects of Polish life through the lens of a camera.



**Figure 10. Black Star Print 19-1257, [Polish parliament Feb. 1981, Jaruzelski], 1981**

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<sup>94</sup> Chris Niedenthal, "Fotoreporter Komunizmu" [Photo Reporter of Communism], *Biuletyn Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej*, no. 11 (2004): 84.

The presence of photographs depicting the military grows in the 1980s, with a total of 18, while there are only 3 in the 1970s. Moreover, there are differences in the way that the military is represented in the 1970s and 1980s. The 3 photographs from the 1970s depict members of the military performing their official duties, parading through the streets on May Day, and fulfilling their role as the Polish Guard of Honour. These photographs align most closely with the category of Prosperity. In the 1980s, more than half of the photographs depict the military in an alternative role, those of the oppressor, enforcing state restrictions during the occupation of Poland, and patrolling the streets of Poland during Martial Law. These photographs belong in the category of Counter Revolutionary Activity. Thus, while the photographs from the 1970s show an idealized military, those of the 1980s show the military to be in conflict with its citizens.

While religion appears prominently in Niedenthal's work in both the 1970s (19 photographs) and 1980s (24 photographs), the photographs of the 1980s integrate religion with the Solidarity movement, adding a new dimension to the representation of religion in the country at the time. With the connection of religion and Solidarity, the religious photographs become politicized. From the beginning, the Catholic Church was a major supporter of the Solidarity movement, maintaining its position as staunchly anti-communist.<sup>95</sup> While photographs taken during the 1970s period depict religion as a significant part of Polish life and culture, and embody the theme of Success, during the Solidarity period, these photographs depict members of the Solidarity movement praying, or feature Solidarity symbols during public masses. In so doing, these photographs send a strong message of resistance that fits into the category of Revolutionary Activities.

## **b. VISUAL ANALYSIS**

In further analyzing Chris Niedenthal's photographs in the Black Star collection, I focused on the 45 images that I had selected as a representative sample. Through a visual analysis, I have found that the images in the representative sample appear to be in good condition, without signs of image fading or deterioration. While some versos appear to have some yellowing and staining, they do not exhibit any signs of damage that would be a concern to the image itself, or to the other photographs stored with it. Both the rectos and versos of the sample show little to no signs of tearing, creasing, or deterioration, which suggests that they had been stored in proper conditions, and had not been handled extensively. Currently, each photograph is individually kept in its own transparent archival sleeve. All 45 photographs have the Black Star credit stamp on the

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<sup>95</sup> Paul J. Best, "Poland's Politics in the 1970s," *International Journal of Politics* 9, no. 1 (Spring 1979): 10.

verso, along with Chris Niedenthal's name either written or stamped. All of the photographs in the collection are black-and-white gelatin silver prints on resin-coated paper. 36 measure 8 x 10 inches, while 9 measure 5 x 7 inches.

Many of the photographs from the 1970s were taken from the same perspective as the subjects depicted. In other words, Niedenthal took these photographs at ground level. The freedom to photograph from the ground is reflected in the kinds of images captured, which conform to the requirements set out by the state. These photographs appear to have been planned in advance, and in each photograph, there is a focus on a specific subject, leaving the viewer in no doubt of what is being depicted. These photographs do not appear to be snapshots, but rather carefully convey visual information on a specific subject. For example, the photograph of two young women walking (Fig. 11), with the accompanying caption that reads "Warsaw Girls" depicts exactly that, without trying to convey more than what is seen. The straightforwardness and direction in his photographs suggests that Niedenthal had time to study the subjects beforehand. Further evidence of this planning can be found in the way that the photographs are in focus and often centered, with seemingly no key visual information cut off at the edges of the image. In Figure 12 the statue of Lenin is centered, with people occupying visual space on either side, thus balancing the image, but not drawing away from the center.



**Figure 11. Black Star Print 19-481, [Warsaw Girls], 1978**



**Figure 12. Black Star Print 19-747, [Kids playing around statue of Lenin, in Nowa Huta, NR. Cracow S. Poland], 1978**

When it came to representing state leaders, Niedenthal's photographs perhaps inadvertently, conform to the visual conventions of the 'propaganda of success' that were specifically implemented to depict people of importance. Leaders are depicted performing gestures such as hugs and kisses, alluding to brotherly love and international friendship in some cases.<sup>96</sup> A photojournalist at this time really had no other way in which to depict these individuals, as they were most often seen out in public at political parades and national holiday

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<sup>96</sup> Krystyna Piątkowska, "Estetyka PRL - Teksty Wizualne i Znaki w Propagandzie" [The Aesthetics of the People's Republic of Poland - Visual Texts and Signs in Propaganda], *Konteksty*, no. 1 (2011): 79.

events, always performing as the well liked leader.<sup>97</sup> In this sense, Niedenthal's photographs of this sort are really just documents of the Party's presence in the public eye.

When this group of images is considered alongside descriptions provided on their versos, many of them highlight favorable aspects of life in Poland, most notably, prosperity. Prosperity in development, manufacturing, cultural events and commerce are all represented. 97% of photographs from the 1970s provide an in-depth description. These descriptions provide more information concerning the photograph, which is depicted, and where it was taken, something that is less common to come across in the 1980s. This speaks to the fact that Niedenthal had the time to include these descriptions, as well as suggests the manner in which the photograph should be used.

Though my analysis reveals that much of Niedenthal's work from this period does not come into conflict with the representations of the country that the state sought to portray, it is important to consider the nature of Niedenthal's occupation as a photojournalist. Although Niedenthal did not work for the state, he was still restricted in where he could go, and what he could do. At the same time, accreditation made his job as a photojournalist easier, thus by not provoking during this period, his work was not called into question. In the case of the photographs, it is apparent that Niedenthal shifted away from sensitive topics and themes, suggesting that he instead abided by the confines of allowable subject matter. This resulted in certain photographs that appear far from candid and instead somewhat staged. Working within the confines of what he was "officially" allowed to photograph, his work is inevitably restricted in terms of the kind of reality that is conveyed. However, by not stirring the pot during the 1970s, he was able to stay in the country long enough to witness the significant changes that were occurring, and this eventually prompted him to abandon photographing through official channels.

When we turn to the 1980s photographs, it is apparent that these images depart in style and theme from the earlier set. Depictions of prosperity and happiness have been replaced with photographs that focus on revolutionary activities, as well as hardships of daily life under communism, such as food shortages. 217 (46%) photographs were taken in 1981 (the year Martial Law was imposed). During Martial Law, photojournalists had to be very cautious. As Niedenthal states in an interview, photographers couldn't openly show up in the streets with their cameras in hand; photographing these events was illegal, and they would have been arrested if caught.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Krystyna Piątkowska, "Estetyka PRL - Teksty Wizualne i Znaki w Propagandzie" [The Aesthetics of the People's Republic of Poland - Visual Texts and Signs in Propaganda], *Konteksty*, no. 1 (2011): 79.

<sup>98</sup> Magdalena Wróbelka, "Chris Niedenthal," Culture.Pl, last modified December 2011, <http://culture.pl/pl/tworca/chris-niedenthal>.

Many of the photographs taken in the 1980s are of poorer quality, and appear rushed. The slightly out of focus features of some of these images suggest that Niedenthal was working under time constraints and in fear of getting caught by the authorities. Many of these photographs were taken from an elevated vantage point (Fig. 13) and (Fig. 14).



**Figure 13. Black Star Print 19-168, [No Inscription], 1981**



**Figure 14. Black Star Print 19-150, [No Inscription], 1981**

Niedenthal describes in an interview that when he covered demonstrations during Martial Law, he would usually photograph from someone's window. He describes his job at that time as "sitting in the balcony of a theatre, watching those who were fighting the riot militia".<sup>99</sup> His publishers required photographs of events, and not his participation on ground level. Thus, his photographs from this period reflect restrictions set out by his employers, in that to comply with their requests, he had to find vantage points that allowed him to be an observer—disqualifying him from participating in events.<sup>100</sup> Furthermore, after Martial Law was declared, it was very difficult to photograph demonstrations. A photojournalist could be seen as a threat by both sides, as they could be perceived to be cooperating with both Solidarity and the Militia.<sup>101</sup> In order to record events surrounding Solidarity, one had to gain the trust of the people, which often proved to be

<sup>99</sup> The Gallery 2b, [http://www.2b.art.pl/index.php?LANG=en&struct=9\\_20&art\\_ID=198](http://www.2b.art.pl/index.php?LANG=en&struct=9_20&art_ID=198).

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Chris Niedenthal, "Fotoreporter Komunisty" [Photo Reporter of Communism], *Biuletyn Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej*, no. 11 (2004): 90.

challenging. Thus, this issue of trust meant that many photographs had to be taken from a safe distance.

Many photographs (Figs. 13, 15, and 16) appear to the viewer as instant and urgent snapshots of events unfolding. In their composition, these photographs could serve as a counterpoint to the planned manner of the photographs taken in the 1970s. Another noteworthy feature of the 1980s photographs is that many of them do not have proper descriptions on the back. This omission was strategic, as including the descriptions would have made it more difficult for Niedenthal to smuggle his work out of the country. Through routine searches, the authorities could come across the descriptions, and confiscate the film. 22% of photographs taken during the 1980s have no description written on the back. While the remaining 78% do have some form of description, it is often quite minimal, as compared to the 97% of photographs in the 1970s, which have long detailed descriptions.



**Figure 15. Black Star Print 19-130, [Poland – May Day Demos], 1981**



**Fig. 16 Black Star 19-397 [Katowice (S. Poland) Oct. 1981. Crowd gathers around overturned police van outside Police HQ during disturbances there.], 1981**

Photographs that were taken in the early 1980s, but not within the context of Martial Law, carry with them a sense of urgency as well as hope. A key feature that stands out is the lack of engagement between the photographer and his subjects as seen in Figure 17, where a group of students is shown participating in a strike at the University, engaged in conversation, as though ignoring the fact that their picture is being taken. This is also seen in Figure 18, where a woman is depicted working the assembly line at an appliance factory, with her attention focused, not on Niedenthal, but rather on her work. While such engagement can be seen more prevalently in the 1970s photographs, the 1980s appear to be quite the opposite. These compositions suggest that Niedenthal may have worked with his subjects in order to get the right shot. By the 1980s, the style of his photographs, which became more candid, suggests his resistance to regulations.



Figure 17. Black Star Print 19-160, [Student's sit in strike in Łódź, S.W of Warsaw Poland], 1981



Figure 18. Black Star Print 19-381, [Freedom - Polar Appliance Factory 1982], 1982

Visual evidence from an examination of Niedenthal's photographs taken in the early 1980s suggests that there was a shift in both the content and composition of the photographs taken by Niedenthal. While his circumstances may not have lent themselves to provoke the state by photographing sensitive subjects in 1970s, his photographs from the 1980s indicate that he abandoned his previous mode of operating as an accredited photojournalist in the PRL, for one that was quicker and snapshot-like in appearance, but also reflective of the reality of events occurring.

### **c. COUNTER PHOTOGRAPH ANALYSIS**

A further finding in the analysis of the Black Star collection of Niedenthal's work is that for many of the photographs taken in the 1970s, there is a counter photograph taken in the 1980s. In general, these counter photographs appear as less glorified representations of the subject matter in the 1970s. The photographs revisit similar subject matter, but highlight a different perspective on the subject. The visual tropes re-visited by Niedenthal include: commerce, industry, work, living conditions, religion, students, and military.

Despite the promotion of new shopping centers in Poland during the late 1970s, as seen in Figure 19, one can see that a counter-photograph to this, from the 1980s, depicts street traders selling clothes at an outdoor street market (Fig. 20). These photographs of shopping centers reflect the 1970s push to modernize the country and promote a sense of prosperity, yet the lasting impact of these efforts was far from what Gierek's 'propaganda of success' suggested. The shopping center in Poznań photographed in 1978 resembles those built in the West, with its large scale and modern architecture. Cars are lined up along the side of the building, and the image suggests that this is a busy center. The photograph taken in the 1980s suggests a different reality, one that contradicts the prosperous economy that a Western-style shopping center represents. People were not free to shop as they pleased. Despite the fact that these modern shopping centers opened up, people would have to line up in front of stores long before they would open.<sup>102</sup> Goods were in short supply, and one could not just walk into a store anytime to purchase what they needed. In turn, as can be seen in the 1980s photograph, the streets became the center of the distribution of goods. In the photograph, an older woman is selling a wide assortment of attire, including coats, bathrobes, sweaters, and shoes. Some of the articles of clothing are hanging off a fence, which goes to show that these kinds of markets popped up everywhere, regardless of the

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<sup>102</sup> Michał Ogórek and Zenon Żybertowicz, *Z prądem i pod prąd. Ostatnia dekada PRL-u* (n.p.: Carta Blanca, 2012), 23.

space. These street markets were better stocked than most stores at the time, and contrary to the narrative endorsed by the state, were sites of much commercial activity.<sup>103</sup>



Figure 19. Black Star Print 19-490, [Poznań – The Shopping Centre], 1978



Figure 20. Black Star Print 19-989, [Street scene in Poland, Sept 1982 – Bazaar in Remberton near Warsaw. Private selling of shoes, coats, clothes, antiques, even old copies of Newsweek (at 200 zł, or \$2.50)], 1982

<sup>103</sup> Michał Ogórek and Zenon Żyburtowicz, *Z prądem i pod prąd. Ostatnia dekada PRL-u* (n.p.: Carta Blanca, 2012), 162.

During the 1970s, when depicting the city of Gdańsk, there was a focus on industry, specifically the shipyards, and the manufacturing work done in this region (Fig. 21). In the photograph, the only visual information present is that of machinery and the ships. Not one person is seen in this image. In the representations of the city in the 1980s, the imagery shifts from depicting industry, to focusing on the striking shipyard workers. Figure 22 depicts a group of men, all of them looking away from the camera. There is a feeling of uncertainty in this photograph, as the men sit around, they appear to be waiting for something to happen. Earlier in the 1970s, presenting Poland to a Western audience, as well as reporting on it within the country, would have included verbal and visual accounts of industry in the country. These representations follow the ‘propaganda of success’. The press and television were interested in places of work, notably the shipyard in Gdańsk, only in regards to productivity and important accomplishments.<sup>104</sup> Yet the public was interested when these industrial bodies were not working or thriving, such as when the workers went on strike, since these developments affected their lives.<sup>105</sup> Thus, the photographs depicting striking workers could provide meaningful information to the public that the government wanted to cover up.

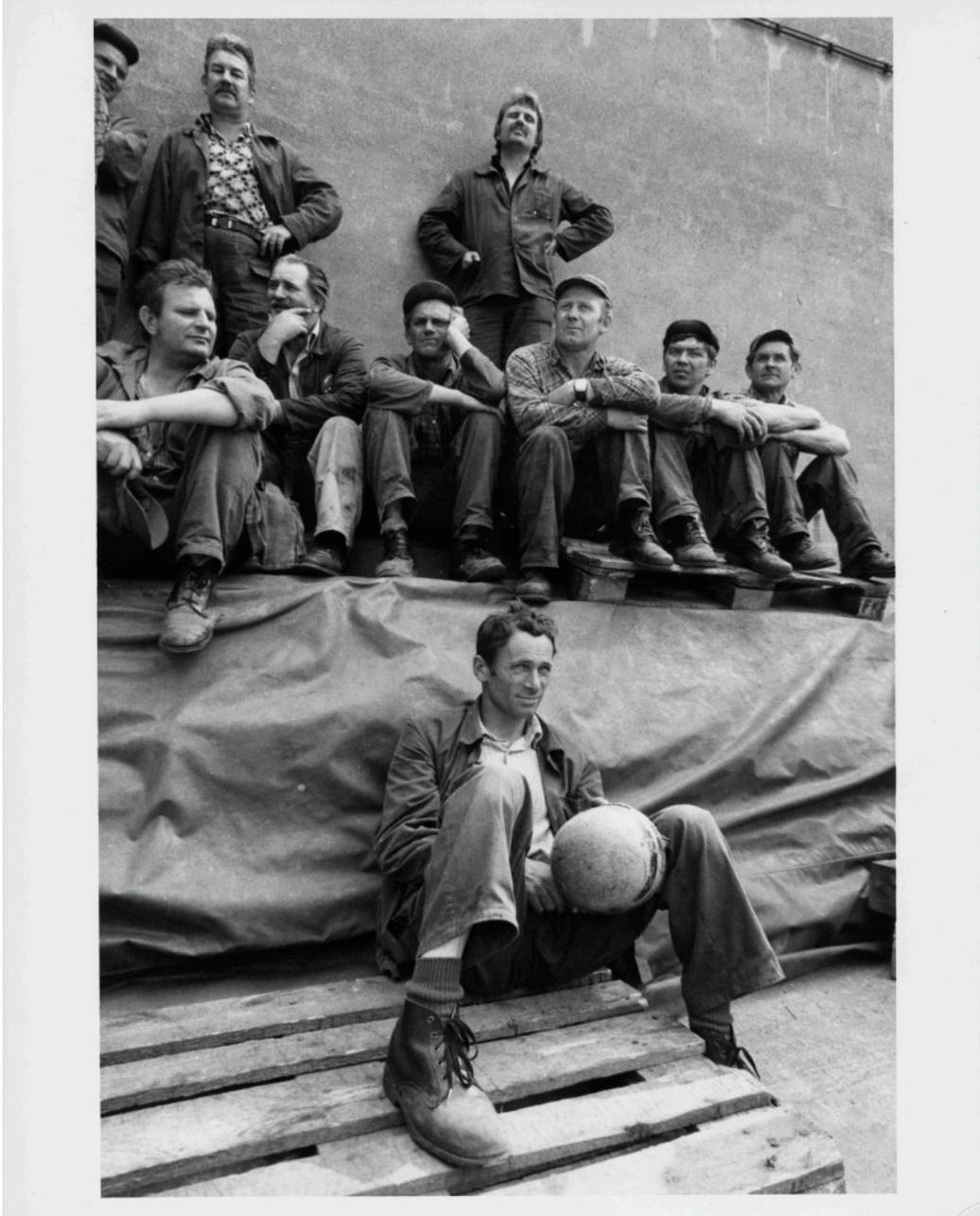


**Figure 21. Black Star Print 19-502, [The Port of the North, Near Gdańsk Loading Coal for export], 1978**

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<sup>104</sup> Michał Ogórek and Zenon Żyburtowicz, *Z prądem i pod prąd. Ostatnia dekada PRL-u* (n.p.: Carta Blanca, 2012), 39.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*



**Figure 22. Black Star Print 19-165, [Poland], 1981**

A significant shift in representation occurs in Chris Niedenthal's depictions of workers. Figure 23, taken in 1978, depicts a smiling worker, with the description on the verso reading: "Loading face cream at 'Miraculum' cosmetics factory in Cracow S. Poland". The woman is looking directly into the camera, and engaging with the photographer in a manner that suggests she is content with the work she is doing. This of course is the only way in which it would have been officially acceptable to depict the nature of work and industry under Gierek's regime. Figure

24 on the other hand, depicts workers in a State run bakery in 1982. Not one worker is looking at the camera, nor are they photographed from a ground level perspective as in Figure 23. This approach to photographing the workers, which employs a higher perspective, appears to strip them of their individuality, and captures the influence of social forces outside of their control. This portrayal is very different from the photograph in 1978, where work is depicted in an idealized positive light. A similar photograph (Fig. 25) depicts an older woman leaning over her machine, smiling directly at the camera. Once again, work is reinforced here as a positive aspect of life, which took away from the fact that these workers could pursue few alternatives. As authors Michał Ogórek and Zenon Żybertowicz point out, work in the PRL was not a privilege, a promise of wealth, nor an opportunity to impress. Rather, it was a habitual routine that people went through day after day. At work, no one had the authority to fire anyone, and no one could quit. Most people worked their whole lives at the same job, in the same position, and at the same location. When ready to retire, a person left exactly where he or she started years ago.<sup>106</sup>



**Figure 23. Black Star Print 19-492, [Loading face cream at ‘Miraculum’ cosmetics factory in Cracow, S. Poland], 1978**

<sup>106</sup> Michał Ogórek and Zenon Żybertowicz, *Z prądem i pod prąd. Ostatnia dekada PRL-u* (n.p.: Carta Blanca, 2012), 88.



Figure 24. Black Star Print 19-70, [Poland –State run bakery in Warsaw], May 11, 1982



**Figure 25. Black Star Print 19-1333, [Woman worker in textile factory in Łódź, Poland], 1978**

In the 1970s, there was a push to show progress in Poland, and it often came in the form of depicting architecture and new building projects. A photograph taken in 1978 depicts Poland's longest building (Fig. 26). People are seen walking along the path next to the building, which extends into the distance. There is no denying from this image that this was in fact quite a long building. It is interesting to note however, that while six people are present in this photograph, not a single one of their faces can be seen. This photograph is not about them, but rather the building complex. There was a push to produce such milestones in the building industry, promoting the capabilities of the country and the success of the state. The counter-photograph to this image taken in 1981 shows an example of a small kitchen. This is a kitchen from the kind of apartment that many people were living in this period (Fig. 27). This kitchen already seems small for this family of four, yet in most cases, people shared these apartments with extended family members as well. Unlike the photograph from 1978, the family in this photograph is the primary focus, not the apartment itself. Thus, while the state could build Poland's longest building, they could not accommodate all who wished to own their own apartment, let alone one that afforded more living space. The process of being assigned an apartment was in itself arduous. Every application required the right amount of attachments and recommendations. Without them, an application

would not be considered. However, the volume of applications and supporting documents was so large, that applications could rarely be tracked down later, and many were put on hold.

Startlingly, an application to be allotted an apartment would have the chance of being realized after roughly 20 years from its original validation.<sup>107</sup> People were not so much concerned about living in a modern building that broke records, as they were about having their own space, which they didn't have to share with their extended family.



Figure 26. Black Star Print 19-487, [Gdańsk: The Falowiec – Poland's longest building], 1978

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<sup>107</sup> Michał Ogórek and Zenon Żybertowicz, *Z prądem i pod prąd. Ostatnia dekada PRL-u* (n.p.: Carta Blanca, 2012), 72.



**Figure 27. Black Star Print 18-1022, [Poland – Warsaw Family], 1982**

In my analysis of depictions of religion in the PRL, I came to find that the photographs taken in the 1970s depict religion primarily in the form of events organized by the church. In Figure 28, a sea of umbrellas is depicted at an outdoor mass. Not only does this represent the large population of Catholics in Poland, the photograph reveals their devotion as shown in the fact that they attend this mass despite the rain. In the 1980s, there is a new iconography associated with religious activity that emerges. Here (Fig. 29) a large gathering of people is depicted at another outdoor mass held in a center of the city. While similar types of events are depicted in both groups, the photographs from the early 1980s capture the Solidarity slogan on display, which was used at the time to promote activities of the Trade Union. This representation of Solidarity stands in stark contrast to the earlier photographs, which are apolitical. Similar developments can be seen in other photographs with religious elements, such as Figure 30 which shows Lech Wałęsa, leader of the Solidarity Trade Union, holding his daughter, with an image of the Pope behind him with hands upraised, as though giving Wałęsa his blessing.



**Figure 28. Black Star Print 19-116, [Rain doesn't stop play during Corpus Christi procession in Warsaw, Poland], 1978**



**Figure 29. Black Star Print 19-100, [Poland – Religion], May 1981**



**Figure 30. Black Star Print 19-1327, [Lech Wałęsa at home with his daughter], 1981**

Regarding depictions of youth and students, there is a considerable difference between the 1970s and the 1980s as well. The earlier photographs depict carefree, happy youth enjoying themselves (Fig. 31). A couple is depicted immersed in their own world, lying around, kissing in the grass, while individuals next to them are drinking and engaged in conversation. The photograph taken in the early 1980s, focuses on students aligning themselves with the Solidarity movement, and staging sit-ins and strikes at Universities (Fig. 32). In this photograph, students are standing by the University gates that have been plastered with posters signaling a strike. One of the posters reads: “We’ve got food, we will last!” Hence, depictions of concerned and engaged students fighting for change in their country replace the image of carefree youth from the 1970s.



Figure 31. Black Star Print 19-501, [Young people having fun during apple blossom festival in southern Poland], 1978



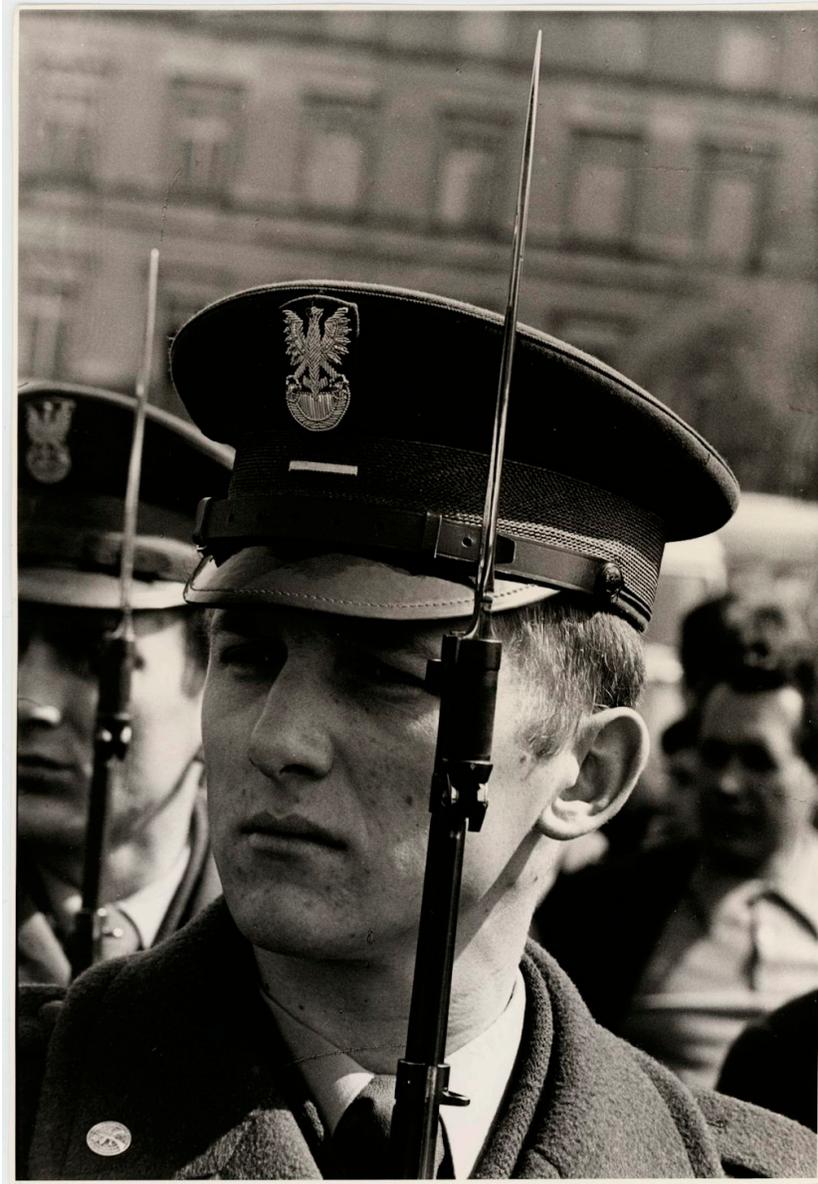
Figure 32. Black Star Print 19-373, [Student's strike in Łódź, S.W of Poland. Entrance gate of Łódź University], 1981

In photographs taken in the 1970s, the role of the military is depicted in association with both honour and prestige. In Figure 33, the profile of a young soldier in uniform is captured during a national parade. He is seen looking off to the side, holding his rifle. A different side of the military is depicted in the 1980s. In the photographs from this period it can be seen that the military doesn't hesitate to use violence and force against their fellow countrymen. Figure 15 depicts civilians being subdued by the military through the use of water being sprayed from a truck. Obligatory military service was the most widespread and brutal contact between young citizens and the state apparatus. Avoiding it became the main aim of many young men.<sup>108</sup> While a number of men were enlisted despite protesting against it, there was a prevalence of military who abused their power and positions, and took on a reputation that resulted in civilians regarding them with great mistrust. Michał Ogórek and Zenon Żybertowicz describe the situation in their book *Z Prądem I Pod Prąd*: "The PRL was only a safe and comfortable country for the militia, as they preferred to arrest too many people than too little. As a precaution, they would hold people for 48 hours, which became common practice."<sup>109</sup> It is ironic that these soldiers actively used force against those whom they, in theory, were supposed to protect.

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<sup>108</sup> Michał Ogórek and Zenon Żybertowicz, *Z prądem i pod prąd. Ostatnia dekada PRL-u* (n.p.: Carta Blanca, 2012), 253.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 267.



**Figure 33. Black Star Print 19-889, [Polish Soldier on parade in Warsaw, Poland], 1978**

Through my analysis I have also found other instances of irony in Niedenthal's work. In Figure 34 from 1978, people are depicted dancing at the Apple Blossom Festival. This would seem to be a fun occasion, but many of the people in the photograph appear to be having a miserable time, with most of them looking away from their dance partners. This goes against the majority of photographs depicting similar subjects of festivals and youth, where people are shown smiling as though they were enjoying themselves. This photograph perhaps, brings into question the authenticity of those happy emotions depicted in the others. Are the subjects perhaps just putting on a face for the camera? While there may not be more to the photograph than simply

catching a moment where no one was smiling, it catches the viewer's attention because it doesn't follow the formulaic happiness that was pushed by the 'propaganda of success'.



Figure 34. Black Star Print 19-499, [Dancing at apple blossom festival , Łącko Southern Poland], 1978

In a similar manner, Figure 35 taken in 1982 depicts a man holding ration cards in a shop that appears to be sold out of products. The women behind the counter are smiling, as is the man holding the ration cards. While the representation of empty stores is not new to Niedenthal, and in fact there are a number of these kinds of photographs in the Black Star Collection, this one stood out as the only one where people appear to be smiling. In similar photographs in the collection, people appear to be frustrated and angry, and often long lines of people are depicted, as seen in Figures 36 and 37. This photograph in a sense acknowledges the absurdity of the situation where there are ration cards for food that the stores do not have in stock in the first place. The state saw the ration cards as an expression of their good intentions to ensure that all the needs of the Polish people were satisfied.<sup>110</sup> However, the implementation of the ration card system spurred a market of counterfeit ration cards, which led to a new category of punishable crime established in 1981: cheating the ration card system was an offence for which one could face five years in prison.<sup>111</sup>

<sup>110</sup> Michał Ogórek and Zenon Żybertowicz, *Z prądem i pod prąd. Ostatnia dekada PRL-u* (n.p.: Carta Blanca, 2012), 92.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*



Figure 35. Black Star Print 18-1053, [No Inscription], 1982



Figure 36. Black Star Print 19-90, [Poland – Food Shortage], 1981

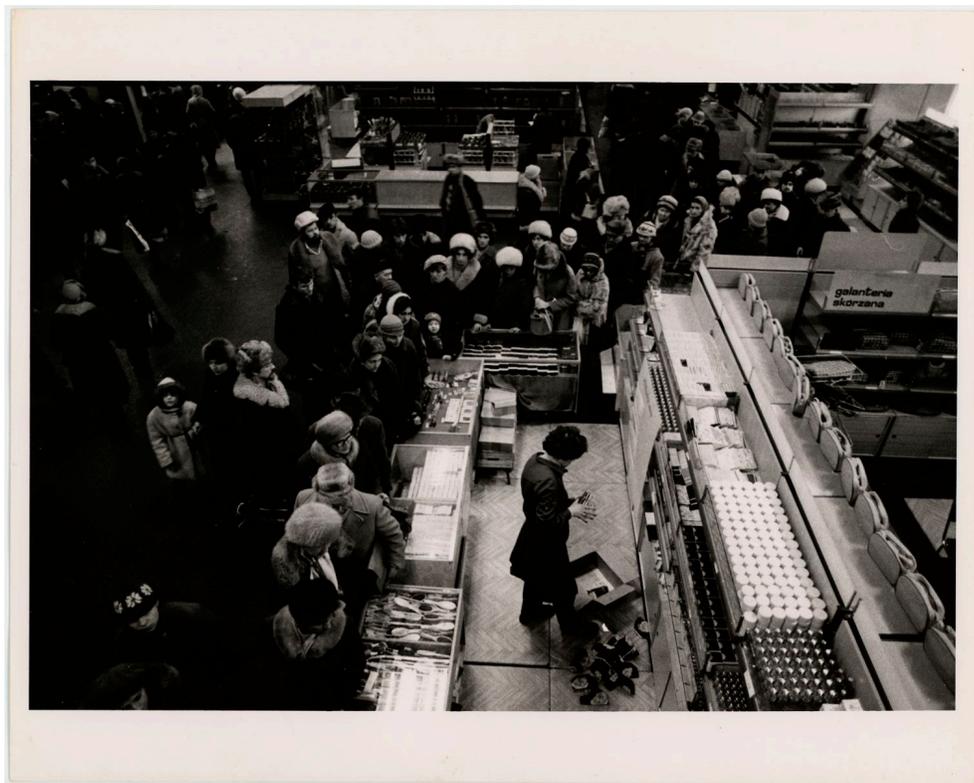


Figure 37. Black Star Print 18-1031, [Poland – Food Shortages “Centrum” and “Supersam” stores], 1982

Finally, an elderly woman is depicted looking at the camera with a hint of a smile, while sweeping a pile of garbage (Fig. 38). The banner hanging in front of the building in this image reads: “Warsaw welcomes delegates to the 9th extraordinary congress of the Communist Party”. The symbolism here functions in an ironic manner that is similar to the previous two examples, as it was customary before any official delegation visits, to ‘clean up’ or put up a façade of a clean, highly functioning city and society. The woman sweeping up the garbage suggests that there is more to the country than what the state would like to show. Niedenthal once again, captures an absurd side of the state, where all efforts are put towards creating an illusion of a functioning society.



**Figure 38. Black Star Print 19-136, [Poland], 1981**

The representations in these counter photographs stand out because they provide an alternative depiction of common subjects and themes. It is significant that they do this, as they reflect changes that occurred in Niedenthal’s work between the 1970s and 1980s, moving from representation of Success to representations of Solidarity. It is telling that in Niedenthal’s case,

the influence of the state had a different impact on his work across different periods of time. In the 1970s Gierek's 'propaganda of success' shaped Niedenthal's work since he was new to the country, and was working within the confines his accreditation. In the 1980s, Jaruzelski's crackdown on rebellion and opposition led Niedenthal to document these events and defy the censors. The stylistic elements of Niedenthal's photographs reflect the progression of events in Poland.

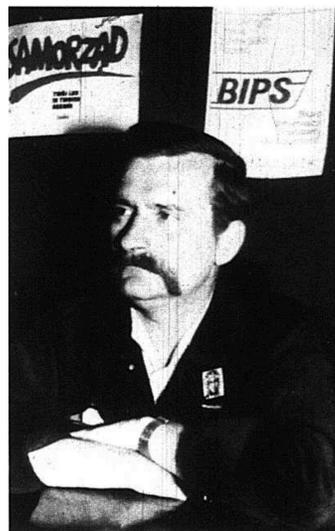
## 7. NEWSWEEK 1978 – 1982

An analysis of *Newsweek* magazine between the years 1978 – 1982 was conducted in addition to the analysis of Chris Niedenthal’s work in the Black Star collection. 260 editions of the weekly were surveyed, and 66 photographs were identified as being taken by Chris Niedenthal. In the 1970s, there were 12 photographs by Niedenthal that were published in *Newsweek*. All of the photographs were published in 1979. The 12 photographs fall under two related categories: Religion – 4 photographs, and Religion with the Pope – 8 photographs. In the 1980s, 54 photographs taken by Niedenthal were published in *Newsweek*. 7 photographs were published in 1980, 27 in 1981, and 20 in 1982. There are 16 photographs that depict government personalities, which is the largest category of the photographs published in the early 1980s. This group primarily depicts state leaders such as General Jaruzelski and Stanisław Kania. Comparatively, only 4 photographs were published that depict Solidarity Personalities. The second largest group depicts conflict with 8 photographs, then religion with 6 photographs. There are 5 photographs or less covering the categories of protests, shortages, strikes, militia, and industry. Furthermore, I found that 4 photographs were sourced from the Black Star Photo Agency: (Fig. 39) (Fig. 40) (Fig. 41) (Fig. 42). However, it is worth noting that a number of photographs published in *Newsweek* are not credited to Black Star, but are quite similar, if not identical to those I came across in the collection.

*Kania: Was Moscow sending a pink slip?*  
© 1981 Chris Niedenthal—Black Star



Figure 39. *Newsweek*, April 20, 1981, p. 47



Chris Niedenthal—Black Star

Figure 40. *Newsweek*, October 5, 1982, p. 41



Figure 41. *Newsweek*, February 1, 1981, p. 47



Figure 42. *Newsweek*, October 25, 1982, p. 45

Knowing that Niedenthal's work was intended to be published in the West, it is interesting to consider the kind of stories about Poland that Western publication conveyed to their readers. With photographs, images taken to communicate events to one culture may not serve as appropriate records for the historical discourse of another culture.<sup>112</sup> Who then, were the photographs taken by Niedenthal intended for? It has been argued by Anna Banks that the choices made by editors in the selection of images that are used in newspapers and news magazines are "influenced by both the culturally embedded codes the images contain and the cultural and organizational practices under which the editors operate."<sup>113</sup> It is crucial then, to consider what readers of *Newsweek* got out of the photographs depicting the conflict in Poland, a situation and culture that was drastically different from that of the United States, where *Newsweek* is published. Banks further makes the point that, "News photographs are not viewed in isolation, but must be read in the context of the culture that produced and distributed them."<sup>114</sup> These photographs taken by Niedenthal were published outside the context in which they were taken. Hence they risk being misinterpreted, or having ideas projected onto ideas them.

Despite the fact that in the Black Star collection there are photographs that appear out of focus, and depict violence, the photographs that made it into *Newsweek* are in appearance neater and clearer. Peter Turnley made a note of this trend in the American news in 1987, "Most American newsmagazines – newsweeklies in particular – exhibit a classical visual take on the world, one communicated through symmetrical compositions and images that are immediately apprehended by readers. That just doesn't play in Europe ... pictures have to be looser, a little

<sup>112</sup> Anna Banks, "Images Trapped in Two Discourses: Photojournalism Codes and the International News Flow," *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 18, no. 1 (Winter 1994): 132.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 119.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 128.

wild and at times shocking.”<sup>115</sup> Though many of the images from the 1980s depict events that at times got rough and violent; this aspect of the events is not shown. While some photographs suggest there is unrest and disturbances in the country (Fig. 43) (Fig. 44), the only photograph that actually depicts violent acts towards civilians portrays protesters being sprayed by water cannons (Fig. 45). Furthermore, most of the articles in *Newsweek* detailing the situation in the country primarily include photographs of political leaders, with additional photographs showing tamer elements of protests, or strikes.



Figure 43. *Newsweek*, December 28, 1981, p. 11

<sup>115</sup> Carol Squires, "Foreign Intrigue," *American Photographer*, September 1987, 61, quoted in Anna Banks, "Images Trapped in Two Discourses: Photojournalism Codes and the International News Flow," *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 18, no. 1 (Winter 1994): 123.

*Warsaw, December 1981: When the armor rolled, the CIA knew the game plan*

Chris Niedenthal



Figure 44. Newsweek, December 20, 1982, p. 49

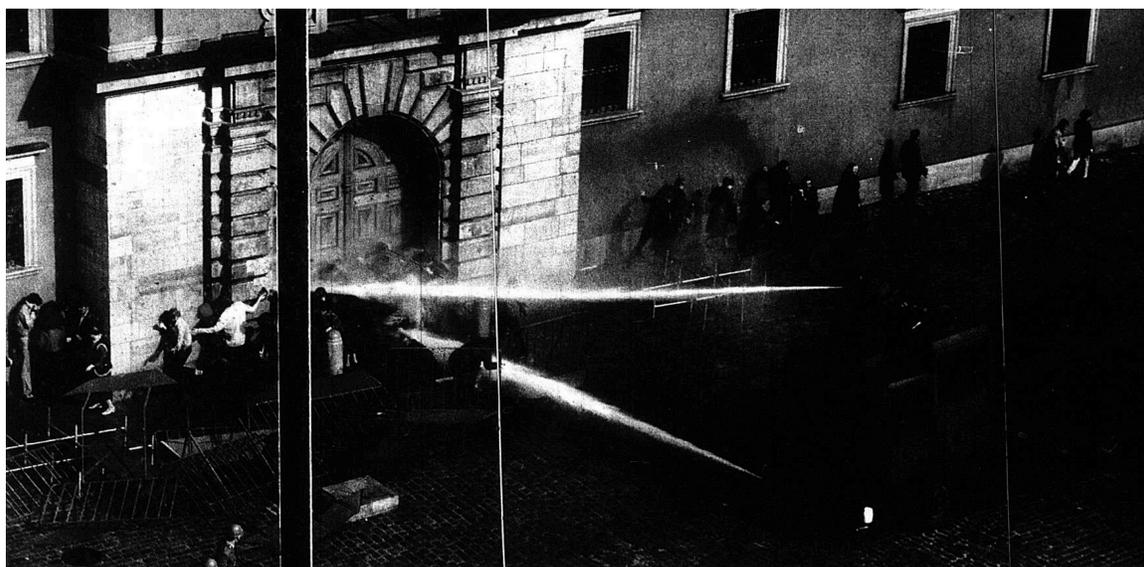


Figure 45. Newsweek, May 17, 1982, p. 62-63

Due to the nature of censorship and propaganda in the PRL, Western publications such as *Newsweek*, *Time*, *Der Spiegel*, etc., were not available in the country. An aspect of the state's control of information was the screening of information coming into the country, as well as the information going out. What the authorities deemed 'harmful' content was intercepted by the customs officers and censors, who focused their attention on screening all books and periodicals published in the West that dealt with Polish content and subject matter. The content did not matter, all of these publications were considered anti-communist.<sup>116</sup> Thus, it is worth noting that anywhere Niedenthal's photographs were published, most Poles in Poland had no means of

<sup>116</sup> Alexander Remmer, "A Note of Post-Publication Censorship in Poland 1980-1987," *Soviet Studies* 41, no. 3 (1989): 418.

viewing these images, as their access was severely restricted. This reinforces the point that Niedenthal's work at the time was primarily geared towards an audience in the West, not for Poles within the country itself.

Anna Banks further argues that "the legacy of photography as a method of recording the 'truth' has inhibited serious discussion of the practices which govern the selection of which photographs newspaper and newsmagazine readers see and which they do not."<sup>117</sup> This is an interesting point to consider in regard to the photographs taken by Niedenthal that were intended for publication in the Western Press. From what was published in *Newsweek*, and information stated later by Niedenthal (in the form of published interviews), it is clear that there wasn't much interest in the country until a Polish Pope was elected, and events surrounding the Solidarity Trade Union took off. Niedenthal had been working for Western publications in the late 1970s prior to these events, yet much of his work from this period was not published, while at the turn of the decade, there was a definitive increase in the number of his photographs published in *Newsweek*. This brings up the question of why so many photographs taken in the 1970s were not chosen for publication, and what constitutes 'publishable' and 'newsworthy' photography. As Banks states, "The mass media both shape and reflect our views, and, as such, are empowered to limit the range of those views."<sup>118</sup> It is interesting to note that the media of both Poland and the West exerted influence over Chris Niedenthal's photography. As mentioned previously, the PRL had an intensive media agenda, designed to take attention away from the failures and shortcomings of the regime, and to reinforce a sense of control and power. The Western media, in general took a stance against the regime, in its portrayal of events in Poland, however *Newsweek's* coverage focused largely on state leaders, rather than the everyday lives of people living through hardship and conflict. Issues such as shortages, strikes, and protests are covered less than how the people in charge responded to events.

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<sup>117</sup> Anna Banks, "Images Trapped in Two Discourses: Photojournalism Codes and the International News Flow," *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 18, no. 1 (Winter 1994): 119.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 132.

## 8. CONCLUSION

This study of Chris Niedenthal's photographs taken between 1978 and 1982, shows his work taken in the 1970s, both in style and content, portray Poland in a positive and uncomplicated light. These images don't capture the dark political and social undercurrents in Poland, but rather correspond with the idea that Poland was thriving. By contrast, Niedenthal's depictions of Solidarity mark a break from these visual conventions, suggesting that his work needed to change with the events happening around him. This implies that the supposedly objective requirement of photojournalism at times necessitates making peace with the establishment, and at other times defiance of state restrictions. In both cases, the influence of the state appears in the final image, and reflects the impact that censorship had on the field of photojournalism. Moreover, in the case of the photographs in the Black Star collection, a number taken in the 1970s have a counterpart in the 1980s, representing similar subject matter, but in a different light. This reflects the differences between the Success and Solidarity photographs, and by pairing these photographs together, the constraints Niedenthal was bound by, and later his break from them, becomes all the more apparent.

My analysis suggests that, in the 1970s, it would not necessarily have been worthwhile for Chris Niedenthal to defy state censorship in photographing sensitive subjects. There was not much to depict that made it worth going around the censors, as during this time Poland was not a central concern of the international community, which Niedenthal brings up in describing his delight that Poland would once again be on the map, when the new Pope elected in 1978 was Polish.<sup>119</sup> Circumstances changed with the rise of the Solidarity movement. Protests and other activities associated with Solidarity were considered newsworthy events in the West, yet promoting them would have gone against the censorship mandate in Poland at the time. One can think about this as a cost benefit analysis. If nothing newsworthy (according to the Western press) is going on, then why would a photojournalist like Niedenthal risk losing his job, to show something that no one is going to be interested in? Due to the fact that Niedenthal played his cards right and waited for the right moment to push the boundaries, he took photographs that not only were sought out by his editors and published in major press outlets, but also made an impact, since it documented a situation that the authorities sought to contain. Had he been kicked out earlier for defying the restrictions placed on him as a foreign photojournalist, perhaps he would

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<sup>119</sup> Ewa Kasnik and Monika Nowicka, "Polish Freedom Through the Lens of Chris Niedenthal," Poland - Official Promotional Website, <http://www.polska.pl/en/experience-poland/history-poland/polish-freedom-through-lens-chris-niedenthal/>.

never have been able to return to the country to document the revolution. I argue that he portrayed Poland strategically, and adapted to events as they occurred.

Throughout my analysis of Niedenthal's work during this crucial period at the turn of the decade, the matter of insider vs. outsider repeatedly comes up in regards to Niedenthal's position as a photojournalist, as well as the kind of work he produced. It would appear that the year 1980 marked a shift from outsider to insider. The photographs he took in the 1970s come across as case studies of Poland that fall in line with the state's vision of the country. This work reflects Niedenthal's position as an outsider at the time, as he wouldn't have made the right connections or gained the trust of most Polish citizens. This outsider status is further reflected in the fact that while many Polish photojournalists would often put together covert underground exhibitions displaying work that depicted topics that would not have been approved by the authorities,<sup>120</sup> Niedenthal did not participate in these activities.<sup>121</sup> With the new decade, he brings a different visual representation of Poland, one that begins with his work focusing on the Solidarity movement, and leads to personal photographs of Lech Wałęsa and his family, at this point signaling his transition from outsider to insider. Had Solidarity not trusted Niedenthal, he would not have taken such personal and at times intimate photographs of its members, and his presence at rallies and meetings would have been met with suspicion and mistrust.

Further considerations that arise concern Niedenthal's audience, and how over the decades, it has shifted from consumers of the Western Press, to Poles trying to make sense of their history. In a sense, this shift in audience echoes his outsider / insider status. As a foreign correspondent he was inherently an outsider, but in time his work began to reflect an internal Polish perspective. It is fitting that these photographs have made their way back to the country, now accessible to those who were affected by the changes that swept the nation, rather than those who were reading about them from a distance. Given the popularity of Niedenthal's work in Poland today, it could be said that his photographs have become iconic representations of this important time Polish in history. Underneath the superficial veil of the regime, historian Jerzy Plich writes "there lies the light of real life breaking through from beneath the totalitarian rituals, then it transpires that the People's Republic was a strikingly impressive land."<sup>122</sup> Attending to the circumstances under which these photographs were created reveals how striking and captivating they are, and offers an illuminating perspective on everyday life in the PRL.

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<sup>120</sup> Irena Hauck, interview by the author, Guelph, May 1, 2015.

<sup>121</sup> Chris Niedenthal, e-mail interview by the author, Email, June 1, 2015.

<sup>122</sup> Chris Niedenthal and Jerzy Plich, *Chris Niedenthal: Wybrane Fotografie (Selected Photographs) 1973-1989*, trans. Caryl Swift (Olszanica, Poland: Wydawnictwo Bosz, 2014), 23.

## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A: TABLES

**Table 1. Total Number of Black Star Photographs by Category**

<b>Year</b>	<b>1978</b>	<b>1979</b>	<b>1970s other</b>	<b>1980</b>	<b>1981</b>	<b>1982</b>
<b>Addiction</b>					4	
<b>Rural Poland</b>	9				10	6
<b>Commerce</b>	1					9
<b>Daily Life</b>					1	2
<b>Education</b>						4
<b>Festival</b>	5					
<b>Government</b>					2	3
<b>Industry</b>	11				2	6
<b>Landmark/Architecture</b>	14				3	
<b>Landmark/Promotional</b>	16					
<b>Landmark/Sites</b>	19					3
<b>Militia</b>	3				14	4
<b>Parade</b>	3				1	
<b>People/Other</b>	17				4	
<b>People/Youth</b>	4	1				
<b>Personality/Other</b>	2					
<b>Personality/Government</b>	7		7	3	29	16
<b>Personality/Solidarity</b>				4	42	4
<b>Protest</b>					5	2
<b>Religion</b>	18		2		25	17
<b>Religion/Solidarity</b>					14	10
<b>Shortages</b>					7	6
<b>Solidarity</b>					16	2
<b>Sports</b>						5
<b>Strike</b>				2	29	1
<b>Violence/Conflict</b>					7	6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>215</b>	<b>106</b>

**Table 2. Total Number of Photographs Published in Newsweek by Category**

<b>Year</b>	<b>1978</b>	<b>1979</b>	<b>1980</b>	<b>1981</b>	<b>1982</b>
<b>Violence / Conflict</b>				5	3
<b>Strike</b>				2	
<b>Solidarity</b>				1	1
<b>Shortages</b>				1	4
<b>Religion / Pope</b>		8			
<b>Religion / Solidarity</b>				2	2
<b>Religion / Other</b>		4		2	1
<b>Personality / Solidarity</b>			3	2	1
<b>Personality / Government</b>			2	10	4
<b>Personality / Other</b>				1	
<b>Militia</b>					1
<b>Industry</b>					1
<b>Protest</b>			2	1	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>20</b>

## APPENDIX B: LIST OF REPRESENTATIVE SAMPLE OF BLACK STAR PRINTS

1. Black Star Print 19-485, [Rainy Fashions, Open air fashion show in the center of Warsaw, Poland], 1978
2. Black Star Print 19-491, [Gdańsk – Długa street, main street of the old town. Old town hall in background (Baltic Coast, N. Poland)], 1978
3. Black Star Print 19-135, [Poland], 1981
4. Black Star Print 19-486, [Kazimierz Dolny – The Square (Near Lublin, E. Poland)], 1978
5. Black Star Print 19-1739, [Old-Style Farming in Poland], 1978
6. Black Star Print 19-441, [The Village of Zbrosza Duża, where in 1978 the first peasants defense committee was set up], 1981
7. Black Star Print 19-1349, [Edward Gierek: First secretary of the Polish United Worker’s Party Central Committee], 1978
8. Black Star Print 19-481, [Warsaw Girls], 1978
9. Black Star Print 19-747, Kids playing around statue of Lenin, in Nowa Huta, NR. Cracow S. Poland], 1978
10. Black Star Print 19-168, [No Inscription], 1981
11. Black Star Print 19-150, [No Inscription], 1981
12. Black Star Print 19-130, [Poland – May Day Demos], 1981
13. Black Star 19-397 [Katowice (S. Poland) Oct. 1981. Crowd gathers around overturned police van outside Police HQ during disturbances there.], 1981
14. Black Star Print 19-160, [Student’s sit in strike in Łódź, S.W of Warsaw Poland], 1981
15. Black Star Print 19-381, [Freedom – Polar Appliance Factory 1982], 1982
16. Black Star Print 19-490, [Poznań – The Shopping Centre], 1978
17. Black Star Print 19-989, [Street scene in Poland, Sept 1982 – Bazaar in Remberton near Warsaw. Private selling of shoes, coats, clothes, antiques, even old copies of Newsweek (at 200 zł, or \$2.50)], 1982
18. Black Star Print 19-502, [The Port of the North, Near Gdańsk Loading Coal for export], 1978

19. Black Star Print 19-165, [Poland], 1981
20. Black Star Print 19-492, [Loading face cream at 'Miraculum' cosmetics factory in Cracow, S. Poland], 1978
21. Black Star Print 19-70, [Poland – State run bakery in Warsaw], May 11, 1982
22. Black Star Print 19-1333, [Woman worker in textile factory in Łódź, Poland], 1978
23. Black Star Print 19-487, [Gdańsk: The Falowiec – Poland's longest building], 1978
24. Black Star Print 18-1022, [Poland – Warsaw Family], 1982
25. Black Star Print 19-116, [Rain doesn't stop play during Corpus Christi procession in Warsaw, Poland], 1978
26. Black Star Print 19-100, [Poland – Religion], May 1981
27. Black Star Print 19-1327, [Lech Wałęsa at home with his daughter], 1981
28. Black Star Print 19-501, [Young people having fun during apple blossom festival in southern Poland], 1978
29. Black Star Print 19-373, [Student's strike in Łódź, S.W of Poland. Entrance gate of Łódź University], 1981
30. Black Star Print 19-889, [Polish Solider on parade in Warsaw, Poland], 1978
31. Black Star Print 19-499, [Dancing at apple blossom festival, Łącko Southern Poland], 1978
32. Black Star Print 18-1053, [No Inscription], 1982
33. Black Star Print 19-90, [Poland – Food Shortage], 1981
34. Black Star Print 18-1031, [Poland – Food Shortages "Centrum" and "Supersam" stores], 1982
35. Black Star Print 19-136, [Poland], 1981
36. Black Star Print 19-105, [Occupation of Poland, Warsaw residents pass by rows of Polish militia men], 1981
37. Black Star Print 19-157, [Polish solider keeps warm in Warsaw], 1981
38. Black Star Print 19-86, [Polish militia patrols the capital], 1981
39. Black Star Print 19-493, [Warsaw – Young people in the shopping center], 1978

40. Black Star Print 19-1257, [Polish parliament Feb. 1981, Jaruzelski], 1981
41. Black Star Print 19-38, [Solidarity leader rally, May 1981], 1981
42. Black Star Print 19-400, [Warsaw hunger march, 10/22/81], 1981
43. Black Star Print 19-385, [Poland – Lech Wałęsa Farmer’s strike], 1981
44. Black Star Print 19-401, [General strike 10/29/81, Poland University of Warsaw gates, Poland], 1981
45. Black Star Print 19-52, [Poland – Warning strike in Warsaw, Jan. 23, 1981], 1981

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