

Institute of National Remembrance

<https://ipn.gov.pl/en/news/76,Meeting-with-Allan-Tyrrell-and-former-members-of-European-Democratic-Students-ED.html>

11.04.2024, 02:28

03.12.2004

Meeting with Allan Tyrrell and former members of European Democratic Students (EDS)

On December 3, 2004, twenty-five years after the seminar on the origin of European unity in Rynias (Polish Tatry Mountains), the participants hold a meeting in the Institute of National Remembrance. Prof. Leon Kieres, the President of IPN, took part in the meeting.





Members of the European Democrat Students organization from Great Britain, Norway, Sweden and Germany as well as activist of the young

Polish opposition movement participated in the seminar in Rynias.

On the meeting in IPN we had the pleasure to host Mr. Allan Tyrrel, who had been European Parliament member in the period from 1979 till 1984. In November 1979 he paid an unofficial visit to Poland and met with several Polish oppositionists. As a result of his visit he presented to the European Parliament a special report. Of Mr. Tyrrell's accord the issue of human rights in PRL (Polish People's Republic) was specified in the resolution of European Parliament in September 1980.

Mr. Stefan Dingerkus (in 1979 Deputy Chairman of European Democrat Students) and Mr. Richard Thoburn (in 1979 Research Assistant to Allan Tyrrell, and member of European Democrat Students) were also present at the meeting in IPN.

The Polish party was represented by: Mr. Janusz Krupski (activist of the opposition movement, today Deputy President of IPN), Mr. Kazimierz Wóycicki (activist of KIK – Catholic Intellectuals Club, director of Polish Institutes in Dusseldorf and Lipsk), Józef Ruszar (activist of KIK, today at the Publishing House „Presspublica”), Stanisław Puzyna (activist of the Warsaw KIK, today at the Chancellery of Polish Senate – responsible for contacts with European Parliament), Jan Strękowski (opposition activist, today focuses on research on Norwegian aid to Polish opposition in the 80s).

During the meeting the participants touched upon the historical and social reasons for the political transformations in the 80s. as well as

the consequences of those changes for the European societies.

The schedule of the visit of the guests included also Warsaw Catholic Intellectuals Club and later they had a meeting scheduled in the offices of "Rzeczpospolita" Daily.

{PODZIEL}

European Democratic Group

VISIT TO WARSAW BY ALAN TYRRELL, QC MEP,
AND RICHARD THOBURN, 9-11 NOVEMBER 1979

1. PURPOSE

We went to Poland, with the intention of meeting Poles who were, to a greater or lesser extent, involved in the opposition movement. Our Visit was arranged by East European Solidarity Youth (EESY).

2. CONCLUSION

No one who has spent 48 hours talking to a wide range of opposition members can fail to be impressed by their courage, their idealism, stability and practicality. We are convinced they not only deserve all the support we can give them, but that it is in our interest to do so. We accept that the development of the opposition movement can play a crucial part in achieving a genuine détente.

3. HARRASSMENT AND PERSECUTION

The following facts clearly emerged:

- There is a continual harassment of opposition members. Arrests are frequent, usually of 48 hours duration. Father Malkowski had been arrested in the week of our visit, and released. His flat has been searched, and books confiscated. His mother had been searched the week before on her return to Poland from the West, and books on philosophy confiscated.

- Shortly after Alan Tyrrell's visit to the KOR Committee, about 8 of those present were arrested, together with about 32 others. This was believed to be to prevent them from participating in the Polish independence ceremony on 11 November, Adam Michnik was released on the Saturday afternoon after only about 14 hours in custody. It is suspected his release was to enable him to keep his appointment with Alan Tyrrell. The others had all been released by lunchtime on Wednesday 13 November.

- Telephones and flats are bugged. Both Lipinski and Kuron told us that our conversations (including the KOR Committee meeting) were being taped by Security Services.

- Although there is generally freedom of movement to and from Poland, members of the opposition are likely to find that their applications for passports to go abroad are almost refused. Some have been unable to visit the West for many years.

- The better known opposition member is, the safer he is. Unknown students suffer most. They are likely to be beaten up by thugs or, after arrests, by the Security Services. They are liable to be expelled from a university without the opportunity to complete their courses.

- All members of the opposition are liable to have their employment terminated and be unable to find themselves other work appropriate to their abilities. Promotion is unlikely, but this is the same with anybody who declines to join the Party.

- Some members of the opposition were clearly in fear. Most accept this harassment as part of their daily lives.

- Censorship is vicious and near complete. We saw a massive file of censored items from a leading Catholic magazine. Production of this “permitted” paper is limited to a maximum number, which is only about one-third of the likely number that could be sold. The underground magazines are confiscated, and the machinery for production destroyed, whenever they are found. The equipment for the unofficial press i.e. stencils, duplicators, ink, typing fluids, cannot be obtained openly and is usually smuggled in from the West.

- Not only the written word is censored. All art forms are. One actor reads Polish works in Churches, when the Priests let him in, but other actors are afraid to. The Actors' Union is in the hands of Party members. Opposition does not mean expulsion, but the 'fringe' benefits of e.g. broadcasting, are withdrawn. The Writers' Union is in a similar state.

- The Catholic religion is officially tolerated, but pressure is frequently applied to individual believers. There is strong resentment that news of the Pope's visit to Poland was minimal in Polish media. There is a petition in circulation for Mass to be televised. It has 350,000 signatures in provincial Poland, and 30,000 in Warsaw. Signatures are being collected outside churches.

- There are restrictions on academic study: e.g. aspects of modern history are forbidden. The Society for Academic Courses, nicknamed "The Flying University" provides a range of Academic Seminars outside the official structure. Originally, it was open to all, but so many of its meetings have been broken up by police and gangs of thugs that now it is by invitation only. A new venture is the tutorial system. Sympathetic dons in the universities are willing to supervise students whose courses have been terminated for political reasons, to enable them to complete their training.

- Free Trade Unions are forbidden. Notwithstanding this, there are 3 workers' committees in various industrial centres with substantial memberships, despite the risk of discovery with fear of loss of employment. There are also peasants' committees.

The Samizdat paper "Robotnik" produces 20,000 copies every 3 weeks. Its readership is put at 100, 000. It circulates the factories and its news is obtained from within the factories by secret informants.

- It was stressed to us that there is massive exploitation of workers, who are tied to particular jobs; e.g. in the mines, shifts are long, wages low and safety precautions deplorable. In the month of October, there were four separate mine accidents, each causing deaths, a total of 80 lives being lost (46 in one accident).

4. THE FUTURE

- There were widely divergent views as to the future. It was widely believed that there may be a flashpoint at any moment. Prices have risen by one-third over the last year whilst wages have been held back. There is little room amongst the workers for belt-tightening. The shops are almost empty, by western standards.

- Almost without explanation, those we met believed that violence would achieve nothing.

- Nobody knew either how Mr Gierck achieved power, whether he can hold it, who would succeed him, or how much freedom of action he is allowed by the USSR. The curtain of silence is apparently very effective.

- The role of the Catholic Church is enigmatic. It is widely believed that the Government fears the power of the Church, and that the Church is unwilling to put its power to the test. Some priests are active human rights workers, but others will give no co-operation. The influence of the Church is enormous. On Sunday morning, the two churches we visited were full.

- The most constructive plans we heard are those of Jacek Kuron, a formidable and fearless person and a natural leader. His group is working to set up the alternative Society to co-exist with the Government until the latter falls into decay. To some extent this alternative already exists. Most things from cars to flats are available to those who can pay for them, through the "alternative", and this service is widely used.

Great Emphasis is placed on the development of the Workers' Committees, and the Samizdat press as a means of

communicating. There is a critical shortage of medical supplies in Poland. Under the “Alternative Society” theme, it is hoped that Western doctors and chemists will be willing to supply medical drugs against Polish doctors’ prescriptions. Again and again we were told that there is not a Marxist left in Poland, either in the Party or outside it.

- Great emphasis is placed on the part the opposition movement in Eastern Europe can play in achieving a genuine détente.
- The Polish people regard themselves as Europeans in every sense. As it was put to us, “Why are we referred to as Eastern Europe? We are central Europe.”
- There is great interest in the directly elected European Parliament and guarded optimism by the Polish people that they may one day participate in it.

5. HELP FROM THE WEST

The following practical steps were urged upon us:

- As much Western publicity for the opposition Human Rights movement as possible. This not only inhibits the Government against persecution and harassment, but also raises the morale

of the opposition.

- When possible publicity should be linked to a specific campaign to remedy a particular abuse.
- True news is vital. The importance of Radio Free Europe cannot be over-stated. But the most reliable news service is the BBC external service. This should be extended if possible. As many books as possible should be sent into Poland, not only Polish books published in the West, but also ones about the Western way of life, its values, its problems and solutions to those problems.
- Visits from MPs and MEPs are important; it provides information to the opposition; it educates the world outside as to the true position; above all it gives the opposition a status that helps it both with other Poles and with the Government.
- Technical Aid, particularly Roneo duplicators and copying machines, are greatly needed. The circulation of the Samizdat is held back only by the physical difficulty of production.
- Invitations should be sent to named members of the opposition movement to attend outside conferences. This may embarrass

the Government into granting a passport or emphasise the fact that passports are refused. It gives the opposition status. It increases their knowledge of the world outside.

- On Western Trade contracts conditions should be attached, These should relate to the safety of workers and the hours they work.

- The students of the “Flying University” whose university courses have been terminated for political reasons, and who are completing their courses under the supervision of friendly professors, need money for support and books. KOR is helping TKN (who run the courses) by the provision of fellowships. Western aid to provide more fellowships would be appreciated.

(An international support committee was recently set up in the West with the backing of more than 60 intellectuals, including 3 Nobel Prize winners, for this very purpose.)

Opcje strony

- [Print this page](#)
- [Generate PDF of this page](#)

- [Notify about this page](#)

- Share this article

[Share on Facebook](#)

[Share on Twitter](#)