

The “Sign of the Cross” exhibition as a polyphonic political statement in the 1980s Polish art field

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Abstract

The thesis examines “Sign of the Cross” exhibition that took place in the Catholic church on Żytnia street in 1983 in Warsaw, and how it connects to the anti-state symbolism of the political discourse of the era. The work aims to analyse the entanglement of religion, nationalism, and politics in the artistic production of late socialism with regard to the broad political context concerning the change of the regime in 1989. By applying Gramsci’s theory of hegemony and Bourdieu’s theory of field, it evaluates the complexities of the identity politics of the resistance movement expressed through artistic production.

The thesis brings together the resistance and the artists scholarship to challenge the existing knowledge about the phenomenon of church exhibitions, a mass movement in the Polish art field in the 1980s that gathered socially engaged artists who supporter the anti-state resistance marked by the Solidarity Carnival. For this, in the first chapter, I focus on the use of religious and national symbolism in the anti-state political field in the 1980s to evaluate what type of exclusions and politics it produces. In the second chapter, I use the historical background to evaluate the position of “Sign of the Cross” exhibition within the possible artistic expression. In the final chapter by analyzing three distinct artworks and artistic careers, I show three different relationship participants of “Sign of the Cross” formed with the state, the resistance movement, and the Church.

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Introduction

My research focuses on what is considered a prominent example of political engagement in the field of contemporary art. The event called “Sign of the Cross” was organized in 1983, in Lord’s Charity church at Żytnia Street in Warsaw, by curators Janusz Bogucki and Nina Smolarz¹. The event awarded the Cultural Committee of Independent Solidarity Prize in 1984 was recognized as a political anti-state statement, and as an expression of Polish nationalism and Catholicism. It gathered more than one hundred artists across media: photographers, painters, sculptors, musicians, performers and intellectuals under the common theme of the importance of sign of the cross in the Polish culture, and represented a form of “meeting with art accompanying the holy Father John Paul II’s visit in his Homeland on June 14-30, 1983”. Lasting for one month, it consisted of events such as film screenings, theatre and music performances, poetry readings, lectures and seminars. Central to the event, a similarly titled art exhibition brought together professional and amateur artists from different backgrounds, generations, religions, and ethnic origins. Topics introduced by the artists varied from simply representing the theme of the exhibition - the sign of the cross – and religious imagery, to expressing political opinions about foreign oppression, Polish independence, or disapproval of violation of human rights. The exhibition was part of a larger movement in Polish contemporary art in the 1980s which produced exhibitions in Catholic churches. Participating artists used Catholic symbols and mixed them Polish nationalism and political messages. These exhibitions were reflecting a broader discourse in which Catholicism and Polish nationalism were entangled in resistance against the state, but also rooted in the discourse of resistance in Polish history². “Sign of the Cross” was the most visible and most politically engaged artistic event within the anti-state movement. As such, it is a valuable source of knowledge about the place of visual culture and symbolic representation in the contentious politics of the 1980s.

The “Sign of the Cross” is set against a rich historical background of the anti-regime resistance in the early 1980s, with its most important actors, Solidarity (Solidarność) and the Catholic Church. When referring to the political field of the 1980s Poland, one must realize the enormous existing scholarship on the subject and the international academic attention it attracted because

¹ “Sign of the Cross” Exhibition Catalogue, Church in Żytnia Street, Warsaw 1983 - Włodzimierz Borowski Archive - Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw’ <<https://artmuseum.pl/en/archiwum/archiwum-wlodzimierza-borowskiego/1661/77781>> [accessed 2 January 2019].

² Geneviève Zubrzycki, ‘Genealogy of Polish Nationalism’, in *The Crosses of Auschwitz: Nationalism and Religion in Post-Communist Poland* (University of Chicago Press, 2009), pp. 34–76.

of the success of Solidarity, which remains one of the most mentioned and well-researched resistance groups in Eastern and Central Europe, as it dominated the political scene of the time and changed the nature of the public sphere and of the political opposition. On the 31st August 1980, workers represented by the Interfactory Strike Committee (Międzyzakładowy Komitet Strajkowy, MKS) and state politicians reached the legendary August agreement, by signing 21 demands, which ranging from requests of improving workers' conditions to ending censorship. This eventually turned into the first independent labour union in the Eastern Bloc, the Independent Self-governing Labour Union "Solidarity" (Niezależny Samorządny Związek Zawodowy NSZZ Solidarność). The political and social changes that launched are referred to as the "Carnival of Solidarity" and ended with the implementation of the martial law of December 1981. The organization then went underground, as thousands of resistance activists were imprisoned, and 91 protesters were killed over the next years. The law was suspended in the end of 1982 and abolished in September 1983. Academics argue about the nature of 1980s resistance movement, as it does not fill the regular labels used to describe promoters of social change. Alain Touraine distinguishes three dimensions of Solidarity: trade union, democratic movement, and national independence movement as that unfold in time to a different extent:

How could economic demands, democratic action and national struggle possibly be distinct and separate? Social problems characteristic of industrial society and intertwined with those concerning the independence of the nation (...). If we are to understand Solidarity, we must first look carefully at the nature of this union between social, political and national claims"³.

The phenomenon of church exhibitions and artists' contributions to the public sphere in the 1980s has not been included in the vast scholarship on this topic. Despite the fact that exhibitions like "Sing of the Cross" were relevant movement in the 1980s, they have not been included in the historical and social research on resistance. Especially in the art history discourse, the church exhibitions were either excluded from the dominant canon or described negatively as a conservative, homogenous phenomenon. I believe that artistic production with its cultural capital and prestige was important element of articulating the visual culture of the resistance movement, which makes it particularly important subject of researching resistance practices and discourses. Challenging the existing knowledge of the church exhibitions and "Sign of the Cross" can shed a new light at possible ways of artistic engagement in the political and social turmoil.

The entanglement of the religion, nationalism and politics its artistic expression that constitutes

³ Alain Touraine, *Solidarity: The Analysis of a Social Movement: Poland, 1980-1981* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 40.

the focus of my thesis. This focus can be translated into several interrelated questions: how was “Sign of the Cross” with its use of religious, national and political symbolism a part of these processes? What role did it play in connecting different positionalities of anti-state resistance supporters? How and why did the art field engage in the relationship with the political resistance and the Catholic Church? How did the exhibition represent the religion, the nation or oppositional political views? With these research questions in mind, I will reconstruct the meanings of the exhibition as a wider case of anti-state discourse as I evaluate examples of artistic acts represented during the exhibition. I will connect the church exhibitions to the discourse of Polish nationalism and Catholic fundamentalism that continue to influence the current political situation in Poland.

In order to address my research questions asked so far, I used the methods of discourse analysis of the “Sign of the Cross” event and the in-depth interviews with participants of the exhibition, with goal of reconstructing the network of artists invested in articulating counterhegemonic practices, their reasons to participate in the church exhibition, and their positionality in the wider fields of art and politics. The challenge of researching a historical event from 35 years ago is that many of the people engaged in the exhibition, such as both curators Nina Smolarz and Janusz Bogucki, have already passed away. I have chosen eleven potential interviewers who remain alive based on their diverse identity, such as gender, religion, political engagement and position in the field of art, to obtain a representative population of the participants of the exhibition. I have contacted them through their online professional pages, their managers, the galleries they work with and art historians active in the 1980s. However, four artists agreed to talk to me and remembered the “Sign of the Cross” exhibition. To complement the interviews part, I employ the methods of historical sociology by focusing on primary and secondary sources analysis and archival research. My sources range from academic scholarship of the topic published since 1991 to 2018 and materials gathered at archives of Polish National Library in Warsaw, which include everyday newspapers, cultural magazines and Catholic papers from between 1983 to 1987. Many parts of archival materials are inaccessible, decentralized, lost and incomplete because of the underground, unofficial and ephemeral nature of the event. It is also important to add that the contributions by successful artists are much easier to locate and reconstruct as they are more visible and more present in the collective memory and histories of the event. Photography plays an important role in representing the art works that were more spontaneously created, more immaterial or by amateur artists.

I will use two theoretical perspectives that embed the exhibition in the broad social, political

and economic context. In the first chapter, to address the problem of the entanglements of meanings in anti-state discourse in 1980s, I will use the theory of hegemony proposed by Gramsci⁴ to evaluate the political field of the early 1980s concerning the transformations of national, religious and class representation to justify why it is important to focus on the same elements in the “Sign of the Cross” exhibition. In the second chapter, to problematize politics of art in the late socialism, I will use Bourdieu’s theory of field⁵, to understand the relationship between art and politics in socially engaged exhibitions like “Sign of the Cross”. From this perspective I will analyse the early 1980s art field with special focus on what was the place of church exhibitions and “Sign of the Cross”. I will include the historiography of the event and the changing perspectives on it using the concepts of Bourdieu’s of autonomy of art and art field to see how the issues of dependence from state, the Church and political opposition changed with time.

Including Gramsci and Bourdieu as theoretical framework helps to unravel the broader positionality “Sign of the Cross” in the art and in the counterhegemony. These theories present different perspectives on the politics of art and its role in social change. While for Gramsci cultural production is mainly seen as the machine of counterhegemonic articulation, Bourdieu focuses on showing the value of the autonomy and purity of the art and its radical political potential. In my thesis I show that “Sign of the Cross” profits from both of these understandings, as it challenged the purity of avant-garde art and the uncritical engagement of counterhegemonic discourse. Authors who compare these two scholars point out to the fact that both Gramsci and Bourdieu represent two different approaches to defining domination in relation to individuals and their agency or empowerment⁶. Burawoy argues that Bourdieu’s concept of habitus is too shallow to address the complex entanglement of different capitals and their stability and worth outside of capitalistic order⁷. On the other hand, he shows that Gramsci’s theory of hegemony leaves no space for actions outside the hegemonic or counterhegemonic movements. Comparing these theories is for Burawoy a middle ground of

⁴ Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks* (Columbia University Press, 1992).

⁵ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, Reprint 1984 (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2000); Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature* (Columbia University Press, 1993).

⁶ Scott Schaffer, ‘Hegemony and the Habitus: Gramsci, Bourdieu and James Scott on the Problem of Resistance’, *Research and Society* <https://www.academia.edu/574734/Hegemony_and_the_Habitus_Gramsci_Bourdieu_and_James_Scott_on_the_Problem_of_Resistance> [accessed 29 March 2019].

⁷ Michael Burawoy, ‘The Roots of Domination: Beyond Bourdieu and Gramsci’, *Sociology*, 46.2 (2012), p. 187.

negotiations between determinism and individualism in specific time and place. These two theoretical perspectives can serve as a direction for the further research of the “Sign of the Cross”, its artworks and artistic careers of the people engaged, comparing it to different forms of politically engaged art in the late socialism.

In the final chapter I will show different reasons and motivations for artists exhibiting at “Sign of the Cross”, with each of the perspective illustrated by one artwork presented at the exhibition that will be presented in the context of one artist’s career: Teresa Murak, Krzysztof Findziński and Jerzy Kalina. While working on choosing the specific works to focus on from over one hundred participants, I wanted to include a representative of diverse positions in terms of gender, religion, generations, location in Poland and their political engagement. I have decided to choose three people that took the most explicit position wards the elusive autonomy of art and towards its connections to the Church, Solidarity and the state. This individual biographical perspective will be used as an example of wider systemic positionality within the field, which goes beyond the effects of the martial law and shows the importance of a deeper historical perspective on the political stance of art with regard to the state, the church and the Solidarity. Using individual biography as an evidence for sociological arguments allows us to uncover the unique place of art and religion in the lives of politically engaged artists. Describing these three artists’ works and careers would be used to make an argument about the complex dependence of church exhibitions from other fields, as politically engaged art is a good example of the meaning making processes of the era, both when mainstream politics is concerned, and when resistance took the forefront.

Chapter 1: The entanglement of religion, nationalism and politics in counterhegemonic discourse

In this chapter I will describe the political field in the 1980s Poland to show how the “Sign of the Cross” was responding to mainstream political discourses. By using Gramsci’s concept of hegemony, I will address the political importance of symbols in the resistance movement, its historical embeddedness in broader social relations, and the reconfiguration of power that had led to its becoming the dominant discourse. The subject of representation of class, religion and nationalism in the resistance movement, especially in Solidarity, has been generally researched mainly from the perspective of which one of these elements and social group played the most important role when it comes to eventual success of the anti-state movement in 1989⁸, and rarely from an angle that privileges the aftermath of these events in terms of identity politics in post-socialist Poland. In the 1990s and beyond, the legacy of the anti-state resistance movement became the dominant voice in shaping the new political reality of Polish state. I will show the processes of reconfiguration of power that the exhibition was part of, in order to connect the “Sign of the Cross” meanings with the contemporary trajectory of Polish politics.

1.1 The importance of symbols

I look at the resistance movement through the lenses of Gramsci’s theory on hegemony, which shows that hegemonic and counterhegemonic public discourses compete for legitimacy, understood here not simply as political domination but as the possibility to (re)define reality through acceptance of discursive categories rather than brute force. This approach reveals the heterogenous nature of the public sphere, which despite the totalitarian nature of the socialist state, was composed of both official state discourse and public rituals, and by anti-state stances that were primarily dominating in different groups’ habits and customs. Adopting a Gramscian perspective also stresses the importance of everyday life and common sense for the political forces, through pointing out the constant process of producing and reproducing both hegemonic and counterhegemonic discourse in time via cultural practices. By including the Gramscian understanding of counterhegemonic visual culture to the research on political scene in 1980s I follow Jan Kubik’s cultural studies perspective to describe the anti-state movement as a counterhegemonic discourse embedded in everyday practices and institutional actors such as

⁸ Jan Kubik, ‘Who Done It: Workers, Intellectuals, or Someone Else? Controversy over Solidarity’s Origins and Social Composition’, *Theory and Society*, 3, 1994, p. 441.

Solidarity and the Catholic Church who contested the official hegemony of the state⁹. Kubik points out that the use of symbols and visual representations played a crucial role in forming a coherent identity of the resistance movement and in mobilizing masses to take part in it, especially after the introduction of the Martial Law and for the immediately following period. He proves that the elements of religious symbols, Catholic rituals and practices used by Solidarity were in fact exaggerated in order to reinforce its division from the socialist state and mobilize the affects of Polish citizens to legitimize its power, to which he refers as an “oversymbolisation” of the political discourse¹⁰.

His perspective shows that although this resistance discourse was born from a shipyard’s workers strike focusing on their rights, working conditions and economic inequalities, after the introduction of the martial law in December 1981 it was implemented in the anti-state discourse that disregarded class dimension and used religion, nationalism, and anti-communism as the main axes of its identity. The introduction of martial law weakened Solidarity’s emphasis on workers’ demands and economic equality, as well as its leftist perspective. Thus, the centre of the movement moved from the factories, mines and shipyards to the urban centres’ intelligentsia¹¹. Political identification with the Polish nation and the Catholic Church became the axis of division between the atheist socialist and Soviet-style state on the one hand, and sovereign religious resistance on the other. It also serves as a mobilization of morality and conscience of citizens. The evidence of that can be the increased use of national religious symbols in protests, strikes and other events organized by political opposition, Solidarity or their supporters, which included religious songs, the use of language in speeches, manifests or articles, the usage of saint pictures or the figure of the pope John Paul II. It led to reinterpretation of possible political resistance practices, as usage of Catholic symbols in public spaces become the anti-state gesture, with example of the flower crosses arranged as a gesture of civil disobedience and destroyed by state police for example in Warsaw, Cracow and Częstochowa during political or religious events¹².

⁹ Jan Kubik, *The Power of Symbols against the Symbols of Power: The Rise of Solidarity and the Fall of State Socialism in Poland* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994).

¹⁰ Idem, p. 67

¹¹ Ewa Alicja Majewska, ‘The Utopia of “Solidarity” Between Public Sphere and Counterpublics: Institutions of the Common Revisited’, *UTOPIAN STUDIES*, 29.2 (2018), 229–247.

¹² Magdalena Michalska-Ciarka, ‘Warszawski Krzyż z kwiatów’, *Polska Sztuka Ludowa - Konteksty*, 48.1–2 (1994).



Figure 1: Cross Flower at Plac Zwycięstwa in Warsaw in 1982. Photo: PAP/Wojciech Kryński

The presence of religious and national symbols in the counterhegemonic resistance culture illustrated the wider nature of the resistance movement in the 1980s Poland. The division based on the politics of symbols of Catholicism and Polish nationalism were not new in the 1980s since it had played an important role in the anti-communist discourse before, and was drawing from the historically constructed image of the Poles as Catholics, which according to Porter:

“is far more than a recognition that Roman Catholicism was and is important in Poland: it is an ideologically loaded conceptual framework that gives specific meaning to the past and helps to determine what is remembered and what is forgotten”¹³.

The use of national and religious symbols in identity politics of resistance movement referred back to the discourses on the Partitions of Poland, which started in 1772, and divided then the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth between Habsburg Austria, the Kingdom of Prussia and the Russian Empire. Statelessness nationalism and religion became the main forces of differentiation. During this period, “national identity was Catholicized, and Catholicism was nationalized”¹⁴ and together they formed the concept of “Polak-Katolik” (Pole-Catholic), to be the dominant narrative about the identity politics used in the formation of the Second Republic of Poland in 1918. This historical framework influenced the anti-communist resistance and was used by Solidarity in the 1980s. Artworks presented at “Sign of the Cross” were responding to this tendency. By 1983, the religious sign of the cross in the public sphere was linked with a

¹³ Brian Porter, ‘The Catholic Nation: Religion, Identity, and the Narratives of Polish History’, *The Slavic and East European Journal*, 45.2 (2001), 289 <<https://doi.org/10.2307/3086330>>, p. 291.

¹⁴ Zubrzycki, p. 49.

political stance. The entanglement of religious symbolism in the political struggle led to a possibility of expressing anti-state sentiment in a more or less acceptable manner, because of the strong position of the Catholic Church and its independence.

1.2 The excluding nature of the counterhegemonic discourse

Gramsci's perspective also shows that the power does not have one source, as both the official state and the anti-state resistance produce dominating discourses and fight for hegemonic power. This theory enables to avoid idealized nostalgic views of the movement determined by the events that happened later, such as 1989 elections, as the counterhegemonic discourse fights for dominance, it is also totalizing, exclusive and selective. Scholars like Marcin Kościelniak¹⁵, who uses the theory of antagonistic political sphere by Chantal Mouffe¹⁶, and Piotr Piotrowski¹⁷, who refers to writings of Rosalyn Deutsche¹⁸, provide critical perspectives to the Polish resistance movement. They prove that the counterhegemonic movements in Poland worked with an authoritative democracy model, not with a radical or open one, as it was built on the sense of ruling of the majority and the social consensus. Thus, the counterhegemony of the Catholic Church, Solidarity and the political opposition was not a mediator of radical democracy or the supporter of political pluralism. While it was successful in overthrowing the totalitarian socialist state, it set the foundation for creating a polity dominated by nationalism, religious fundamentalism, and neoliberal politics.

The excluding and limiting nature towards women or people of different religion and nationalities of the public sphere it was set up upon can be proven by different examples from 1990s onwards. Genevieve Zubrzycki shows how the counterhegemonic identity was mobilized in an anti-Semitic protest in 1998 known as "War of the Crosses" in Oświęcim, in the case of commemoration of Auschwitz camp victims¹⁹. The importance of Polish nationalism and Catholicism, as well as Solidarity, was used in the axis of arguments of exclusion of Jewish

¹⁵ Marcin Kościelniak, *Egoiści: trzecia droga w kulturze polskiej lat 80* (Instytut Teatralny im. Zbigniewa Raszewskiego, 2018); Marcin Kościelniak, 'Pochwała Profanacji. "Trzecia Droga" w Kulturze Polskiej Lat 80.', *Teksty Drugie*, 2, 2017, 227–54.

¹⁶ Chantal Mouffe, *On the Political* (Psychology Press, 2005).

¹⁷ Piotr Piotrowski, *Agorafilia: sztuka i demokracja w postkomunistycznej Europie* (Dom Wydawniczy 'Rebis', 2010).

¹⁸ Rosalyn Deutsche, *Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics* (MIT Press, 1998).

¹⁹ Genevieve Zubrzycki, *The Crosses of Auschwitz: Nationalism and Religion in Post-Communist Poland* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2006).

people in the production of Polish martyr memory²⁰. Another example would be the important political position of the Catholic Church and its influences on shaping the Polish politics after 1989 around issues like the criminalization of abortion right in 1993 and the implementation of obligatory religion classes in schools in 1990, which started a debate over the separation of the Church and the state. This left many dissidents connected to Solidarity surprised over the changing nature of the Catholic Church which was perceived as suddenly against political pluralism and neutral religious stands in politics. The sense of disappointment was expressed heavily by the feminist movement engaged in the underground Solidarity when the abortion rights were changed despite the mass protests²¹.

The hegemonic nature of the 1990s public sphere can be linked to the strong position of the Catholic Church. This transformation of Church politics and its relationship with political actors is a strong indicator of this exclusive discourse of counterhegemony. It can be observed for example in Adam Michnik writings, who in 1977 published “Church – the Left – dialogue”²² (translation of the original Polish title), which in 1993 was further referred in his article “Church – the Right – monologue”²³. Michnik builds the differentiation between the “liberal Church” most active during the early 1980s, tolerant, open to discussion and willing to build a secular democratic state, and the “fundamentalist Church” that works only to build its strong position and influence the political field after 1989. As Sowa points out, the Church’s support towards the resistance was less homogeneous and ambiguous in the early 1980s, depending specially on the high position of priests in the hierarchy with archbishops being reluctant also during the martial law²⁴. With time the Church obtained the right to influence the state policies through its anti-state resistance before 1989, however it led to building a “non-secular state” where Catholicism become in fact a state religion²⁵.

²⁰ Roger Cohen, ‘Poles and Jews Feud About Crosses at Auschwitz’, *The New York Times*, 20 December 1998, section World <<https://www.nytimes.com/1998/12/20/world/poles-and-jews-feud-about-crosses-at-auschwitz.html>> [accessed 27 March 2019].

²¹ Shana Penn, *Solidarity’s Secret : The Women Who Defeated Communism in Poland* (Ann Arbor : University of Michigan Press, 2005).

²² Adam Michnik, *The Church and the Left* (University of Chicago Press, 1993).

²³ Adam Michnik, ‘Kościół — Prawica — Monolog Albo Ludzie Innego Wyznania’, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 28.03 1993, pp. 12–15.

²⁴ Jan Sowa, ‘Solidarność- wydarzenie komunistyczne’, in *Inna Rzeczpospolita jest możliwa! Widma przeszłości, wizje przyszłości* (Virtualo, 2015).

²⁵ Roman Graczyk, *Konstytucja dla Polski: tradycje, doświadczenia, spory* (Znak, 1997), p. 222.

1.3 Early 1980s reconfiguration of power

From the point of view of Gramsci's theory, the imposition of the martial law in 1981 is a clear example of a process in which the state loses hegemonic power and is pushed toward the adoption of brute force as the only solution in dealing with countervailing political voices. According to Gramsci, the acceptance of the ruler's definitions of reality, even if fragmented and not conscious, must be done willingly and cannot be forced violently. The use of military power and the imposed cohesion of state ideology as a way of stopping Solidarity shows only the weakness of the state discourse and the changes in the public sphere. Another example of this process was the second pastoral visit of the Pope John Paul II in June 1983. His visits were always major events for the Polish society. The Pope undermined the legitimacy of the state as he showed the possibility of expressing opposite values and opinions. "The Pope Effect", as some academic refer to it, can be seen as an important reason why Polish society was able to participate in counterhegemonic moves that challenged state hegemony since 1978 without fear, as it was possible to imagine social gatherings independent from the state²⁶.

Evidence of the loosening of the hegemonic power of the state can be the rise of funding for building and renovating Catholic churches since the 1970s, including the Żytunia parish were "Sign of the Cross" took place. Another argument was the fact that the state's secret police invigilation system was overarching but ineffective which also refers to the exhibition, who was not censored or blocked despite its clear anti-state statement and obvious presence of the secret police agents²⁷. Although there is no way to measure the strength of hegemony or counterhegemony, imposition of the martial law and the changes in relations between state and anti-state institutions and discourses can be read as important redefinition of importance of forces between the state and the anti-state resistance that could shed a new light on the process of making and unmaking the counterhegemonic discourse. The counterhegemonic discourse of the 1980s clearly gained a hegemonic strength by the 1989, when it led to partially free elections, and managed to build a democratic political system based of the Solidarity members. The transition from counterhegemony to hegemony can be seen in many institutional ways, such as political representation in parliament, the strength of Polish nationalism and the position of the Catholic Church. The main source of legitimacy of power during and after the

²⁶ Marcin Zaremba, 'Zimno, ciepło, gorąco. Nastroje Polaków od „zimy stulecia” do lata 1980', in *'Solidarność' od wewnątrz 1980-1981* (Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2013).

²⁷ Janusz Bogucki, *Od rozmów ekumenicznych do Labiryntu / Janusz Bogucki* (Warsaw: Centrum Sztuki Współczesnej - Zamek Ujazdowski, 1991), p. 123.

transformation period was the relation to the dissident movement, whose definition was unclear but connected to moral values and representing Poland as a nation. After the change in power in the parliament, newly elected MPs were presenting themselves not as politicians, but as dissidents and activists of the anti-state movement²⁸.

As showed in this chapter, the resistance movement at the time of the exhibition was in the process of ambiguous negotiations and reformation. The “us” vs. “them” division had to constantly be exaggerated and reproduced in discursive practices in order to be relevant, which led to oversymbolisation of the resistance movement’s national and religious identity. With reconfiguration of the power after 1989 this led to constructing a excluding public sphere and the authoritative model of democracy. Because of its timing, “Sign of the Cross” can be an illustration of the momentum when the religious, national, and political representation of the resistance movement were on their way of becoming hegemonic, but its critique was not yet articulated. The political stance of the Catholic Church at this time was also less homogeneous than later. This can suggest that reasons for cultural production to participate in the church exhibitions were heterogenous and diverse and its influence on the power of the Church is worth closer examination. In the second chapter I will elaborate on the reception of the exhibition and the positionality of the “Sign of the Cross” within the art field to see how endorsing the resistance movement by artists was perceived.

²⁸ Piotr Jan Weislik, ‘What Does It Mean That Communism Has Ended? Disintegration of the Dissident Counterculture and Politics of Memory in Post-Communist Poland’ (Central European University, 2009).

Chapter 2: Counterhegemony and the challenges of the autonomy of the art field

In the previous chapter I showed that Gramsci's theory explains that the dichotomies between state and anti-state language were constantly interpreted and represented in culture, but the politics of the Polish art world with its distinct position and importance needs to be addressed in particular. In order to address that, in this chapter I will introduce Bourdieu's concept of art field, and his discussion of its autonomy and its positionalities. Despite the fact that Bourdieu's work has impacted sociology of art so profoundly, it has not been applied to the Polish art field in late socialism. His theory focuses on the politics of art in capitalist society of France where artists are dependent from either the state or the market, but it is useful in analysing "Sign of the Cross" dependence of different social actors. Using his writings as theoretical framework, I would like to address the politics of "Sign of the Cross" and place it within the broad field of the 1980s art - mainly art institutions and the embeddedness of the participants in this institutional nexus – to understand its possible relations with the state, as well as with the counterhegemonic forces. In order to do so, I will analyse the historiography of the event to see how it was received and how its entanglement of religion, nationalism and politics was described.

2.1 Politics of art in Catholic churches

To address the "Sign of the Cross" positionality towards other artist and art institutions in the art world, I will use Bourdieu's theory of field, defined as the joint action of habitus and capital expressed through objective structural relations between the positions took by social actors involved. These relations are hierarchical and competitive, but they also become a platform for creating interesting class alliances and representations of social meanings²⁹. One of the most important concepts of Bourdieu's theory is field autonomy, which becomes valuable in itself, a productive force that sets boundaries and establishes art's independence from other fields through creating rules and value systems. Bourdieu describes it as

"the specific competence necessary for the production or reproduction of a deliberately organized corpus of knowledge", whose authority is reinforced by 'the objective dispossession of those who are excluded from it', who are thereby constituted as the profane laity"³⁰.

²⁹ Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*.

³⁰ Pierre Bourdieu, 'Genesis and Structure of the Religious Field', *Comparative Social Research*, 13 (1991), 1–44.

Relative field autonomy is important in the context of art for Bourdieu, as he finds it the key factor of reproduction of the field of art since the 20th century and forming avant-garde. In the “Sign of the Cross” case, the rule of art autonomy was challenged directly, as the exhibition was engaging politically in the counterhegemonic struggle. Politically engaged art in the socialist state causes debate in the academic field³¹. The tensions between political and non-political art existed in the whole period of socialist state Poland and got even more explicit since the Solidarity Carnival started³², when many seen that art should engage in the social and political turmoil and being apolitical carried negative associations in the art field. This trend was most famously represented in the signing of support for the Solidarity by the Association of Polish Visual Artists (Związek Polskich Artystów Plastyków ZPAP), which gathered around 11000 professional artists was one of the first institutions to back the August Agreement in 1980 on 5th October 1981, after which it was suspended and replaced with few smaller, more specific unions that were easier to control³³. As a further gesture of anti-state resistance and support for political prisoners, artists and people of culture form a Committee of Independent Culture “Solidarity” which publishes leaflet called “Voice of silence”³⁴ in April 1982, which by calling for a boycott of public institutions created the clear division between the artists who supported the state and whose who did not. This division was not so strict in reality, as few important avant-garde artists who used political themes in their art and proclaimed support for the resistance still exhibited in state galleries because of pragmatic reasons, such as money or access to a passport, like Edward Druwnik. However, the general rule of the field was to look for alternative, state independent unofficial spaces.

As artists searched for independent spaces, the lack of institutions of the counterhegemonic movement left them outside cultural centres in the countryside or in private houses, gardens and apartments. One of the only early explicitly political group exhibitions on the topic gathering Polish artists at the time had to take place outside of Poland³⁵. In the early 1980s,

³¹ Piotr Piotrowski, *Znaczenia modernizmu: w stronę historii sztuki polskiej po 1945 roku* (Rebis, 1999); Claire. Bishop, ‘The Social Under Socialism’, in *Artificial Hells : Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*, ACLS Humanities E-Book. (London: Verso, 2012); Andrzej Turowski, ‘Polska Ideoza’ (presented at the Sztuka polska po 1945 roku: Materiały Sesji Stowarzyszenia Historyków Sztuki, Warsaw, 1984), p. 31.

³² Aleksander Wojciechowski, *Czas smutku, czas nadziei: sztuka niezależna lat osiemdziesiątych* (Wydawnictwa Artystyczne i Filmowe, 1992), p. 9.

³³ Patryk Wasiak, ‘The Second Life of Polish Art World in the Eighties’, *Civil Society in Central and Eastern Europe*, 7 (2014).

³⁴ ‘Głos, Który Jest Milczeniem’, *Wezwanie*, 1–2, 1982, 125.

³⁵ “Jeune peinture – Jaune Expression” took place in Grand Palais in Paris in 1982.

functional art become an important medium of expression of counterhegemonic support, especially the poster contests³⁶. As a solution many artists focused around The Church because of its important social, political and national functions, had become a centre of openly alternative culture, with poetry readings, film screenings, debates and theatre performance. Few professional artists around Poland exhibited their works in churches since the beginning of 1981 mostly in a very individual and decentralized way because of the underground nature of this type of activities. Some professional artists started designing the traditional catholic installations of the Christmas Nativity Scene and the Lord's Grave for Easter started during the martial law in churches in Warsaw and Gdańsk. These works on the verge of ethnographic and professional art have not been researched and little is known about them. After the suspension of the Martial Law on December 31st 1982, the presence of professional artists in Catholic churches became a mass movement³⁷. This tendency formed a heterogeneous phenomenon called church exhibitions³⁸, which is said to have gathered around 1700 artists until the elections of 1989³⁹. In art history scholarship, this movement referred also as "the second way" or "the second circuit", as opposed to the official state one was expressed not only through exhibitions, but also through permanent galleries, magazines, conferences around Poland.

"Sign of the Cross" was the first and the biggest exhibition representing the second way. The exhibition was organized by curatorial duo Nina Smolarz and Janusz Bogucki. While she was a relatively young and unknown journalist reporter focused on photography, he was one of the key figures of the 1970s and 1980s Polish art world, known especially for his career in Współczesna Gallery and for organizing events in Łaski. In his writings since 1980 Bogucki

³⁶ First prize of the first National Contest for Poster of NSZZ "Solidarność" organized in November by ZPAP went to Jan Bokiewicz from Warsaw, graphic designer, a member of the union, who later takes part in "Sign of the Cross". The exhibitions of all the awarded designs set to take place in state's Central Bureau of Art Exhibitions Zachęta (CBWA Zachęta) December 1981 was cancelled due to the introduction of martial law and the suspension of ZPAP. Krzysztof Findziński, another participant of "Sign of the Cross" and a member of Solidarity, remembers winning contest for poster design organized by the Archbishop of Warsaw on the occasion of pastoral visit of John Paul II in 1983.

³⁷ Anda Rottenberg, 'Asylum for the Majority', in *Sztuka w Polsce 1945-2005* (Wydawn. Piotra Marciszuka 'Stentor', 2005), pp. 283–91.

³⁸ Polish: „sztuka przykościelna” (literary: art around churches). This concept is difficult to translate and the only English academic translation that I know of was "church exhibitions" proposed by Dorota Jarecka in 'Janusz Bogucki, the Polish Szeemann?' (presented at the Rejected Heritage. Polish Art of the 1980s, Warsaw: Museum of Modern Art, 2011) <<https://artmuseum.pl/en/publikacje-online/dorota-jarecka-janusz-bogucki-polski>> [accessed 2 January 2019]. Jarecka's translation is problematic and very imprecise it uses "exhibitions" not art and "church" not around church. This makes the difference in terms of independence of art presented in churches. The proper translation should show a distinction between the religious content of the sacral art that is present in Catholic Churches and art of the 1980s. However, it is difficult to find the proper translation that would capture that.

³⁹ Wojciechowski, p. 8.

focused of the role of sacrum and spirituality in art, especially in his writings about the place of religion in both art, culture production and the public sphere. Smolarz was responsible for preparing the part of the exhibition that gathered journalist photographers which resulted in the big space gathering illustrations from protests around Poland, with flower crosses, Solidarity demonstrations and other resistance related pictures. This part obtained the most of the audience's attention, as it was referring to the most relevant social events of the time⁴⁰. The event involved many relevant neo-avant-garde artists from circles in Warsaw, Kraków, Katowice and Wrocław as well as amateurs, young artists and designers of Solidarity posters. Bogucki's concept of this type of curatorial choices was a reference to "Live in Your Head. When Attituded Becomes Form" at Documenta 5 in Kassel from 1972, influential exhibition by Harald Szeemann that challenged the ruled of art field by curating objects from different ontological perspectives⁴¹.

2.2 "The third way": avant-garde reacts to church exhibitions

The exhibition was entangled in the symbolisms of the counterhegemony and connected to political actors such as Solidarity and the Catholic Church, as it included the specific evidences of the visual culture - such as photographs, and posters of Solidarity – to support anti-state resistance. Because of that it was interpreted as the political gesture that challenged the art field autonomy, its value system and the function of art in the society, which caused many reactions witch varied depending on the time, the position from where they were articulated and their relationship with the art field and the political field. The strongest negative reactions towards the church exhibition were visible among the described as "third way" or "third circle" in the culture field in 1980s⁴². Artists centred around it articulated themselves as distanced from church exhibition directly in interviews or writings and through their art by presenting radical political and aesthetical choices, as they perceived as too conservative and dependent from the Church. They were active in alternative spaces of private houses, apartments, ateliers. Although the third way was also against state hegemony, it was critical towards the idea of engaging within the counterhegemonic discourse presented by the church exhibitions. Most famously this tendency was referred to as the *Kultura Zrzuty* (Pitch-in Culture)⁴³ of "private" art, which

⁴⁰ Marek Rostworowski, *Niebo nowe i ziemia nowa: wystawa* (Warsaw: Parafia Miłosierdzia Bożego ul. Żytia, 1985).

⁴¹ Bogucki, p. 51.

⁴² Nawojka Cieślińska, 'Żeby Życ Godniej', *Przegląd Powszechny*, 1984, nr 9 edition, p. 418.

⁴³ Marek Janiak, *Kultura Zrzuty 1981-1987* (Warsaw: Akademia Ruchu, 1989).

mocked second circle for example by organizing “Artistic Peregrination: LONG LIVE ART!” in September 1983 in Łódź and “Artistic Kolęda⁴⁴: WITCHOUT A MOTTO” in Koszalin in 1984. Ciesielski notes that

“this movement had nothing to do with the so called <Church-affiliated opposition>. The very names of the events prove this point. The models of peregrination and kolęda were used in jocular fashion, rather than being identified with the national-religious artistic movement functioning during the same period”⁴⁵.



Figure 2: “Madonna with Moustache” by Adam Rzepecki from 1983, featured on the cover of the Tango Magazine, associated with the Pitch-n Culture

While the divisions of second and third way seem clear for some scholars like Ciesielski, in reality these two movements were deeply connected as the artists of the third way also participated to a different extent in church exhibitions, with painters from Gruppa who were regular members of it despite their neo-expressive Neo-Dada art style⁴⁶. Moreover, artists usually affiliated with church exhibitions, like Teresa Murak, with time began to be affiliated with the avant-garde movement in art history. This shows that the division, although present in

⁴⁴ Kolęda in Polish is both Christmas Carol and the visit of the priest in the houses of the parish members

⁴⁵ Wojtek Ciesielski, ‘Peregrination and Kolęda in Polish Art’, in *War State. Publication Accompanying the Exhibition ‘War State. Works from the Collection of Exchange Gallery’* (Toruń: Centrum Sztuki Współczesnej Znaki Czasu, 2012).

⁴⁶ Maryla Sitkowska, *Gruppa, 1982-1992: Ryszard Grzyb, Paweł Kowalewski, Jarosław Modzelewski, Włodzimierz Pawlak, Marek Sobczyk, Ryszard Woźniak: Galeria Zachęta, Warszawa, XII 1992-II 1993* (Galeria Zachęta, 1992).

the scholarship, is more blurred.

2.3 Challenging the existing knowledge about “Sign of the Cross”

Strong reactions of the avant-garde artists were reciprocated in the media releases and the scholarship on the “Sign of the Cross”. In the 1980s, the understanding of the exhibition was through its engagement with the political field. The reviews in counterhegemonic magazines like “Tygodnik Powszechny” (The Catholic Weekly), the main Polish Roman Catholic weekly magazine from in Kraków, were very enthusiastic⁴⁷. What strikes this text is that despite the fact that this is a review by art critics, its main focus is on the role of religion in contemporary political struggle. The text focuses on the fact that the exhibition “manages to portray the diverse and intensively dramatic presence of the Cross in contemporary life of Poles”. Skrodzki treats the event as iconic gesture that connects the religious, national and political symbolism. He does not refer to particular art works, rather an idea and execution that managed to prove that “the Cross can become the common and universal symbol and way of artistic expression and the collective experience”.

On the contrary, art historians’ reviews of “Sign of the Cross” and church exhibitions were also rather critical, which can be explained by the negative perception of in avant-garde circles, who valued their autonomy and were critical towards any type of institutional patronage. Andrzej Skoczylas from “Perspektywy” published a polemic with Skrodzki, where he argues that his text is not an honest review, but set to prove a thesis, as he states that its author:

“does not refer to reality, without any concern if it is an intellectual misuse, ostentatious abandonment or pretense of respecting different opinions”⁴⁸.

His main argument is that the critic values art like “Sign of the Cross” on the basis of its stance on the right side of the political division, not the actual content of the exhibition. Moreover, he does not agree with the statement that supporting the Catholic Church and Solidarity is not the main goal of the whole Polish art field.

Similarly, art critic Cieślińska in a review from “Przegląd Powszechny” points out the inconstancies of the meaning of the cross in many works and have seen it as an attempt to sacralize laic art:

“One had the strong impression that many authors identified the sign of the cross with the crossing of straight

⁴⁷ Wojciech Skrodzki, ‘Krzyż- Uniwersum Sztuki’, *Tygodnik Powszechny* (Kraków, IX 1983), 37 edition, p. 12.

⁴⁸ Andrzej Skoczylas, ‘Krucjata’, *Perspektywy* (Warsaw, XII 1983), nr 48 edition.

lines. Others treated it as merely a theme of an art competition or decided to use it as an identification sign⁴⁹. The same year, Rottenberg pointed out the fact that the art works were not subtle or intellectual, and reviewed the exhibition as propaganda similar to the state hegemonic discourse⁵⁰

With time, the dichotomy in the debate on the politics of church exhibitions became even more diverse. Some catholic magazines like “Tygodnik Powszechny” or “Szkice” remained positive to its engaged, dissident position, which was seen as a reaction to current political needs and showing resistance. At the same time, many art critics turned more negative, as the development of phenomenon of church exhibitions grew and became more explicit. This was the case of Czerni’s “Crisis of engaged art?” in “Przegląd Powszechny” from 1986, which summed up the negative critics on “the kitsch in the church porches”, as it called church exhibitions, which started a big debate among art critics⁵¹. Czerni pointed to the fact that at some point “symbols stop being a testimony of values and become a hackneyed, obvious stereotype”. In the same journal, Jan Józef Lipski published “For the Decanonization of Holy Trash”, where he jokingly asked for removing kitsch, bad religious art from the Catholic churches⁵². Some critics, like Piotrowski, argued that in exhibitions like “Sign of the Cross”, it was “a strategic movement and not genuine religious or spiritual feelings” that pushed artists to exhibit in churches due to its hegemonic power, as it was the only place where their bad art could be exhibited without being negatively critiqued⁵³.

As “Sign of the Cross” was located in the intersection of the art field and the political field, it was negatively described by supporters of art autonomy, because in the logic of the field described by Bourdieu, it was not seen as transgressive and pure avant-garde. Besides the fact that the exhibition was entangled in the political field, it was also representing the art of the masses, as Wojciechowski points out to the democratization of art by the church exhibitions as it touched important and well-known social topic in a comprehensive way, which made the audience of the event more diverse then that of the regular exhibitions⁵⁴. This can be referred

⁴⁹ Nawojka Cieślińska, ‘Spotkanie’, *Przegląd Powszechny* (Kraków, 1983), nr 10 edition.

⁵⁰ Anda Rottenberg, ‘Polski barok’, *Zeszyty artystyczne. Państwowa Wyższa Szkoła Artystyczna w Poznaniu*, 1992, 6 edition; reprinted in Anda Rottenberg, *Przeciąg: teksty o sztuce polskiej lat 80* (Fundacja Open Art Projects, 2009).

⁵¹ Barbara Czerni, ‘Kryzys Sztuki Zaangażowanej? Notatki Na Marginesie Kilku Wystaw’, *Znak* (Kraków, 1986), 2–3 edition, pp. 30–33.

⁵² Jan Józef Lipski, ‘O Dekanonizację Świętej Szmiry’, *Znak* (Kraków, IV 1984), 4 (353) edition.

⁵³ Piotr Piotrowski, *Dekada: o syndromie lat siedemdziesiątych, kulturze artystycznej, krytyce, sztuce--wybiórczo i subiektywnie* (Obserwator, 1991), p. 77.

⁵⁴ Wojciechowski, p. 7.

back to the concept of homology positionalities proposed by Bourdieu⁵⁵, when individuals situated in a given position within a given field are likely to be sympathetic to actors who occupy a homologous position in another field or in the general social structure, which explains that art often tends to form alliances with popular taste because of its dominated position of a dominant class. Using the Catholic symbolism and presenting art in churches was a way to challenge the autonomy of art and its alienation from the masses, which also constructed its negative reception in the art field.

The contemporary scholarship on the 1980s art history focuses on more pure avant-garde art of 1980s, as it is seen as more transgressive, revolutionary and pure, which leaves church exhibitions excluded from the main discourse and not mentioned in recent studies on dissident or resistance art of the region⁵⁶. The exclusion of church exhibitions from the dominant canon is also doubled by mentioning it only in comparison as the worse, more conservative background for the actual avant-garde art. After years of relatively small attention of scholars on the topics, the exhibitions were mentioned again by Dorota Jarecka, which out of the phenomenon of second circuits distinguishes “Sing of the Cross” and “Labyrinth—the Underground Space”, both by Bogucki and Smolarz. While Jarecka sees the potential of these church exhibitions to be “good art”, as they focus on building a community and bottom-up self-organization in times of totalitarian power. However, she points out that

„No doubt, if we were to look at it all from the perspective of the alternative attitudes and circles such as Strych from Łódź, Kultura Zrzuty, Luxus, etc., then we would see no revolutionary or subversive concept lying at the foundation of the exhibitions by Bogucki and Smolarz”⁵⁷.

Most recently Kościelniak’s book on Kultura Zrzuty features a short analysis of church exhibitions and “Sign of the Cross”. He connects the exhibition with the authoritative democracy model of the counterhegemony described in the first chapter, based on the presence of national and Catholic symbolism, which he interpreted as the representation of:

“art engaged not socially, but only nationally, that reinforces the picture of engaged art as the space of monolith national-catholic culture in art history”⁵⁸.

⁵⁵ Pierre Bourdieu, ‘The Social Space and the Genesis of Groups’, *Theory and Society*, 14.6 (1985), 723–44.

⁵⁶ Apor Balázs, Apor Péter, and Horváth Sándor, *The Handbook of COURAGE: Cultural Opposition and Its Heritage in Eastern Europe* (Institute of History, Research Centre for the Humanities, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, 2018).

⁵⁷ Dorota Jarecka, ‘Janusz Bogucki, the Polish Szeemann?’ (presented at the Rejected Heritage. Polish Art of the 1980s, Warsaw: Museum of Modern Art, 2011) <<https://artmuseum.pl/en/publikacje-online/dorota-jarecka-janusz-bogucki-polski>> [accessed 2 January 2019], p. 24.

⁵⁸ Kościelniak, *Egoiści*, p. 93.

His thesis is based on the evidence of the presence of conservative artists like Jerzy Kalina who use the national-religious martyrdom references in his work and the idea of censorship at church exhibitions. His reception of “Sign of the Cross” is flat, as he finds even more progressive, avant-garde art misrepresented at the exhibition, as the presence of famous relevant artists and people of culture as a way of justifying building culture that

“was not independent or oppositional. It was just Polish. In all its cases what was national was entangled with what was catholic, creating a schema of interpretations, feelings and valuing contemporary affairs of the nation and the individual”⁵⁹.

For him even heterogenous representations in different art works are misused to fit the main discourse, as the subjectivity of artists and the group identity of the audience were constructed to match the common narrative that was not presenting any plurality. However, this negative vision of the second circle is set to provide a contrast with the transgressive, revolutionary activities of the *Kultura Zrzuty*.

I argue that this interpretation of “Sign of the Cross” as a monolithic national-catholic authoritarian exhibition is hardly based on the analysis of its actual content, as Kościelniak chooses only few artworks to prove his thesis. Despite the fact that the event was happening in a Catholic church with the cooperation of Catholic priests and parish, to accompany the pastoral visit of the Pope and to celebrate the importance of the sign of the cross for the Polish culture, it also gathered artists of different religion and ethnic belongings. As Krzysztof Findziński states: “nobody checked your passport if you wanted to participate of course!”. In an interview Koji Kamoji, a Japanese artist connected to Buddhism who exhibited at “Sign of the Cross”, expresses the unimportance of being Catholic or not in order to take part in the exhibition. In further exhibitions, Bogucki and Smolarz developed an ecumenic movement that highlighted the importance of spirituality outside the organized religion to challenge the power of the Catholic Church by preparing the chapels of different religions during “The Path of Lights—Ecumenical Meetings” at Żytnia parish in 1985. There Bogucki pointed that the determining part of the church exhibitions is was the sense of common moral foundation.

Based on above it can be concluded that “Sign of the Cross” was misinterpreted and poorly researched, as its diversity was flattened to a singular understanding of representation of the counterhegemonic discourse. For authors like Skordzki, this was valued positively as a strengthening of the Polish Nationalism and Catholicism. Others, like Kościelniak, criticized it for supporting the excluding nature of Polish culture and the authoritative. I believe “Sign of

⁵⁹ Ibidem, p. 95.

the Cross” was broad and heterogenous in its meanings, motives and political stances. Scholars do not grant the agency of the individual authors who participated in “Sign of the Cross” with diverse attitudes towards the counterhegemonic movements. Moreover, they also do not see the exhibition as located in the specific timing of resistance history, where its hegemonic force was still in the making and its negative, excluding and monolithic powers were not visible as yet. It is particularly in the center of this thesis to show how the exhibition and the phenomenon of church exhibitions relate to the counterhegemonic discourse. Although the exhibitions were read as clearly anti-state resistance political gestures, they have not been analyzed as to what extent and how church exhibitions were part of counterhegemonic discourse and how they were referring to it. In the next chapter, I develop the analysis of the “Sign of the Cross” relationship with counterhegemony based not on its reception and the context of the art field, but on the cases of particular art works it presented.

Chapter 3: Three voices of relative autonomy at “Sign of the Cross”

“Sign of the Cross” emerged as a heterogeneous big group exhibition that gathered artists from different political positions within the field of art, as and the art-products were representing it connected the avant-garde “third circle” with the “second circle” church exhibitions. It also connected different positionalities of anti-state resistance supporters within counterhegemonic discourse and presented different views of the entanglement meanings of religion, nationalism and politics. The plurality of mass resistance movement presented in this exhibition is difficult to map out. However, its complexity can be articulated by pointing out its main, dominating tendencies that were represented through art works at “Sign of the Cross”. In this chapter, I would like to describe three possible positions that can illustrate the intentions and motivations to be a part of resistance movement and the visions and ideas about the way political situation should progress among artists. I will present three distinct versions of them. Firstly, I will focus on Jerzy Kalina, Catholic artists who works with topic of Polish nationalism and martyrdom. Secondly, on Teresa Murak, a Catholic avant-garde artist, Lastly, on Krzysztof Findziński, member of Artists’ Solidarity in Warsaw connected to Artists Union ZPAP. Lastly,

3.1 Jerzy Kalina: The Church as an institution of a national religion

Kalina was the celebrity of the “Sign of the Cross” with his work big environmental installation “Last Supper”, which uses the ruins of the church to cover the Polish flag staged at a table with chairs that symbolise the Last Supper from the Bible. Kalina describes it as a: “representation of Poland, which was in ruins. We did not know what will happen to it, but it was a chance to rebuilt it”.

As the building of the church was in the process of being rebuild since spring 1983, the piles of rubble were constantly transported by the workers around making it an installation in progress. This piece was design specially for “Sign of the Cross” with negotiations with Bogucki. Kalina was one of the closest friends of Bogucki and one of the artists engaged in the process of organizing exhibition and present during the events around it. Counterhegemonic values are heavily inscribed in “Last Supper”.



Figure 3: Jerzy Kalina "Last Supper" in the main nave of the church in 1983. Photo: Erazm Ciolek.

His perception of the exhibition is uncritical, as he never heard about its negative reception and believes that "only people who were jealous could give negative critics to it". Because of his position at the "Sign of the Cross", the close friendship with Bogucki and the fact that his work "Last Supper" was commissioned by curators, it can be said that among all the artists at "Sign of the Cross", Kalina's way of thinking about the Church was one of the more visible, important and identified with the whole event. It was also more permanent, as Kalina participated in many other church exhibitions and even organized one in 1985.

The entanglement of religion, nationalism and Polish history are important features in Kalina's are and are heavily expressed in an interview with him, for example, when asking if the political context was present is the "Sign of the Cross" he states that: "it was so obvious like amen in the end of the prayer". It is also visible in his oeuvre, as many of his important work have a common foundation of the use of national, religious and historical symbols, which connects him to the counterhegemonic discourse. As one of his most important works Kalina himself lists the design of the tomb of priest Jerzy Popiełuszko located in his local parish St. Stanislaus

Kostka Chuch in Warsaw. Popiełuszko was the main martyr of counterhegemonic movement, chaplain of Solidarity, murdered by agents of the Security Service of the Ministry of Internal Affairs on 19 October 1984 because of his anti-state resistance. Popiełuszko was an icon of the anti-state movement, taking part in workers' protests and organizing regular National Masses where he voiced political topics. His sermons were broadcasted by the Free Radio Europe. His brutal assassination caused masses to attend his funeral, with around 250000 people and many Solidarity figures. The grave designed by Kalina have become the place of memory of Popiełuszko and a goal of pilgrims since the 1980s⁶⁰. The tomb in the shape of the cross is surrounded by stones which symbolize the rosary placed in the shape of boundaries of Poland. The central stone above the tomb combines the national and religious symbols. It has the representation of Black Madonna from Częstochowa, the most important Polish icon of Virgin Mary, and the Polish Coat of Arms from before the socialist state, with the white crowned eagle. The work employs symbols of the national independence from Russian oppression and the importance of the Catholicism in the national identity for the anti-state resistance memory.



Figure 4: Jerzy Popiełuszko's tomb by Jerzy Kalina, parish St. Stanislaus Kostka Chuch in Warsaw 1984. Photo: Erazm Ciołek.

⁶⁰ Agnieszka Jasik, '32 lata temu zamordowano Jerzego Popiełuszkę. Jego grób odwiedziło już ponad 20 milionów osób' <<http://www.tvp.info/27391630/>> [accessed 21 May 2019].

The figure of Kalina represents also the transformation of 1980s counterhegemony into future hegemony, as his career track after 1989 changed dramatically from opposition to the state official. Kalina's career was rather slow since 1990s until recently. In his interview he states that he was stigmatized for doing Catholic art and exhibiting in churches, as there are many negative reviews of his art done by important art critics which blocked his participation in biggest exhibitions. This made him particularly focused on-stage design, monuments and architecture. Now again his career is on the rise, as he is having a lot of commissions from the Church and from the state. Kalina speaks that he has been forgotten before but now times have changed, which is clearly a mark on the change of the government and its cultural policy since 2015 elections when Law and Justice won. He was disappointed that after the change in power in 1989 church exhibitions and his art have not been redeemed from since he was so closely connected to the opposition and Solidarity whose Cultural Committee awarded him with award in 1985⁶¹. In 2019 he has been given the Medal of the Centenary of Regained Independence from the President Andrzej Duda. In the interview Kalina states that the track of his career has been changed particularly since he designed Monument to the Victims of 2010 Smolensk Air Crash in Warsaw in 2018. It is the official state monument of the memory of the 96 people, president, top state politicians and military leaders, who died in an air crash in Smoleńsk, Russia on their way to commemorate 1940 Katyn Massacre. The Smoleńsk plane crash become the top political topic as many believed it was not an accident, but a deliberate action of Russian government causing the rise of xenophobia and nationalistic politics⁶².

⁶¹ Anna Szyrwelska, 'Jerzy Kalina. Przeciw Złu i Przemocy', in *Niepokora: Artyści i Naukowcy Dla Solidarności 1980-1990* (Gdańsk: słowo/obraz terytoria, 2006).

⁶² Raymond Taras, 'Russia Resurgent, Russophobia in Decline? Polish Perceptions of Relations with the Russian Federation 2004-2012', *EUROPE-ASIA STUDIES*, 66.5 (2014), 710–34 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/09668136.2014.898432>>.



Figure 5: Monument to the Victims of 2010 Smolensk Air Crash in Warsaw by Jerzy Kalina, 2018. Photo: Adrian Gryczuk.

3.2 Teresa Murak: Catholic community and its spiritual practices

At “Sign of the Cross” Murak showed “Procession with the Cross” which was an act of bringing a six-meter cross covered in cuckooflower by the members of Żytnia parish and then put in the main nave under the ceiling. The cuckooflower was gardened and maintained by her in the process of the exhibition with the help from member of the parish. In the interview Murak reveals that her work was initially thought to also include a piece of fabric covered in cuckooflower to be hanging from the cross to be touched by people. This idea was blocked by the main curator of the exhibition, Janusz Bogucki, which left the cross far from public and impossible to touch besides the performative part. While mentioning this fact in an interview, she expresses anger and frustration about the intervening in her work. Although in the beginning she was enthusiastic about the idea of the exhibition, in the process her opinion about Janusz Bogucki, the main curator, become very negative, as she calls him “an epigone”, someone who used the already existing potential of bottom-up lively community for his own purposes. She recalls that the cooperation with him was not good as he was forcing his ideas and visions on her work. In 1991, she made an art piece in a form of a flayer with a poem “Selling the River Water” where in a metaphorical way she accuses Bogucki publicly of abusing the Catholic community. She says she is critical because it was used as “propaganda” as this type of art was supposed to be loyal to the given political situation. She does not think that art should be this dependent from given political stance. According to her interview artists and generally

everybody should have supported Solidarity and be a part of a resistance and anti-state movement, but not in the way Bogucki and church exhibitions did.



Figure 6: Beginning of the Teresa Murak's performance "Procession with a Cross". Photo: Marcin Apper.



Figure 7: The end of Teresa Murak's performance, the Cross is located in the main room of the church in the place of the main nave where it stood for the rest of the exhibition. Photo from artist's archive

Interpretations of this work vary from different authors as Murak's was one of the only artists exhibiting at "Sign of the Cross" included in the avant-garde art history canon Siebuła and Ronduda point out to the egalitarian and participatory nature of this work, which challenged the totalitarian public sphere by providing bottom-up community of resistance⁶³. Jarecka on the other hand compares it to the critical art of the 1990s to point out its progressiveness and sexual context especially with the idea of the hanging fabric. Kościelniak is sceptical towards these interpretations and sees it rather as subordination of avant-garde artist to the religious

⁶³ Natalia Siebuła and Łukasz Ronduda, "Bread and Roses: Artists and the Class Divide" Exhibition Catalogue' (Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, 2016) <<http://breadandroses.artmuseum.pl/public/breadandroses.pdf>>, p. 74.

symbolism⁶⁴. In fact, since the beginning of her career in the 1970s Murak has been very vocal about her Catholicism and expressed it through her art. In 1974, while she was still a student, she used the space of a Catholic church at Kiełczewice, her hometown near Lublin, for exhibiting her work “Easter Carpet”⁶⁵. Murak took one week to grow cuckooflower on a piece of 18-meter-long fabric in a nun’s building that later was took by friends, artists, neighbours and parish members to the building of a church for a Great Saturday Mass. After the mass, the fabric was transported outside to be put down to the river Bystrzyca nearby. This early work represents Murak’s interest in nature and growing process as well as communal rituals. Cuckooflower is a plant traditionally associated with Easter rituals in Catholicism and used widely for decoration of this holiday. The action of putting something into river on the other hand can be associated with the pagan ritual of the beginning of the spring. As Murak continued working in churches later, she also performed and exhibited at galleries and public spaces such as streets, gardens, forests or the building of the art student dorm. It should be noted that her work often uses explicitly Christian symbolisms and rituals but without any political or national aspect, for example by including the representation of Jesus Christ, by dedicating her work to John Paul II or by working with the nuns from Order of the Visitation of Holy Mary in Warsaw. However, Murak was vocal about her support of Solidarity in two smaller works that were not religious, from 1981 and 1989 that combined her interests in nature with political message. This shows that two topics were treated separately in her career.

⁶⁴ Kościelniak, *Egoiści*, p. 93.

⁶⁵ *Teresa Murak*, ed. by Teresa Murak (Bielsko-Biała: Galeria Bielska BWA, 2000).

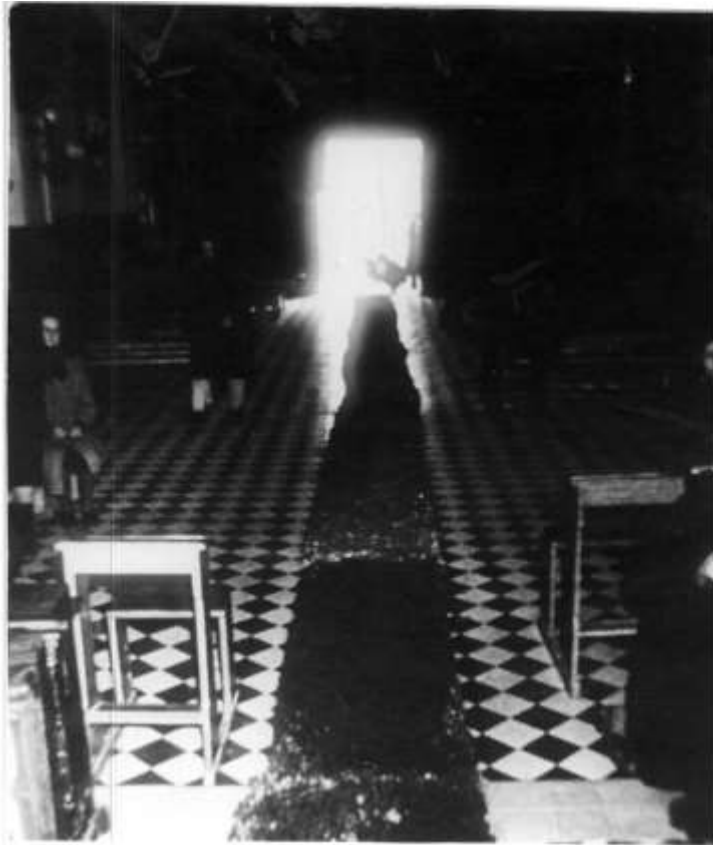


Figure 8: "Easter Carpet" by Teresa Murak in Kielczewice in 1974. Photo from artist's archive.



Figure 9: "Easter Carpet" by Teresa Murak in Kielczewice in 1974. Photo from artist's archive.

Murak's interest in Christian spirituality and symbolism combined with avant-garde form makes her a representative of two groups of participants of "Sign of the Cross". Firstly, she is one of the religious artists engaged in the relationship with institutionalized religion in a long-term way, such as Jerzy Nowosielski whose career was closely connected to the Orthodox Church. On the one hand, she is one of the artists successfully placed an art field who were and are still recognized as good and avant-gardes and included in the canon of history of art. Being on this intersection, she may be the only one so engaged in Catholicism and religious aspects of art. However, many other artists present at "Sign of the Cross" were Catholic and engaged in other ways with religion regardless of the political situation of the Church. This means that her position is not singular or unique, but the most visible and clearly expressed.

What is also important is that Murak was the only artists from "Sign of the Cross" invested in Żytnia parish before and after the exhibition. This particular Church got attention of her because it was famous for its help to the people in need and the bottom-up organization. Particularly, the main priest, Wojciech Górecki, was considered famous among the Catholic community for his open-mindedness and idea of creating a community of believers⁶⁶. He was the initiator of the existence of Żytnia parish and the rebuilding of the Church, which was a ruin bombed during the 1944 Warsaw Uprising. In 1973 he decided to start holding masses in a ruined building. Until 1980 it seemed to be not official or legal, with a foil instead of a roof. By May 1983, the building was being renovated by the people from the parish. Murak was a part of the community there. She described how her family was engaged in permanent help to the teenage boy from a poor family. However, she did not exhibit there any of her art before "Sign of the Cross". Because of her relationship with the church, she played big role in the process of negotiating between the organizers and the members of the parish.

My argument here would be that exhibiting at Church for Murak was something done because of her religious beliefs and everyday practices outside of the field of politics. Her presence at "Sign of the Cross" points out the religious and communal function of the Church regardless of its broad political position. Her "Procession with the Cross" can be interpreted as the Catholicism which brings people together to form a community. This togetherness can be seen from the political perspective and as a practice of resistance of anti-communism. However, I would argue that this is a teleological argumentation, as Murak continues the same meanings in her work after 1989. For her work, the importance of community, spirituality and processual

⁶⁶ Ewa Berberysz, 'U Siebie (At Home)', *Tygodnik Powszechny* (nr 25, Kraków, VI 1983).

work goes beyond the critique of the socialist state and the martial law. Her use of catholic symbolism is more intimate and while it can be seen as political, it is not counterhegemonic and directly connected to given political opposition or institution. She treats Church within boundaries of its religious functions. Murak expresses negative emotions towards the appropriation of Catholic Church, symbolic and physical, for making a political or national statement. This attitude is rarely expressed in the 1980s, especially during marital law. To sum up, Murak's work represents the dependence of Catholic Church but strives for autonomy from political field, both from the state and from the counterhegemony, which is different than the one represented for example by Kalina.

3.3 Krzysztof Findziński: Church as a social-political actor

Findziński presented couple series of graphics: one triptych with crosses "Plus equals plus", one work "Hope Points" and two untitled works with political symbols. All the works were made in the 1970s and picked by Bogucki from Findziński's portfolio for the exhibition. Unfortunately, the works were lost after the exhibition and the not all were photographed or reproduced. Their use of symbolism is ambiguous. Two works, triptych "Plus equals plus" and "Hope points" were using the shape of cross. However, their engagement in religious or spiritual symbolism is not clear, as they were using it graphicly and simply. One uses the name of "plus" and not "cross", so it is not engaged in religious discourse. The other "Hope Points" was clearly referring to Crucifixion in the sense of new hope. Two other works, not reproduced, were referring to political situation. They are easier to disentangle, as they were openly connected to political affairs critical towards the party and enthusiastic towards the peaceful opposition. One was representing a scene of speech given by Gomułka in 1957 that gathered around million people audience. This speech was famous for its reformative hope after Stalin's death and was announcing changes in socialist state. The other work was showing a V-symbol, which was widely understood as a victory symbol since the II World War. However, it is represented upside down, showing a rather pessimistic approach towards the way this historical event ended for Poland. Interestingly, V-symbol was famously also used by Wałęsa and associated with Solidarity since 1980s.

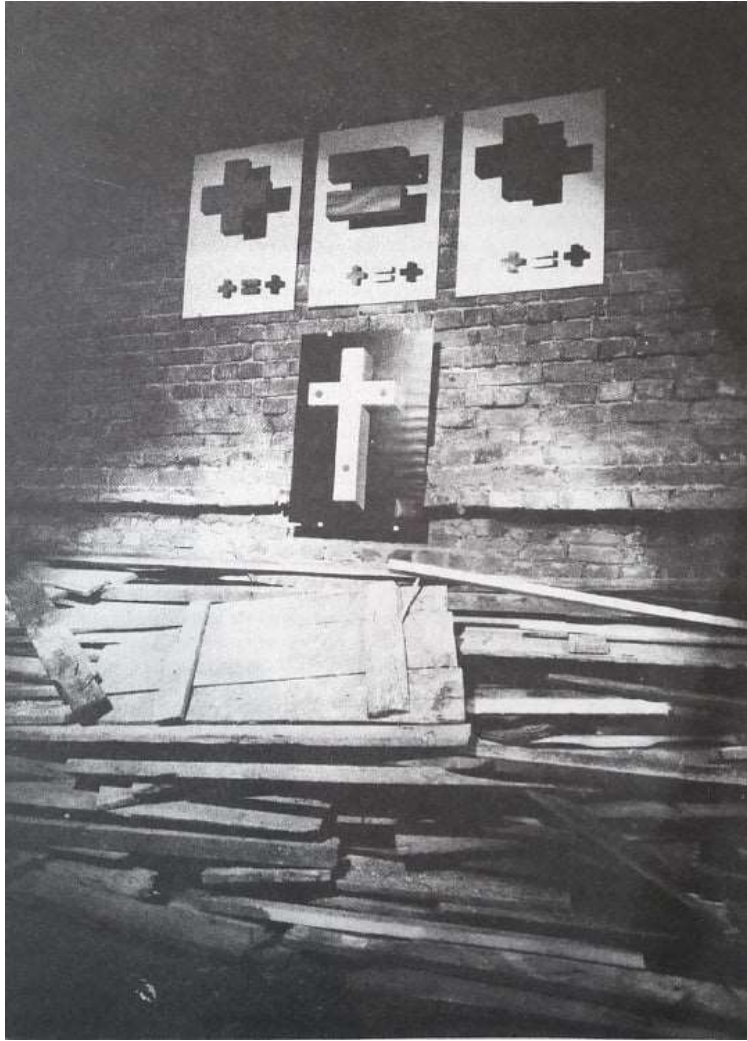


Figure 10: “Plus equals plus” and “Points of Hope” by Krzysztof Findziński in 1983. Photo: Leszek Fidusiewicz

This lack of balance in the use of political and religious topics is surprising. Findziński comments it by pointing that he was not interested in fitting himself into the “Sign of the Cross” narrative. By preparing some new work that would focus on religion or Catholic Church Findziński felt that other artists are dishonest to themselves and too dependent on political and social atmosphere: “I did not want to fit into one tendency, everybody started to paint Christs and Crosses, get revelations because of entering the church, like they did not paint Lenin before”. Instead, he chose to use works from 1970s that could also comment of the contemporary situation. Despite the fact that Findziński was engaged in Solidarity, he did not include this in his oeuvre:

“I did not feel like painting ZOMO or tanks... it was not Warsaw Uprising, the protests were uneventful, there was nothing to paint”.

He felt disappointed and bored with the weak resistance as it mostly consisted of making posters, doing fundraisers and debating about political situation. He felt like it was not making any impact, and nothing could be done to influence the change.

For Findziński, cooperating with Bogucki was the main reason of taking part in “Sign of the Cross”. The fact that “Sign of the Cross” was organized in Catholic Church was secondary. It was the only time he exhibited in the Church. Moreover, Findziński states that he was enthusiastic towards exhibiting in Catholic Church because he believed it’s a space of freedom. Because of the total state control and lack of independent exhibiting spaces, discussions, political pluralism, he wanted to look for freedom of speech and believed Church would be its source. Nowadays he is more critical: “Church was not about freedom at all”, as there was clearly censorship and not everything could be shown. However, it was still relatively less restricted than any other space during martial law. Additionally, Findziński finds exhibiting in Żytnia church as an interesting experience with art in relation to space, pointing out to the site-specific art tendency that he practices until today. He describes the Żytnia parish mainly from the point of view of its history and aesthetics. The ruins of church were inspiring for him, as they represented the bombing of the Warsaw Uprising from 1944. He is disappointed that the building got renovated, as for him it captured the tragic memory in a unique and touching way. Later, Findziński experimented with different locations, organizing private exhibitions in his apartment and outside of Warsaw. He did not participate in other church exhibitions and was critical towards most of them: “there was one good one called “Labyrinth” [organized by Bogucki in 1986 in Warsaw], but the rest was terrible, parish religious art, saint pictures. I was not invited because I was never a part of religious art movement”.

Findziński’s presence at the “Sign of the Cross” represents its political position regardless of the religious or spiritual importance of the Church. The sense of community of the parish, the religious beliefs or Christian symbolisms were not important to him. This position can represent the situation of many atheists, non-believers and avant-garde artists who changed their opinion about the Church because of its political situation. Findziński took part in the exhibition because it became an important political and social actor that took active part in the anti-state resistance and supported Solidarity. His position is similar to other artists who were members of Solidarity, for example Jan Bokiewicz, who was also book and poster designer and a participant of underground movement during the martial law. Their participation in “Sign of the Cross” legitimized the political and not only religious stance of the exhibition. It showed its pure political engagement. It made the Catholic Church the space of not only religious, but also political and social debate. In the end, neither Findziński nor Bokiewicz did engage in religious art exhibitions movement, because of its dependency from church.

In the above lists of positions represented at “Sign of the Cross” does not exhausts the topic and the possible reasons of every participant of the exhibition. However, it can serve as a systematic representation of possible understandings of the heterogenous, diverse political stands that were included in Church during the martial law. The three main arguments here: religious represented by Murak, resistance represented by Findziński and national represented by Kalina could be combined to the different extent by other participants and other works of art presented at the “Sign of the Cross”. The importance here is the fact that the space of Catholic Church at that time was including all of the above. For the field of art, it was representing them all at once depending on their position, personal politics, views on art, religious beliefs. Intersection of actors with different motivations caused the space of Catholic Church to undergo a transformation of its social functions. The above chapter shows how during “Sign of the Cross” the space of a Catholic church becomes an arena of the pluralism of options and different interpretations of the functions of the Catholic Church and the state. When in fact it was never the case that the Church wanted to challenge its strength, position and the possibility to influence the political situation, the members of the community and the ways the church was used it otherwise. This unrealistic expectation and the collective nature of the “Sign of the Cross” point out to interpreting it as a radical democratic field with very opposite views being represented together to make a political, anti-state statement with the use of the existing possible symbols.

Conclusion

In the above thesis by analysing the “Sign of the Cross” exhibition I challenge the existing scholarship in two ways. Firstly, I argue with the limited understanding of the counterhegemonic entanglement of religious, national and political symbolism as based in the excluding public sphere by showing that individuals engaged in anti-state resistance presented different views on this topic. Many worked for producing more inclusive communities, not limited to representing “Pole-Catholic” figure, even when they were using symbols of Catholicism and working in Catholic churches. Secondly, I challenge the misinterpretations of “Sign of the Cross” and the church exhibitions overall. The art history discourse that excludes the phenomenon of artists in Catholic churches does not see the political potential of it. What is focuses on is its comparison to avant-garde “third way” artists who remained less engaged in the political struggle and more in the search of the progressive artists forms and topic. By presenting the existing interpretations of the “Sign of the Cross” exhibition as biased and outdated I show the possibility of its new interpretations and re-writing its history and relationship with the art field, the state, the counterhegemony and the Church.

In this thesis I would like to propose a new understanding of the church exhibitions such as “Sign of the Cross” as a cultural and symbolical production and its role in the making the counterhegemonic discourse. Based on the empirical research that included archival material and in-depth interviews I argue that the church exhibitions of the second circuit of 1980s are were engaged in a critical debate about existence of different possibilities of the entanglement between of religion, nationalism and politics. By presenting three different artworks in third chapter, diverse ideas about the anti-state resistance and its relationship with art and the Catholic Church can be observed. Due to the not institutionalized culture life and place of Catholic Church in the political scene, many actors with different positionalities were drawn to it. The discourse of counterhegemony was not yet well articulated, which made it easy for artists with different, often oppositional ideal, come together and exhibition is the one space. This can expands our knowledge about the meaning making processes of the visual culture of the era and the reasons why the Catholic and national symbols were present in the political visual culture, as it shows that the spaces of Catholic Churches in position of mobilizing people with different reasons: political, national or religion to make a common statement.

This shows that limiting “Sign of the Cross” to a representation of the counterhegemonic discourse connected to “fundamentalist Church” described by Michnik or “monolith national-catholic culture” mentioned by Kościelniak is not the whole picture of the exhibition, as it to

showed different representation of the entanglement meanings of religion, nationalism and politics. The reception of “Sign of the Cross” through the lances of the aftermath of the 1980s event, and the fact that Church and Solidarity obtained the hegemonic force leads authors to see only one side of the exhibition, as represented by Kalina’s Monument to the Victims of 2010 Smolensk Air Crash in Warsaw. However, the use of religious symbols in works by Murak and Findziński prove that the Catholicism goes beyond this particular exclusive representation and shows that artists who participated were critical to the excluding nature of counterhegemonic discourses. This shows how the processes of the oversymbolisation of the political discourse are remembered as the monolithic culture when in fact it was the polyphony of voices of different circles of actors and visions. It can be interpreted as a unique gathering of distinct social actors to work together with different ideas and reasons as the space of Catholic church and the understanding of “Sign of the Cross” were very wide are not oppositional.

“Sign of the Cross” proposed a unique platform of artistic expression that combined the critique of the art field, the state and the counterhegemony. This phenomenon can start the discussion over the ways in which the bottom up actions and change in the community can take place to challenge the hegemonic understandings of public sphere, relationship of the Church and the state and the role of the art in society. By studying phenomenon such as church exhibitions we can learn more about the anti-state discourse within art and cultural production. For future research, the topic can be developed by comparing and contrasting a different possible artistic expression within the context of social, economic and political transformation of the Socialist Bloc, as well as engaged art and its dependency in the post-socialist societies. Additionally, the case of “Sign of the Cross” can be researched from the point of view of memory studies and the knowledge production, as its historiography and ways of remembering it provide important input into constructing a narrative about the 1980s politics and art.

Appendix

Teresa Murak:

Born in 1949 near Lublin, south-eastern Poland, Teresa Murak graduated from Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw in 1976 as a painter. In fact, Murak had exhibited in the most important museums and galleries in Poland in recent years at solo or group exhibitions at Zachęta National Gallery, Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, Silesian Museum in Katowice and more. She had also succeeded in making an international career, which makes her one of the most famous participants of “Sign of the Cross”. After “Sign of the Cross” she participated in other exhibitions at Żytnia parish (“New Heaven, New Earth” curated by Marek Roztworowski, 1985) and she worked one more time with Bogucki.

Krzysztof Findziński:

Born in 1948, Krzysztof Findziński graduated from Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw and in Belgrade. After graduating from the Academy, he became a professional book graphic designer. Besides his professional career in design, he made exhibitions with a group of friends as an art collective Blok Wyspy, which were not political or religious⁶⁷. His career in the art field was not successful. In 1980 he became a member of Artists’ Solidarity in Warsaw connected to Artists Union ZPAP. During the martial law he was part of the underground resistance during in Warsaw, publishing and distributing the illegal papers and taking part in protests. Nowadays Findziński is working on the peripheries of the art field, in smaller towns of Poland and funding his own exhibitions. He is interested in site specific art, history of Poland and Eastern and African art from the anthropological orientalist perspective

Jerzy Kalina:

Born in 1944, a filmmaker, stage designer, painter, Jerzy Kalina graduated from Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw in 1971. He is considered the most important artist of the movement exemplified by the “Sigh of the Cross”, which is the religiously and politically engaged art combining political message with nationalistic symbols when making religious pieces⁶⁸. Besides working with the counterhegemonic exhibitions, after 1984 Kalina stayed close to the St. Stanislaus Kostka Church in Warsaw where he designed the temporary altars for the pastoral visits of John Paul II and other forms of Church event architecture.

⁶⁷ *Przyczółek Janowiec 1944-1945*, ed. by Filip Jaroszczański and Krzysztof Findziński (Kazimierz Dolny: Muzeum Nadwiślańskie w Kazimierzu Dolnym, 2016).

⁶⁸ Anda Rottenberg, *Sztuka w Polsce 1945-2005* (Wydawn. Piotra Marciszuka ‘Stentor’, 2005). Page 244.

Janusz Bogucki:

Alongside Nina Smolarz, the curator of “Sign of the Cross” event. Previously, he became relevant in the art field by running the Galeria Współczesna (Modern Gallery) in Warsaw between 1965-1974, where despite state control he managed to develop personal taste, circle of neo-avant-garde artists and international connections. The rise of “auteur” galleries like Galeria Współczesna in 1970s in Poland was a wide phenomenon that developed concepts of neo-avant-garde caused by the relatively liberal cultural policy at the time⁶⁹. The term “auteur” suggests the subjective perspective and recognizable unique artistic choices presented by them. Such galleries were operating as the cultural centres, sources of international contacts and tendencies around Poland. The spaces of such galleries were usually in a constant negotiating of independence with the state in order to run a unique relatively autonomous institution of art. Their activity was marked by the specific political climate, which made them sources of resistance, communities and political discussions, despite the fact that they were owned, controlled and often shut down in the end by the state. Bogucki’s political position and his relation to the state hegemony and counterhegemony structure is interesting. Since after the war, he was always working in the official state art institutions, firstly at Ministry of Culture in Warsaw, then in the National Museum in Cracow, later in different state galleries. Despite being a part of the system, Bogucki’s actions were often considered anti-state⁷⁰. Exhibitions which were found too controversial lead to him being fired from the Galeria Współczesna in 1974, which was widely criticized and discussed in the art field. After these events, he became focused on spiritual topic in culture and sacrum in art, which he developed by organizing events in Laski, small village near Warsaw, where he gathered city intelligentsia in his family’s place. In Laski he was also cooperating with local Catholic Churches, convent and Catholic Retreat Canter.

⁶⁹ Wasiak, p. 29.

⁷⁰ Jarecka, p. 26.

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