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Polish Libertarians Under Martial Law

A Declaration to the Libertarian Movement in the
West

Sigma Group

1983, Summer

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Sigma Group (Warsaw)

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The following was received by the Fifth Estate as a "Declaration to the Libertarian Movement in the West"

We are a group of anarchists and anti-authoritarian left-wingers in Warsaw who came together in a discussion circle (Sigma) at the beginning of 1980. We all agreed on a general opposition to the existing political system in our country. Most of us came to anarchism via literature. For example, at the beginning of the 1950s some works of the Russian anarchist Peter Kropotkin were published in Poland in small editions. All of them were accessible to everyone in the public libraries. Another important source for us was a series called Library of Socialist Thought in which, during the 1960s, along with texts of Owen, Saint Simon, and Fourier, some works of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon and Mikhail Bakunin were published. In addition, a very badly edited collection of works of the most important Polish anarchist, Edward Abromowski, was published.

These texts, although subordinated to official Marxist-Leninist commentaries and often disfigured by arbitrary editorial cuts, nevertheless woke some interest in anarchism especially in student circles.

At the end of 1980, we distributed the first edition of our review *Nowa Gazeta Mazowiecka*, intended as a theoretical discussion forum and organ of the anti-authoritarian left in Poland. Beside opinion about the current political situation, poems, and satire, we published short articles on the theory and history of the libertarian movement, e.g. a "Short History of Anarchism" and "The Kronstadt Rebellion 1921." Along with our publications there existed another anarchist review (at Wrocław), but we only learned of its existence by chance after December 1981. During an interrogation the review was shown to one of our members and he was asked whether he had any contact with the group in Wrocław. Beyond this several other left publications were distributed in Poland and reflected sympathies for anarchism and anarcho-syndicalism, before the declaration of martial law.

The political position of our group as expressed in our publications can be defined as follows:

- strict opposition to the totalitarian Jaruzelski regime remote-controlled from Moscow;
- support for the self-determination of the Polish people;
- critical solidarity with *Solidarnosc* and the movement for civil rights, meaning: support for all who fight for the real autonomy of the working class;
- opposition to all those who work for the installation of a national and clerical government as in the West.

The libertarians in Poland were not surprised by martial law; but since we had no success in establishing an operating coordination between the different groups before December 1981 (much less a common program), we were not able to coordinate underground activities after the military pogrom of Jaruzelski.

Another problem was that parts of the libertarian groups worked right from the beginning in a totally conspiratorial way, which made contact very difficult. One week after the declaration of martial law we were informed by chance of the existence of another anarchist group in Warsaw. We got this information via a leaflet distributed at the university, which called for active resistance to the military junta.

After December 13 and the temporary arrest of some of our members it was necessary to organize all our activities underground. All printing machines and other materials we had used for distributing our review have been confiscated and even destroyed during several police raids. At present printing machines, paper, and ink are not available—it is even difficult to get them in the black market, and prices there exceed our financial capacities.

Without technical possibilities and with a permanent fear of police observation, the only chance of propagating our ideas during the first months of the new military regime was to write leaflets by hand or to paint slogans on walls at night, which was quite dangerous for us.

After the first great wave of repression we got in contact with other non-dogmatic left groups in Warsaw. In May 1982 we were able to distribute the underground review *Równość* (Equality) together with other comrades in Warsaw. Besides this we were informed some days ago that the publication of an anarcho-syndicalist paper titled *Przełom* (Subversion) is being planned. But until recently we had no contact with these comrades. We intend to revive our *Nowa Gazeta Mazowiecka* and several booklets on anarchism and anarcho-syndicalism.

In order to support this and to spread libertarian ideas in Poland we very urgently need your political and material aid. Support us in our fight against Jaruzelski's junta and all the nationalist and clerical forces, and for the self-determination of the Polish people

Fraternally yours,

Sigma Group
Warsaw, Poland

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German comrades have founded a solidarity fund at the following address:

Jochen Knoblauch
Postscheckkonto Nr. 451523-109
Postscheckamt Berlin
West Germany