

MARTA OLEJNIK

# THE ATTIC

**ON UNDERGROUND CULTURE  
IN THE PRL**



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## INTRODUCTION

Attics are often associated with a mystery, somehow hidden from an accidental visitor, yet arousing interest in what is hidden. Attics are promise of something forbidden, an oasis of things, thoughts, and imaginations that have momentarily paused in their journey through the real world. Experiences gathered in attics gain new meaning and return to people once again. This is what 'Strych Kulturalny' (*Cultural Attic* in a direct translation) —was all about—an underground newspaper created literally in a space beneath a roof but metaphorically in the minds of people seeking shelter from a hostile world.

The name of the magazine harkened back to the heritage of generations—dusty, abandoned somewhere in the metaphorical attic. For some, it was an opportunity to acquaint themselves with art or new, fresh ideas; for others, it was about ideals and causes. "Strych kulturalny" was not just the name of a literary and artistic magazine; it was also a meeting place for a group of friends who foster an independent circulation of culture. Yet it was just an attic of a single-family house, filled with works of art, paintings, books, and offering a view of the surrounding hills on the horizon. In front of the house, there was an old orchard with sprawling apple trees, several decades old, and an unmowed, wild multi-flower meadow. Greenery abounded everywhere. "This is how we viewed the world around us, without forgetting about the existence of the underground. We lived a somewhat dualistic life—working, tending to everyday chores according to communist rules, but spiritually distanced from that realm and closer to something much more significant," wrote Marek Kuchciski, the owner of the attic and one of the magazine's editors, in the introduction to the reprint. ("SK" was also edited by Jan Musiał, Mirek Koco, and Mariusz Kościuk).

Professor Jarosław Piekalkiewicz is not afraid of bold comparisons: "The attic held more significance than it may seem at first glance. The atmosphere of these gatherings reminded me of my meetings in the Home Army. In the attic, as well as in the Home Army, we felt free. Undoubtedly, during the war, we risked much more, including torture or even death, but for us, as well as for the members of the attic group, "Poland has not yet perished as long as we live." Participants who gathered in the attic risked harassment and persecution from the communist authorities. They could have been detained, arrested, and their professional careers were certainly endangered. Like those of us in the Home Army, they were a minority, because the majority of Poles believed that survival was the top priority."

However, "Strych Kulturalny" remains a symbol to this day. There is no recognized expert in Poland dealing with the politics of the 1980s who would not see in the 'Attic' a seed of change. The flame that would engulf the entire communist regime did not erupt there, but it was one of the sparks that ignited the imagination at that time.

Even the staunchest opponents of Marek Kuchciński admit that he managed to create a place in Przemyśl, on the outskirts of Poland, that gave a signal to others:

'We can reach further,' attract renowned thinkers and instill faith in young activists. If it could be done in Przemyśl, closer to the wild Bieszczady Mountains than to the salons of big city sofas and industrial workers' movements, then why not start a solidarity revolution elsewhere? Enhance it with deeper contemplation of humanity, its place in culture, history, and various expressions of rebellion.

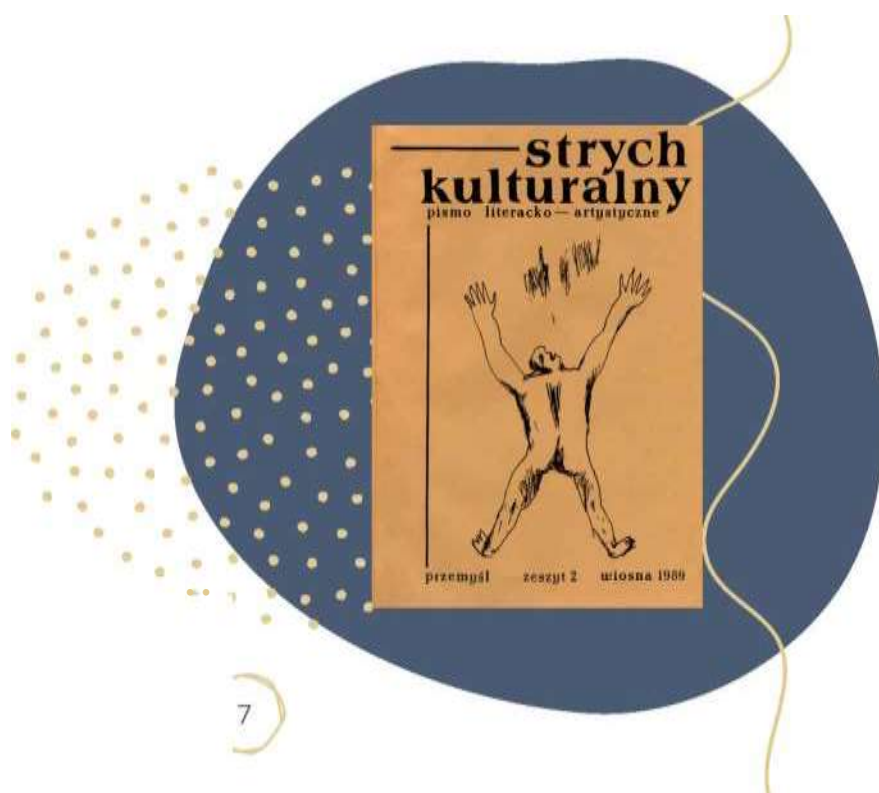
When we think about the formation of views today, we immediately picture the present reality of the filter bubble. As a society we atomize into small groups. We establish our own ideological frameworks, and technology also imposes them. Today, opinions are largely shaped by heartless algorithms of online information filtering systems. They are meant to keep us in the realm of intellectual comfort, fulfilling pre-defined needs. The Przemyśl of the 1980s didn't have such frames; hence, independent culture mingled with the agricultural opposition and the underground Solidarity movement in one place. Deeply Catholic intellectuals found common ground with farmers, whose main concern was the state-regulated procurement of livestock, or the mundane reality of state-owned farms. In the crucible of hippie rebels' passions, the words of Bishop Ignacy Tokarczuk from Przemyśl blended. Traditional, Polish religiosity collided with the logic of Wittgenstein's ambiguous faith.

It can be said that this work does not aim to definitively capture what truly happened in the small attic of a house on the outskirts of Przemyśl. It will forever remain an interpretation of the people who were its regulars, would hang out there or just came by. Because their reasons varied, they took different paths, and that was the essence, the power of this place. Today, it is also evaluated by the person who was the host at the time. A figure as challenging to definitively assess as the 'Strych Kulturalny' itself. The Marshal of the Sejm, lacking formal higher education, is a politician affiliated with the ruling party, an esteemed member of a political faction known for pragmatic planning and effectiveness. Alternatively, a character from the attic—a dreamer hunched over a typewriter, expelled from the Catholic University of Lublin, surrounded by books, yearning for freedom during long solitary walks in the Bieszczady Mountains. This latter facet remains largely unknown: an avant-garde artist immersed in the scene that included Grotowski, and a hippie frolicking through the meadows of Lublin, gathering cornflowers, poppies, and wild grasses, as well as stalks of grain for a field bouquet for friends who treated him to Russian pierogi.

Marek Kuchciński left a lasting impression not only as the host of the attic – truth be told, he didn't run the magazine on his own – but he had an organizational gift. He knew how to persuade the right people to find a duplicator, and he would figure out how to get a ream of paper. His persistence combined with courage set him apart. While he wasn't particularly known for politics in the underground Solidarity movement, in Silesia and Podkarpacie it was recognized that if someone in danger of internment needed relocation, all they had to do was talk to Marek. He had the knack for extracting individuals sought by the secret police (SB) even from a moving train. Bishops and ordinary priests held Kuchciński in high regard. Usually, though, he preferred to remain in the shadows. Similarly, 'Strych Kulturalny' frequently alludes to intellectual heritage, penetrating the consciousness of the interlocutor with the names of philosophers and historians.

It's challenging to unequivocally define what 'Strych Kulturalny' was and the impact it had on the consciousness of many people. Professor Krzysztof Dybciak, a historian, literary theorist, essayist, and poet, reminisces about cultural events, sometimes known as 'attic meetings,' and the magazine issues: 'They were original phenomena on the map of independent culture existing outside the structures of the communist-led state. One remarkable aspect was the ability to attract collaborators not only from Poland. It was genuinely exceptional for so many British artists and intellectuals to perform in a small city, on a European scale, near the border of the Evil Empire. In Przemyśl, they hosted not just any creators; Professors Mark Lilla and Roger Scruton are significant figures in world humanistic thought. However, knowledge about this precious phenomenon of free culture in the 1980s is scant.

Marta Olejnik



## ADVERSARY

### **The Executive Committee of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR): *Culture has never been and cannot be devoid of the influence of ideology.***

During the Plenum of the Provincial Committee of the PZPR on April 13, 1985, held in Jarosławie and focused on the cultural landscape of the Przemyśl Voivodeship, attention was drawn to cultural phenomena that were eluding state control. It was emphasized that culture cannot exist in a vacuum, separate from ideology. The absence of tolerance towards what was termed "high political culture" was underscored, along with the poignant observation that its "four-decade legacy is being subjected to ridicule, criticism, and diminishment."

Bircza, Sub-Carpathian region : Ryszard Głąb, the First Secretary of the Provincial Committee of the PZPR, articulated, "This significant facet of our superstructure, which is culture, serves as a terrain of silent, unrelenting warfare, unfolding across the expansive ideological-propaganda front since the inception of the PRL [Polish People's Republic]... Our adversaries spare no means, sometimes even resorting to appropriating sacred objects for their own ends... This struggle is fundamentally for the hearts and minds of the young and the youngest... Interestingly, certain clergy have even adopted rock music, not out of an affinity for its boisterous 'yeah, yeah, yeah,' but rather to attract the maximum number of youths" – p. 127, *Generation '80*.

Indeed, the attic where Marek Kuchciński gathered a substantial group of cultural luminaries managed to evade the clutches of ideology. Its regular patrons hailed from diverse walks of life, united by their opposition to the regime and their ardor for a broad spectrum of artistic expressions. This attic eluded the stranglehold of censorship, creating an environment conducive to the nurturing of intellectual culture. It stood as a sanctuary of freedom amidst a city brimming with security agents—an enclave where discourse flowed unrestricted, unburdened by the chains of censorship. After all, these were the years of martial law, marked by severed communication with the nation and the world beyond. On the airwaves, Radio Luxembourg and Radio Free Europe could be heard, occasionally punctuated by the Marxist echoes emanating from Tirana.

In his report from February 1985, dispatched to the Ministry of Culture and Art, the voivode of Przemyśl underscored Przemyśl's role as a crucible of socio-cultural activities—within pastoral gatherings for farmers, notably in Krasiczyn and Zarzecze, where films with religious themes were screened during the Days of Christian Culture at the churches of the Carmelites, Dominicans, and Franciscans (e.g., "In the Shadow of the Altar" by T. Krawczak).



## **KRZYSZTOF SAWICKI:**

In the mid-1980s, we were journeying back from Krasiczyn after one of those meetings. As we approached Przemyśl, a barricade materialized: MO, ORMO, a phalanx of individuals, roadblocks obstructing our path, a group of men boarding the bus carrying around five or six of us. They conveyed us to the local security headquarters in Przemyśl. They informed us that each of us would be engaged in a conversation with an officer overseeing church affairs, dispatched from Jarosławie. This interrogation was rather tedious. Their fervor for inflicting harm had waned, and our inclination to respond in kind had likewise dwindled.

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They detained Marek and released the rest of us, predominantly those who hailed from beyond Przemyśl and from KUL [Catholic University of Lublin]. We opted for a taxi, bound for Marek's residence in Ostrowie—a prearranged rendezvous spot upon our release. The taxi driver cast an intriguing gaze upon us—all of us adorned with beards and flowing locks. Eventually, he ventured, "Gentlemen, have you heard? The militia and ORMO are apprehending anyone sporting facial hair." This elicited hearty laughter from us... A truly peculiar atmosphere..

The attic often served as my workspace for editing numerous books published by underground publishers and the Catholic University of Lublin. As a result, I kept the Episcopate's protective umbrella handy just in case. At Marek's place I could work which was not possible in Lublin, in the student dorm with my two young children. During the martial law period, characterized by dispersion and a multitude of disoriented individuals, I traveled to Przemyśl to reconnect with Marek, whom I hadn't seen for several years (1982, 1983). In the 1980s, Marek used to visit Lublin; he even became the godfather of my son, named Lech in honor of Lech Wałęsa, who famously stated: 'This is not a system to be fixed; it's a system to be dismantled. It cannot be reformed.' Marek was likely released from prison at that time so he could attend the baptism ceremony, yet his presence hung in the balance until the very last moment."

## **JAN KARUŚ:**

I once arrived at the church, and there stood Marek, an empty bench behind him. I intended to sit, but Marek advised against it, as a security officer from our school days sat there. Nevertheless, I took my seat, with Zygmunt Majgier behind me. The officer inquired about the content of the upcoming Mass, point by point. The homily was delivered by Kazimierz Ryczan, then a priest, who delved into political matters. I had seven intentions, which we vocalized as intentions for those who were murdered during martial law, those who were unjustly detained, and those who were beaten..... Marek took the first one, Katarzyna Majgier the second, I handed the third to Zygmunt, and then the SB officer took the fourth. He read it beautifully and asked, "What's next?" The response came, "We beseech you, Lord."

The words he uttered provoked uproarious laughter. The next day, they arrested me, claiming that I was making a mockery of their officer. I explained that the man was trying to learn how to pray.. Marek owned an old Toyota, which we used to travel throughout the province. The church in Krasiczyn served as our hideout. It sheltered numerous individuals, including Wiesiek Nowacki. Once he feigned illness and we secretly rescued him from the hospital. On another occasion, we journeyed to Krakow, to Czerna. Father Sadłowski arrived, as did actors... it was a dissident gathering. The Security Service set up spotlights, illuminating the building, but didn't enter. Marek and I were there to retrieve some underground pamphlets. We were advised us to take a country road, through Opatów. Our Toyota was packed with illegal stuff - books and brochures. We set off, passing through Krakow, unimpeded by anyone. Yet they detained those who attended the gathering. They stood on the roads, counting on the fact that no one would drive across the fields. During that time, possessing a single leaflet was an offense; driving a car full of them like ours was even riskier.

#### **MARIUSZ OLBROMSKI:**

The border with the Soviet Union was heavily guarded from both sides. It wasn't a "border of friendship," but one adorned with barbed wire... The attic was also under surveillance. However, the Security Service turned a blind eye. One can speculate now... On one hand, it could have been a safety valve; on the other, they might have sought to identify the most active individuals.

#### **MAREK KUCHCIŃSKI:**

The concept of the borderland was, for us Przemyśl residents, a vivid reference in various aspects of life. It delineates the border between cultures, nations... It was natural to introduce them to culture and art.

Living on the border shapes strong characters

#### **JAN MUSIAŁ:**

Culture is constructed on the foundations of many forms of independence. One of these is independence from negative stereotypes, environmental influences, and seasonal trends. What we were engaged in may have been imitative in nature, but it was without any pretensions to frantically keep pace with the prevailing creative trends..

## **POLITICS**

A location on the city's outskirts, nestled among trees, remained unpretentious and discreet (since the house lacked grandeur, and its modesty didn't garner much attention). Przemyśl, in itself, stood at an intriguing crossroads. While on one hand, the communist authorities viewed the city as reactionary, on the other, it lay sufficiently distant from the surging currents of dissent to relegate pacification to a secondary concern. In this manner, the royal city beckoned those in search of a secluded refuge for intellectual exchange, where they could also encounter individuals resolute in propagating their ideas to other corners of the country.

The attic laid the foundations for free political thought. Politicians were an integral part of this environment. Today's perspective, that compels us to mention well-known figures of the current scene, is deceptive. Among the people on the front pages of newspapers, there were: Jarosław Kaczyński; Ryszard Legutko; Korwin-Mikke; Leszek Moczulski; Tadeusz Mazowiecki; Ludwik Dorn. However, it's worth remembering that in the 1980s, the opposition figures were largely nameless. So who to mention? Zygmunt Majgier, and not mention Father Stanisław Bartmiński? If this publication seems to omit certain names, it's not because of marginalization but due to the necessary simplification required to describe this complex phenomenon.

### **KRZYSZTOF SAWICKI:**

Our principal objective was to foster a conservative community, encompassed by both political and intellectual dimensions. Marek Kuchciński, already at that time, was inclined towards a more partisan perspective. He was truly a political enthusiast.

In March 1989, discussions lasting nearly 10 hours took place in the attic, focusing on whether and how to be a conservative in the People's Republic of Poland.

### **RYSZARD LEGUTKO:**

Everything changed in Poland. So, if someone wanted to be a conservative in those times, they had to fall into despair because the sense of disgust and rejection of the old system was associated with the need to change everything. It's strange for a conservative to want to change everything... The hallmark of these changes was in the political sphere. What was characteristic of it was that it was carried out under the banner of modernization, and this is not pleasing to conservatives.





### **ANDRZEJ MAZUR:**

I think Marek understood very early that political activity, activity for the benefit of society, the region, or the city without considering culture is futile. It lacks justification. Why? To address public issues, which are always complex, a place for intellectual discussion is necessary. I emphasize - intellectual. With a clear and well-articulated topic, with a guarantee of discussions and conversations at an appropriate intellectual level. It is evident that Przemyśl, with its over a thousand-year history and culture manifested in its architectural monuments and the contributions of individuals who have lived here for centuries, significantly influenced Marek's approach: the integration of political matters with cultural ones. But let's not exaggerate. Many people live in cities with similar values and fail to draw conclusions from them. Nevertheless, we should recognize and acknowledge this as a fundamental fact, as it shows the potential directions of political thinking arising from residing in a city with a cultural-ecological character and the ability to collaborate with like-minded individuals.

The attic meetings were always led by Marek Kuchciński, who initially introduced the guest, whether they were local, national, or foreign. After the lecture, he moderated the discussion, giving rise to various ideas. Sometimes, the emotions of the participants took over, and he would announce the end of the discussion, inviting those interested to stay and continue their conversations. Even then, you could see the potential of a future Speaker of the Sejm.

### **ROBERT CHOMA:**

Staying there was something new, a profound experience for young people. Marek was an inspiration, a moderator. Even back then, he was drinking green tea, which seemed rather unpalatable to us. We received a dose of information that was completely foreign to us at the time, ranging from profound to what seems banal today. Everything was steeped in politics, in the hope that everything would be different. We used to wear shirts with the inscription "PC - the best way to deal with flies (Wordplay in Polish: When a "komuch" - a colloquial term for a communist - loses its first syllable, it transforms into a "much" (a fly), changing its meaning completely.) Marek was deeply involved. Jan Musiał played a significant role in drawing people in. For Marek and Jan, it was about coming here and delivering a message, regardless of the pejorative associations with the province, to show an Eastern European perspective on politics. Jarosław Kaczyński mentioned that he also learned a lot there, that he came to a place where there was a great attachment to tradition, culture, and religion. Everything was well-ordered here



### **WALDEMAR WIGLUSZ:**

Sometimes, the attic meetings were preceded by the joint preparation of leczo in the ground floor - made from all possible vegetables. Sometimes, Western guests brought with them, which was in demand, but the meetings were never characterized by drinking. The attic was filled with shelves of books, and the host subscribed to all publications. At that time, Marek was involved in growing greenhouse tomatoes, which he sold at the Silesian market at dusk. He would leave home at night. On one occasion, as he was driving, he dozed off at the wheel due to lack of sleep and ended up in a ditch, but fortunately, he and the car were unharmed. By the way, he was already driving a secondhand Toyota at that time. In the People's Republic of Poland, they used to say, "if you have a Japanese car, you drive it to the end," and the Security Service gave Marek the codename "Toyota."

At the attic, Leszek Moczulski, the head of the Confederation of Independent Poland, talked about a rather colorless topic, namely electoral systems. I stayed for a conversation after the lecture until almost morning. He spoke about electoral mechanisms, their pros and cons, and mathematical calculations. I was fascinated that one could talk about this topic so interestingly all night long.

Incidentally, Wojciech Jaruzelski's election as president by the National Assembly on the advice of the American Embassy proves that Moczulski was not listened to at that time. Another particularly memorable meeting was held in the Egyptian Coptic church with a female archaeologist. It coincided with another announced price increase, which is why this meeting was monitored by the Security Service. I walked back to Przemyśl on foot, carrying my young son piggyback. A white Fiat followed me the entire way; I regret not asking them for a ride back then. Apart from that, I don't remember any other incidents, but discreet observation was probably carried out, at least for the invited guests.

### **KSIĄDZ STANISŁAW BARTMIŃSKI:**

Our collaboration dates back to the hippie times and lasted for about 10 years. Later, Marek Kuchciński ventured into other paths, founded "Strych Kulturalny," and I helped him a bit. I provided press materials, equipment, and Marek contributed gifts—vegetables, for example. Together, we traveled across Poland, organizing aid for farmers.

Marek was always reliable when it came to assistance for Silesia. Along with Maria Klimowicz's group, he facilitated the transfer of internees to our diocese. Tadeusz Jedynek's wife, Maria, with her daughter, who was threatened that she would be found murdered or raped, had to be transferred from Silesia. She boarded the train in Katowice, supposed to get off in Żurawica, where Marek Kuchciński and Zygmunt Majgier were waiting for her. She was terrified because the train didn't stop. They snatched her from the train (with a Toyota, precisely) and transferred her to Bircza, where she lived.

She was convinced they were taking her to Russia. He also transported Father Sadłowski, who was targeted for arrest. To Korytnik, then Marek took him away into the world (the first months of martial law, retreats, transferring after Father Tokarczuk's sermon to Jasna Góra). It was a significant operation.

### **MAREK KAMIŃSKI:**

In 1983, Marek Kuchciński came to me and said there was a need to smuggle copies of the Bible in Russian into the Soviet Union. At first, I was stunned and thought he was sending me not to the college for offenses but straight to the criminal ward! And perhaps the Soviet one! After a while, I calmed down and said I would find out how realistic this was. Marek assured me that priests on the other side of the border – in Mosciska and Lviv – knew everything and had trusted parishioners working on the railway ready to receive the "shipments."

I thought the railway dry port for the Russian iron ore near Medyka would be a chance. Perhaps railway Solidarity activists could somehow smuggle such a "biblical shipment" through the railway border crossing. So, I asked the experienced railway Solidarity activist Staszek Baran to check this and possibly organize such a smuggling. I had no idea how it would develop, whether Staszek could organize it, and how many copies there would be. Then Marek Kuchciński brought me five large packages with 2,000 copies of the Bible each. I was completely stunned and terrified. I could imagine smuggling 50 or 100 copies, but not 10,000!



After some time, Staszek Baran comes to me with a broad smile and says, "Arranged. Colleagues who travel with empty broad-gauge trains to that side agreed. Where do you have those Bibles?" With a heavy heart, I showed him those large book packages, and he said, "A bit too much, but we'll try to hide them in the ore cargo. And that's how our smuggling began, lasting from 1983 to 1988. Transports of about 10,000 copies each were smuggled across the border two or three times a year. All of this was done according to the principles of conspiracy. I suspected that the action was inspired by Bishop Ignacy Tokarczuk. Maybe even by the Vatican? Because those Russian-language booklets were exceptionally well-made. I kept one as a souvenir: very high-quality printing on extremely thin and strong paper, in an elegant black cover made of very good imitation leather. The book was like a dream. Really beautifully produced, and since it was in Russian, it was unlikely to be printed in Poland.

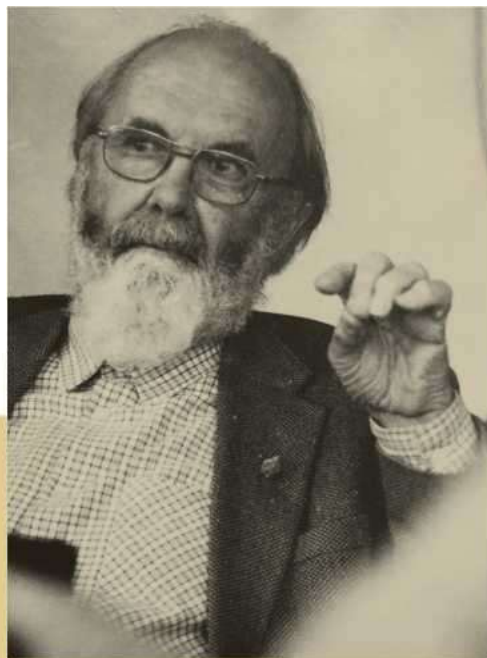
Over those five years, we smuggled over 100,000 copies to the Soviets. Luckily, there were no incidents on either side of the border. We took a lot of risks, but I think it was a great thing that undoubtedly influenced the awareness of those people and their eventual rejection of communism. (Jacek Borzęcki)

#### **MAREK KUCHCIŃSKI:**

Democracy, dictatorship—these are incantatory words that ignite fervent discussions in the short periods of "breath" between election campaigns, which annually occupy the time of thousands of people, with admirable persistence honing political game techniques. And we did not shy away from them, didn't hide in attic fur coats. It seems to me that our internal need for experiencing exciting adventures helped with that. Because what had been happening in Poland and around it for several years was not just the deliberate creation of history, as fundamental social and political problems remained at the level of fearful discussions in the entire provincial Poland. So, from intuition, an adventure emerged in the search for a different "lifestyle."

And although in Przemyśl, Strych tried to keep up with this revolutionary locomotive, often pointing its direction (not only local), as a result, encounters with people of art leaned towards politics, ideas, etc. So, the rhythm of changes surpassed our perception, and almost every day brought new events. Not everyone could endure these overloads.

There would be, of course, no attic as a place where this "lifestyle" is refined if we didn't talk exclusively about art. Even about the connections between art and something that can be described as the inexpressible mystery of the creative act, something artists like to call the barrier of time or overcoming passing.



## **PHILOSOPHY**

The attic is usually the highest floor in any house, and from its window, one can see more, look farther, and detect signals on the horizon earlier than from lower floors. It's a window to the world for the most curious minds. In Przemysł, this window was used to gaze not only at other streets but also at countries and continents. Of course, this is a metaphor, as the exchange of ideas prompted journeys into important matters, into regions explored by others, somewhere far away. In the 1980s, we perceived physical distance differently than we do today. Traveling was less realistic, so the exchange of views often began with laborious correspondence.

Artists associated with the attic formed friendships with English, German, or American artists, as well as with representatives of various foundations who came to deliver lectures, or with British conservatives from Margaret Thatcher's circles.

Among the dozens of attic individuals, artists, and politicians from both the country and abroad, a special place is occupied by the philosopher from the University of London and the editor of the quarterly "Salisbury Review" – Roger Scruton. In Przemysł, he led several attic meetings, including "Left and Conservatism," "Trade Unions and Law," and "Principles of Conservative Politics." Attic dwellers read Scruton's underground book, "Thinkers of the New Left." At that time, the information that he was dismissed from the university for his views had a significant impact on them. "The Salisbury Review" had been relentlessly harassed since its inception. Collaborators were threatened with the loss of positions or research grants.

In the 1980s, Roger Scruton, along with Baroness Caroline Cox and Jessica Douglas-Home, founded the "Jagiellonian Trust." With a group of friends, mainly from academic and scientific environments, he supported anti-communist activists in Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary, mainly by sending (through illegal channels) clandestine lecturers with the necessary equipment, especially duplicators, and publications introducing the ideas of democracy and conservatism.

## **ROGER SCRUTON:**

By the 1980s, the period of Solidarity was already a memory, and martial law had reduced Poland to a kind of somnambulistic silence. I traveled in search of small groups of people who wanted to discuss, learn, ask questions, and regain at least a part of the intellectual life that once flourished in Poland. They met, not like our friends from Czechoslovakia in some basement or boiler room underground, but on the rooftops of buildings, as if they didn't care who could see them.

Their discussion group was described as an attic, a place under the roof, and when I met them, I found myself in an open society of normal, bourgeois people who were determined to live, paint, write, and discuss, as if the party were nothing more than a stream of dirty water flowing in the sewers below. At their helm was Marek Kuchciński, a former art history student who lived outside the system and was a fervent advocate of culture as the liberation of the spirit and opposition to the totalitarian order. Around him gathered writers, painters, teachers, and it was thanks to him that I managed to organize a series of visits by Western intellectuals to discuss the most important issues of the day on these attics.

I got directly involved in Polish opposition culture under the influence of my visit to Poland in 1979, right after Pope John Paul II's visit to his homeland. I was very impressed by the atmosphere. There were huge tensions, fear, and yet little seeds of hope everywhere. I thought that since they are here, I should try to water them to let them grow. We were lucky to meet Marek Kuchciński at that time, who invited us to Przemyśl – a beautiful and old Central European city, the center of its own local culture.

Przemyśl was one of the first cities to cast off the gloomy communist bonds. Through Marek Kuchciński, Scruton began to build a network of contacts. The group dealing with philosophical thought made the life of the city more interesting and free.



#### **ROGER SCRUTON:**

In Przemyśl, people lived, denying the official distinction between the whispers of private life and the orders of public life. The streets were lively and joyful even at night. You could walk on them just like in London, talking freely with friends, or stand and wait for someone without attracting the attention of any uniformed figures. Completely different from Warsaw, where there were militia patrols ready to control the activities of passersby at any moment. Poland had been stripped of its identity, which it preserved independently of Stalin's or Hitler's actions... It was a country enveloped in its own mysterious aura, where I felt the breath of aggression. A country filled with fear, where people spoke in whispers or sat in silence... As I walked, I heard footsteps that faded when I stopped...

## WEST

Or rather... East. Przemyśl is a city where, at times, it's closer to Austria than Vilnius. Although a proverbial stone's throw separates a house on Węgierska Street from Ukraine, the Austrian army has left a strong mark on its history. So, if we think of the Attic as a borderland of cultures and ideas, the geographic and historical borderland had a tremendous influence on such attitudes. Poles in the East are people open to other cultures, living in a religious melting pot, and at the same time, for generations, nurturing their roots, giving them a sense of stability. Successive wars and partitions left behind fear, pain, but also a new culture. Therefore, it's not surprising that the "Attic" had to reach into the sources of thought flowing in Western Europe. "Western" contacts also had practical aspects. Thanks to them, magazine subscriptions were possible, which was a great luxury at that time. A Xerox machine, an IBM electronic typewriter, was also gained—smuggled across the border—on which the first issues of the "Attic" were documented, along with a whole bunch of paper, of course.

One of the important educational ideas was the organization of the Polish-British Local Government-Citizen Symposium in Krasieczyn in September 1990. The organizer was the Przemyskie Towarzystwo Kulturalne (the Attic) and the Jagiellońska Foundation of Roger Scruton and Marek Matraszek. They piloted the entire project together with Zygmunt Grzesiak. And it was a great success. For a week, from morning to evening, discussion sessions were held. Excellent speakers. National and local politicians (local government officials), scholars, British

### **MAREK KUCHCIŃSKI:**

The main speakers from our side were invited from Warsaw, Dr. Zdzisław Najder (then heading the Civic Committee for Lech Wałęsa), and from the British side, Professor Zbigniew Pełczyński from Oxford, associated with the Batory Foundation. Professor Pełczyński recommended caution in adopting politically radical measures. He seemed to be on the side of Tadeusz Mazowiecki's politics and the whole Environment of the later Democratic Union. On the other hand, Dr. Najder was not so much in favor of Lech Wałęsa (he only stated that he would win the presidential elections) but elegantly distanced himself from the concept of monopolizing the political scene by supporters of Prime Minister Mazowiecki. He pointed to the still significant role of civic committees, which then had the potential strength because they did not constitute an ideological monolith and should remain such a forum, especially since the upcoming elections significantly hindered ideological work. However, it turned out that among local activists, opinions were even more divided.

Of course, how could a symposium take place without amusing situations? Such moments accompany us at almost every meeting. According to diplomatic European customs, sessions were interrupted by refreshments, and in the evenings, there were parties with good alcohol. One of them was graced by Marek Zazula's cello recital within the old castle walls and the presence of the last of the Sapicha lineage, Prince Michał. This extraordinarily tall figure, with a large head and a red nose, now a resident of Belgium, welcomed guests entering the castle walls in the darkness like a specter, a spirit from bygone eras, undulating in the light of flickering candles with his immense shadow, heightened by the chronic renovation work taking place in the castle. Invited guests had to traverse (or rather sprint) a couple of hundred meters to the castle gate (without gates, of course) in the raging and unforeseen storm over Krasiczyn. The British guests were surprised by the suggestion to use chairs instead of umbrellas. And the elegant older gentlemen in top hats, shiny canes, and sharply pressed tuxedos and ruffles carried those chair-umbrellas through the completely dark park. One of them told me that if we were in England, it would be a precedent written in customary law, as it was unheard of for members to carry chairs. Marek Matraszek, responsible for them, was momentarily sweaty with anger, fearing it might end in a mighty affront. Fortunately, our sense of humor was properly understood (Zygmunt Grzesiak came up with this).

Among the most interesting attic meetings, Marek Kuchciński includes those with David Selbourne—both in the attic and during trips around the province with candidates. He recalls him as an extraordinary person. A lawyer by education and a twenty-year philosophy lecturer at Oxford. A man tragically disillusioned by his "flirtation" with the left. In 1980, he began to criticize the lumpenproletariat, the evil and foolish people driving the spread of ex-Marxist ideas in the West. Traveling through Central Europe, he encountered real socialism. The Attic was referred to as an enclave of freedom.

## DAVID SELBOURNE

In the homestead, near Przemyśl, in the farthest corner of Southeastern Poland, in the middle of the night, weary campaign workers discuss the mysterious suspension of organizers' phones, the tracking by the civilian militia, and other normal harassments. Dim light shines over the kitchen table; in its pale glow surrounded by darkness, beards and sweaters, tired eyes, a crucifix on the neck, Solidarity announcements and posters are visible. Down the road, just 9 miles away, is the Soviet Union, and 50 miles further into Ukraine is Lviv, which was once a Polish city (...) In the Przemyśl committee, there are Catholic intellectuals, independent farmers, social-democratic members of the local Solidarity Workers' Movement, and representatives of a largely conservative cultural organization... Coffee cups and photocopies, cigarettes and matches passed from one brotherly hand to another: camaraderie is typical of the left-wing of the Western second half of the sixties. But here, there is an anti-communist fervor, for many, also anti-socialist. But here, the influence of local Bishop Ignacy Tokalczuk, not the imprimatur of Mao or Trotsky, guides the actions of these bearded, radical, denim-clad people. (...) In the extensive garden of the Franciscan fathers, under the white-hung acacias, a silent, restrained crowd (...) the noise of traffic can be heard in the distance; a woman at the edge of the crowd gently rocks a child in a stroller. It's as if everyone is walking in a dream in this quiet corner, or dreaming of finding some other way, any other way of life. And who wouldn't do that? (...) Tadeusz Trelka, a strong man with a beard, is running for the Sejm: "We will fight for the life of the nation," he shouts, fists clenched, the crowd applauds, some foreheads wrinkled and concerned. (...) But here is 51-year-old Janusz Onyszkiewicz, a fair-haired man, in an English plaid shirt and navy blazer: "I am in contact with the world of international politics," he says sonorously. "I have talked to Margaret Thatcher." From the platform, I alternately see suspicious glances and smiles expressing hope...". " „The Independent Magazine”, 1989 r.







## ART

Selbourne is also a kind of connector of worlds. Not entirely representative or significant for the fate of the attic, but precisely remarkably non-random. A British historian of ideas, a political philosopher venturing eastward to document the fall of communism. He ends up in a place where he discovers something unexpected. Philosophers, priests, farmers, poets, dreamers. They engage in discussions about the brutal political struggle surrounded by paintings, with well-worn volumes of poetry in backpacks with paper urging protests. Selbourne was familiar with this from Oxford, but that was an academic center. Przemyśl, on the other hand, was more of a religious center, and the multidimensional context of social changes in Poland fascinated him even more. These changes drew their strength, among other things, from art. This broadly understood culture was an excellent carrier of ideas in a country oppressed at that time by the propaganda of the Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR). For a Briton, finding a piece of Oxford in eastern Poland was something intriguing.

### **MAREK KUCHCIŃSKI:**

The inspiration for "Strych" also came from visits by people of art, such as Edward Robinson, Margaret Steli Hunter, and Helen Ganly from Oxford. However, local talents also emerged, including the poet Tomasz Jastrun and Józef Kurylak, a connoisseur of world literature. Kurylak's tragically vampiric passion left a mark on some of the regulars of the attic. He often fumed and was terribly insufferable with his absolute certainty.



### **MARGARET STEELE HUNTER:**

In 1988 I was invited as an artist to participate in an event in Przemyśl; a group exhibition to be held in the arched subterranean chambers of the imposing Franciscan Church organised by the opposition movement 'Solidarity' (Solidarność). This was still the time of the cold war and the Catholic Church and trade union in Poland combined in peaceful opposition to the government. It seemed art events were a kind of vehicle for them to come together. Initially there was a frustrating time trying to secure a visa until I contacted the British Council for help and as a result the Visa was granted.

picturesque farms, but rough roads, and some memorable sights. At one stage along a double carriageway, separated by a strip of grass, we came across an elderly country woman leading a cow held by a thick rope, along the grass. It seemed like a scene from another century. In the gloaming of the evening, rounding a corner could bring us up short behind an ambling horse and cart without lights.

Eventually arriving in Przemysl we didn't fare much better and had to enlist the help of a lone taxi driver to lead us to the address where we were due to stay.

It was a sprawling, old villa completely in darkness. No one there so we asked the taxi driver to lead us to a hotel: NIE hotel. B & B? NIE B&B, until he remembered the caravan site! He led us there; it was dark, dismal and no signs of life until a woman appeared in the gatehouse who gruffly informed us that the site was full up! After a long journey we were tired and frustrated.

Returning to the driveway of the old villa, we fell asleep in the car and were awakened by a noisy group of men tumbling out of a van. We were ushered into a large kitchen where one of the group banged a gun on the table remarking that 'this will have to be the answer'. At this point I wanted to get into the car and head straight back to Berlin. However, the gun was a convincing looking toy, and we stayed!

The villa belonged to the main organiser of the event, Marek Kuchcinski. Next day we could see the large overgrown garden with old stone sculptures peeking above the long grass. We were part of a group from various backgrounds but all associated in some way with the opposition movement. We slept on mats on the floor of the attic, more or less head to feet. I believe I was the only artist there. The town of Przemysl in socialist Poland was situated a few kilometres from the Ukrainian border. It had a long and rich history but by the time I visited in 1988 much of the town was crumbling and grey with little outdoor life

I was impressed by the setting up of the artwork in the arched underground spaces of the church although initially astonished at the shortage of hanging material. However copper wire was carefully stripped out of plastic cable, while the few tools were passed around hand to hand. There was camaraderie within the attic group however Joachim, my partner was disappointed that it was not possible to have a beer since good beer was indeed produced in Poland. A member of the group in the house worked at the University of Warsaw, Dr. Ryszard Zoltaniecki, and one evening he suggested we go with him to a municipal restaurant in the town where he thought it might be possible to buy beer.

A great idea, so we dropped him off in the town square and waited for a while in the car; still we waited, but he didn't return! Eventually we enquired about him at the restaurant: they said he had never been there! It transpired that he'd been picked up by the police and held for questioning about the group. He returned rather shaken. Shocked by Ryszard's experience, it was the first time in my life that I realised how vulnerable and helpless one could be in an Eastern Bloc country; a British passport could give little protection if you were in the hands of the Polish Security Police.

One day I was invited to visit the place where the Solidarity underground newspaper was printed. However, when a car carrying several large men was spotted following us I was relieved that the trip was abandoned.

My partner Joachim and I were made very welcome by the group and we were guided around and shown Przemyśl by an English speaker who explained its rich varied history.

It was particularly interesting for me as a Scot because many Poles settled in Scotland after coming to fight in World War II and there is still a large Polish community there.

I was also kindly provided with a professional translator.

Since it was a large group exhibition, I didn't lay so much importance on arriving early at the opening, but arrived at the church just on time. The translator was waiting at the door, agitated. 'The Archbishop is waiting' she said pulling me down the long aisle to the very front of the church.

The building inside was overwhelmingly ornate, beautifully covered with intricate frescoes, gold leaf, stunning grandeur compared to the crumbling grey buildings and streets surrounding the church. I was astounded to see the church was full, every pew and every seat was taken. This was obviously a very important event for the town's public. The Archbishop stood at the front with microphone and men beside him with video cameras were ready to record. I was honoured to be presented with a prize and afterwards Joachim and I were invited by the Archbishop to the abbey on the outskirts of the town for a delicious Polish meal served by nuns who mainly grew their own food. In the shops in those days there were constant food shortages, little choice and long queues. Life then was very hard.





I felt privileged to have taken part in the exhibition in Przemysl, to have met the people involved and to have shared their experiences first hand. It was one of the most important artistic events of my life. On reflection it seems to me that the exhibition in the Franciscan Church was an element of peaceful opposition, organised by the social and political movement that sought broad economic and democratic reforms. Part of the effect of this ‘solidarity’ contributed to the downfall of the Soviet Union and the domino effect that ensued eventually changed world politics.

### POSTSCRIPT

Two years later partner Joachim and I returned to Przemysl to pick up my paintings.

It was summer and post communism; Przemysl was a totally different place. There was ‘life’ on the streets, busy cafes, it was as though the lights had been turned on in the town. We discovered that the group who’d organized the exhibition had splintered, separating to pursue their own political interests. While we were there they came together again and we watched a video made during the exhibition in the church.

There was great excitement as one of their group shown in the film was agitatedly pointed out: he’d been later uncovered as a spy! The meeting brought them together; it was a memorable evening and a good reunion.

Ten years later in January 1998 Joachim and I unexpectedly met Ryszard. It was at the opening of an exhibition in the International Cultural Centre in Cracow, where I was to have a solo exhibition of my paintings and sculptures. He looked different, imposing in an elegant suit. He told us when Poland became a democracy in 1989 he had the position of acting Foreign Minister; thereafter he became Polish Ambassador to Greece and Cyprus. It was interesting to meet him again, to reminisce and discuss the changes to the country.

This is a purely personal account in relation to a particular event in 1988 in the then socialist state of Poland. My observations were shaped by my background as an artist from the quiet west coast of Scotland, living half time in the West of the then divided city of Berlin.

In October 1988, the attic and the exhibition "Man - God - World" also hosted Edward Robinson, an Oxford man who dealt with two seemingly unrelated areas of human experience: the world of religion, drawing themes from the Gospel, and the world of fine arts. He shared reflections with the attic residents on imagination, mystery, spirituality, and tradition. He returned to Przemyśl the following year, offering himself for room and board to sculpt altarpiece triptychs for the church in Tarnawce.



#### **MAREK KUCHCIŃSKI:**

Meetings with Edward Robinson left a particular mark on our discussions. I called him a metaphysical sculptor. Edward reaches the bonds and differences between religion and art as if from both sides simultaneously: from the side of the artist who, using his senses, hands, tools, and worked material, creates a work, and from the spiritual side. Imagination connects them, creatively allowing the perception of a power shrouded in mystery, and through their spiritual ability to open up to it, people can experience it. Passion also unites metaphysics and art, allowing artists to show the world in a different way in the act of creation. They are also united by the highest, deepest themes, eliminating trivial passions and enabling, as John Ruskin wrote, dwelling in the highest realms of thought to which humanity is capable. These are spheres of experiences often inexpressible but in their nature must be good and true to emanate their beauty.







## PASSION

### EDWARD ROBINSON:

The meeting point of metaphysics and art, or what they have in common, is passion. When you ask an artist why they painted a picture, they'll say, damn it, I just painted it. It's a compulsion that forces a poet, for example, to write a poem. It's interesting that when we talk to artists, they'll repeatedly say that they don't know why they did this or that in a particular way. For example, Paul Klee often didn't know how to title a work after completing it. He would then ask friends to give it a name. It's one of the most wonderful experiences for an artist.

According to Robinson, novelty is often a challenge for people. They don't like to see the world differently. A good example is the Paris exhibition of the Impressionists, whose paintings seemed repulsive to contemporary viewers. Today, these same paintings are considered exceptionally beautiful, and their value hovers around millions of dollars.

If the world requires balance, the ubiquitous paintings and graphics in the attic were silent equivalents to the discussions. One of the authors was Helen Ganly, a multidisciplinary artist from Oxford. She was involved in painting, graphics, installation, costumes, set design, writing and illustrating children's books, as well as public and private collections. She was a founding member of Oxford Printmakers and ARTWEEK, Oxford's Visual Arts Festival. She taught at the Ruskin School of Drawing (University of Oxford), Oxford Brookes University (Department of Education), as well as in schools, community centers, psychiatric hospitals, and prisons. The attic environment was undoubtedly a sociological experimental ground for her.

## **PAINTING**

One can boldly venture the thesis that the Attic is unfairly associated with text, word, politics. Visual art spilled through the Przemyśl house in a manner often surprising. Profoundly religious discussions took place in the company of works by people once associated more with alchemy and the exploration of a surrealist path to understanding faith. Today, it is already difficult to remember whether Henryk Waniek brought with him to the Attic the New Unpretentious Bible in Pictures. It was a kind of folder, a package with visual works.

### **MAREK KUCHCIŃSKI:**

Henryk Waniek seemed somewhat worried by the consciousness that limited him, that "even if he denies it, disputes it, explains it," he will always be called a painter, is not a supporter of the purity of artistic means. And he can move in spheres not only on the border of these disciplines of art but also in those we call mystical (he greatly values Friedrich's mystical landscapes): "It always seemed to me that some designator of the natural scenery of the world is necessary, so that in the face of the image we could somehow feel our presence in the so-called space of mystery".

### **STANISŁAW KOBA:**

My works were not an illustration of specific texts; they were interludes. At that time, it was a series of works: man-animal-nature. The hardness, aggressiveness of the line is the basic means of expression.

On July 4, 1989, an exhibition of Koba's paintings was to take place, which, despite being after the elections, was blocked by the state authorities.



## POETRY

Koba is an unpredictable artist, challenging to fit into frames. Thus, he perfectly fits into the entire cultural ferment of Przemyśl's bohemia. It must be clearly stated that the environment of the attic was a kind of bohemian lifestyle, except their desire to break away from conventions, social norms, and materialism had an adversary in the system. The realism of the socialist country organized for the needs of the authorities disgusted and united even the most extreme artistic movements. Mirosław Kocoł, Marek Kuchciński, and Jan Musiał, the editorial team of the first edition of "Cultural Attic," operated in the transcendent reality of a house that served as their shelter.

The poetry that flowed through their hands and that was present during meetings was mostly gloomy. Even when it reflected daily life, it had to have threads of death, sadness...

Freud supposedly told his disciple: Either you will create beautiful poetry, or you will cure depression. There is something to it. It is said that beautiful poetry is written with depression. Sufferers are usually sensitive individuals who see and feel more, who must rein in excess emotions, name them, mold them into a form. It's a kind of therapy...

The time of attic meetings naturally forced discussions about poets addressing political themes.

In the dispute with Krzysztof Sawicki, Józef Kurylak opposed Herbert's politically engaged poetry with pure, visionary, somewhat surreal poetry by Grochowiak. And he did it with such intensity that it almost came to blows.

Józef Kurylak's poetry was not politically engaged. It was simply metaphysical. The collection of poems published in Strych in 1989 opens with "Spirit," which reveals the strength of the determination of the new spirit of the world.

It is eternal and immortal, always new, stronger. However, it comes into conflict with nature, whose forms disintegrate.

In the prologue, Faust's thought is quoted: "moment, linger on!" Unfortunately, it never lingers. And these are the famous ideas that deceived the poet in his youth: the new spirit and rusting bridges. There is no harmony in this. Another poem, "Clearing," speaks of deceitful scrolls of the new era, not illuminated by Thomas Aquinas. It considers two views of the world: external and internal. These views do not overlap, meaning there is no God in nature (external view) and the vision of a transcendent God (internal view). Therefore, man is condemned to this contradiction, and thus lives in despair.

### **JÓZEF KURLAK:**

During a lecture on Leśmian's poetry eroticism, Andrzej Gronczewski was enchanted by the picturesque landscape of Southern Poland, comparing it to the realm of Leśmian and his poetic gardens. Around the house, herbs and raspberries were growing at that time... The professor shared with me the observation that, like Leśmian's Drowner, he drowned in greenery

### **ANDRZEJ MAZUR:**

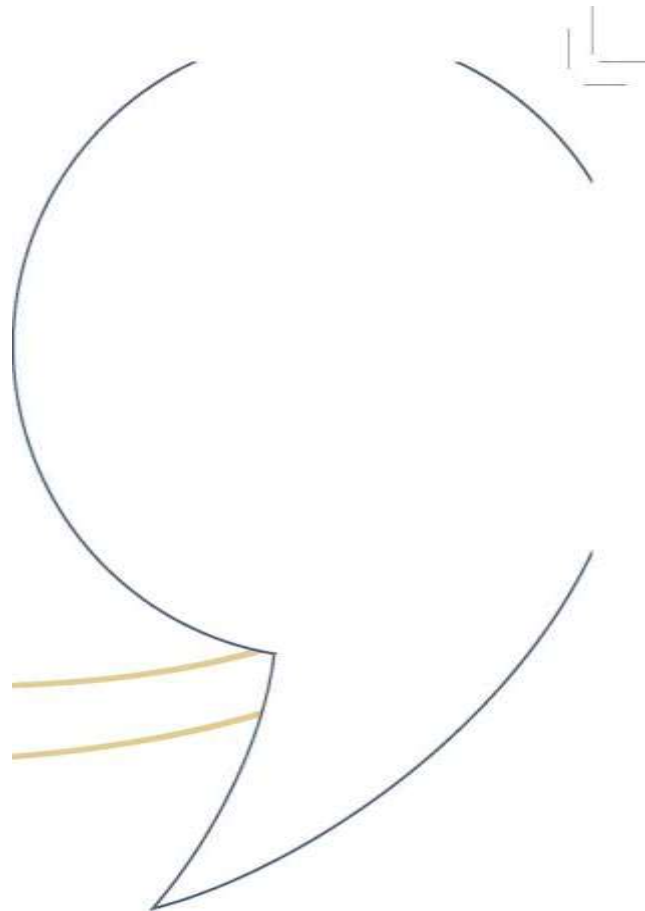
Poetry was highly honored, both at attic meetings and in "Cultural Attic," as well as in later lectures. In addition to outstanding and well-known critics and essayists like Piotr Kłoczowski, Krzysztof Dybciak, Tomasz Jastrun, Ludmiła Mariańska, Iwona Smolka, Krzysztof Karasek, it's worth mentioning the statistics from seven issues of "Attic." The poetry section had a total of 117 pages, featuring 78 carefully designed poems, with 13 poets including Józef Baran, Józef Kurylak, Marek Pękała, Adam Ziemianin, Mariusz Olbromski, Rev. Jan Kalinka, Andrzej Mazur, Kazimierz Biculewicz, Turkish literature translator Antoni Sarka, and Turkish poets Necip Fazıl Kısakörek, Yahya Kemal Beyatlı, Orhan Veli Kanık, Fazıl Husnu Dağlarca, Bulent Ecevit.

### **MAREK KUCHCIŃSKI:**

The organizational transformation over the years is best seen in a specific budding: from the Days of Christian Culture, through exhibitions ("Man - God - World" festivals), the first strictly attic meetings, the citizens' committee (partially), Przemyskie Towarzystwo Kulturalne (officially registered after the fall of the PRL), "Spojrzenia Przemyskie" to Strych. The organizational core remained the same: Kurylak, Niezgodowa, Zazula, Musiał, Jarosz Grzesiak... there was a group of people whose connections brought later prime ministers, ministers, world-renowned scholars, MPs, politicians, journalists, and writers once sentenced to death for their views to our city. And sometimes, you have to pay the highest price to remain yourself....

**JADWIGA SAWICKA:**

The idea of organizing exhibitions emerged. The Franciscans provided the underground of an 18th-century church. Dark, cold, damp. Overwhelming interior, reminiscent of catacombs, nighttime prayers, self-mortification, forcing seriousness. Exhibitions gained financial support, artists received awards. Tomatoes were transported to Warsaw on a trailer, and the same trailer returned with tomatoes for the exhibition. The place made you want to see an exhibition different from all others. One that would be able to engage in a dialogue with the location. Some of the works dealt with the relationship between man and God, others with man and the world, while still others spoke about man, his loneliness, alienation, and torn nature. Some didn't try to say anything, they just were. Like a stone, a tree, a chair.

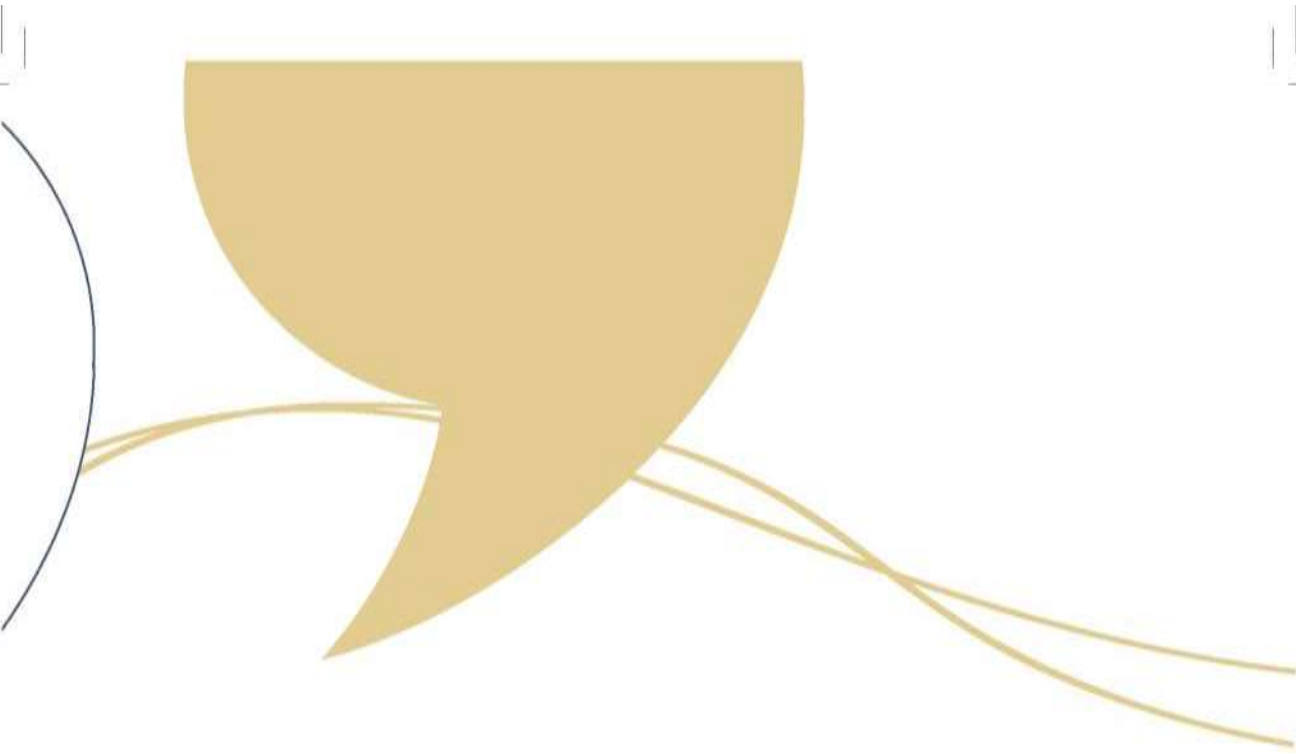


#### **MAREK KUCHCIŃSKI:**

Almost all events took place amid independent art exhibitions and non-debt publishing houses in the aforementioned Franciscan underground, a place where, in the 1980s, censorship had no access. Thousands of people listened to speakers, watched films and performances, strengthening their conviction that art could support the love of freedom.

In 1988 and 1989, we named the exhibitions "Man - God - World" not diocesan or national, but simply art exhibitions, as creators from many parts of the world participated: the USA, South Africa, France, Berlin, Australia, Slovakia (then Czechoslovakia). There were contests and cash prizes funded by the Committee for Independent Culture, represented by Magda Hniedziewicz, Maciej Gutowski, Janusz Eysymont. These exhibitions and attic meetings had a very important meaning because they were places where contact with art and creators occurred without censorship. It was like private gatherings where universally important matters were discussed.

Some accused us of preparing events "American-style" (minimalism!) or claimed that we were only doing politics (socialists!). However, Bishop Tokarczuk's principle *primum non nocere* brilliantly silenced the reluctant



The audience not only densely filled the churches but also intensified the atmosphere of the drama with great silence and focus, even before the meetings began when the organizers were still "suspended" on several-meter ladders, stretching boards or screens under the vaults. Here is a scene that has become classic today: standing at the top of such a terribly long ladder swaying in all directions, Janusz Czarski is supported by Marek Zazula (who will have his recital in two hours) and Jurek Bonarek, the famous hundred-kilogram "Canary," and Father Klisko, praying with people tightly filling the church of the Franciscans with "Hail Marys." At that time, I wondered to what extent this silence and focus on prayer were enhanced by the anticipation, with bated breath, of the roar of the falling ladder. In reality, this concentration, focus, and prayer expressed a great desire for an unknown freedom. The silence of that time was a symbol of the military reality of the PRL dictatorship. Because no one knew when the secret communist police would react, when they would come to make arrests. No one knew the boundary beyond which the expression of human intellectual and artistic creativity would be considered interference in politics by the dictators. Because outside the churches, it was not safe even in one's own home. Because beyond the world of religion and faith, there was practically no freedom. And yet, contacts with the country had to be maintained, secret meetings on Żytnia Street in Warsaw had to be attended, discreet help from the Committee for Independent Culture had to be used, cooperation with other centers of the political underground of that time had to be carried out. Courage was valued at that time, and it was boosted by a small number of people willing to work, people with a strong character and a tough internal structure.



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ranciszkanów w Przemysłu  
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**BÓG - ŚWIAT**  
rac plastyków przemyskich

Thanks to extraordinary guests and regulars of the attic, news of cultural and oppositional activity in Przemyśl spread beyond the country's borders. Przemyśl is a Catholic city with a large number of churches and associated communities. However, the strong connection of the attic community with the Church hindered the publication in Giedroyc's "Kultura".

#### **KRZYSZTOF DYBCIAK:**

In the late 1980s, I met Herling-Grudziński in Naples, who became interested in political and cultural activities in Przemyśl and the surrounding areas. He encouraged me to write a short text informing readers of the Parisian "Kultura" about these little-known matters. So, when the second issue of "Strych" was published in the spring of 1989, I saw it as a good opportunity to inform the readers of "Kultura" about the activities of the oppositional community in Przemyśl. I sent a several-page text to the editorial office of "Kultura" (I don't remember how, but it wasn't difficult at that time). However, my report did not appear despite several months passing, so I turned to Jerzy Giedroyc with urgent requests and later with a request for an explanation of the lack of publication. I probably did not receive any response, and Herling informed me of Giedroyc's reluctance to publish that little article.

The explanation for the negative stance of the head of the Literary Institute was political and somewhat social. At the end of the PRL, similar to opposition circles in the country, there were power struggles for dominance in political life. This also applied to cultural matters. In my text, I truthfully wrote about the decidedly independent and Catholic-conservative orientation of the editors and the creative environment of Przemyśl (the authors of "SK" were Legutko and Scruton), as well as the positive role of the great Archbishop Tokarczuk. This did not please the secular and Marxist revisionists and reformers favorable to Giedroyc, and even more so the people from his then environment - those with liberal or left-wing views, or even a communist past like Krzysztof Pomian, who had significant influence on the editor at that time (co-author of "Autobiografia na cztery ręce"). In the early 1990s, the main informants about national affairs in "Kultura" became people who hated the right and orthodox Catholics, such as Tomasz Jastrun or Leszek Szaruga (Aleksander Wirpsza). These are the reasons for not publishing a text favorable to "Strych Kulturalny" and the cultural achievements of the opposition in Przemyśl.

This story is reminiscent of the one described by Helen Ganly, when during World War II in England, a committee was formed to commission paintings from artists about various aspects of the war. A London dealer approached the committee with a request to commission works from Stanley Spencer, as he was struggling financially. Spencer intended to paint a large picture on the subject of the crucifixion, commemorating the invasion of Poland. The committee rejected this project.

Summer 1995, upon Marek Kuchciński's invitation, Professor Jarosław Piekalkiewicz, accompanied by his wife Moira from Amnesty International, visited from the State University of Kansas. He held the honorary title of Distinguished Lecturer in Western Civilization (from Gilgamesh to the future). Unfortunately, he fell ill after eating a meal at the Central Station in Warsaw and had to be hospitalized at the city hospital on Rogozińskiego Street in Przemyśl. The changes that occurred after the round table were outlined as follows:

#### **JAROSŁAW PIEKALKIEWICZ:**

While in Przemyśl, we talked in the old attic, casually dressed by candlelight because the light was dim. I cautiously took steps because I thought this attic would collapse... And when we were leaving Warsaw, I asked my wife, "Maybe I should take a jacket?" She replied, "A jacket to Przemyśl? To the attic? Have you gone mad?" But just in case, I took one, and I'm very glad because it might not bother you, but on TV, there is such a custom...

In the fifth issue of Strych, Prof. Piekalkiewicz asks about the reason why so little remains of the great capital of Solidarity. In response, he uses the example of the Kiszczak case, which he personally observed when Michnik testified as a witness. Michnik entered the room, approached Kiszczak, and shook his hand. He shook hands with a man who had spent his entire life in Military Intelligence, for whom the officers of the Security Service were angels. People from Military Intelligence killed for pleasure. According to Piekalkiewicz, this gesture annulled what happened in Poland. Michnik forgave Kiszczak and saw him as a political partner. According to Piekalkiewicz, the Church, preaching Christian forgiveness, could have influenced this. In the leadership of Solidarity, there were some sons and daughters of communists and Security Service officers (rebellious against their parents but not willing to accuse their own father). Thirdly, a certain part of the opposition was infiltrated by UB and SB (Security Office and Security Service), and some were their agents from the beginning. There was no decommunization in Poland. The law was not changed, and the responsibility of the communists for the economic ruin of the country and the construction of an economy unrelated to Poland's natural treasures was not shown.

#### **ANDRZEJ MAZUR:**

Documentation from meetings at Przemyskie Towarzystwo Kulturalne (PTK), including articles, interviews, and features in "Strych Kulturalny" and other media, remains relevant. It maintains its freshness, and one can rely on it for contemporary analyses.

When reading the interview with Prof. Piekalkiewicz published in the same issue of "Strych" from July 1995, titled "The Politics of Ideocracy," it immediately prompts an analysis of its text and invites comparisons with Zbigniew Brzeziński's "The Second Chance" [2008] or Jeremy Rifkin's "The European Dream" [2005]. The same applies to the unconventional reflections found in "The Politics of Death" by R.A.D. Grant, stimulating thoughts on the no longer existing classical Greek schools of thought and their modern continuations.

In reading Piekalkiewicz, one can still grasp the method of intellectually mastering reality and conducting partial analyses. In Jarek's case, it's a professorial lecture on the definition of democracy, a straightforward and fundamental lecture. According to Piekalkiewicz, democracy involves relinquishing the pursuit of an ideal society. If I were leading a political science seminar on democracy, the interview with Piekalkiewicz would serve as the starting point and mandatory reading for participation in these classes. Participants would also explore additional works such as Tomasz Żyro's "American Ideology," Carl Becker's "Divine State of Eighteenth-Century Eternal Philosophers," or the aforementioned writings of Brzeziński and Rifkin.

Piekalkiewicz holds immense importance in political philosophy as he thoroughly examined ideocratic systems and their global influence. Therefore, his definitions bear educational and philosophical significance, particularly his definition of democracy as the abandonment of utopian ideals. He emphasizes the significance of the constitution, the social contract, and the rule of law for the effective functioning of society and the awareness of civil rights. In the mid-1990s, he pioneered the reference to the principle of the separation of powers from the Roman philosopher and lawyer Polybius, a rare source in Poland at that time. Piekalkiewicz provides insight into sources of thought, bibliography, and guidance, akin to a university seminar from the finest global institutions.

So who were these young, bearded men who resembled Sartre's followers? They were the regulars at Strych and their friends. A few among them constituted the core of the citizens' committee, but collectively, they were the driving force behind the entire local election campaign. They operated a clandestine print shop (also in the attic!) where they duplicated election leaflets at night. One type of these leaflets ("How to depict the enemy") was printed in just two nights, totaling close to three hundred thousand copies, enough for every adult resident of the province. They edited Biuletyn Wyborczy (the "Election Bulletin" )and were responsible for all advertising and propaganda.

**MAREK KUCHCIŃSKI:**

"Looking back at the texts of 'Strych,' I see that such activity is invaluable. It brings a new dimension to understanding politics as culture."

It's crucial to recognize the capacity for drawing conclusions and their materialization through the establishment of institutions, such as the attic meetings during martial law. These meetings served as a passage for many individuals, including the magazines "Spojrzenia Przemyskie," "Strych Kulturalny," and Przemyskie Towarzystwo Kulturalne. Experience has demonstrated that the creation of a cultural institution dedicated to dialogue and the discussion of political issues can foster development..





## **BOND**

The journal was, therefore, something more than literature. It was a symbol and a kind of manifesto of the place where it was born. For its founders, it was also a testimony to the intangible. This is why it is so important to understand the context of time, purpose, and passion. If we were to take only the yellowed pages of the journal today, we would probably consider it an intellectual testament. However, to be in line with the truth, one must also have in mind the image of people moving on the extreme poles: art, politics, education, and wealth. If we adopt this perspective, the pages of the Attic also become a metaphysical bond.

9

### **MAREK KUCHCIŃSKI:**

Today, I am amazed that people with such different worldviews could coexist without disputes. Perhaps these are the effects of intellectual discussions mainly conducted among practitioners. Maybe the secret of utopian unity lies in this fantasizing?

When we try to reach it, examining reality with rational methods and satisfying life needs, various cracks and divisions open up, which, falling into them, we ourselves widen? This seems to be an answer to why the people of the attic did not split into various factions, often competing with each other.

9

### **JANUSZ CZARSKI:**

The people of the Attic were bound by an extraordinary bond. Friendship, understanding, trust, mutual acceptance were so strong that no one asked anyone about anything... If someone didn't want to, they said nothing. But each of us felt, knew, that we could count on the other. And that was the most beautiful thing in our meetings.

9

### **ANDRZEJ MAZUR:**

My greatest admiration was for the nutria breeding. Marek had a herd of nutrias, beautiful animals. The villa - in terms of overall appearance - was colorful, walls painted white, navy blue shutters, inside paintings, a library. And outside, Indonesian sumacs and nutrias.

Nutrias in a garden full of trees. It was extraordinary: conversations about art, intellectual considerations, tomato beds, trees, and nutrias.

I love these animals: they have large yellow teeth, turning red, and look like a seasoned long-time cigarette smoker, or heavier cigars,

They are curious about people, maybe you could talk to them after a few deep vodkas. Nevertheless, I don't recall any big drinking session with a trip to the nutria pools for philosophical conversations.

If Marek wanted to create some logo for himself in retirement, I would suggest an image of a nutria. Friendly animals, friendly people, friends for life. I love the phenomena of this world; they tell us more about ourselves than we realize. Tomatoes, people, sculptors, footballers, oppositionists, anti-communists, Brits, Grotowski's interns, this whole wonderful group of real life in communion would somehow be dead to me without these images of beautiful nutrias: with gray rough fur, with yellow teeth like Humphrey Bogart's, almost actors in this world full of wonders we live in.



**JANUSZ J. CYWICKI:**

Those who were there know what I'm talking about. When was it? Where, with whom, and why did it happen there, on that street and in that small, freestanding house, on the outskirts of the city, set back in the garden and somewhat hidden.

A row of bushes separated it from the street, creating a kind of refuge,

a buffer that provided silence, conducive to detachment from the hustle and bustle of everyday life and, in reality, allowing for a somewhat different perspective on the surrounding sad reality of the gray days of 1980s Poland.

In those times, we often met primarily in private homes, art studios, or at vernissages organized at the Bureau of Art Exhibitions, the Regional Museum, or the Desa Gallery.

At one point, the choice of Węgierska Street became obvious. Moreover, the owners had extraordinary patience for us; they were not surprised by frequent, very late visits with various groups, and they always had something to offer us. Most importantly, we all felt good there, and the conversations lasted for hours.

The house on Węgierska had as if two separate worlds. However, the ground floor was not equal to what was above. After climbing steep (not very safe, as it turned out once) stairs, we entered a somewhat different world – a mysterious attic that enchanted with its unique atmosphere from the very first meeting. The attic appealed to everyone; it was well-designed and made of wood. It created a unique, warm atmosphere conducive to meetings, listening to music, talking about art, and feasting, which we indulged in with great pleasure and enjoyment.



In fact, we envied the owners of this place and its atmosphere a little. Each of us needed something like that, a place where we could create in peace, meet friends, and spend time pleasantly. Few of us could boast of such a thing. It's not about material values here, but rather about the independence of this place and the tranquility that creates the necessary conditions for creative work, which was our basic and most important value.

One of the meetings is etched in my memory, which ended unexpectedly and dramatically. One night we were sitting there in a larger group. The conversation was lively; we were discussing some important issues, as always, listening to music. It was noisy, but at some point, I don't remember who, sitting near the window called out, "Wait, I think something is roaring, can you hear it?" Everyone fell silent... we started listening carefully. Indeed, something outside was getting louder and louder. There wasn't much to see from the attic windows. So, we ran downstairs to the ground floor and went outside the house. Although it was deep night, even in the weak light of the flashlight, it was easy to notice the raging element! The house was surrounded by rapidly flowing water, sweeping everything in its path. The water kept coming. A few meters from the house stood large and heavy polyethylene tunnels with vegetables, which had now simply disappeared... A few meters away, a small Fiat (probably yellow) belonging to one of our friends was parked. Now it was barely visible under the water, which flooded it to the roof. The situation was not cheerful. We didn't know if the nearby San River had flooded, which would be very serious, or if the water appeared for some other reason. It was difficult to find a good answer and a sensible solution. The narrow path leading to the nearby street was completely flooded. We were like on an island. In addition, the water kept rising, and our situation became truly dramatic. There were many ideas. Some proposed quickly moving the furniture from the ground floor to the attic and waiting for help there until morning. Others suggested the risky option of going through the rapidly flowing water to the nearby street. Time passed, and it got worse and worse... At some point, someone noticed distant lights on the road. This meant the possibility of evacuation, which several people took advantage of. Holding hands and wading through the water reaching our arms, we reached the gate and the road, which turned out to be passable. Completely wet, I returned home in the morning. On the next day, it turned out that a small stream flowing near the house on Węgierska brought a lot of water. Everything ended happily, but the losses were quite significant. The appearance of the "Strych Kulturalny" publishing house was a natural culmination of all these meetings that shaped this place and left behind unforgettable values and memories, but that's a completely different story.

## **KUL**

Two later democratic journalists in Podkarpacie - Janek Stepek, editor-in-chief of "Nowiny" in Rzeszów, and Marek Kuchciński - editor-in-chief of "Spojrzenia Przemyskie" and "Strych Kulturalny" in Przemyśl, drew intellectual and aesthetic inspiration from KUL. These were also civilizational models.

The student environment in the 1970s was a mix of people from parishes, believers, hippies, anti-communists, extraordinary individuals, poets, philosophers, eccentrics. In total, there were 2,000 students, and everyone knew each other. The university was open, with a global and European character, and its diplomas were recognized in the West. KUL was then the only Catholic university from the Elbe to Kamchatka (in the entire socialist bloc), and it had no military studies, no lectures on Marxist philosophy, and, thanks to the students' protest in 1973, no structures of the Socialist Union of Polish Students were established. The university was completely different from others: non-partisan, non-communist, non-socialist, non-Marxist, non-union... It allowed the development of humanistic and philosophical interests.

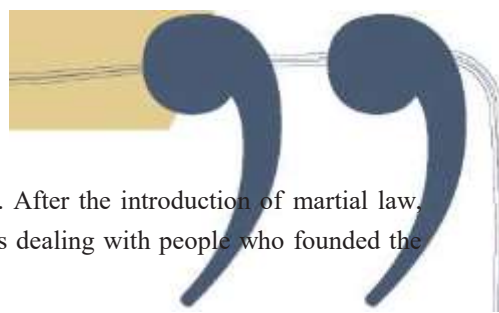
After the events of 1968, rector Rev. Wincenty Granat admitted students expelled from other universities with a "wolf ticket," saving them from repression (military conscription). The most eminent Polish scientists also came to KUL, forming the faculty - Rev. Karol Wojtyła, Rev. Ignacy Tokarczuk, Barbara Filarska, Tadeusz Zagrodzki, Jacek Woźniakowski, Zdzisław Szpakowski, Tadeusz Chrzanowski, Ewa Bieńkowska - alongside distinguished lecturers from Lublin: Stefan Sawicki, Czesław Zgorzelski, Rev. Władysław Smoleń, Rev. Tadeusz Styczeń, Rev. Zbigniew Gierczyński, Edward Zwolski, Urszula Bzówka, Bożena Wronikowska... The university had a strong methodology of sciences and logic - Dr. Borkowski taught there, a student of professors from the Lviv-Warsaw school of logic, and in philosophy Prof. Andrzej Grzegorzczak and Stanisław Kamiński. The fact that Tatariewicz donated his entire library to the university is indicative. In fact, the entire basic philosophy course was based on Tatariewicz.





At KUL, access to non-debit publications was available, primarily to Giedroyc's 'Kultura,' Leszek Moczulski's 'Opinia,' and Janusz Krupski's Lublin-based 'Spotkania.' The KUL reading room boasted over 2,500 volumes of books, periodicals, and weeklies. Their collection included 1.5 million books. In contrast, UMCS (The Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin) had 100,000 books.

Student carefreeness was often disrupted by bad news, such as those about events in Radom and Ursus, the death of Rev. Roman Kotlarz, and Staszek Pyjas. In May 1973, students rebelled for the first time. The Polish Students' Association was liquidated at that time; the party moved strongly towards the Soviets, wanting to demonstrate and forcibly establish the Socialist Union of Polish Students everywhere. For KUL students, it was a disaster, and they couldn't accept it. Primate Wyszyński had to come to calm down the heated spirits.



**KRZYSZTOF SAWICKI:**

I liked coming to Przemyśl because I had friends there. After the introduction of martial law, which was a natural verification, it turned out that I was dealing with people who founded the first Solidarity in the Bieszczady.

Marek, with his colleagues, organized training for rural Solidarity activists from Podkarpacie in the mid-1980s. I helped him by connecting people from KUL, where I worked, encouraging them to go to Przemyśl, Krasiczyn...

People from various parts of Podkarpacie came to the church in Krasiczyn. KUL lecturers conducted lectures in an accessible language on building an open society. These were lectures that were not about saying that communism is bad - because everyone knew that. You need to know the language of the enemy. It was surprisingly easy to decipher because the Marxist-Leninist system is not a system at all. People, often simple ones from the countryside, opened their eyes. It was wonderful, a very valuable action, under the patronage of Bishop Tokarczuk. Several such meetings could take place because the secret police was very afraid of this short, elderly man. They tipped their hats to him.



### **WOJCIECH BUTKIEWICZ:**

Funkcję salonu na KUL-u (lub też platońskiej Akademii) spełniał uczelniany dziedziniec, który był oazą w rozciągającej się po horyzont złowrogiej rzeczywistości. Tam dyskutowano - między sobą i z profesorami; czytano, siedząc na ławkach lub leżąc na trawnikach; umawiano się na randki i wygrzewano w słońcu pod krzakami bzu.

### **ANDRZEJ MAZUR:**

The youth was wild. In the 1970s, the cream of the crop of hippies studied there. Except for the "Prophet," who studied at the Academy of Fine Arts. The second elite studied at the Catholic University of Lublin (KUL) – there were "Pies" Terlecki, Baluba, Staniszewski, Andrzej Mitan... It looked interesting, as if the courtyard were a big fashion show runway: women with unique styles, men too, with any hairstyle, sneakers, any flannel shirts, backpacks... However, a very high level of education was maintained throughout all of this. Professor Krąpiec established the rule: one professor for every seven students. At KUL, points for origin were not respected, including for working-class and peasant youth; many middle-aged people, intellectuals, aristocrats studied there. It was a community that didn't want to study at state universities. There were no party committees, no compulsory lectures on Marxism and Leninism, no communist indoctrination. People were not afraid to think freely, to openly discuss.

The hottest address in Lublin at that time was Sienkiewicza 44. In this newly built two-story brick house, students were crammed everywhere, and in the basement, there was a glazier. Some rooms were occupied by married couples. It was here, in one of the apartments, in the attic, behind a curtain at the Stepkóws' place, that there was a spirit duplicator called Zuzia. Wit Wojtowicz and Michał Zulauff also would print illegally underground texts there, making this place the first printing house in Poland.

»

### **ILONA STEPEK:**

"Zuzia" was with us for a while, but to confuse the enemy, she moved from apartment to apartment. The house in the single-family homes estate was under a red light bulb, which could make it mistaken for a brothel.

The strange house on Sienkiewicza aroused various associations, making it harder to expose that society.

### **KRZYSZTOF SAWICKI:**

We lived near the psychiatric hospital, and they certainly took us for residents..







Underground texts were also printed in the room of the male dormitory at Sławińskiego 8, soundproofed and tightly covered with blankets. In the suffocating odor of denatured alcohol, KOR (Committee for the Defense of Workers) messages were printed at night, then the magazine "Zapis," and finally, subsequent issues of "Spotkania. Niezależne Pismo Młodych Katolików" ("Encounters. Independent Journal of Young Catholics").

#### **WOJCIECH BUTKIEWICZ:**

In the first issue, Janusz Krupski outlined the goal that guided our community: "Independent and democratic Poland. Free Poland in a Free World." And what infuriated the communist authorities: "Without the independence of the nations of the Soviet Union, we will not regain and maintain our own independence."

#### **WIT WOJTOWICZ:**

Janusz Krupski told me about Piotr Jedliński, whom I didn't know at that time. He painted the darkest visions and scenarios of what could happen if I got caught, frightening me with imprisonment. I was supposed to meet Piotr in London and pick up the duplicator intended for us. Indeed, during some rehearsal, in the deep semi-darkness typical of Mądzik's theater, I heard a stage whisper behind the curtain: "Are you Wit?". And that's how I met Piotr.

I was contacted by Bogdan Borusewicz through Janusz Krupski. After the delegalization of the Association of Polish Students, it was replaced by an entity called the Socialist Union of Polish Students, which most of us at KUL had no desire to join. Janusz Krupski, along with Bogdan Borusewicz and Piotr Jegliński, led these protests. Over time, heated discussions began on what to do. The idea emerged to unite all scientific circles and academic associations into one organization, and indeed, the Coordinating Committee of Academic Associations at KUL was established. Janusz Krupski, who enjoyed great authority, was unanimously elected as its first chairman. In early December 1976, Janusz handed over our first duplicator to Warsaw. In Lublin, around mid-December, a new spirit duplicator appeared—ethanol-based, slightly larger and heavier but more efficient. Similar to the previous one, it ended up in my dorm room, under the bed. I affectionately named it Zuzia, in honor of the cowboy Zuzia from a fashionable cabaret song sung by Mieczysław Czechowicz at that time. It was our slang - we would say, for example, "I'm going for a walk with Zuzia." We called paper "diapers," denatured alcohol "juice": "we need to buy a few diapers (meaning several reams of paper) and a few bottles of juice."

In the spring of 1977, we started preparing for a significant issue. After consultations with Warsaw, we started printing "Zapis" No. 1. It was a massive logistical undertaking. This first "Zapis," dated January 1977, was printed over several months in different places—initial pages were produced in the dormitory.

Tadek Hofmański, Bogdan Pietrasiewicz, Michał Zulauf, and Jasiiek Stepek joined our old team. Only Janusz Krupski knew about printers.

We sealed windows and doors with blankets—the stench was terrible, our heads ached, we sweated profusely, and our eyes burned. Some couldn't endure these conditions and tensions for long. It was a very difficult, sometimes grueling, work, often in terrible conditions, in cramped spaces, amid the fumes of denatured alcohol for dozens, often scores of hours without going outside. With short breaks for sleep and a so-called simple, soldier's meal - preferably milk (as an antidote) straight from the bottle, jam, strong tea, a crusty roll in Lublin called a hot dog, and homogenized cheese, with jelly as dessert. We considered our work with duplicators a form of manifesting our opposition to the communist system. We knew perfectly well that if we were caught, we would be treated by the "cops" as criminals.

Later, we printed at Sienkiewicza 44, where Ilona and Jasiiek Stepko and a specially rented apartment in Skołuby, belonging, if I remember correctly, to the Borys family, rented a flat. There, we could print all day and all night, changing teams of printers. The printing of the first "Zapis" was entirely financed by Janusz Krupski. It was printed for several months, and I think we finished it in May. We considered it our flagship, a special product. We were aware that the era of free circulation was opening, that it was something more, far beyond the nature of the short and necessarily concise "Communiqués" or other texts.

In October 1976, statements of repressed individuals after June 1976, Bulletins and Communiqués of KOR, which were delivered to Warsaw, were printed in Lublin.

#### **WOJCIECH BUTKIEWICZ:**

The first issue of "Spotkania," with a vignette designed by Gosia Ociaś, was printed in Stefan Szaciłowski's apartment; the next one in the attic of the student couple Ilonka and Jašek Stepko. There we met Michał Zulauf, the wizard of lights from the Plastic Scene of KUL, by the handle of the duplicator. And there was Zygmunt Kozicki, a hippie with a somewhat military flair, of iron will, with a huge backpack, the most effective distributor in the world. And Piotr Kałużyński, Black Peter. And all of them - colorful birds of the courtyard runway - deeply involved in underground work because, in addition to printing and distributing, there was also the smuggling of literature from the GDR, which reached there through Piotr.

And so, moving with the duplicator from place to place, zigzagging to lose a potential "tail," performing acrobatic maneuvers to obtain reams of paper and six bottles of denatured alcohol, we spent nights, with even greater commitment, throwing ourselves into the whirlwind of student life at dawn, stinking terribly, back to the dormitory, to "my" eleven-person room. And you could say that this was also in some sense "romantic." Of course, there were also arrests, interrogations, and searches - the most painful was the loss of a fully printed edition of the magazine after such "stinking," mentally and physically exhausting nights, with even greater commitment, we threw ourselves into the whirlwind of student life at dawn.

#### **WOJCIECH BUTKIEWICZ:**

Those hippies from KUL had a distinct mark that set them apart from other followers of the counterculture movement. After all, they chose this place, aware of the sensitive shadow cast by the walls of the academic churchyard, and befriended peers in cassocks. In essence, we were all hippies – we had long hair, dressed in colorful, artistic clothing (where did we get those clothes when everything was uniformly gray – I don't know), contested reality, and at the same time, came from decent, Catholic homes, with good grades from reputable schools and successful exam results. We were fascinated by the Eastern philosophy, sure thing, and Ibero-American prose

Julio Cortázar, Jorge Borges – there was a lot of it, of various kinds, but in the brilliant translations of Zofia Chądzyńska. We discovered Stefan Themerson and Robert Musil, as well as what we smuggled from the GDR, coming from Paris, from Piotr: Solzhenitsyn, Watt, Bobkowski, Miłosz. We immersed ourselves in the poetry of Andrzej Bursa, Rafał Wojaczek, Edward Stachura, and Osip Mandelstam. We also wrote ourselves, I think, all of us, because there were plenty of poets at KUL, many of them truly outstanding – Andrzej Mazur, Tadzio Sokal, Adam Ossoliński, Krzysztof Paczuski, Wojtek Ładocha, Tadeusz Hoffmański... At least once a week, there was some poetic evening, and to this day, I have memories of excellent improvisational competitions.

### ANDRZEJ MAZUR:

During lazy summer days, when we were free from exams, we often found ourselves bored and played bridge. On the ground floor in the kitchen of the dorm, Stepęk formed the first pair with his friend Ela from UMCS, and Marek and I were their opponents. The catch here is that Marek and I had no idea about bridge and played just to amuse Stepęk. We bid as we pleased, in line with the Galician fantasy carefully developed in Przemyśl garrisons in 1911, known as "żurawiejki":

„hey girls

lift your skirts

a Uhlan from Jazłowiec is coming."

So, we bid without knowing the rules of bridge, with a shameless Przemyśl smile on our faces, pretending to be geniuses. Here's an example of our bidding:

Stepęk opens the bidding: 2 clubs

Kuchciński: 2 diamonds

Ela: 3 diamonds

Mazur: 3 hearts

Stepęk: 4 hearts

Kuchciński: 6 hearts!!

Stepęk: Pass

Ela from UMCS: Pass.



Then the playing begins: we win with Marek! Stepęk can dream about Ela! Both of them were shocked: we were winning without knowing anything about bridge. Fortunately, we were losing just as often, if not more. I don't remember today whether someone had to take a taxi to the train station for Carmen (brand of the cigarettes) , either as a penalty or by chance.

In the Sienkiewicza lodging, there lived a multitude of individuals, a catalog of more or less Polish culture: Czarek Harasimowicz with friends Wojtek Ziemiński, a filmmaker, and Count Antos Borzewski; Wiesiek Lipiec with Janusz Malinowski, a constant collaborator of Grotowski's Laboratory Theatre; Stepek with Zulauff from Janusz Krupski's "Spotkania" and Leszek Mądzik's Scena Plastyczna, and many other people. And then there was my humble self – a participant in internships with Grotowski in 1976.

The KUL of that time was also a kind of fashion show. After all, Marek Jackowski, in May 1976, after seeing my paratheatrical action, said, "Damn... at KUL, it's like in Berkeley."

Marek and I added our own color to this. Once, we decided to venture into the city in an avant-garde style, deliberately putting on a show: Kasia Stańczak, a beautiful student with a wicker basket in her hand, wearing fantastic scarves and an extraordinary skirt; Marek with a bag in white pants and an undershirt, and myself in some sailor-style shorts made of thick canvas, also white, and wooden clogs.

With long hair, we appeared to the Lublin audience like people from another world, avant-garde, civilization, counterculture, an alternative and free perception of the world. We walked through half of Lublin, including the university street – Aleje Raławickie, arousing curiosity and sincere admiration. Today, it would be the same!

From the same period, I remember a beautiful day: Ela from UMCS, at our request, decided to cook Russian pierogi for dinner. Since making handmade pierogi required several hours of cooking, Ela asked us to go and pick cornflowers from fields far beyond the Abramowice district. So, Marek and I went to the fields, picking cornflowers, poppies, thistles, and ears of grain for a field bouquet for our female friends. After a few hours, we brought huge bouquets to the residence. It was beautiful. Two KUL students were picking cornflowers for UMCS students making pierogi. What a symbiosis, supposedly communist UMCS students and anti-communist KUL students in the symbiosis of a shared dinner, a dozen pierogi with butter on top...

Blue cornflowers, red poppies, yellow ears of grain, the smiles of our friends, a community of people who loved each other, and from whom we never parted. This is our lesson. For a lifetime.

## **THEATRE**

The true climax of the lively student life occurred in May when Kullages, the cultural spring of KUL (Catholic University of Lublin), was organized – a festival comparable to Fama in Świnoujście. The cream of the crop of student culture creators would come there. Osjan, Jacek Ostaszewski, Manaam, Milo Kurtis, Anawa, Ela Adamiak, Janusz Muniak, Suchanek B, Tej Cabaret, Kazimierz Dąbrowski, Janusz Osęka.

## **ANDRZEJ MAZUR:**

W latach 70. XX wieku był otwartym i oryginalnym środowiskiem rozwoju. Od 1974 co roku w maju odbywała się Wiosna Kulturalna Studentów KUL „Kullages”, porównywalna z ogólnopolskim festiwalem kultury studenckiej FAMA w Kołobrzegu.

Trwały rozpoczęte wcześniej lub realizowane monumenty leksykograficzne: „Komentarze do Ksiąg Biblijnych Starego i Nowego Testamentu” [1959, 1962; 33 tomy aż do 2020] i Encyklopedia Katolicka [1973, 20 tomów do 2014].

W uniwersytecie funkcjonowały dwie szkoły nauk: Kulowska Szkoła Biblijna oceniana ówczesnie jako trzecia w świecie po rzymskim „Biblicum” i Szkole Dominikańskiej w Jerozolimie oraz Lubelska Szkoła Filozofii Chrześcijańskiej, tzw. neotomizm egzystencjalny.

Na 2,5 tysiąca studentów było w szczytowym okresie 1976-1978 aż 6 zespołów Teatru Akademickiego KUL: znana w świecie „Scena Plastikarna” Leszka Mądzika, „Ubodzy” Mieczysława Abramowicza i Romana Doktora współpracujący z Teatrem Laboratorium Jerzego Grotowskiego we Wrocławiu, współpracujący również z Teatrem Jerzego Grotowskiego „Warsztat” pracujący w dwóch zespołach: Janusza Malinowskiego (mysteryjny) i Andrzeja Mazura (parateatralny), „Scena słowa” Stefana Szaciłowskiego i teatr „Rok” Macieja Szpindora. Ówczesny hicior naukowy nowa dyscyplina naukowa „bioelektronika” była autorstwa profesora Filozofii Przyrody KUL ks. Włodzimierza Sedlaka.

W roku 1973/1974 restytuowano lektorat języka sanskryckiego i wykłady z filozofii indyjskiej, które prowadził dr Leon Cyboran.

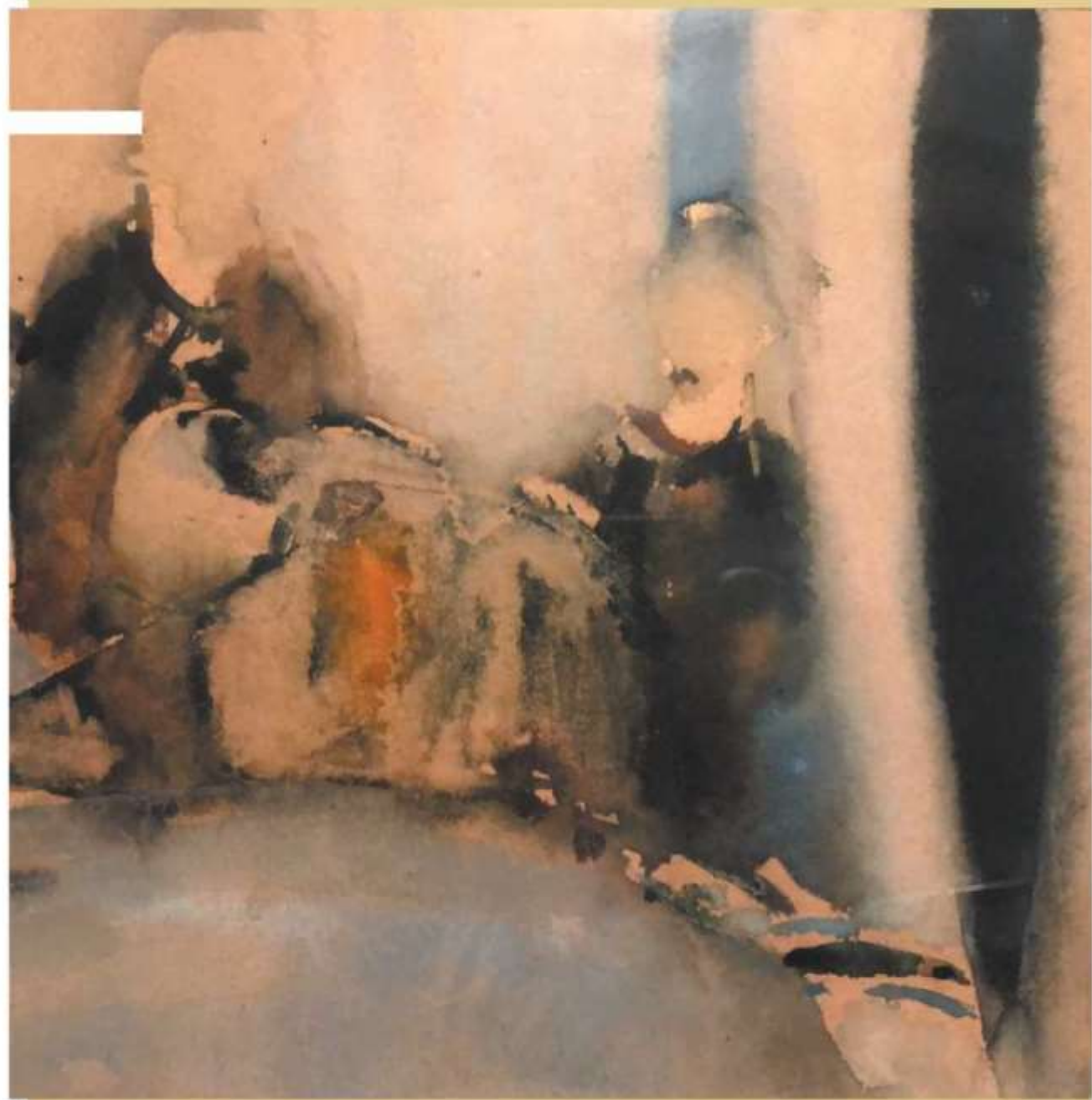
Pierwsza misja Ruchu Świadomości Kriszny, jaka przyjechała do Polski (bhaktowie z RFN) w II połowie 1976 roku odbyła spotkanie na jedynym polskim uniwersytecie KUL.



### **WOJCIECH BUTKIEWICZ:**

We forgot about the world for those few days, about sleep, sometimes even about eating. Something was happening everywhere, and everything was fascinating. You wanted to be everywhere and participate in everything: where Halina Mikołajska recited Herbert and Miłosz; in meetings with Jarosław Markiewicz reading his poems (a butterfly sat under the window – Kasia Stańczak, through the window a breeze would sneak in); with Janusz Kurczab talking about the successes of Polish Himalayan climbers, with Krzysztof Kieślowski showing his documentary films; in lectures – Aldona Jawłowska; in performances – Adekwatny Theater of Magda Teresa Wójcik and Henryk Boukołowski, The Eighth Day Theater; in visual and musical activities, which were happening in every, even the most unexpected place: Repassage Gallery, and Sławek Furmankiewicz was creating monumental sculptures in the sand on the construction site of the university's facade and playing on vacuum cleaner tubes; Jacek "Krokodyl" Malicki made a Playing Tree from a bush growing in the corner of the courtyard; in the corridor, he played on a Renaissance lute by Antoni Pilch; somewhere standing on the table, Andrzej Mitan sang; in the Theresa Waclawik room, she presented her paintings and played the guitar; and Jacek Kleyff came with Jurek "Słoma" Słomiński. And in the courtyard, the "kids" - the neighborhood youth from Lublin's Old Town, led by Tadzio Sokal and Adas Lewicki, were constructing kites...





Marek Kuchciński finally concluded the paratheatrical performance of the KUL Workshop titled "Breath and Sleep".

**ANDRZEJ MAZUR:**

At the turn of 1974 and 1975, during one of the student gatherings in Lublin after a night-long discussion about the then English bestseller by Benedictine Bede Griffiths, "The Golden String," Janusz Malinowski, a Polish literature student, invited me to join a student theater he founded called "Warsztat" (The Workshop). During the first rehearsal at KUL (Catholic University of Lublin), I noticed Marek Kuchciński. So, he was a member of the group. After intense multi-hour daily sessions, we accumulated a wealth of experiences over the month, working under the direction of Rena Mirecka and Zbigniew Cynkutis, and Janusz and Przemek under the direction of Jerzy Grotowski. Upon returning to Lublin, we began rehearsals in the vast catechetical hall in the Dominican monastery in the Old Town, made available to us by Father Ludwik Wiśniewski. The hall was high, had flexible boards, which was perfect for us for technical reasons. Paratheatre requires a lot of physical strength and determination: both during rehearsals twice a week and in our private studies and exercises. After 8 months, in May 1976, we presented the paratheatrical performance "Breath and Sleep," directed by me, with the following lineup: Przemek Łoś – drums, dance, tenor flutes, a mask made of rabbit fur, brooms; Wiesław Łoś – drums; Rena Pacewicka – dance, small drums; Michał Zulauff – tenor and baritone flutes, small drums; and me – a drum with a diameter of 1 meter, reciting in a yoga pose "crow" 20 Sanskrit verses from the Patañjali Yogasutrai.

These details may not mean much to those unfamiliar with that era. We were "Warsztat" members from Lublin, one of the two Polish student theaters, perhaps, invited to Wrocław at that time among 300 people from around the world. Representatives of professional theatrical avant-garde such as Jean Louis Barrault, Eugenio Barba, Andre Gregory, Peter Brook, "Odin Theatre," Joseph Chaikin, and carefully selected experimental semi-professional and student troupes from the USA, Sweden, France, Switzerland, England, Australia, etc.

Charged with knowledge and paratheatrical practice, seen for the first time in the world in Wrocław, after eight months of hard work, we presented an original performance in the KUL building that contained not a single dialogue or line, except for a minute-long recitation of an ancient Indian text in Sanskrit, incomprehensible to the audience. And here's the point: after the 45-minute performance, everyone could join in, play instruments, walk on brooms, dance, and have fun.

There were 11 performances of "Breath and Sleep."

After 11 rehearsals, the performance ended irreversibly because Marek Kuchciński destroyed my drum! It happened like this: as always after the performance, he joined in the communal fun, and whoever wanted could play the drums, dance, shout, and the more daring ones climbed on brooms, made noise with a signal trumpet, and whistled on flutes. The atmosphere was always intense and relaxed simultaneously – at the first rehearsal in May 1976, Dr. Leon Cyboran, one of the three best specialists in Indian philosophy in Europe at that time, entered after the performance and danced with great enthusiasm the original dances of Indian shamans that he learned in India.

Then, during the 11th rehearsal, Marek also entered – whether he was at earlier ones, I don't remember – and began playing on my meter-wide drum. Around fifty people were having a great time, as the sharp rhythms flew, and Marek hit too hard, causing the skin on the drum to burst!

Despite the short tenure in "Warsztat" under Janusz Malinowski and participation in an open paratheatrical action available to everyone after "Breath and Sleep," as well as probably other events, Marek certainly benefited from the experiences of both directors and groups. I absolutely do not belittle this. First, because "Warsztat" was in constant contact for several years with the most important theater in the world at that time – the Actor's Institute, Grotowski's Laboratory Theatre. And anyone who encountered the works of either Malinowski or Mazur and their groups saw a student, but still up-to-date version of translating Grotowski's work into performances presented at KUL.

Marek participated in rehearsals for "KM" (Constant Prince) and saw the exercises at the beginning of the performance, which was, as I describe it, the "circle of Chaikin." After a few minutes of rehearsal, there was a captivating and almost mystical or mystifying, mysterious singing held by all the actors walking in a circle around the room. I would give a lot today to see and participate in this beautiful, absolutely mysterious and mystical circle. But who can do it today?

And in "Breath and Sleep," he saw a focused, sharp ride of the workshop in a not very large hall with a dominant feature of regular, powerful, and rhythmic strikes on three drums, along with Przemek Łoś's strictly paratheatrical dance. In the coming years, he became a permanent participant in Grotowski's workshops.

After the first rehearsal of "Breath and Sleep," Leszek Mądzik approached me and said he had seen all professional and student festivals but had never seen such drums before. We practiced this study on 3 drums and a dance called "arrow," which we worked on for 3 months, bringing it to perfection.

An absolute novelty was inviting the audience to participate in improvised activities after the paratheatrical performance. And Marek experienced this, as did other spectators – it was a very avant-garde solution. Playing together, singing, in incense smoke, in a room covered with green branches, dancing, laughing, and playing. "Breath and Sleep" required personalized invitations – we never sold tickets for the performance.

Just as we did not sell tickets from 1976 to 1978 for my open paratheatrical actions held over three days in May throughout the KUL building, available for free to everyone. In one action called "wheelbarrows," everyone could direct it, and the youth of Lublin loved it. It lasted for 3 days. Przemek Łoś, who went to study in Wrocław after the end of "Warsztat" to participate in Grotowski's work, during the scientific-popular session on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the KUL Academic Theatre in 1983, officially said that "Andrzej Mazur preceded Jerzy Grotowski by 1.5 years in paratheatrical work." It caused a sensation.

If it were true – as my research from 1998-2018 proves – then Marek Kuchciński, participating in open paratheatrical actions in those years, had already seen avant-garde that surpassed Jerzy Grotowski.

My workshop team, conducting work in "Breath and Sleep" and in open multi-hour and multi-day paratheatrical actions called "rags," was truly open. The end of the drum that Mark played signaled the end of work in "Breath and Sleep."

We absolutely did not blame Marek for that; it fit perfectly into the open convention of our paratheatre. We accepted it with laughter and naturally, as the official conclusion of the performance. The drum fell, and that was fine. The end of the job. The humorous aspect was also that we bought this drum at a music antique shop in Lublin, with good skin, in a wooden acoustic case, hung with half-meter-thick ropes that I diligently placed on it. And there was no second drum like that. So, Marek finished "Breath and Sleep" after 11 rehearsals. Today I think it was a very good solution – the performance was very physically and technically demanding. And one had to be very careful – we played barefoot – not to get injured. It is very possible that such an injury could have happened one day. During the eight-month rehearsals for the performance, we eliminated all dangerous moments in the play.

Grotowski often described this stage of the paratheatrical experiment of the 70s, after the performance "Apocalypsis cum figuris," as practicing active culture. I think that both "Warsztat" groups, in which Marek participated in rehearsals or open actions, demonstrated this active culture.

On June 2, 2019, during the festive celebrations at the National Museum of the Przemyśl Region, marking, among other things, the 30th anniversary of the activity of Przemyśl's "Strych Kulturalny," led by Marek Kuchciński, in conversations with Professors Krasnodębski, Dybciak, Terlecki, and Draus, I emphasized that we, at KUL at that time, had no complexes in relation to the West and its universities.

During my studies at KUL from 1972 to 1979, it was a truly open European university. From the compulsory reading of Maria Ossowska's classical work "Chivalric Ethos" at the theological faculty, through starting the philosophy course with the basic philosopher of Western civilization, Parmenides of Elea, through memorizing the definitions of science by Aristotle from Athens combined with definitions by Alfred Tarski and Lviv logicians, to frequent lectures by Western professors, music and theater festivals, the original "Scena" theater by Leszek Mądzik, presentations of performances based on the "poor theater" method or Grotowski's paratheatre, a constant presence of poetry where Lublin then excelled in Poland, punk and fashion based on it, and installations, participation in student protests, readings beyond debut magazines and paper.

It was during my studies at KUL that I talked for several hours with Franciszek Starowieyski, listened to lectures by Józef Szajna, attended a concert by Krystian Zimmerman and the beautifully playing violinist Kaja Danczowska, the TEY cabaret, Marek Grechuta and Anawa, Ossian, the first lineup of Manaam with Milo Kurtis and Marek Jackowski – who performed in "Warsztat" at the end of one of my paratheatrical actions in 1977, saxophonist Janusz Muniak with bassist Suchanek, poets Jarek Markiewicz, Olek Rosenfeld, Krzysztof Paczuski, Czarek Listowski, and many, many other poets, Albert and Strobel, Ela Adamiak, performers like Gosia Sady and poet Piotrek Grauman. A powerful and unfinished story...

Colorful, fantastic student life, multidimensional, full of original inspiration.



Those were the times of the hippies. Like every youth, they reacted differently to the need for freedom. Some were artists, trying to play, sing, create their own pieces, while others indulged in contemplation. Marek played the congas, African drums. We named the band Ptah - after the fertility goddess - and they were fertile, full of vigor, with an aura speaking of another world. They created many of their own pieces and performed in many concerts. We played sophisticated music; guitars, fusion, harmonica colliding classical, jazz, rock. We oscillated towards jazz-inspired music, the boys honing their swing skills. Playing in a large ensemble the piece "Introduction to the Caravan" by Ellington Duke: congas, piano, bass, guitar, two flutes, male choir, Ptah won a competition in Puławy. As the jury expressed it: This band shocked us.

"No kidding, sir, no kidding, socialism is on the moon. And in Poland, you have to work for bread." This song was included in every band meeting on Marek Kuchciński's initiative, and he was known for his creativity. When it came to matters of freedom, he acted with great dynamism. During a time when the police were making arrests and suppressing dissent, we often felt helpless. This artistic rebellion, expressed through lyrics and words, became a way to protest. Even after martial law was declared, and Solidarity was at the forefront, there was still heavy censorship. We decided to create a program called "Cheek Show, or the Ark of the New," in which people from our environment, including musicians and a dance group, participated. After going through the censorship process, the program was allowed to be performed on stage.

However, after the very first performance, it was abruptly removed. While the text could be censored, the physical movements could not. For example, there was a ballet piece in which various cold cuts came on stage, and the ham ran off to the East. Surprisingly, there were no reprisals. In Puławy, we received an invitation to a studio in Lublin. Our drummer had become difficult to work with, leading to a falling out, and we had to part ways. In an honorable gesture, we presented the award to the band from Lublin, which later became known as Budka Suflera. Additionally, Marek was involved in a cabaret where you could express yourself politically. In one of the shows, he took on the role of Odysseus. Upon his return, he banged on the door and shouted, "Penelope, it's me!" It was quite humorous, and that's how he earned the nickname "Penelope".



### **WALDEMAR WIGLUSZ:**

After 1989, the continuation of attic meetings took the form of gatherings (and conferences) organized within the framework of the Przemyskie Towarzystwo Kulturalne (Przemysl Cultural Society), with Marek Kuchciński as the president. The meetings featured figures such as Ryszard Legutko, Jan Szyszko, Ludwik Dorn, Marek Jurek, Antoni Macierewicz, Adolf Juzwenko, Jacek Kurski, Michał Kulesza, Kazimierz Ujazdowski, and others. The society was dissolved when Marek became involved in local government and party activities. Regular meetings were held at the apartment of Jan Musiał

where, for about half a year, the three of us studied Latin from a textbook, attempting to converse and read in Latin. Unfortunately, it was not an effective form, as current issues and matters to be and matters to be settled, as well as information exchange, kept recurring.

Sometimes, parallel meetings took place at the Kalinowski family's apartment in Przemyśl – art historians who collectively watched films on video, such as Bugajski's "Interrogation" or film parodies by Jacek Fedorowicz.

### **MAREK MIKRUT**

No one could have predicted how our fates would unfold. The only thing that was certain was the awareness that a lack of engagement on our part would haunt us as a terrible missed opportunity. What united us was a thirst for knowledge. Each of us had to piece together this world for ourselves, fill it with historical and political knowledge, and arrange it artistically. The fact that we gathered as a group of several dozen people to discuss the most important topics with those who were already initiated and well on their way to freedom was something extraordinary. Looking back after many years, I can thank fate for placing me among those active individuals who were distinguished by their exceptional curiosity. The result was dozens of thematic meetings with people whose knowledge and skills could withstand our insatiable questions. The proof of its worth was evident many times in the future 30-year-old political-cultural-media public space.

## LUCYNA PODHALICZ

Places of intellectual challenges like "Strych Kulturalny" should exist both then and now in every city. When we look at Marek's Przemysł initiative, we must acknowledge that the people who participated in these extremely interesting meetings were fortunate to crystallize their political views in a classic and best way: through discussion and debate. These people formed their principles (a word often emphasized by Jarek Piekałkiewicz, one of the guests at the attic). Most of us, if not all, got involved in civic committees, in political and local self-government activities from 1989 onwards, at the local, regional, and national levels. Each one has a specific achievement, leaving a lasting, altruistic mark, and many are still changing Poland. Strych was a place for people with a mission – willing to work hard for their homeland.

## MAREK ZAZULA

We were among the fortunate few who had the opportunity to listen to lectures from distinguished guests such as the advisor to the Presidents of the United States, Prof. Zbigniew Brzeziński. In the impressive surroundings of the Cultural Center, he outlined the rules of the communist system and the possibilities of overcoming it. We also had the opportunity to meet Prof. Zdzisław Najder, who was fascinated by Conrad Korzeniowski (Joseph Conrad). There was an asthma sanatorium in Przemysł, and we took him there with Marek. The professor told us that the writer stayed there with his parents.

I had access to the US consulate, and they gave me films that I smuggled in a cello case at night. Five "patrols" of ZOMO officers with rifles leaned against a bench near the Mickiewicz monument in Przemysł. The already intoxicated company called out to me, "Hey, musician, come over here." I went over, terrified, thinking that if they looked inside the case, it would be over for me. However, they poured me a glass of vodka, told me to drink it, and go home... Concealment – of things and people – was one of the masterful skills of the attic group. For example, I sometimes traveled in the trunk of Marka's Toyota, as when we were heading in a large group to the unveiling of the monument to Cardinal Wyszyński in Komańcza.

## BOB FIELDING

A terrifying image of the past era is the queue for toilet paper, in which I stood, unaware that I would only receive a roll when I presented a receipt for recyclable paper. I didn't immediately understand the whole situation. Someone in the queue asked, "Did you turn in 24 kilograms of old newspapers to get toilet paper?" That's when I thought: "I f...ing must overthrow this regime."

A curiosity is that it was Fielding who introduced Marek Kuchciński to Jarosław Kaczyński. This happened in 1990 at the Warsaw University of Technology during a meeting of Solidarity.

The several years of activity are best summarized by numbers :

- Well over 100 meetings organized without the assistance of any state institutions, mostly funded privately, with usually just a handful of people involved.

Over 200 exhibitions.

A dozen or so concerts.

Two independent plein-air.

Several published books.

Several issues of the monthly magazine "Spojrzenia Przemyskie," intended for a wider readership but on a level significantly higher than other publications in Przemyśl.

Six issues of "Strych Kulturalny," a periodical already elitist and strictly formative.

No community in Southeastern Poland has yet boasted such a list of significant international names for a long time..

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## PEOPLE FROM THE ATTIC

**Rev. Bartmiński Stanisław**, parish priest of the Roman Catholic parish in Krasiczyn (1970-2008), co-founder of pastoral work for farmers, organizer of aid for the interned during martial law, and supporter of the agricultural opposition activities in the 1980s.

**Butkiewicz Wojciech**, historian, secretary of the editorial office of the "Biuletyn IPN" (Institute of National Remembrance Bulletin), during his studies at KUL associated with the opposition milieu of "Spotkania" in Lublin.

**Choma Robert**, local government official, deputy mayor of Przemyśl (1996-1998), vice president of the National Labor Office (1998-2001), and president of Przemyśl (2002-2018).

**Cywicki Janusz J.**, painter, graphic artist, professor at UR (University of Rzeszów), for 40 years associated with the Contemporary Art Gallery in Przemyśl (formerly BWA), and a longtime curator of the International Triennial of Painting of the Carpathian Region "Srebrny Czworokąt" (Silver Quadrangle).

**Czarski Janusz**, philologist, independent cultural animator.

**Dybciak Krzysztof**, historian and literary theorist, critic, essayist, professor at KUL and UKSW (Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University), associated with the underground Solidarity movement.

**Bob Fielding Robert**, translator, American union activist, employee of the Foreign Office of the National Committee of "Solidarność" trade union, representative of American AFL-CIO the Independent unions, after 1998, he led the AFL-CIO Solidarity Center program supporting democracy development in post-communist countries of Eastern Europe.

**Kamiński Marek**, worker, printer, activist of the underground Solidarity, chairman of the Board of the NSZZ "Solidarność" (Solidarity) Region of Przemyśl (1988-1991).

**Karuś Jan**, farmer from Tapina, Jarosław district, activist of the peasant opposition in the 1980s, signatory of the Ustrzyki-Rzeszów agreements in 1981, which contributed to the establishment of Union of Agricultural Solidarity.

**Koba Stanisław**, painter, draftsman, graduate of the Krakow Academy of Fine Arts.

**Kuchciński Marek**, founder, host, and publisher of the "Strych Kulturalny," Member of Parliament, Marshal of the Sejm (Lower House of Parliament) during the 8th term.

**Kurylak Józef**, poet, essayist, author of many volumes of poetry.

**Legutko Ryszard**, philosopher, professor of humanities, publicist, author of books on socio-political issues, translator of Plato's works, politician, senator (2005-2007), Vice Marshal of the Senate during the 6th term, Minister of National Education (2007), since 2009 a Member of the European Parliament.

**Marcińczak Jacek**, musician, music instructor, and artistic director of many music groups since the 1970s, including the PTAH band.

**Mazur Andrzej**, philosopher, theologian, studied hermeneutics at KUL, co-founder of the KUL academic paratheatre, former expert of the Polish Academy of Sciences (PAN) and UNESCO.

**Mikrut Marek**, visual artist, graphic artist (ASP Krakow), member of the attic community, deputy director of the National Museum in Przemyśl.

**Musiał Jan**, philologist, PhD in humanities, politician, academic teacher, journalist, anti-communist opposition activist in the PRL era, senator of the Republic of Poland during the 1st and 2nd terms, voivode of Przemyśl (1990-1992), participant in attic meetings.

**Olbromski Mariusz**, philologist, poet, prose writer, museum professional, opposition activist, and member of the Catholic Intellectuals Club in Lubaczów, director of the National Museum of the Przemyśl Region (2000-2010), engaged in cooperation with the Polish and Ukrainian cultural communities of the former southeastern borderlands.

**Piekalkiewicz Jarosław**, professor of political science at Kansas State University, specialist in totalitarian systems, "Distinguished Lecturer in Western Civilization." Podhalicz Lucyna, sociologist, member of the Strych community, from 2001-2017 director of the parliamentary office of Marek Kuchciński, councilor of the City Council in Przemyśl (2006-2018) and chairperson of the Council (2017-2018), deputy voivode of Podkarpackie Voivodeship (2018-2020).

**Edward Robinson**, a British sculptor, thinker, aesthetician, and director of the Alister Hardy Research Center at Manchester College, Oxford (1980-1990), as well as the director of the Center for the Study of Spirituality and the Arts at the University of London.

**Podhalicz Lucyna**, socjolog, członek środowiska Strychu, w latach 2001-2017 dyrektor biura poselskiego Marka Kuchcińskiego, radna Rady Miejskiej w Przemyślu (2006-2018) i przewodnicząca Rady (2017-2018), wicewojewoda podkarpacki (2018-2020).

**Jadwiga Sawicka**, a painter and photographer, studied at the Krakow Academy of Fine Arts under Jerzy Nowosielski and is a professor at the University of Rzeszów.

**Krzysztof Sawicki**, a philologist, journalist, editor, and activist of the Solidarity opposition, has been a diplomat since 1990, including serving as the Consul General of the Republic of Poland in Lviv (2000-2003).

**Roger Scruton**, a British philosopher, conservative thinker, writer, composer, essayist, critic, and editor of "The Salisbury Review," supported opposition activities in communist countries (Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland).

**David Selbourne**, a British philosopher, historian of ideas, and publicist, supported underground opposition activities in Central Europe in the 1980s.

**Margaret Hunter Steele**, a painter, sculptor, and illustrator, studied at the Glasgow School of Art (1981-85) and the Hochschule der Künste in West Berlin under George Baselitz (1985-86), and currently resides in Berlin.

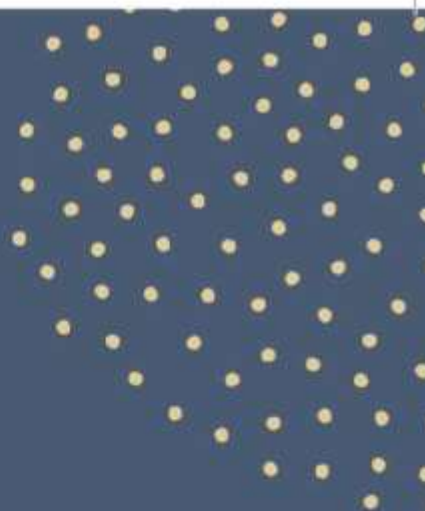
**Hona Stepek**, a historian, was active in the "Spotkania" milieu in Lublin in the 1970s along with her husband Jan A. Stepek.

**Waldemar Wiglusz**, an activist of the "Solidarność" trade union (in 1981, the secretary of the Board of the "S" Region in the Przemyśl area), a treasury official, President of the Society of Friends of Sciences in Przemyśl, and a participant in attic meetings.

**Wit Wojtowicz**, an art historian, and the director of the Museum in Łańcut, co-created the opposition milieu of "Spotkania" in Lublin in the 1970s.

**Marek Zazula**, a graduate of the Krakow Academy of Music, a cellist, conductor, and one of the initiators of independent culture in Przemyśl, the Days of Christian Culture, and interdisciplinary exhibitions "Man – God – World."  
i wystaw interdyscyplinarnych Człowiek - Bóg - Świat.





## Photo Descriptions:

Cover I:

Author meeting with Paweł Niemkiewicz, attic, November 1989, in the photo from left: Leonard Reppel, Barbara Mięka, Dorota Mech, Monika Maresch, Marek Kuchciński, Paweł Niemkiewicz.

Cover II:

Author meeting with Marek Lilla, attic, October 1989, in the photo from left: Lucyna Podhalicz, Mieczysław Dudek, Wojciech Mięka, Jadwiga Reppel, Józef Kurylak, Marek Kuchcinski, Mark Lilla.

Page 7:

Cover of "Strych Kulturalny," issue 2, spring 1989.

Pages 12-13:

Marta Sienicka "Miss Editorial," Americanist, co-author of "History of American Literature in Outline. Age XVII-XIX" and Stefan Makowiecki, Anglicist, author of a monograph on Malcolm Lowry. In the attic, autumn 1986.

Page 18:

Jarosław Piekalkiewicz, professor of political science at the State University of Kansas, at an attic meeting in the Przemysł Cultural Society, July 1995, titled "6 years after the round table."

Edward Robinson, sculptor, thinker, aesthetician director of the Center for the Study of Spirituality and Art at the University of London, attic meeting, October 1988, about art and metaphysics.

Krzysztof Zanussi, director, author meeting, November 1990.

Roger Scruton, philosopher, thinker, writer, in Krasiczyn, September 1990.

Page 24:

- Margaret Steele Hunter, painting, oil on canvas.

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- Page 28:

- Opening of the III Exhibition of Art "Man - God - World," September 1988, Przemysł, underground of the church of the Franciscans. From left standing in the front row: Jan Jarosz, NN, NN, Grażyna Niezgoda, Barbara Hawajska, Janusz Eysymont, Henryk Waniek, Maciej Gutowski, Rev. Stanisław Zarych.

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- Page 29:

- III Exhibition of Art "Man - God - World," September 1988, in front of the entrance to the underground of the church of the Franciscans in Przemysł. From left: Marek Kuchciński, Grażyna Niezgoda, Ryszard Żółtaniecki, Janusz Eysymont, Henryk Waniek (back), Margaret Still-Hunter, Joachim Gross, Ryszard Żółtaniecki, Janusz Eysymont, Henryk Waniek (tyłem), Margaret Still-Hunter, Joachim Gross.

Page 32:

Art exhibition "Man - God - World," September 1986, Przemyśl, Franciscan catacombs.

Page 34:

Mirosław Kocoł, "Photo from the Cross," painting, watercolor, paper.

Page 40-41:

Tadeusz Nuckowski, Poster for the "Man - God - World" exhibition, 1986.

Page 45:

Jan Jarosz and Marek Kuchcinski in the attic, autumn 1987.

Page 50:

KUL courtyard, May 1976, from left: Janusz Malinowski - founder of the student theater Warsztat and members of the group: Andrzej Mazur, Michał Zulauf, Agnieszka Golka, Grzegorz Chomicki.

Page 51:

KUL courtyard, May 1976, from left: Mieczysław Abramowicz "Metys" from Teatr Grupa Ubogich, Marek Kuchciński, Ryszard Tkaczyk "Raszek."

Page 54:

KULLAGES'76, top photo: Cultural Spring of KUL Students, Lublin, May 1976. Standing from left: Marek Jackowski - Manaam, Anna Hepner, Leonard Górski, Piotr Mitan, Zuzanna Gałązka from the USA, Henryk Wójcik "Globaj." Sitting in the 2nd row: Katarzyna Stańczak, Anna Ambroż, Milo Kurtis - Manaam, Adam Lewicki with a guitar. Sitting in the 1st row: Krzysztof Wasilewski, Lutek Furmaga, Marek Kuchciński in a beret.

Bottom photo: Andrzej Mazur and Marek Kuchciński in a genre scene during Otrzęsiny at KUL, winter 1974.

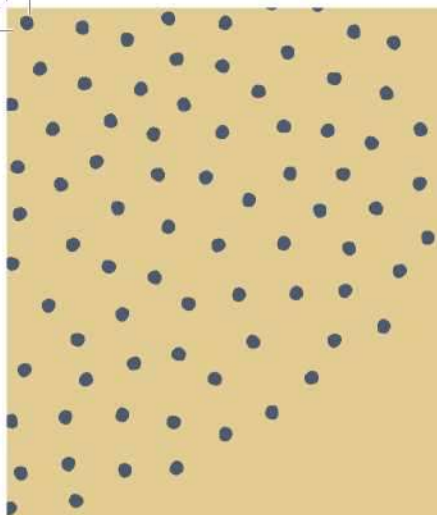
Page 55:

Marek Kuchciński in 1975.

Marek Kuchcinski in 1977, playing congas.

Page 63:

- Stanisław Koba prepares a presentation of his works in Krasiczyn during the Polish-British conference, September 1990.



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