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THE FRENCH STANCE TOWARDS THE POLISH PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC FROM THE ELECTION OF FRANÇOIS MITTERRAND TO THE LIFTING OF MARTIAL LAW AS ASSESSED BY POLISH DIPLOMATS

This article aims to explain and assess how Polish diplomacy saw the French policy towards Poland from the beginning of the presidency of François Mitterrand to the suspension of martial law (1981–1982). It evaluates the reactions of the French state and the Socialist Party, the French Communist Party, and the French public opinion. The French state – adhering to the political principles of Charles de Gaulle – was faced with a real conundrum: what policy to pursue when it came to the Polish crisis? Conflicting interests made it act indecisively. Its policies and motives were all closely observed by the Polish diplomacy. This article further proves that Polish foreign policy, though not sovereign, was not ideologically driven (besides official declarations) as the assessment of the French foreign policy demonstrates.

Keywords: France, Poland, martial law, François Mitterrand, Wojciech Jaruzelski, public opinion.

Following the imposition of martial law, the French government adopted the most critical stance towards Poland among all Western European countries. This position is largely consistent with that of the United States.

A. Naworyta

1. INTRODUCTION

In the last few decades, a relatively large number of studies have been written on how the French reacted to martial law in Poland (Heruday-Kielczewska, 2012; Heruday-Kielczewska, 2015; Pleskot, 2013a; Pleskot 2013b; Frybes, 2010; Chwalba, 1997; Gebert, 1991; Korolko, 2019). However, no research has been published on how France's attitude towards Poland was perceived among Polish diplomats. This article aims to address this gap and to analyse how Polish representatives assessed French policies towards the Polish People's Republic and the attitude of the French Communist party, which had a significant

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influence on the French-Polish relationship given its participation in the French administration (Jarosz, Pasztor, 2008). The study will cover the period from the election of François Mitterrand as President on 10 May 1981 to the lifting of martial law on 31 December 1981 (however, it will not cover assessment of French reactions to lifting of martial by Polish diplomats). In particular, it shows how far Polish diplomats' perceptions of France were ideologically biased and how far they differed from reality. Numerous scholars have argued that it was in post-1956 Poland that the process of dismantling totalitarianism was most evident, with policies becoming less dogmatic and principled, less dependent on "ideological constraints", and more pragmatic (Walicki, 1996; Duraczyński, 1997)². The tentative conclusion is that the diplomatic analysis appeared to be matter-of-fact and sober, free of ideological considerations. The article has been based on analyses, notes, and correspondence of Polish diplomats, including employees of the Warsaw Ministry of Foreign Affairs and diplomatic missions in France. These sources are kept in the Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Archive of Modern Records in Warsaw.

2. FROM THE ELECTION OF FRANÇOIS MITTERRAND AS PRESIDENT TO THE DECLARATION OF MARTIAL LAW

On 10th May 1981, François Mitterrand, the chairman of the Socialist Party, won the second round of the presidential elections. Mitterrand had a rich political history, having served as a minister during the Fourth Republic and having run for president twice before (in 1965 and 1974). Mitterrand's victory came as a surprise to many countries, who had expected Valéry Giscard d'Estaing to be re-elected (Heruday-Kielczewska, 2012; Szeptycki, 2005; Favier, Martin-Roland, 1990). The socialist president was expected to make significant changes to foreign policy, following his criticism of de Gaulle's assumptions, which had been the basis for the French strategy in the past³. After the June parliamentary elections, the government was joined by communist ministers, causing concern among Western countries (Heruday-Kielczewska, 2012). The future direction of France's both internal and external policies appeared uncertain.

Regarding the presidential election, Polish diplomats highlighted the factors that contributed to Mitterrand's victory, including the deteriorating economic situation in France. This involved specifically the increase in unemployment, inflation, and slowdown of industrial development. In addition, Giscard d'Estaing's relationship with the Central African emperor Jean-Bédél Bokassa had contributed to a compromising situation known as the diamond affair, and the much-criticised policy of privileged relations between the Fifth Republic and the USSR was still in place despite the collapse of détente in East-West relations. In particular, Giscard d'Estaing was criticised by Mitterrand and Jacques Chirac for meeting Leonid Brezhnev in Wilanów. Ultimately, the neo-Gaullists of the Rally for the Republic (RPR) allowed their voters to "vote freely in the second round, which

² Andrzej Walicki pointed to the swift rejection of totalitarianism due to the fact that Poland had not become a fully totalitarian state (Walicki, 1996).

³ These fears turned out to be unfounded because Mitterrand, like de Gaulle, saw the future of Europe in close Franco-German cooperation; he sought close cooperation with the Soviet Union, although this was initially impossible, and a break with the Yalta system; he did not fundamentally change relations with the United States either (Szeptycki, 2005). Both the USA and the USSR preferred Giscard d'Estaing because they knew what they could expect from him (Favier, Martin-Roland, 1990).

determined the election results” (Olechowski [1981, 14 May]. [Urgent note...]. 45/84, Fr. 2412, AMSZ, Warszawa, Poland). Importantly, this was a factual and objective assessment of the situation, which historians now agree upon (Bozo, 2019; Titley, 2002; Heruday-Kielczewska, 2012)⁴.

Tadeusz Wojciechowski, the former ambassador to France and then deputy minister of foreign affairs, predicted that Mitterrand's foreign policy may differ from that of his predecessor in many aspects. He stated that

Mitterrand will pursue a more European policy, in favour of integration, and a more Atlantic one, despite his anti-American rhetoric. The privileged relationship between Paris and Bonn will be maintained. [...] Regarding East-West relations, particularly in the area of dialogue and cooperation with the USSR, M. [itterrand] will aim to maintain France's current active policy. However, his stance on Middle Eastern affairs, Afghanistan, China (potentially using China as leverage in relations with the USSR), and human rights could complicate and restrict these relations.

The Minister predicted that relations with the Polish People's Republic would be good, although slightly worse than before, and that there would be greater difficulties for Poland to receive loans (Olechowski [1981, 14 May]. [Urgent note...]. 45/84, Fr. 2412, AMSZ).

The accuracy of the aforementioned forecasts should be considered high when one considers the turning point that was the declaration of martial law. Polish diplomats concluded in their subsequent analyses that

the emerging positive feelings towards the government and parties in our country are, however, weakened by continuing negative assessment of real socialism in Poland and other socialist countries, as well as by vigorous promotion of their very own model of «democratic socialism».

Although the French promised to provide economic aid, this was conditional on “the continuation of the «renewal project»”, i.e. introducing reforms and agreements between the government and the opposition. According to Polish diplomats, the architects of the French policy perceived Poland was still ahead of other Eastern Bloc countries in terms of progress. They were pleased to hear that Prime Minister Pierre Mauroy was scheduled to visit Poland. According to Polish diplomats, Mauroy's importance in France's semi-presidential system was greater than that of his predecessors (Korczewski [1981, 22 June]. [Memorandum. Official statements of French administration regarding Poland]. 45/84, Fr. 22, AMSZ, Warszawa, Poland). Additionally, it was claimed that “discussions at both government and party level have shown that our affairs draw considerable international

⁴ The diamond scandal involved accepting a very expensive gift of diamonds from the bloody dictator Jean-Bédél Bokassa. During the election campaign, the president sold the diamonds and donated the money to the Central African Red Cross, but the damage to his image remained (Titley, 2002). Valéry Giscard d'Estaing antagonised the right wing by pursuing liberal policies, e.g. on abortion (Heruday-Kielczewska, 2012). In the tradition of French policy going back to de Gaulle, Giscard d'Estaing, after the collapse of the period of détente in international relations, persistently sought dialogue with the Soviet Union in order to avoid a clash of powers. To this end, a secret meeting was planned between the French president and Leonid Brezhnev in Wilanów. The results of this meeting were unsatisfactory, and the French president was accused by French and world public opinion of breaking transatlantic solidarity (Jarosz et al., 2008).

attention. There is a growing understanding that stabilising the situation in Poland may also potentially lead to détente and maintaining peaceful order in Europe". Several politicians in power in France and the Federal Republic of Germany believed that "Solidarity does not motivate people to work and therefore only aggravates the already difficult situation". This was viewed as an opportunity to exert pressure on Western politicians and trade unions associated with Solidarity. These, in turn, were expected to influence the Polish trade union to "rise to a position of cooperation and shared responsibility for resolving the country's pressing issues". The author of the note observed that the French positively evaluated the 9th Congress of the Polish United Workers' Party as well as the actions the party and the government had been taking towards Solidarity (Czyrek [1981, 20 August]. [Urgent aide-memoire for interviews with P. Mauroy, the French Prime Minister, J. Delors, the Minister of Finance and Economy, as well as G. Plissonnier, a Politburo member and the secretary of the Central Committee of the French Communist Party, and C. Germon, the national secretary of the Socialist Party, on 17 August in Paris, and with H.D. Genscher, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, H.J. Wischnewski, the vice-chairman of Social Democratic Party of Germany, and H. Mies, the chairman of the Communist Party of Germany, on 18 August in the Federal Republic of Germany]. 45/84, Fr. 22, AMSZ, Warszawa, Poland). It should be noted though that not every speech presented to the Congress exhibited conciliatory tendencies or the need for reforms⁵.

The French statements were linked to Mitterrand's conviction that the international situation made it impossible for Poland to leave the Soviet sphere of influence quickly, and that he therefore preferred the resolute attitude of the Polish United Workers' Party towards Solidarity to an invasion by Soviet troops. The latter would have been a tragedy because it would have led to hostile relations between the West and the East. Similarly, during a conversation with Lech Wałęsa, Minister Cheysson emphasised that France "respected Poland's geopolitical situation". Thus, a much hoped-for compromise agreement between Solidarity and the Polish communists was regarded as the optimal outcome. The French applauded the actions of the Polish authorities that were leading to it, but acknowledged that it was not an easy task (Pasztor, Jarosz, 2015; Attali, 2005; Pleskot, 2013b)⁶.

The comment by Polish diplomats on Mitterrand's pro-Atlantic attitude is remarkable. Subsequent analyses have identified the sources of pro-Atlanticism in the inclusion of four communist politicians in the government and in the implementation of a socio-economic

⁵ The desire to reach an agreement and to emphasise the need for reforms was evident in the speech of Deputy Minister Mieczysław Rakowski, who, however, was short on specifics, apart from the need to introduce a more "authentic" concept of the National Unity Front and the need to introduce workers' self-government. In other speeches, the criticism was more pronounced, in particular against the radical part of Solidarity (e.g. the speech of Stanisław Kania). The final resolution adopted at the Congress can hardly be called revolutionary (Holzer, 1984). Years later, Minister Józef Czyrek recalled a conversation with Prime Minister Pierre Mauray in August 1981, during which the Prime Minister of the Fifth Republic said that "the left [...] considers Poland to be a leading country in democratic changes and in the policy of rapprochement with the West [...]". The Polish minister was very pleased with this meeting (Czyrek, 2012).

⁶ Even before the elections, socialists saw the changes in Poland as the beginning of a pluralistic society that could bring both parts of Europe closer together. This did not mean that the Yalta-Potsdam agreements were completely scrapped. Mitterrand himself was quite skeptical about the possibility of the Polish experiment succeeding. He believed that the coexistence of the Marxist-Leninist system and institutional freedoms would sooner or later lead to confrontation (Korolko, 2019).

programme that involved greater state intervention in the economy, nationalising some industries and developing social policies which concerned Western countries, particularly the United States (Korolko, 2019; Heruday-Kielczewska, 2012). According to a note, "the left-wing government, implementing the economic and social programme, which has been criticised by Atlanticist circles, is seeking to increase its allied credibility by strengthening military cooperation within the alliance" (Dąbrowa [1981, 2 September]). [Memorandum on the defence, disarmament and international security in the policies of the current French government]. 45/84, Fr. 2413, AMSZ, Warszawa, Poland).

As for the assessment of the French Communist Party's participation in the government, it was predicted that

the Socialist Party could benefit more from social achievements by agreeing to the joint implementation of the Mitterand line. This was because the French Communist Party was likely to receive more blame for any slow progress and there would undoubtedly be obstacles along the way" (Kaługa [1981, 1 July]. [Aide-memoire for the interview with Maxim Gremetz, a member of the Politburo and the secretary of the Central Committee of the French Communist Party on 30 June 1981]. KC PZPR Wydział Zagraniczny, LXXVI-595, Archive of Modern Records (AAN), Warszawa, Poland (page numbers not continuous).

The balance of power was assessed objectively: only four communist politicians entered the government and the joint programme declaration contained mainly socialist demands. As emphasised, Mitterand aimed to share responsibility for reforms with the communists, with the Socialist Party controlling the government, and to neutralise the communist trade union headquarters, Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT) (Bożym [1981, 2 July]. [Assessment of the agreement between the SP and the FCP as well as the entry of communists into the government]. 45/84, Fr. 2412, AMSZ, Warszawa, Poland; Korolko, 2019; Łakomy, 2006). However, following the rejection of the policy of détente, it was concluded that the inclusion of the Communists in the government could have a positive effect on the tense international situation. It was also noted that "the French Communist Party had taken a correct stance on current events in Poland from the outset, expressing sympathy and support for the party and government in the process of renewal". It was realistically stated, that "the positive influence of communist ministers on the position of the French government on Polish affairs could be counted on to a small extent" (Bożym [1981, 2 July]. [Assessment of the agreement...]. 45/84, Fr. 2412, AMSZ).

Politicians from the French Communist Party closely monitored the situation in Poland and supported the Polish People's Republic during the "renewal process", often attributing its failures to Solidarity. The Polish side was even criticized for taking too soft a stance in their contacts with the union, and it was anticipated that a confrontation would occur sooner or later. The Polish government should consider whether "Solidarity supports progress, i.e. socialism, or opposes it, and whether Solidarity supports adequate market supply or opposes it" (Marcinkowski [1981]. [Aide-memoire for the meeting between comr. J. Głowczyk and comr. R. Leroy, a member of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the French Communist Party responsible for ideological matters, the Executive Director of "L'Humanite" and "l'Humanite Dimanche", on the jubilee of "l'Humanite" on 12 September 1981]. Foreign Affairs Department of the Polish United Workers' Party, LXXVI-595, AAN). The French Communist Party had also observed a concerning shift in the attitude of Solidarity, which aimed to seize power in Poland (Fronczek [1981, 18

September]. [Aide-memoire for the meeting between comr. J. Głowczyk and Maxim Gremetz on 13 September on the jubilee of “l’Humanite”]. Foreign Affairs Department of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party, LXXVI-595, AAN, Paris, France). But Polish diplomats rightly noted that the party was rather reluctant to speak clearly about the situation in Poland because of domestic issues and its alliance with the Socialist Party. Speaking to Ryszard Wojna Gremetz, a member of the Communist Party Political Bureau, said he would not have wanted to be in Poland at the time martial law was declared (Wojna [1981]. [Aide-memoire for the interview with comr. Gremetz, a member of the Politburo of the French Communist Party on 24 October in Valence, at the French Socialist Party Congress]. Foreign Affairs Department of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party, LXXVI-595, AAN).

The French Communist Party, led by Georges Marchais, identified itself as part of the Eurocommunist movement that emerged in the aftermath of the Prague Spring (Kershaw, 2018). Throughout the 1970s, parties across Western Europe distanced themselves from the Soviet Union, criticising its domestic and foreign policies as well as those of other socialist countries, rejecting Leninism and advocating the introduction of socialism by parliamentary means (Opiola, 2018). Unlike the Italian Communist Party, which consistently and severely criticized the policies of the USSR and the Eastern Bloc countries, the French Communist Party followed the principle of *L'Unité dans la diversité* – unity in diversity. This allowed for numerous variations of a socialist state without imposing a single pattern (Curtois, Lazar, 2022)⁷. Thus, the Polish socialist system received support rather than condemnation, though, as can be seen, not an uncritical one. The presence of communist ministers in a government dominated by socialists who were strong supporters of Solidarity prevented them from openly expressing their position.

3. THE FIFTH REPUBLIC AND THE DECLARATION OF MARTIAL LAW

The introduction of martial law by the regime of General Wojciech Jaruzelski elicited strong reactions from Western countries. Initially hesitant, governments began to protest more forcefully, although individual responses varied widely. From the outset, Western public opinion reacted strongly to news of the restriction of civil liberties in Poland. Crowds gathered outside the embassies of the Polish People's Republic, and numerous Solidarity support committees were established to provide moral and financial support for oppressed Poles (Paczkowski, 2021; Kastory, 2019; Jaworski, Kamiński, 2013; Frybes, 2010).

French public opinion reacted violently to the introduction of martial law. According to Andrzej Chwalba, “France became a never-ending show of support for several weeks” (Chwalba, 1997). Initially taken aback by what was happening in Poland, the French Government failed to know how to react. The first statement made by the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, Claude Cheysson, was deemed very unfortunate. He expressed surprise at the introduction of martial law but when asked if the French government would take any action, he replied, “Of course not. We won't do anything” (Heruday-Kiełczewska, 2012;

⁷ In view of the above, it should be noted that Eurocommunism was a very diverse phenomenon. Relations with the Polish United Workers' Party and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union deteriorated considerably during the FCP's transition to Eurocommunism. The Polish United Workers' Party was also criticised by the FCP for maintaining close relations with the French government of Giscard d'Estaing, who was ruthlessly attacked by the French Communists (Jarosz et al., 2008).

Pleskot, 2013a; Pleskot, 2013b). However, under the influence of American pressure and public opinion, subsequent statements by French politicians condemned the Polish People's Republic and the USSR. In general, the French policy towards the Polish People's Republic and the USSR was inconsistent. It was a combination of strong anti-communist rhetoric and a reluctance to take action. While speaking out more boldly against these communist countries in international forums such as the EEC, the International Labour Organisation and the Socialist International, France was reluctant to impose economic sanctions, despite US pressure (Pleskot, 2013b; Korolko, 2019)⁸.

Initial assessments of how Western countries reacted to martial law were optimistic. Foreign Minister Józef Czyrek noted the “balanced position” of the West, excluding the United States. However, the situation quickly changed, and the influence of the United States and public opinion led to a tougher stance on the part of Western countries after 16 December, in the wake of the Wujek mine massacre. “The international situation has developed unfavourably”, the minister concluded (Paczkowski, 2021). In the case of France, Polish diplomats noted a split in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs between those who favoured a tough approach towards Poland (the European Department), which was expressed in interventions at international forums, and those who were more “down to earth” (e.g. Minister Cheysson). According to Jan Padlewski, a Polish diplomat in Paris, France was implementing a “carrot and stick” policy (Padlewski [1981, 19 December]. [Aide-memoire for the meeting between comr. Padlewski and Mr Puisais on 18 December]. Foreign Affairs Department of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party, LXXVI-595, AAN, Paris, France). The “stick” referred to the actions taken against the Polish state in international institutions, while the “carrot” was the calmer tone and conciliatory conversations between French and Polish diplomats. For instance, in a later conversation with Minister Claude Cheysson, Ambassador Eugeniusz Kułaga was assured of France's willingness to “resume the dialogue” (Korolko, 2019). Eventually, a division of roles within the ruling camp became apparent. In January, Polish diplomats noted that “the Socialist Party and the trade unions under its influence, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Prime Minister Mauroy took an extreme position, whereas President Mitterrand and his advisers exhibited a more balanced one” (Noworyta [1982, 21 January]. [Memorandum

⁸ France was reluctant to impose economic sanctions for fear of undermining the sovereignty of its foreign policy. The break with the Yalta order was a matter of dialogue rather than excessive confrontation with the Eastern bloc. There were also economic arguments. Shortly after the declaration of martial law, France signed a contract with the Soviet Union for the supply of Russian gas. Prime Minister P. Mauroy justified this decision by saying: “We cannot impose sanctions on ourselves [...]. We need Soviet gas” (Korolko, 2019). The reaction of the American government to the imposition of martial law was the most severe, both in words and in deeds. The latter took the form of quite far-reaching economic sanctions. For example, all agricultural and dairy products financed and supported by the USA were suspended, and LOT Polish Airlines' flights to the USA were stopped. Sanctions also affected the Soviet Union (e.g. suspension of licences for high-tech products). The unyielding position of the USA was intended to show the determination of the United States and not to allow the USSR to test it at other stages of the rivalry (Tyszkiewicz, 2013). No other country, not even Great Britain, adopted the harsh attitude of the United States towards the events in Poland. Margaret Thatcher did not want the sanctions to have a double-edged effect on the British economy (suspension of deliveries of equipment for the construction of the Siberian gas pipeline), and Britain did not want to drive Poland into bankruptcy. The sanctions amounted to the suspension of high-level diplomatic contacts and the refusal to grant new state loans to the Polish People's Republic (Tebinka, 2013).

on the French stance on Poland after 13 December 1981]. 8/86, Fr. 22, AAN, Warszawa, Poland). However, it is unclear for Polish diplomats whether the issue is related to the division of roles, the abovementioned “carrot and stick” policy, or a genuine difference of opinion (Noworyta [1982, 26 January]. [Urgent memorandum on the current state of affairs between Poland and France]. 8/86, Fr. 22, AMSZ, Paris, France).

It is now understood that Minister Cheysson's strong language was not always approved of by F. Mitterrand. In fact, during the January EEC session in Brussels, the minister was reportedly accompanied by the president's officials to ensure that France could pursue the more compromising policy favoured by the French president. In fact, the Socialist Party incited more radical actions (Korolko, 2019). The division of roles was, thus, unintentional. The differences of opinion may have been mixed with differences regarding political tactics or strategy. But the author of the note was right to observe that “the position of the French authorities was hesitant and inconsistent” indeed (Olszewski [1982, 21 January]. [The French stance on Poland after 13 December 1981]. 8/86, Fr. 22, AMSZ, Paris, France).

Polish diplomacy promptly recognised that December 13 marked a significant turning point in the relationship between Poland and France. Prior to this date, the Fifth Republic had been the most supportive of Poland among Western nations, as evidenced by its favourable economic policies towards the Polish People's Republic, such as granting loans. However,

following the imposition of martial law, the French government adopted the most critical stance towards Poland among all Western European countries. This position is largely consistent with that of the United States. It strongly condemns the actions of our authorities, in particular the restriction of civil liberties,

and this condemnation is expressed in speeches to international organisations and in announcements of economic sanctions, such as the suspension of loans (*ibidem*).

In 1982, Polish diplomats observed French animosity towards the Polish People's Republic, in spite of occasional improvements. “Throughout 1982, Polish-French political relations remained under the influence of France's reaction to the events in Poland in December 1981”, according to an embassy report from that year. “France decided to halt any political dialogue, both between administrations and in the Socialist Party's inter-party contacts. Alongside the USA, France took a critical and uncompromising stance towards Poland at the forum of various Western organizations. Despite suspending high-level political dialogue, the Embassy maintained intensive informal contacts with the local high-ranking administration, in particular in the initial period following the introduction of martial law in Poland. An attempt to resume political dialogue occurred during the visit of Comrade [Józef] Czyrek to France as the head of the PZPR delegation to the 24th Congress of the French Communist Party in February 1982⁹. However, the meeting of ministers was

⁹ It certainly demonstrated France's willingness to engage in dialogue with Poland. However, it was received very negatively by public opinion, which forced Cheysson to make a gesture towards the Polish opposition. A few days later, he received a delegation from the Coordinating Committee of the National Solidarity Union in France (Korolko, 2019). Czyrek officially expressed himself positively about this meeting in an interview for TF 1: “I will describe it as open, honest and, in my opinion, useful. During the meeting I stressed that French-Polish relations are special and will remain so” ([interview with Józef Czyrek, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Polish People's Republic, on TF 1 on 4 February 1982]. Foreign Affairs Department of the Central Committee of

of a formal nature and only served to maintain the positions of both sides. The next high-level contact was the meeting between foreign ministers [Stefan] Olszowski and Cheysson at the UN session¹⁰. The conversation took place in a positive atmosphere, and the French side accepted the Polish proposal to resume the dialogue using the method of successive small steps. This indicated some possibilities of reversing the unfavourable trends in relations. However, further developments showed that the French position in Polish affairs had hardened again" (multiple authors [1982, 17 December]. [Political report of the embassy of the Polish People's Republic in Paris on the year 1982]. 8/86, Fr. 242, AMSZ, Paris, France).

It was claimed that economic relations had become politicised. Only technical-scientific and cultural cooperation maintained its quality and intensity; the cooperation was hoped to improve Poland's image in many French scientific circles (*ibidem*).

The quote provides an accurate assessment of Polish-French relations. French policy towards Poland, while similar to the American one in many aspects (except economic), aimed to establish a dialogue with the Polish People's Republic. Informal diplomatic relations were maintained at the ministerial level, while formal ones were suspended. In the face of public outcry, the French demanded that the Polish government show some goodwill by freeing the prisoners. When the Polish government did so, there were some positive words and gestures towards the authorities of the Polish People's Republic. This was also the case after the release of some internees on 22 July and after the (temporary) release of Lech Wałęsa in November (Korolko, 2019).

The Polish government reacted to unfriendly gestures such as the hostile statements made by Claude Cheysson and the sending of 10,000 balloons with propaganda material to Poland, the latter being considered "an unfriendly act against Poland, potentially dangerous to air transport and contrary to the Chicago Convention" (Bożym [1982, 22 February]. [Aide-memoire for the interview of comr. G. Bożym with T. Marcaggi, the First Counsellor of the French embassy on 22 February 82]. 8/86, Fr. 22, AMSZ, Paris, France). The improvement in relations with France was noticed by Polish diplomats not only in gestures but also, perhaps prematurely, in the conciliatory tone of the statements made by French diplomats. Any deterioration in these relations was quickly observed (Kaługa [1982, 15 May]. [message to J. Czyrek]. 8/86, Fr. 22, AMSZ, Paris, France; Wiejacz [1982, 12 June]. [Aide-memoire for the interview with Jacques Dupuy, the French Ambassador, on 11 June 1982]. 8/86, Fr. 22, AMSZ, Paris, France).

The attempt by Polish diplomacy to comprehend the reasons behind France's aforementioned policy is intriguing. Subsequent analyses have reiterated several fundamental factors influencing the French policy.

1. Public scrutiny, often presented as the most important factor.

"The reaction of the so-called public opinion in France, especially the intellectual community, to such steps is always almost spontaneous, without going into the reasons behind the concept of these steps. In this case, there was also undoubtedly sympathy for Poland. The public demonstrations and other forms of protest that took place in France were unprecedented and had a significant impact on the attitude of the government" (Noworyta [1982, 21 January]. [Memorandum on the French stance...]. 8/86, Fr. 22, AMSZ).

the Polish United Workers' Party, LXXVI-609, AAN, Warszawa, Poland. It seems, however, that he was just putting a brave face.

¹⁰ Stefan Olszowski took over from Józef Czyrek as the Minister of Foreign Affairs in July 1982.

It is widely acknowledged that public opinion played a large role in intensifying the government's rhetoric and actions against the Jaruzelski regime, as demonstrated previously. Even diplomats from the French Republic acknowledged this in conversations with their Polish counterparts (Olechowski [1982, 12 March]. [Aide-memoire for the interview with Jacques Dupuy, the French Ambassador, on 10 March 1982]. 8/86, Fr. 22, AMSZ, Warszawa, Poland).

2. **The ideologisation of French politics**, considered by some to have been a decisive factor (*ibidem*) with the Socialist Party as the driving force behind it. It involved viewing other countries through the lens of “human rights and the right of nations to self-determination, with these rights seen as the fundamental (if not supreme) principles of coexistence among states” (Olechowski [1982, 12 March]. [Aide-memoire...]. 8/86, Fr. 22, AMSZ). This translated into sharp criticism of the USSR's foreign policy (e.g. the intervention in Afghanistan) and the fight against real socialism, which was considered unacceptable (Kułaga [(1982, 30 January). [Memorandum on the current state of affairs between Poland and France]. 8/86, Fr. 22, AMSZ, Paris, Poland). To some extent, this would have been a major departure from de Gaulle's foreign policy paradigm. According to de Gaulle, relations between East and West should not be analysed in terms of competing ideologies and systems, since national interest prevailed over ideology (Pazik, 2012).

It was during this period that Mitterrand's policy became more pro-American, for the reasons given above. He still followed de Gaulle's main guidelines and believed that France's interest lay in an agreement with the Soviet Union, but he did not have the “polite” (*complaisant*) attitude towards the USSR that he had accused his predecessor of. In Mitterrand's view, closer ties with the United States were necessary for the national interest at that time. On human rights and the right of nations to self-determination, Mitterrand stressed the need to respect them, but did not make relations with other countries dependent on them. He also rebuked Minister Cheysson for making undiplomatic remarks (Favier et al., 1990; Attali, 2005). Polish diplomacy seems to have overemphasised this factor, despite its importance for the French Social Democrats (Korolko, 2019). As the Polish argued that “further normalisation of the situation in Poland could be expected to strengthen the realist tendencies in French politics” (Noworyta [1982, 22 January]. [Memorandum on the French stance on Poland after 13 December 1981]. 8/86, Fr. 22, AMSZ, Warszawa, Poland)¹¹, and thus contribute to the improvement of Polish-French relations.

3. **Shattered hopes of breaking the Yalta order**, which was supposed to begin with “building a new pluralist model [in Poland] (with meaning and influence for other socialist countries), based on a tripartite system of exercising power (Government and Party – Church – Solidarity)” (Noworyta [1982, 21 January]). [Memorandum on the French stance...]. 8/86, Fr. 22, AMSZ). As mentioned above, Mitterrand's policy relied heavily on hoping to break the Yalta order by accommodating the Soviet Union's interests (including security) in central and eastern Europe. Whether

¹¹ This was also the view of Wojciech Jaruzelski, who said: “It seems that the single most important incentive for the enemy to withdraw from the trenches of sanctions and boycotts will be our regaining political, social and economic equilibrium. One does not negotiate with a dying man, but it is worth reaching an agreement with a recovering one. That is why we must unite and concentrate all our activities in order to regain this health” (Jaruzelski [1982]. [VIII Plenum KC PZPR. Transcript of the 8th plenary meeting of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party on April 22–23]. III-143, AAN, p. 202), Warszawa, Poland).

the disappointed hopes in this regard had such a significant impact on French policy, however, is doubtful. As Polish diplomats also claimed: "In order to preserve the most important content of the renewal for the Socialist Party, France should be relatively more flexible in the practice of relations with Poland, including economic ones, than in the external framework of these relations" (Kułaga [1982, 30 January]. [Memorandum on the current state...]. 8/86, Fr. 22, AMSZ). In other words, the desire to preserve some changes in Poland could have influenced the more conciliatory policy of the Fifth Republic, which is contradicted to some extent by the previous argument.

4. **The desire to be seen as a loyal ally of the United States in its policy towards the Polish People's Republic and the USSR. This was due to the left-wing reforms in France, which were initially viewed unfavourably by the West, and the participation of communists in the government** (multiple authors [1982, 17 December]. [Political report...]. 8/86, Fr. 242, AMSZ). As shown above, Polish diplomacy identified these pro-Atlanticist sources of Mitterrand's policy very early, several months before martial law was introduced. This issue had a significant impact on French policy, especially in the harsh rhetoric used against the government of the Polish People's Republic. For example, the Polish authorities were accused of violating human rights (Korolko, 2019).
5. **The "internal" political interests [of the Socialist Party];** winning the battle over Solidarity against the Communist Party and the CGT, on the assumption that both the support of the Socialist Party and the opposition to it will seriously weaken the two (Kułaga [1982, 30 January]. [Memorandum on the current state of affairs...]. 8/86, Fr. 22, AMSZ). It is hardly rebuttable that the bitter campaign against the Polish People's Republic was also due to the internal policy of the Socialist Party.

The assessment of the conduct of the French government during the martial law in Poland was thus founded on reasonable premises. Despite the overestimation of the ideologisation of French politics, the analysis of the causes of French political behaviour was very accurate and basically free of any ideological influence. Let us now take a look at how the attitude of the French Communist Party was assessed by Polish diplomacy in 1982.

As it has been shown above, the FCP's Eurocommunism did not always imply breaking with the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc. When it comes to the case in question, it can even be said that the Communist Party withdrew from some views associated with Eurocommunism. At the 23rd Party Congress (1979), Georges Marchais presented an analysis the international situation, claiming the global capitalism was undergoing destabilisation, whereas communism was expanding (especially in Africa and Asia). To back up his words, the party supported the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan and opposed the installation of American Pershing missiles in Europe in response to the deployment of Soviet SS-20s. The party again largely saw the world in black and white – the belligerent West and the peace-loving Soviet Union. It is therefore not surprising that the FCP supported the imposition of martial law and did not condemn the internment of Solidarity members (Courtois et al., 2022). Marchais's initial statements were quite moderate, but there was no criticism of the situation in Poland (Heruday-Kielczewska, 2012). In a 23 December 1981 letter to Wojciech Jaruzelski, deploring the imposition of martial law, the FCP General Secretary, however, pointed out that "it is up to the working class, the Polish nation, to solve Poland's difficult and complex problems" (Marchais [1981, 23 December]. [letter to W. Jaruzelski]. Foreign Affairs Department of the Central Committee of the

Polish United Workers' Party (AAN LXXVI-595). Voices of support for Jaruzelski's regime subsequently emerged with increasing frequency. But the party was divided on this point, and roles were divided, too. The communist ministers were loyal to the government and condemned the introduction of martial law; the party authorities avoided commenting on these questions; the communist trade unions did not participate in demonstrations against the Polish government; and the party media expressed strong support for the communist government in Poland. It should be noted, however, that many communists broke with the official party and trade union line and openly supported Solidarity. In general the communists' stance also soured the relationship with the Socialist Party (Heruday-Kielczewska, 2012; Korolko, 2019; Chwalba, 1997).

The Polish authorities welcomed the reactions of the French Communists to the declaration of martial law. In particular, the warm words of General Secretary Georges Marchais were often quoted. In conversations with Polish diplomats, he pointed out that solving the problems in the Polish People's Republic was an internal matter for that country, and even did not want to agree to an appeal to the Polish government to release the internees, and "repeatedly expressed his satisfaction that the Polish government was in control of the situation (as the "maitre de la situation") and that it had chosen the best possible formula [to solve the problem]". The letter to General Jaruzelski was also well received (Szafarz [1982, 24 February]. [French Communist Party, Aide-memoire for the meeting between comr. Ambassador E. Kaługa and comr. G. Marchais]. 8/86, Fr. 2412, AMSZ). Very quickly, however, Polish diplomacy became aware of "discrepancies within the Communist Party in a spirit that was unfavourable to Poland". These were interviews given to French television by Georges Marchais (30 December) and the CPSU Minister for the Civil Service and Reform, Anicet Le Pors (1 January 1982). While the former gave a positive assessment of the decision to impose martial law, claiming that "General Jaruzelski [...], relying on the army, took a decision with the intention of establishing order, avoiding bloodshed, avoiding fratricidal war", the latter declared that "all restrictions on freedoms and rights are intolerable in Poland, as elsewhere" (Fronczek [1982, 8 January]. [An analysis of the speeches given by Georges Marchais on 30 December 1981 and Anicet Le Pors on the current situation in the country]. Foreign Affairs Department of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party, LXXVI-609, AAN, Paris, France). Still, hopes were high for FCP. It was a party that could exert a moderating influence on the attitude of the Italian Communist Party, for example, which severely criticised Polish policies (Fronczek [1982, 19 February]. [Memorandum on the 14 Congress of the French Communist Party, its course and resolutions adopted]. Foreign Affairs Department of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party, LXXVI-609, AAN, Paris, France).

In the latter half of 1982, the Polish diplomatic community noted a somewhat negative change in the Communist Party's attitude towards Polish issues, which was expressed in clear support for Mitterrand's foreign policy (the FCP did not have a direct say in foreign policy), appeals for the release of prisoners of war and the need for urgent social, economic and political reforms in Poland. It was emphasised that the FCP felt pressured to comment on the situation in the Polish People's Republic from everywhere, both from the right and from the left of the political scene (the Socialist Party and its trade unions). But it was also stressed that "The FCP presents its own opinions and comments on the solutions adopted by the Polish authorities, without directly criticising them". Instead, the Polish diplomats tried to explain why their "friend" and ally had had a change of heart (Paczocha [1982, 22 November]. [Relationship with the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Communist Party of China in the policy of the French Communist Party; the stance of FCP

on Poland]. Foreign Affairs Department of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party, LXXVI-609, AAN, Paris, France).

This was mainly due to internal policy problems. Firstly, they wanted to gain more influence on society, which was hostile to the Polish state. It was written:

The FCP believes that under French conditions socialism can only be built by parliamentary means, and this requires the support of the majority of society. To win this support, the model of socialism it presents must be attractive and its policies credible. If it fails to take a critical stance on issues such as the internment of some Solidarity activists in Poland, it would actually be very unfavourable for its influence in its own society and would weaken its position in the country (*ibidem*).

The desire to maintain the alliance with the Socialist Party, which at the time was politically extremely beneficial for the French Communist Party, was also at stake (Pasztor et al., 2015):

One of the main sources of this far-reaching rapprochement between the French Communist Party leadership and Mitterrand and the Socialist Party is the current dialogue between the FCP and the SP regarding next year's municipal elections. Favourable arrangements for the FCP with regard to these elections could be a precondition for strengthening the tendency to rebuild the party's position vis-à-vis other partners and to regain the weakened social trust, which is the basic goal of the FCP (Kulaga [1982, 12 June]. [Message to W. Natorf]. Foreign Affairs Department of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party, LXXVI-609), AAN, Paris, France)¹².

For Polish diplomats these reasons were crystal clear: the FCP wanted to stay in power, so it did not criticise Mitterrand's policies too much (Paczocha [1982, 26 December]. [Relationship between the French Communist Party and the Socialist Party]. Foreign Affairs Department of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party, LXXVI-609, AAN).

4. CONCLUSIONS

Polish diplomats were not overly pessimistic about François Mitterrand's rise to power, but they were not overly enthusiastic either. Although some difficulties were expected (e.g. in the granting of loans to Poland), it was generally believed that Polish-French relations would be good. They highlighted the new president's pro-Atlantic stance and insistence on respect for human rights, and therefore they feared an "ideological" policy that could affect East-West relations. The communists' entry into the government was optimistic news for the Polish side. They could influence the socialists in a spirit favourable to the Polish People's Republic. After the imposition of martial law, France – in the opinion of Polish diplomats – went from being the most sympathetic country towards the Polish Republic to the country with the worst attitude towards the Polish state after the United States. In general, this situation persisted throughout the whole year, although there were some

¹² It was not until the communists left the government in 1984 that the previously cautionary approach towards the Polish People's Republic was abandoned. Consequently, in 1985, a FCP delegation visited Warsaw (Pasztor et al., 2015).

fluctuations in Polish-French relations, urgently noted in the correspondence of Polish diplomats. It is worth noting that the reasons for France's attitude towards Poland were presented by Polish diplomats in a very professional and convincing manner, apart from the fact that Poland, in my view, over-exposed the influence of ideology on French policy. Their analysis of the behaviour of the French Communist Party, which gently admonished Poland, e.g. in the case of internees, was also realistic and factual. As a matter of fact, there was no criticism of the behaviour of the French communists, because they were the few allies the Polish side had.

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