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**THE TRANSFORMATION IN POLAND:
SOME POINTS OF VIEW**

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It is being circulated in a pre-publication form to elicit comments from readers and generate dialogue on the subject at this stage of the research.

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INTRODUCTION

Jan Danecki

Transformations that have occurred in Poland since August 1980 have attracted the attention of international public opinion not only because of their consequences for the world balance of forces but also because they represent one more test of the effectiveness of pursuing honest principles of social coexistence, without resorting to bloodshed and violence, by way of social agreements.

The selected texts we present here include some reflections on the sources and meaning of events in Poland. The authors represent various philosophical, intellectual, and political orientations and have varied experiences drawn from their past activities. Differences among them, like the things they have in common, are not difficult to see. All the papers were written between September 1980 and January 1981.

10 April 1981

ON THE ORIGIN OF THE JULY-AUGUST STRIKES IN POLAND

An Interview with Wladyslaw Markiewicz

Q. Did the events of the summer of 1980 come as a surprise to our social scientists? Did the results of earlier sociological studies indicate symptoms of the crisis? Did social scientists try to indicate in good time the dimensions of the approaching conflict?

A. No one in this country can say that he or she was taken by surprise by the events of July and August. It has frequently happened in the past that social scientists, both in Poland and elsewhere in the world, have been unable to predict certain social upheavals that have occurred on a particularly broad scale -- for example, youth revolts or racial unrest -- and this was one of the reasons behind the spread of the theory of an alleged structural crisis in sociology. This time, however, the Polish sociologists did not let us down, for they had drawn attention to conspicuous symptoms of a dangerous economic, social, and moral crisis as early as several years ago, and their warnings had grown particularly insistent after 1976.

The difficulties in publishing policy statements, growing in acuteness from year to year, narrowed down the sphere of influence of humanistic creativity; the diagnostic and prognostic surveys and recommendations submitted often at the specific request of the decision-makers by organizations specializing in the domain of social sciences -- the Polish Sociological Society, the Polish Economic Society, the Committee for Forecasts and Studies "Poland 2000" -- were disregarded in day-to-day management as well as in long-term programming of the development of the national economy. In this connection, experts in the field of the humanities held the bitter conviction that their voice was not being listened to with due attention "at the top"; in other words, that

consulting experts was neither an urgent need nor a moral imperative for the people who discharged the managerial functions and thus decided about the life of their fellow countrymen, for which reason they were bound to have the full knowledge of the matters that they resolved.

How, in the light of the recent events, do you evaluate the state of studies on the consciousness of the working class? Do recent descriptions and diagnoses call for any corrections? Which stereotypes shall we have to give up?

The problems of social consciousness — including the consciousness of workers, the shaping of their attitudes, behaviour, needs, and aspirations — were broadly considered in sociological, political-scientific, psychological, and historical studies. The numerous works on this subject provide a considerable amount of knowledge on the transformation processes occurring among the working class under the influence of industrialization and urbanization, universalization of education and dissemination of mass culture, technological progress, differentiation of the occupational structure, etc.

The mass protests of workers, the course of these protests, and the programmes they gave birth to, are not — in my opinion — in glaring contradiction with the conclusions to be found in a majority of studies dealing with the consciousness of the working class of today. This does not mean that the thesis about the leading role of the working class, treated by some researchers as a dry formula officially in force, does not have to be filled with new vital contents. The public, for example, is largely ignorant of the fact that, during the strike at the Vladimir Lenin Shipyard, proletarian poetry was written, much of which I have been able to read; that, aside from heated political discussions, a cultural and artistic life developed that was extremely exuberant, considering the more than Spartan living conditions in the yard; that an almost ascetic moral rigour prevailed in interpersonal relations, etc. These facts certainly shed new light on the richness of the morality of the workers, a morality for channelling into narrow schemes and, it appears, only known to sociologists very superficially.

What would you say about the "sociology of the strikes"? What social groups and categories played a particularly active part during the strikes? What motives played the chief role in the social conflict and what aspirations came to the fore?

It is impossible, as yet, to give a satisfactory answer to this question. There is simply not enough information and source material available. The strike wave spread gradually throughout the country, reached its climax toward the end of August, and probably will continue here and there for some time to come.* At various times and in various places, the nature of the strikes certainly had its peculiarities.

My direct fragmentary observations (I stayed in the Gdansk-Sopot-Gdynia agglomeration during the first three days of the strike), perusal of the local, national, and foreign press and of bulletins of the Interfactory Strike Committee, as well as the accounts of persons who witnessed the events in the Gdansk area, in Szczecin, and in the Lublin voivodship, have led me to conclude that young workers played an especially active part in initiating and organizing the strikes. At the same time, all signs indicate that the enterprises and institutions where strikes occurred were not the scene of a "conflict of generations," which, it must be admitted, our sociologists have never tended to exaggerate. In the mature phase of the strikes, middle-aged workers exercised the decisive influence on the course and character of the protests, but the activeness and involvement of the young never declined in intensity.

The workers' protests possessed the character of an extremely large-scale and desperate movement against bureaucratic manipulations and technocratic deformations in the management system, acutely felt for a long time and stigmatized also by the party. Each protest movement is, as a rule, a multidimensional phenomenon. Firstly, it has its historical dimension, which means that it does not appear like a bolt

* This interview took place on 3 September 1980.

out of the blue, even if, at a given moment, it is seen as such, especially by those against whom it is directed, but it matures gradually until it reaches a critical point, at which point people come to the conclusion that they can no longer live in the old way, while the "top echelon" cannot yet decide to rule in a new way, in accordance with the programme principles it otherwise recognizes and disseminates but fails to observe. This produces a sort of revolutionary situation, with the pathos proper to it, the sense of fulfilling an important mission, iron solidarity, and strict discipline.

Secondly, movements of such a scale and determination as those of July and August stem, as a rule, from an acute economic crisis which, in our conditions, has appeared in the form of disorganization of the principal branches of the national economy, i.e., investments, raw materials and power, transport, the market, domestic trade, and services of all kinds.

Although we could ascribe part of the blame for economic difficulties to so-called objective factors, in particular the monetary, power-fuel, and raw-material crises that have affected the world, as well as to natural calamities, even an illiterate in the questions of economic policy has for a long time now realized that he has witnessed a process of tremendous waste of the national wealth, accumulated with so much effort and sacrifice. What was euphemistically called a failure to make use of the reserves was in fact evidence of the low effectiveness of the economic system, founded on erroneous bureaucratic injunctions and voluntaristic premises and ignoring elementary directions of modern science concerning planning and management.

The inefficiency of the inert mechanism of the functioning of economic structures would arouse the concern and impatience not only of experts, economists and theorists of organization, who were barred from participation in the decision-making process, but, to a growing extent, also of the ordinary people. Doubts as to the ability and conscious will to ameliorate the economic organism on the part of incompetent and presumptuous technocrats were therefore a third cause of the workers' protest.

Decomposition of the national economy and a drastic lowering of its efficiency in turn resulted in the fact that the ambitious comprehensive social programme, the greatest accomplishment of the post-December period, which ensured for the party the support of the masses, failed to be put into life, save for one very important element: full employment. In some domains, for example, in raising wages — and the lowest wages, pensions, and allowances for the disabled in particular — and in the expansion of free medical care, etc., some progress was actually achieved, but, at the same time, there was tangible regression in areas crucial to the quality of everyday life, such as urban transport and organization of transport for commuting to work, and notably housing construction (a longer waiting period for a flat). By and large, none of the proclaimed social goals was accomplished in full, and this led people to believe that living conditions, contrary to promises, not only were not improving but were actually steadily deteriorating from year to year.

At the same time, the number of privileged people who derived an illegal income that enabled them to live a luxurious life was growing. In this way, a fourth cause of the dissatisfaction and bitterness of the working people was growing in intensity: the painfully hurt sense of social justice, which is a fundamental attribute of socialism.

Fifthly, the ground for mass worker protests was prepared by the so-called propaganda of success, practised, or, strictly speaking, celebrated, for many years with hopeless persistence. To this end, the mass media, notably television, and also radio and the press, were employed; only socio-cultural weeklies managed to smuggle onto their pages objective, critical contents that filled the readership with confidence.

This propaganda ignored the fact, very easily verifiable by means of statistics, that, in the meantime, the Poles had become part of an educated society and that historical experience had shaped in them a sense of criticism which immunized them against empty slogans and haughty ceremonial.

The infantilism, vulgarity, and ritual schematism of the mass political propaganda, which, for example, enabled one to predict beforehand who, in what entourage and titular setting, and in what order would appear on television news, however banal the pretext for the presentation might be, led in recent years to an effect opposite to what was intended. What this propaganda attempted to popularize instinctively evoked resentment, what it wanted to be loathed became almost sympathetic.

In my opinion, what discredited this propaganda most was not that it furnished selected, incomplete, and often untrue information. Cynical as it may sound, I personally do not believe in propaganda that is not manipulated. The worst thing was that this oversweetened, over-didacticized, and — worst of all — boring propaganda outraged the intelligence of the nation, offended its common sense and its belief in the virtue of moderation. One should feel compassion for many able journalists, publicists, and commentators whose talents had to be wasted in the service of so ominously conceived a cause.

The accumulation of these causes of social disapproval — analysed, of necessity, very superficially — gave rise to irritation and distrust and eventually produced an explosive mixture that any spark might set off.

Did you notice any regularities, essential from the viewpoint of social sciences, in the course of events in various centres? What do the social sciences have to say about the forms of organization of the working class? How does science view the passing from spontaneous actions to organized ones?

In the course of the big strikes that swept our country at the height of the holiday season, I discern a confirmation of certain elementary theses of Marxism, pertaining to the regularities of the development of mass social movements.

The first of these regularities consisted in the transformation of economic strikes into political manifestations. One should remember

that, in conditions of socialism, to a greater extent than under capitalism, even a "purely" economic strike, through the very fact of its occurrence, may have a drastic political significance. For under a "normally" functioning socialist system, strikes ought to be treated as an anachronistic phenomenon. Otherwise, there is no rational explanation for the fact that the legitimate owners of means of production and rulers of the state rebel against themselves. They simply must have come to the conclusion that they can no longer identify themselves in full with the actually existing system of governing the state, that the omnipresent bureaucracy, which tends to seclude itself within its own particular interests and needs, has removed workers from direct participation in deciding about their own destinies, that it has barred them from the organizations, such as the party and the trade unions, which, by virtue of their mandate, ought to care for the good of the workers.

No wonder, then, that the most important demand of the workers, one that dominated all other demands, was to call into being independent, autonomous trade unions. Their role is to protect the working people from the sort of dull stupefaction that communicates itself to all bureaucratic institutions when they escape the control of the masses. It seems that the social disease called by some sociologists the pathology of institutions does not spare socialism either.

Another well-recognized universal regularity of the development of mass social movements is the dialectic of interrelationships and interdependencies between spontaneous and organized actions. It would be scandalously naïve and reprehensibly blinkered to believe that any mass movement of the working people can be prepared and organized with diabolic perfection by expert conspirators unless there exists an objective groundwork in the form of a cumulated, spontaneous collective will to reject the prevalent management practices.

Thus there is no doubt that the outbreak of worker dissatisfaction was of a spontaneous rather than a prearranged character. Also, the fact that the workers were able to create at short notice an organizational

framework for their protest should not surprise anyone. After all, one of the basic tenets of Marxism is the truism that the characteristics that predestine the workers to play the part of the leading force in the struggle for social justice comprise organizational abilities and a sense of discipline, solidarity, and comradeship acquired in the course of work, especially in large industrial plants.

A third regularity which "governs" each mass social movement and which does not contradict the former is that these movements always attract — spontaneously or from mercenary motives — individuals and smaller or larger groups which, either unknowingly or with premeditation, can or want to put the movement onto a track inconsistent or even contradictory with its initial intentions and presuppositions. This is a historical-sociological truth of — one could say — a textbook type.

It also pertains to the workers' strikes, which could not but cause an activation of the anti-socialist opposition in our country. The ignoring or slighting of this otherwise inevitable phenomenon by participants in the strike movement might, in the long run, thwart their efforts, the premise of which was, as is well known, the renewal of socialism and elimination of bureaucratic deformations but not the annihilation of socialism.

This warning should be addressed not only to the striking workers. The mass movement which our party is, with a membership of over three million, was penetrated by anti-socialist elements, by corrupt or degenerated careerists to whom socialism had long ago ceased to be — if it ever had been — a confession of faith, and had become, instead, a springboard for high positions and wealth. It was these elements — perhaps to a greater extent than the errors committed by the party — that had undermined the credibility (this word has recently met with great popularity) of party policy in society.

Learning this seemingly simple art of separating the chaff from the wheat is an extremely complicated task in a mass political movement. To attempt to master this art under the circumstances now existing

means, among other things, first, not to let oneself be carried away by uncontrolled emotions and to keep in every situation a certain indispensable minimum of criticism and reason; secondly, to keep, even in situations justifying ebullience and rashness of collective reactions, a measure of patience and realism in submitting demands and claims, bearing in mind that persons to whom these claims are addressed must have a certain freedom of manoeuvre in order to be able to conscientiously fulfil the assumed obligations; and thirdly to weigh as precisely as possible each word, especially when it may be construed as an accusation, until the facts to which it pertains have been checked.

Can one conclude from the events, claims, etc., what attitude the working class adopted toward the interests of other social groups and strata? What are the similarities and dissimilarities between this year's events and the events of 1956, 1970, and 1976?

I would not compare the 1976 unrest to the events of 1956, 1970, and 1980; the former were, it seems, in the nature of a warning. True, we shall be racking our brains for a long time to come before we know how it was possible to ignore such a dangerous signal of warning from Ursus and Radom without carrying through the widely publicized economic "manoeuvre," without modifying the arrogant tone of the propaganda, or without making — if only for the sake of honesty — the necessary personnel changes in the government. And voices of warning were not lacking, then and later, on the part of activists and members of the party; also intellectuals, both party members and non-members, insistently expressed their readiness to establish a dialogue with the authorities, asking the dramatic question: What to do? Where is the way out of the situation?

Deliberating on what was common to and what was specific to the successive worker revolts is certainly important from a theoretical-cognitive and a practical-political point of view. I do not think, however, that anyone could answer this question today in a competent manner, observing the demands of scientific strictness. For in order not to scratch the wounds, it was recognized at one moment that

sociological studies on the psycho-social and political mechanisms that had led to the tragedies in Poznan and the coastal areas were neither desirable nor advisable. Nonetheless, I believe, one could attempt to carry out, in a publicist convention, a cursory characterization of the three great post-war protests of the working class.

What was common to these protests was the fact that demands for an improvement in living and social conditions, made each time from a level indisputably higher than previously, which, however, did not satisfy the expectations and by no means excessive aspirations awakened in the meantime, were accompanied by socio-political claims. They were directed against not socialism but its degeneration, especially those which, under existing circumstances, were felt most acutely by the masses.

Most generally speaking, the workers demanded again and again an extension of democratic rights and institutional guarantees of the right, due to them in conditions of socialism, to authentic participation in management. Submitting in an unceremonious manner, proper to them, proposals of political reforms, the workers always acted with full consciousness as advocates of the interest of the whole society or the whole nation.

The leading role of the workers in urging action for an immediate improvement of socialist Poland could be seen most conspicuously during this year's strikes, especially from the moment of the foundation of the Interfactory Strike Committee in Gdansk. In an extensive list of urgent matters to be resolved, presented to the government, the Committee included the needs of concrete groups of workers (amongst others, health service workers) and the non-proletarian strata of society, i.e., the farmers (durable guarantees of the right to ownership of individual farms) and the creative intelligentsia (legal controls on the powers of the censor's office).

The specific traits of the three successive socio-political crises in People's Poland can be considered from the viewpoint of their

duration, scope, organizational forms, and the methods of overcoming them.

The Poznan events lasted for a relatively short time; they came to be known among the people as "black Thursday." The conflict in the coastal areas had a more persistent nature and went down in history under the name of the "December events." This year's strike battle, even if one were to assume optimistically that it ended with the signature of the Gdansk agreement, lasted for two months and is now referred to as "events of July and August."

The scope of the successive worker protests was also growing steadily. The 1956 events embraced Poznan alone, the 1970 protests occurred in the Gdansk-Sopot-Gdynia agglomeration, and in 1980 practically all large industrial centres and urban agglomerations were the scene of strikes.

In Poznan, the workers managed to keep law and order (the demonstrators were cautioned to "keep off the grass") for several hours only; later on, they lost control of the crowd and were unable to prevent robbery and lynching. The events in the coastal areas proceeded in more or less the same way, although they achieved a higher organizational level, reflected in the establishment, for some of the time, of strike committees which, as recognized representatives of the workers, took up negotiations with the authorities. What was peculiar to this year's strikes was, as is known, the sovereign control, from the very outset, of the movement by the strike committees. The committees scrupulously cared for social property, effectively appealed for a friendly attitude toward the strikes, counteracted any possible excesses. In the factories and towns where the strikes occurred, and in the country in general, delinquency decreased considerably even though normal life had been disrupted.

In 1956 and 1970 — even today we still think back in horror — the strikes and disturbances were suppressed by means of force; brother killed brother; we witnessed national tragedies. With great relief,

though with constant and nerve-racking tension, we watched the peaceful course of this year's strikes, and later the negotiations between the government commissions and the strike committees, dramatic but conducted with dignity and in earnest, which ended fortunately with the signature of agreements. It was no coincidence that these agreements were termed a social contract. This brought relief to us, the Poles, to our well-wishing neighbours and friends, practically to the whole world. . . .

What lasting effects may the events of the summer of 1980 leave in the sphere of consciousness? What political conclusions can be drawn from them?

Precisely that all of us will understand and accept the fact that socialist society is and must remain a community based on a social contract. Let's recall once again: each successive outbreak of worker protest brought with it the risk of an ever greater menace in view of its growing persistence, scope, and determination.

The manner in which the most serious social antagonism in the recent history of the Polish nation and state has been resolved proves that a catastrophic path of development does not have to be our destiny. The important thing is that we persist in the determination that all future conflicts, not only possible from a theoretical point of view, but perhaps also practically unavoidable, between the authorities and the citizens will be resolved by means of a dialogue, mutual concessions, even controversies and quarrels, but never by force. We are in the process of seeking institutional guarantees of solutions of this kind.

It will not be easy for the party to disaccustom itself from the convenient habit of exercising political leadership in the socialist state by means of ordinances and adopt instead persuasive methods of activity among the masses. But society, too, in the eyes of which the party has lost its credibility, will have to accustom itself, not without inhibitions, to the idea that a prudently organized state cannot

exist without the party. Thus, we are facing a period -- let's hope that it does not last too long -- of coexistence on the basis of a division into "we" and "they." This division has in fact existed for a long time but was carefully camouflaged. Today, at least, we are ready to admit publicly that the tie between the party and the masses has been severed and will not easily be restored immediately.

It would be a poor form, dangerous to the future destiny of Poland, to suppose that the party will not find enough strength to recover from the recent shock and revive itself in a new shape, on the basis of its honest and thinking core, which for long has perceived the imminent danger of a catastrophe and warned its leadership in vain. Fortunately, there are many enlightened citizens without party affiliation who understand the need and strive for a prompt renewal of the party and its active backbone and who oppose the method, lethal in the long run to the state, its internal peace and order, and its international prestige, of persistently and indiscriminately humiliating all party members. That some activists have covered the party with infamy is a painful fact for the party's harassed rank and file to digest. Not so much because of the past accomplishments of the party, to which Poland owes its security and meaningful position in the world, but with a view to ensuring a bright future for this country, for which the party wants to and must bear responsibility, one should not add -- *pro bono publico* -- to the worries of the party members and prevent them from recovering their track in these difficult times.

September 1980

NOTES FROM THE BALTIC COAST

Ryszard Kapuscinski

"For the first time we are learning from experience, not from errors."
(A shipyard worker)

1. Twelve August days spent on the Baltic Coast — in Szczecin, then in Gdansk and Elblag. In the streets everything is quiet but one can feel a tension: the atmosphere of seriousness and self-confidence born from the sense of being right. The cities taken over by new morality. No drunk people, nobody kicks up a row, no one will wake up next morning burdened with a stultifying stupor. Crime has fallen nearly to zero, people have forgotten about their usual aggressiveness, have become sympathetic, helpful, outward-going. People, until now strangers, feel they need each other. The striking workers of big industries set up an entirely new pattern of relations.

In those days we were able to observe the way in which relations were built between big plants and the city. A city of several hundred thousand spontaneously subordinated its life to the intentions and aspirations of shipyard workers, whose struggle it has taken for its own and faithfully supports. All waffling and scribbling of the "Impatient society of the coastal region expects the strikers to come back to work" variety repeated endlessly on television and in the press sounded there, on the spot, like a bad joke; more than that, it was an offence. The real situation was different: the longer the strike lasted the greater was the determination of workers. Those days the shipyard gate and the gates of other factories were covered with flowers, because the strike was both a dramatic struggle and a feast. Those were the days of struggle for workers' rights, days of straightening arms and raising heads.

2. The workers of the Baltic Coast smashed the stereotyped image, until then lingering in high offices and exclusive salons, of the dirty and wily workman who was not to discuss matters but simply to complete production plans by a certain date. If one wanted to hear the workman's voice it was only to wring from him assurances and promises; he was interested only in his payment; leaving his workshop he would smuggle out of the gates screws, cables, and tools; if it were not for management, he would steal the whole enterprise; he would stay for hours behind the beer-kiosk, drinking; then he fell asleep; next morning in the commuting train he would play cards with his colleagues; in the plant all of them would queue up and ask the doctor for sick-leave. They were giving management a hard time; there was nothing to talk about with them; at all important conferences we heard complaints of this sort. Meanwhile, on the Baltic Coast and later in the whole country from behind this veil of self-satisfaction emerged the young face of a new generation of workers - thoughtful, intelligent, conscious of their position in society, and, what is more important, determined to draw all conclusions from the fact that, according to the ideological principles of the system, their class should play the leading role in society. In all the years I can recall no precedent for those August days when this conviction, this unbreakable determination, occurred with such strength. Throughout our land a river started to flow changing the landscape and the climate.

I don't know whether we are all yet aware that, whatever may happen from now, since summer 1980 we in Poland have been living a *different* life. I think this difference consists in the fact that the workers have begun to speak on the most important matters with their own voice, and they are determined not to remain silent anymore. Everyone should understand this.

3. To the office of the Strike Committee in Gdynia shipyard came five women from a local handicraft co-operative. They came to join the strike. I witnessed their visit. They did not demand a pay raise or a new kindergarten for their children; they had resolved to go on strike against the president of their co-operative, who was a *boor*.

All attempts to teach him good manners and respect for his subordinates — women, mothers — ended badly, with annoyance and harassment. All appeals to higher authorities were in vain. The guy kept firm; he was well thought of at the top because under his management the co-operative had completed production plans. Women could not stand this situation any longer; they had their *dignity*. Compared with the claims of shipyard workers, the reasons these women had for going on strike seemed to be trifling. After all, so much rabid boorishness is still around us. But young workers who listened to their complaints took them with complete seriousness; they were also fighting against excesses of bureaucracy, against scornful treatment, against the slogan "Do your job, don't talk," against motionless and indifferent faces at the desk saying "no." Whoever tries to reduce the strike movement to an issue of wages and living conditions understands nothing of it. The principal motive of this manifestation was *human dignity*, an attempt to create new relations among the people, in every place and at every level; it was underlain by the principle of mutual respect, binding upon everyone, the principle on which a subordinate is at the same moment a partner.

One of these women asked me, "Couldn't he behave like a human being?" To them, rough behaviour was some foreign, paralysing ulcer in our culture in which there surely existed a certain amount of posturing and swaggering but not a deliberate debasement, not a vulgar, malicious harassment, brutal disdain shown towards weaker people. The workers condemned such attitudes by creating an article of faith that gave Polish patriotism a new quality: to be patriotic means to respect the dignity of our fellow men.

4. On the Baltic Coast there took place too a battle for the language, for the Polish language, for its purity, clarity, for the restoration of an unambiguous sense to the words, for cleansing from our speech empty slogans and rubbish, for liberating it from the plague of half-truths and understatements.

"Why can't we say anything in plain language?" asked one of the

shipyard workers. "Our language is well inured and will not 'catch cold.'" I remember the first encounter of the Strike Committee with the government delegation. The chairman of the Committee: "We ask the representative of the government to present his opinion on our claims." The delegate: "Let me answer them in general terms." The chairman: "No. We want a definite answer — item by item." This conversation reveals their natural distrust for indefinite answers and words lacking concreteness, their protest against anything that looks like a lie, incomplete information, throwing dust in the eyes, equivocation. They won't accept statements beginning "As you know" (answer — we don't know), "As you understand" (we don't understand). Says a delegate of the shipyards: "A bitter truth is better than a sweet lie. Sweets are for children, and we are not children anymore."

5. In their embitterment, visible in the first days of the strike, and in their endeavours to set up institutional guarantees was always felt a sense of *unfulfilled promise*, a feeling born in 1970-71. They had treated that promise all too seriously, as a beginning of a dialogue which was to develop and which quickly and through no fault of theirs was stopped.

6. They demonstrated caution, sensibility, and — if I may use the word — humanism. The highest penalty was to be removed from the ranks of the strikers. In one of the rare instances when the workers decided to remove someone who was a disgrace to them we heard Walesa say, "I am asking everybody to let this gentleman out without any trouble. Please behave with dignity and honour." Here is another scene from the Gdansk Shipyard. Two Trotskyites had arrived from Spain and I was to interpret. "We would like to know about your revolution," asked one of the Trotskyites, a member of the presidium of the Strike Committee. "You are mistaken. We are not making a revolution. We are settling our own problems. Please get out of the shipyard and never come back again." "We are settling our own problems": the way of doing this was also important. There was no element of revenge in it, no desire to make up for previous bad treatment, not a single attempt to make use of personal antipathy, at any level. The workers,

asked about such attitudes, answered, "This is not important" and "After all, it would be unfair." On those August days many words were suddenly revived and gained importance and splendour – honour, dignity, equality.

7. A new lesson in the Polish language has begun. Its subject is socialist democracy. A difficult, arduous lesson, under a rigid and watchful eye that does not allow any cribbing. There are bound, therefore, to be bad marks handed out, but the bell has already rung, and we all must sit at the desk.

September 1980

ON SOCIAL IMAGINATION

Andrzej Micewski

After a certain lapse of time we can try to evaluate recent developments in Poland not only as a historic breakthrough but also as the beginning of a long and painful developmental process. In the past, we had experienced in Poland several strictly political turning points; unfortunately, they brought only disillusionment because they never initiated a continuous process, a change for the better founded upon guarantees inherent in society itself. This time things are different. "Social contracts" signed in Gdansk, Szczecin, and other places have laid the foundations for the establishment in Poland of a system of control and supervision of government from below, without questioning the necessity of leaving power in the hands of those who wield it.

The signing of an agreement between delegates of striking workers and representatives of the authorities was an unprecedented event, evidence of a considerable degree of social imagination on both sides. Workers turned out to be capable not only of social protest and persistent, disciplined action; they also proved their ability at thinking both in terms of economic claims and of the general national and cultural needs of society. They have also been aware of the international position of Poland and all the implications that result from it.

They did not, therefore, put forward any claims which would be inconsistent with the geopolitical situation of the country. The state authorities and a reshuffled government team demonstrated much social imagination and drew conclusions from the loss of confidence in the nation by giving concessions and allowing the trade unions organized spontaneously by rank-and-file workers to continue to exist.

We have to have enough imagination to see that the present will be very different from the past, because there emerged new social mechanisms which must work both effectively and responsibly, while our own stand toward them should be realistic and full of understanding. The "social contract" was not finally and for ever concluded in those dramatic days of August 1980; it must be concluded constantly, almost every day, on various levels, and on every new emerging issue. In new circumstances we ought to know how to get rid of old and used schemes; instead, we must be very careful about the realities -- both international, which are critical to the place of Poland in the world, and social, avoiding a state of social disintegration and making society ever better organized.

Let me discuss now several issues vital in the immediate future. It is obvious that both sides, society and the authorities, put forward claims and counter-claims. The major claim is contained in appeals for better and more efficient work. We have always given our support to these appeals, stressing, however, that for work to be effective the conditions, i.e., its organization and system of management, are decisive. The good will of the workers alone is not enough if it is accompanied by wastefulness and poor organization.

A government commission on these problems has already been called; its work should be based upon broad social consultations and expert advice. If we all agree that one of the most important things in Poland is to recover economically, genuine economists, including non-party members, must in the future be given a key role in the process of improvement of our economic system. It is essential too that general social expectations be brought to the eyes of the political authorities. We can no longer afford the sort of amateurish manoeuvres for which everyone of us is now paying such a high price.

Another most urgent matter in Poland is recognition of family farms not only as the most efficient form of agricultural structure but also consistent with principles of the existing socio-political system. The family farm has proved in various countries and in various systems to

be the most efficient form of agricultural enterprise, and it most certainly does not involve capitalist-type exploitation, that is, it respects the social principles accepted in this country. The attachment of large groups of the population to work on the soil strengthens our country demographically and contributes to an ever-deeper growth of Polish roots in the western lands and to the greater territorial integrity of Poland. Therefore, the family farm system should not only enjoy overall understanding and respect; it should also be granted wide social and economic privileges and guarantees. The Polish peasantry must feel secure in their work on the land; they must be given opportunities to increase their plots and have the certainty that this type of agricultural economy will not be done away with. This is a *sine qua non* for food self-sufficiency in our country, which has at its disposal a rich soil and everything that is needed for good agriculture. The essential thing is to abandon dogmatic thinking and long-lasting prejudices and to understand that family farming is not inconsistent with principles of social justice.

In fact, Polish society is pluralist, as are all highly developed societies in our cultural and geographic region. From this grows the obvious need for tolerance for religious, philosophical, and intellectual differences, provided they are not of a socially and morally destructive character. But this is not all; as we know, power in Poland is wielded by a party officially professing allegiance to Marxist philosophy. This finds its reflection in culture, the mass media, and even in the education of the young people. Not once since the war has the issue of the philosophical pluralization of the state been raised, nor am I naïve enough to presume it simply could be arbitrarily ordained. All spheres of social life are subject to a certain conditioning, and changes can occur in the process of ripening of new ways of thinking and the expansion of the social imagination to new, ever-wider areas of reality. It is already possible, however, to keep a better balance between utilization of administrative and intellectual instruments in safeguarding the principles of the existing socio-political system in Poland. This package includes the issue of censorship, touched upon in the "social contract" of August 1980.

Naturally, among the many "signs of the time" we find a claim for greater freedom to form associations. Beyond doubt, what is essential here is the issue of independent, self-governed trade unions. The freedom of the trade union movement, guaranteed in the Gdansk and Szczecin agreements, has a special rank, being, in fact, itself a guarantee of all "social contracts" concluded up to the present and to be concluded in the future between the authorities and society. There is a profound truth in the conviction that good will on both sides is of first and foremost importance, and that this good will can create a lasting atmosphere of mutual trust.

Obviously, this is not all a matter of free associations. The Church, for instance, has in this domain its own rights and needs. Society is the stronger and the more integrated the more we find in it groups of a character intermediary or particular in relation to the superior nature of the state body. In a modern society the existence of new intermediary structures is a necessity and a condition of the authenticity of national life; but it also requires a consideration for objectively existing conditionings and a justification of their social utility. All this aims at a strengthening of social integration in various fields and on various levels to prevent conflict-bearing situations.

Discussing objective conditionings, we don't see them in terms of ideological compromise, and even less in contradiction to our specific ideological framework inherent in our religion and society. What we mean here are the implications of our geopolitical position and the fact that the division of the world into two social systems is, in practice, an accepted part of international life. Since it is accepted by Americans, French, British, and Germans, we Poles, living in one of the main strategic spots of the contemporary, divided world, have all the more reason to take it into consideration in our own national interest. Naturally, international life is subject to permanent evolution, but the present and future political realities are for Poland quite unambiguous. But they need not deny our specific national identity, shaped by both Latin and Christian European culture. Polish

specificity consists in its simultaneous attachment to Latin and Western European culture and, politically, to the Eastern bloc. The consequences of these two facts must not be neglected.

Although I have not attempted in this paper to deal with all the important issues in these crucial days, I have to mention one more problem of a certain psychological significance. It is obvious that during the 36 years since the end of the war various ideological and political groupings and divisions have appeared. And it had to be so, as we have always been a living social organism; I think, also, that certain general ideological orientations, once they are treated seriously, must remain in force. However, it is worthwhile letting a stream of fresh air into our ideological and intellectual atmosphere; this would involve discarding some labels and stereotype assessments that have been readily resorted to in past attempts to impoverish the forms and contents of our social life, to the virtual detriment of the state, too. All general and pejorative assessments of individual people or milieus, having no justification in new circumstances, simply retard the cause of broad and real social integration. This moment in our history is so eventful and significant that we should commit to society's benefit all constructive forces, with no regard to the partly artificial or outdated fronts and divisions of the past.

September 1980

FORM AND CONTENT OF THE POLISH "SOCIAL CONTRACT"

Jerzy Jedlicki

"Social contract" has become a fashionable catch phrase in Poland since the days of August 1980, and it could quite easily become one more empty slogan, over-used and abused by politicians and publicists. It could, however, become a useful concept and a real basis for understanding, providing we define the form and content of such a contract.

To this end we have to revoke the past and look far into the future, as there emerges in front of us the still somehow dim outline of a political and social situation never known before in the whole 63-year history of the communist states.

Characteristic of this — although not exclusively this — political system and of political activists trained in its school is that the moment of gaining a monopoly of political and economic power immediately brings with it a strong temptation to neutralize and paralyse all centres of social initiative and to submit all spheres of life to the arbitrary control of party functionaries. I am talking of attempts, not of practical implementation, which depends on many circumstances; one need hardly point out how distant Gierek's Poland was, and Kadar's Hungary is, from Kim Il Sung's Korea or Enver Hoxha's Albania — one and the same state doctrine can be applied in many different ways.

I

On New Year's Eve in 1979 I wrote my answer to the second opinion poll issued by the discussion group "Experience and Future" (Polish acronym: DiP). The questionnaire contained only one question: "What actions should

be undertaken by the authorities, institutions, and social circles in order to set up *social understanding* in Poland, to establish between society and the government *relations of partnership*, and to halt the process of decomposition of the economy and of state organization?"

I should like to quote here three sections from my answer.

1. The idea of partnership between society and the government is a theoretical novelty. According to the Constitution of the Polish People's Republic, "Working people wield the power in the country through their representatives" (paragraph 2), and the government is subject to the representatives (paragraphs 9, 37, 38). It is a relation of dependence, not of partnership.

In reality, supreme and arbitrary power is wielded by top party and government circles, the whole nation being submitted to their control. This, too, is a relation of dependence, not of partnership. Thus, partnership is a strange concept, foreign both to democracy and to dictatorship. It assumes that the nation's sovereignty is divided between "society" and "authority." In Poland neither "society" nor "authority" is sovereign, each for its different reasons.

The final part of the "Report on the State of the Republic" compiled by DiP's editorial committee and this question in the poll are based upon the conviction that the sort of new social order that would save Poland from total collapse should be the result of negotiations similar to those held between two states. The result of the agreement would eventually be a half-dictatorial and half-democratic system. There is no doubt that such an arrangement, if it were only viable, would be much better than the existing situation. The trouble is that "authority" does not want to come to an agreement even if it could and "society" cannot even if it wanted to. In support of this rather peculiar contention, I put forward the idea that, given a dangerous conflict of interests, all possible channels leading to negotiations should be examined. A thorough analysis, therefore, of the idea of negotiations should consist in finding out what are the conditions needed for "authority" to want an agreement and "society" to be able to reach one.

2. "Society" cannot be a partner in any agreement because it has disintegrated and has no organizations representing the special aspirations of classes, professions, regions, and ideological groupings. All organizations of this sort were either disbanded long ago or absorbed by the government and turned into official bodies. In the latter case, these organizations are faithful advocates of government views, not of the position of social groups they formally represent.

An exception to this rule is the Church, the only independent organization in the country which no successive government

administration has ever dared to dissolve or absorb. Therefore, real negotiations in Poland are possible only between the government and the Church hierarchy. Since the Church is the sole former organizational structure that survived the post-war shake-up, it is no wonder that it has become the spokesman not only for religious matters but also for affairs that in a normal social order would be taken care of by other associations. Civic society, able to articulate its varied aspirations, was destroyed in Poland. Therefore, at the moment of crisis and weakening of its authority, the government can but hold a "dialogue" with itself and praise itself, which it does with relish, or face a dangerous confrontation with the crowd, amorphous and hostile.

Recurrent dramatic confrontations of this sort have not brought the government to an agreement on the restoration of social institutions able to undertake such negotiations. The party and government monopoly on initiative remains a cornerstone of the whole system, and, *as long as this principle goes unchallenged, a negotiated settlement of the current crisis is out of the question, as no one can parley in a vacuum.*

3. I do not intend to overrate the influence of the opposition in Poland, even though it has turned out to be much stronger than anyone could have expected some three years ago. This, however, is not so important. The point is that the monopoly of opinion and public initiative held by the government has been broken up, and, as a result, there has emerged a pattern of independent social organization, which has its own programme and ways of action. In a society until now incapacitated, silenced, and indifferent toward the predicament of the Republic, this fact acquires a historic significance. At a critical juncture this pattern of action can be blown up to full size virtually overnight. And in this dwells Poland's chance of saving itself from the catastrophe of successive uncontrolled riots. A society that knows how to organize itself, choose its representatives, speak, and put forward its demands is better than a crowd which only knows how to yell and set fire. When a complete collapse of government authority occurs—and we are on the eve of such a situation—the only alternative to self-organization on the part of society is social disorganization, mob rule, and blood.

II

This was written in December 1979. Eight months later the first part of that alternative successfully came into being and became that *organization*. It took only a minute to make it; it appeared among us without us knowing when and how, because the idea of it had been living in people's minds and hearts long before. The supposition that agreement could not be concluded between some abstract "society" and

"authority" suddenly found its confirmation. The first act of the social contract is an agreement *among the people* on the idea of social reconstruction. The agreement is concluded the moment somebody climbs out of the crowd and speaks to them on their own behalf; that moment the mob is transformed into a social movement. This marks the end of the moral "power of the powerless" and ushers in the period of "power of the powerful," conscious of themselves.

It is still too early to assess the numerical and ideological potential of this movement, although until now it has included the majority of the working class, intelligentsia, and students; it is steadily growing and, probably, will very soon spread to the countryside. But since it is still in its early stages, this movement should be viewed in historical perspective. The strikes of August 1980 were the most massive in Polish history, comparable in their range and duration only to the general strike in the Congress Kingdom during the 1905 revolution, despite its different character, organization, and dynamic. Post-strike claims come even from larger areas and wider milieus than those taken in by strikes, and that makes them less homogeneous. The situation is different from that of 1956: today there is less emotion, less pathos and empty talk; people are concentrating on action and are determined to quickly set up organizational structures. The movement, in its self-restraint and language, seems to resemble the Hungarian and Czechoslovakian experiences. Self-restraint in words, means, and goals is one of the rules of the tacitly accepted contract, the unwritten constitution of the movement. As a result of this self-restraint the movement has assumed a creative character: it builds without destroying. It gives rise to friendly co-operation among the people, establishes institutions, and sets down rules. On 31 August the social contract assumed its new shape: this date marks the signing of the *pacta conventa*. They were signed because the government had somebody to negotiate with and had no other way out but to negotiate. And even though the form and substance of these contracts are far from perfect, the very fact of their conclusion by those particular "high contracting parties" is an unprecedented event. What it marks, if history does not turn back upon itself, is the end of absolute rule and paternalism,

although this by itself does not herald the advent of political democracy and representative government. We are thus witnessing the emergence of a peculiar "partnership" — having no base in any contemporary political doctrine — between society and the authorities. In fact, the partners do not trust each other, and it would appear that the time when they do come to trust each other is still very distant. But they must respect each other and find a formula for co-existence between the political and economic monopoly and democratic pluralism of social associations and public opinion, between these peculiarly Polish checks and balances.

This new, emerging model provokes many questions concerning political and social theory: can this hybrid survive and be more or less stable? Why should various circles of society, having suddenly recovered their subjectivity and sense of power, not try to widen their claims? Why should the government, having lost its monopoly of initiative and control, not make attempts to restore it? Is it conceivable that they will not wait for a change of political situation, fatigue on the other side, or a disintegration or decrease in the dynamic of the social movement in the hope that then the claims will be easier to curtail and new institutions easier to suppress? It seems unlikely, however, that either side will surrender; at times, each will probably take the offensive and aim beyond the agreements concluded until then. All this is not to suggest that this eclectic socio-political system is doomed to a short life. Its stability will depend on whether the pressures the sides exert upon each other will balance, so as to keep one or the other of them from being pushed too far.

I think this kind of balance is possible, although maintaining it depends on several unpredictable circumstances. Leaving aside as least predictable the behaviour of our immediate neighbours, the most serious perturbations can be expected in the economic field. Our national economy is in shambles, and nothing points to a quick improvement in its condition; indeed, the most severe shortages and tensions are still ahead of us. In this respect, the opinion of economists, journalists, and managers is almost unanimous.

This situation can set into motion social processes of two kinds. First, it is highly probable that the government will not be able to meet its wage increase, market supply, and welfare obligations or will fulfil them only nominally, with all gains being quickly consumed by the black market and skyrocketing inflation. One positive circumstance is the current demographic situation which, in the coming years, does not posit the threat of mass unemployment but points rather to a future shortage of labour. Nevertheless, under conditions of recession – or, as the Americans say, stagflation – unemployment can affect some groups of highly skilled professionals, starting with members of the intelligentsia, among them young university graduates. In general, lost expectations can bring about a dangerous state of social frustration and reactions much more desperate and aggressive than those of August 1980.

Secondly, recession and acute shortages of goods can help bring to the surface inner social conflicts until now hidden or neglected and a struggle for a change of principles in the distribution of the national product between highly and poorly paid, white and blue collar groups, and first and foremost between town and country. Given the present volume of supplies of coal, building materials, chemical fertilizers, tools, etc. to the countryside, and estimates for the near future, a refusal to deliver agricultural produce and farmers' strikes would hardly be unexpected.

Further dynamic in such conflicts – both between society and the government and among various social classes – is hard to predict, but we have grounds for being apprehensive that developments might take a wrong turn and put themselves beyond the scope of moderating influences.

Paradoxically, these pessimistic prognoses may contribute to shaping a new rationale for political behaviour, especially in the ruling apparatus, which, with the growing anarchy of social life, has more to lose than anyone else. This apparatus has not, so far, been a very clever pupil, but it is clear that, for a government which has no moral authority of its own, it would be much safer to deal with an organized

society trusting its own authority. Furthermore, it is safer when the nation of its own accord entrusts its fate to sensible authorities, instead of lending its ear to social and political demagogues – safer for all parties concerned, with no exception.

This new rationale for wielding power which I am discussing here would consist of the recognition that the rebirth of social integration and, accompanying it, social opposition and control are not a passing stroke of bad luck, not a result of political and economic mistakes, not one more occasion to set into motion a reshuffle of party and government appointments, but a *normal* situation, new working conditions to which the ruling élite should adjust their mentality and habits of rule. This must be an honest and permanent change, not a make-believe, transitory one. In the light of past experiences this condition seems to be particularly difficult to meet, if not thoroughly naïve. Is it, however, totally impossible?

The problem has much to do with famous disputes about whether our political and economic system is "reformable" or not. There is much scepticism expressed on this point, but as a historian I am used to arguing that there are no unchangeable systems. Our system, too, has undergone several reforms, but the changes came at a high price, did not last, and did not always take the right direction. The thesis (formulated, among others, by Jadwiga Staniszkis) that the system can only regulate itself through crises gained increased respectability. The cost of these successive regulatory crises is so high that we would welcome finding out more economical and more rational mechanisms of change. As an inveterate reductionist (in the methodological sense) I believe that the concept of political or organizational "system" is a hypostasis denoting only more or less institutionalized habits and conventional rules of behaviour. Why shouldn't these habits and rules be a subject of change, once they turn out not to be instrumental?

Furthermore, the thesis that the system does not yield to reforms is potentially dangerous, as it justifies, on the one hand, total conformity, and, on the other, total – i.e., revolutionary – negation.

Both alternatives are, in my opinion, unacceptable. To sum up, it is a kind of "self-service" concept: the system does not yield to any reforms as long as it is commonly considered to be unyielding. Therefore, in spite of opposing arguments, I believe it is possible to shape up a new rationale of power in today's Poland. I believe it is feasible that a new ruling élite would react in a different way than its predecessors to signals of the advent of troubled times. And only with a government of this kind would it be possible and realistic to conclude any *pacta conventa* in an atmosphere free of the pressure of imminent catastrophe. This may make real the "social contract" which — as has been rightly pointed out by Andrzej Micewski in the weekly journal *Tygodnik Powszechny* — did not find its final shape in the agreement signed in Gdansk and Szczecin shipyards in late August 1980 but must be concluded unceasingly, almost every day, on various levels and on every issue that might occur.

Any such permanent agreement does not necessarily have to lead to a uniformity of interests, aspirations, and assessments of the current situation in the name of a generally derided "moral and political unity of the nation" exercised by a "front of unity" (against whom is this front designed, anyway?). What we need for our common good is a limitation of the area of conflicts and means for solving these conflicts; we need an agreement upon the rules of dispute, in the common cause of lessening the "coefficient of friction." It should not only exclude the use of force in settling disputes but help introduce into public life the principle of *fair play*. The power of such agreement should help eradicate most repellent traits of contemporary mass propaganda including the defamatory and libellous campaigns guided from the top; no agreement can survive in an atmosphere of hate. An important part of every contract is its language. Much has already been said about corruption of the political vocabulary in Poland. Agreements can be written either in the stiff but precise language of legal provisions or the language of everyday speech and common experience, subjective and empirical. (It is in the name of this empiricism, so as not to introduce a political and ideological tilt, that I am trying to avoid in this text the word "socialism" and its derivatives, for they are

employed in all too numerous and not always honourable services, as are some of the psychological and formal conditions for building the sort of unwritten civic consensus that I am discussing here.) The essence of the political and social contract will be to delimit the area in which society would have its new *franchise* and the area labelled "off limits" and reserved for central authority. The position of the line between these two areas will probably be the main subject of bargaining and a cause of tension.

III

Now, we can observe that the demands of specific social groups take several different forms. The first and most remarkable trend is the establishment of and attempts to legalize new associations, with the impulse for these democratically designed bodies arising from the ranks of workers. There are among them independent trade unions and student associations and autonomous unions; to these will probably be shortly added farmers' unions. From all sides we hear demands for reviving such autonomous professional institutions as the Medical Chamber and the Chamber of the Bar.

A variant of the same tendency can be seen in the revival of existing associations and the reopening within them of channels for democratic processes; such organizations of long standing as co-operatives of various types, scientific and artistic associations, and professional unions have for long been tied up and demoralized by strict state control. With time, this process will probably spread to associations of higher public utility like the Polish Red Cross, etc. It is quite possible that local councils, particularly municipal and communal councils, will be transformed into institutions of a really representative character, into organs of local self-government.

To carry out such a programme would be tantamount to reversing the 30-year-old process of social disintegration. A rich and varied network of authentic representations of particular interests would

result. The coalitions and federations that would develop as a consequence would open channels for the transmission of public feelings and demands, restore an ethos of civic activism, and enable the formation of an individual and collective sense of authority.

The law is another area in which claims can be expected — where necessary for changes, here and there for its enforcement. The law limiting powers of censorship and the new law on trade unions, the enactment of which has been included in the provisions of the August 1980 agreements, are but a first step in this direction. Next in line are an urgently needed new law on higher education, changes in the Labour Code, new principles of education reform, the press and publishing law, amendments to the passport law, regulations aimed at better protecting individual civil rights, a legal guarantee of the independence of courts, and many other necessary measures. Reforms of a purely legal character are inseparable from administrative reforms, from changes in the patterns of management and subordination, control and responsibility. At present, the most difficult package, involving the highest risk of error and failure, is a reform of the methods of management of the national economy; after having been delayed for many years, the reform is to be introduced now at the least auspicious time for its successful implementation — inauspicious if for no other reason than because of the central distribution and rationing of some scarce goods unaccompanied by a growth in the role of the market or a rise in the economic indicators.

A third area of claims involves the right of access to information, the right to express views, opinions, and beliefs in public, and together with them the restoration of the freedom to transmit and create culture. The Polish nation was able throughout its history, under very unfavourable conditions, to defend its culture from impoverishment and annihilation; it has always been able to preserve the internal variety of its culture, and today there is a common and persistent claim that this spiritual diversification finds its expression in a wide range of newspapers, publications, television and radio programmes, artistic groups, school and university courses, etc.,

and that this variety could draw inspiration from the free circulation of the works of art created abroad but belonging to Polish culture, as well as through unfettered exchange of cultural values with other nations.

Finally, economic and social claims make up the fourth area. In fact, after boiling them down to reasonable size, these are not so much claims as attempts to defend an achieved standard of living against collapse. Strangely enough, this particular group of demands, the most common and elementary ones, has today about the poorest chance of being satisfied. The recently acquired increase in the bargaining power of the working class probably cannot help here. We are witnessing these days a dramatic collapse in all plans and economic balances. It is no longer possible to harbour the illusion that one or other social class will be able to avoid bearing the costs of the muddles of the 1970s, although probably the burden will not be equally distributed; the slogans for which payment is now due are "second Poland," "perfecting further," "dynamic development," "restoring order in the national economy," and the like. To these add also the cost of the treatment, which will be high and will last for many years.

Some Western commentators on Polish events are inclined to believe that the immediate success of claims that they can call political — for example, the birth of independent trade unions and a curb on the excesses of the censorship office — will push the country faster to the point of economic anarchy and the consequent political dangers. In their opinion, it is precisely because the workers have gained an effective means of exerting pressure upon the central economic management and are therefore to wring concessions that the position of Poland has become even more dramatic. I presume this thinking is not all foreign to some quarters of the Polish government. If this presumption were right, it would be disastrous for all of us, as it would mean that every victory of the people would bring them closer to a total catastrophe. To me this line of thinking is wrong: the government can in no way — neither through appeals and threats nor through ideology and use of force — induce millions of workers to make

necessary sacrifices; it cannot because has lost its credibility.

Therefore, when the time for tightening the belt comes -- and that time must be virtually round the corner -- workers, farmers, intellectuals, and youth will only listen to the voice of those whom they trust and have appointed as their representatives. And they will need to be sure that these representatives have an equal say in running the "house." To feel this, to be able to identify anew, as was once done in difficult moments of our history, with the state, to subordinate the individual aspirations and well-being of families to the needs of the state, the people must see that at least three fundamental articles of the social contract are fulfilled:

- a. independent unions and associations;
- b. rule of law, consistent with a general notion of dignity and justice;
- c. Freedom of speech guaranteed by law.

These articles cannot represent the aspirations of the whole of the Polish nation. They do not enter into the sphere of politics; they leave out matters of national sovereignty and political democracy; they recognize the present principles behind the functioning of the state bodies and the ways of selection of the power élite. Some people take this restraint for dishonourable capitulation. Let them believe this if they will, but I want to quote here what was written by Aleksander Swietochowski a hundred years ago: "We renounce not dreams but illusions." A common conviction exists in Poland today that there is a certain critical line which must not be crossed, even verbally, lest we should put in jeopardy collective security. More than once in our history those less patient who wanted to get everything done immediately and were not satisfied with any compromise have brought us to total defeat and proved to be the harbingers of night not day.

We have agreed to step on the firm terrain of empiricism, free from fetish-like words and symbols. Ordinary people in Poland in their everyday life do not deal with the Sejm (Polish parliament) and the Central Committee, with the Constitution and the Warsaw Pact. Instead,

in their everyday life they encounter managers, foremen, purchasing centres for agricultural products, corner-shops, newspapers and the daily news on television, school for their children, railway and bus transport, housing co-operatives, clinics and hospitals, the head of the local community, sometimes militiamen and prosecutors, sometimes a gaoler and judge, and often alcohol, in which they drown their feelings of helplessness. So, maybe a more urgent task is to create a new *living environment*, a more decent and more interesting life, instead of celebrating great ideas and pompous words.

Finally, we should say that this feeling of human and civic dignity, revived in summer 1980, lives with us; and therefore, there is a critical point which no authority, on any account, can cross without causing great danger. In that case we would resort to an article that in the Polish law of old was used to curb the encroachments of royal absolutism, to restrain the authority breaking the *pacta conventa*, the article to which power has been restored by Polish workers: *de non praestanda oboedientia*.

Between these two critical spots lies the area of discussion and negotiations. Making proper use of this area depends not on the radicalism of the claims but on the collective persistence of the nation in defence of institutions and rights already won and those still being fought for. If we lack this persistence, in a year or so we will write articles in the newspapers on apathy, "they" will ban the articles, and again everything will be fine in this, the best of all possible worlds.

September 1980

THE PLANE OF AGREEMENT

Jacek Szymanderski

The basic features of our union are its non-political character, its independence, and its self-government. These three features serve three major objectives which the union would like to fulfil:

1. Protection of the material, social, and cultural interests of working people.
2. Contribution to the economic, social, and cultural development of our country. This is an obvious condition for the realization of the first objective.
3. Humanization of work, defence of human dignity, and prevention of demoralization and despondency in work.

The first objective means that in our activities our main guidelines are the claims of the members of the union. The only limitation is the practical possibility of their realization.

In a socialist country the non-political nature of the trade unions is necessary to attain these goals. A trade union is non-political when it does not seek to establish a political line and does not run for power in the government. The non-political nature of trade unions is essential in a system where the political direction is laid down by a mass workers' party, the leading power in the country. Political disengagement does not denote a collision of lines; moreover, it is essential in situations which do not require political decisions. The question is not the direction but the way of governing, and this way of governing has been in Poland grossly inappropriate, as the party and state leaders are now admitting.

We all understand the need to complete the political decisions with

all these particular and everyday issues which determine the way of governing. However, in some opinions, the non-political character of our union, stressed so strongly by us, inspires fears that it might cause great confusion. One of the suspicions is that people will keep on striking and demanding rises, though we all know that we can't divide more than we produce. The reproach holds the working people in contempt for being unreasonable in their demands and suggests accusingly that money is their first priority.

We are convinced that those who toil to earn their living know very well they will not get money for nothing. They must work honestly for what they get. This truth hasn't been forgotten by the working people. In this respect the moral decline started from the top. The question of a just share should be made clear. The workers must have influence on the distribution of the national income, and they must participate in deciding how much should go on consumption and how much on investments. Some say it will lead to chaos and confusion. We must not forget that before August 1980, the workers had no influence on this kind of decision, and the muddle we are having now is the result of it.

There is another vital issue connected with the political disengagement and the division of the national income. In the Gdansk agreement there is a statement that "our union does not shake the existing system of international alliances." This means that in the distribution of the national income we shall respect the obligations resulting from the alliance system.

Thus the political disengagement threatens neither the socialist system nor the alliance system. But it aims at abusing political argumentation and making it a screen for arbitrariness, incompetence, and dishonesty. True political disengagement will be preserved if the top political positions are not coupled with the top positions in trade unions. An activist of our union must come from a basic trade union organization; he can't be a professional political agitator. Only then will the leaders of the union be able to stay in touch with

voters and not become *apparatchik*.

Political disengagement is one of the aspects of independence. Another one is being independent of the administration and employer. In our country there is mainly state ownership of the means of production. In such cases, independence of an employer means independence of the administration and of the party. Such independence is fundamental if the union wants to control efficiently whether a manager acts in accord with the interests of workers, the real masters of factories.

We often meet with the reproach that control is not enough; joint management and joint responsibility are needed. The same slogan was used towards the workings of the committees of the old trade unions. We must stress here that we also attach a great importance to joint management and responsibility, but in a different way. We do not want a joint hiding of "management mistakes," neither do we want to act according to the saying "You roll my log and I'll roll yours."

The management controls the quality of work of its workers. The workers through the independent, self-governing union will control the quality of the management's work. The workers have tools and machines by means of which to perform their work. The management has offices, planners, book-keeping departments by means of which it manages the whole enterprise. The mutual control is obvious and in accordance with the rules of socialist democracy. So what is the point of persistently calling for joint responsibility? Real joint responsibility is ensured through the obvious interest of the workers, which lies in the good quality of production and the profit of the enterprise. The answer may be unpleasant for some people who are afraid the independent union will not have to describe each incompetence of the management as "an objective difficulty." Rain, snow-storms, and energy crises are not the main plagues destroying our economy. Distinguishing between "objective difficulties" and subjective impotence can only help us to get out of the economic crisis. Such joint responsibility is possible only when the union is independent.

Full independence of the employee can be ensured by an organization based on a territorial principle and spreading all over Poland. This results from the state ownership of the means of production and from the way of organizing the state and political authorities in Poland.

The last issue we want to discuss is self-government. Self-government, in our opinion, is the condition of fulfilling the postulates of a crew. It is an obvious fact for everybody, especially for politicians and social workers, that if we want to realize or defend some claims firstly they must be pronounced and secondly they must be heard. Not everyone who is confronted with problems can tell clearly how to improve his situation. This is not to say that another man knows better. He knows it best, but each man must have a chance to think his problems over. One of our fundamental tasks is to help people to join in groups in which they can express their problems, and understand and discuss their interests in the best possible way. Therefore, within the union we help to organize various branch and professional groups. We also hope to reconcile people with their work. If people get to understand their professional situation better, if they can influence it, they will feel satisfaction at work, they will show initiative, they will work to have results and not "to fulfil a task" or "realize the plan."

The statement that people themselves know best what is good and what is bad for them has an important consequence. The fundamental principle of our self-government is that a higher authority of the union can't annul a decision of a lower authority in the territory of its activity. The fear, a completely groundless one, is that this principle can cause anarchy. In conditions of socialist ownership of production the reversal of this principle may cause a muddle and may call for unnecessary and irresponsible strikes by the overcentralized union authorities. It is worth noting that the statute of Solidarity does not give the National Commission such authority, and the principle of self-government guarantees that strikes will be the ultimate measures of exerting influence in order to defend the rights of the wide masses of workers.

The purpose of these general remarks on the foundations of our activities is to show a wide plane of agreement.

We would like to discuss two additional aspects of the relationship between the authorities and the self-governing independent trade union Solidarity. An enormous credibility problem has become a bitter fact and requires some consideration. Self-criticism is not sufficient any more to restore the public trust. All the hard-working people who through the years have been witnesses to and sufferers of "management mistakes" and of the authorities' abuses and incompetence will no longer listen to appeals for "tightening their belts" from those who made those "mistakes" and were guilty of other social evils. People do not know who in the authorities is responsible for what as there is no principle of political responsibility which might lead to a clear understanding of who made mistakes and who defied these people. Those guilty of mistakes might have been but a few, but in people's convictions the authorities knew about all those abuses and did nothing. What we need now is an institutional guarantee that the wise and honest in the authorities will be free to oppose those who are ignorant and dishonest.

We all know that the situation in our country is disastrous and impossible to repair in the near future. We also realize that only a strong power supported by people can help the country out of its crisis.

The people will only listen to appeals for patience and forbearance from those they have confidence in. It can only be an independent, self-governing social organization created by the people themselves. Solidarity is such a great social organization; it can be crushed; it can be thwarted in its activities; but this would not be the way to restore people's trust. And without this trust how is it possible to govern?

We have emphasized that our organization is non-political; we have proved that our activities do not threaten the foundations of the socialist system. And yet each day which should be devoted to work in

the union we have to waste on senseless struggles which needlessly aggravate the situation and reduce the chances of agreement.

Are there still in our country people who want in defence of their selfish interests to increase social strains and intensify the crisis, who want to deprive us of independence and self-government, who want to suppress our movement assembling at the moment over seven million people, the movement which is the only chance for our country to get out of the crisis? If there are such people and if they are capable of the action, will they also take the responsibility for its results?

October 1980

ON AMAZEMENT

Konstanty Puzyna

Flood tide from the coast reached Warsaw, bringing with it some good reports of the situation there and much empty chatter about all sorts of things. Now this talk has something of a psychotherapeutic character; it helps the words recover their original meaning. "Polish August '80" is slowly turning into history. This most important event in the whole post-war history of Poland can now be looked at from a certain, not distant perspective.

The Warsaw press resounds with strange tones — not stiff and cautious ones but enthusiastic tones that are most peculiar. "It is amazing how much calm, responsibility, solidarity is being demonstrated by the working class of the Baltic Coast in these days of strikes." Every third article in September carries these words. Most amazing is that there are dumb-bells who are so amazed. But there are too many of these whole-heartedly amazed people, even bearing in mind the herd of unfortunate victims of the notorious "propaganda of success." Well, they were there on the spot, sent their hot reports every day. What was there so breath-taking to them? I was also there. All the time, from 15 August till the end — not in the shipyard itself but in Gdansk region — so in the first weeks of the euphoria I didn't even dare open my mouth. I was reading the press, but neither from the best reports nor from the whole bunch of strike-day bulletins of Solidarity did I learn anything that had not been known to the people on the coast as early as in August. Perhaps, I reasoned, those amazed ones felt strangers there — not like me, born in Gdansk. I was brought up there; every once in a while I go there to see my mother; and although for 25 years I have lived in Warsaw, I always feel at home in Gdansk. So, maybe I should offer to those confused ones something like a

different perspective or a different point of view?

"Whoever spent a few hours of those strike days among the shipyard workers of Gdansk or Szczecin -- including incorrigible sceptics, cynics, and know-alls -- underwent a peculiar ideological metamorphosis," writes Wojciech Gielzynski in *Polityka*. "Some guests in the shipyard, more sensitive and less selfish, set about weaving a mythological web around the working class. To the great amazement [again!] of intellectuals, workers not only showed Olympian calm and cool determination in fighting their claims -- something we could have expected from them -- but became universally permeated with a spirit of a salvationist mission and responsibility before history for the fate of the nation. For intellectuals there remained but the bitter tears for staying in the rearguard."

So "guests" felt they had stayed in the rearguard. Why? Because, probably, their point of reference was subconsciously, instinctively, October 1956. Then, indeed, intellectuals had played first fiddle, and the game was for appeals and ideas of a strictly political character by that time already partly approved "at the top" (at the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU). A point of reference for the strength and determination of the last summer's protest should be looked for much deeper: not in 1956 but in the 1905 revolution. It is here that the workers' consciousness comes into play. Political issues were so different in 1905 that comparisons, however familiar the moral and social climate looks, are excluded. It was then, in 1905, that within a couple of weeks the worker class consciousness started to become a national phenomenon. Such transformations, sometimes taking a reverse direction and including opinion fluctuations, can be traced throughout the period between the wars, but the tradition of 1905 never won much popularity in Poland. Nevertheless it is there, at the beginning of the century, that we can behold the first analogy helpful in understanding the "Polish August '80."

Another analogy, a quite recent one, looks more like the beginning of current events. I mean here the strikes in 1970 in the same Baltic

cities, in the same shipyards. Indeed, it is not accidental; note that ten years ago, as today, the intellectuals had marched in the rearguard, even further behind than today. Later, in talks held after December 1970 -- private talks, to be sure -- I heard the words of regret that we had not joined the workers, had not signed some protest resolution. I was looked at with a frown of disapproval when I replied to this: "Thank God we did not." Intellectuals, with mental habits brought from October '56 and March '68, could only harm the cause. The power of the December '70 protests, the power of which they became fully aware some time later, dwelt in the fact that the workers limited their claims to economic and welfare ones, free of any political clauses. Because of that they won.

Then the strikes were short, lasting several days, not longer, and they were crushed by force but this was not a defeat. On the contrary, they brought about an immediate change in the party and government leadership -- a fact unprecedented in socialist states where such changes, as a rule, are a consequence of decisions made "at the top" and not the result of open pressure from the worker masses. And although many elements of that change were later squandered, although the workers' sense of responsibility for their country was systematically muffled, there was much more freedom in life, and in thought, in the 1970s than in the preceding decade. This was the principal, national gain of the December movement. Today it is worth keeping it in our minds. Everyday life was more free, but not the press, theatre, or literature. The activities of the censor expanded in an inverse proportion to the events in the country. It is easy to notice that the "propaganda of success" was so boundlessly idiotic because it was not able to persuade anybody of anything; it was first of all a smoke screen to cover what was behind it. And the things that happened there were really interesting, not only to the public prosecutor.

On the basis of widening differences in earnings, an acute social stratification was growing and everywhere there mushroomed hidden pressure groups, "élites" whose standard of living was also widely differentiated, according to their access to power and money and,

obviously, to the extent of their impunity. "There are now in the country some four kinds of people," a woodsman said recently on television. Everybody knew about it but the workers knew best: they themselves built those villas with swimming pools and strange "recreation centres" hidden in thick forests, most of the time staying empty. They also knew well the cost, and so was born a sense of social injustice, of stealing Poland away piece by piece, of bitterness and humiliation, while the "élites" were not sparing in their lordly gestures; they were the pot in which was melted down the hard, strenuous sense of grievance and a hardened social solidarity; working-class consciousness became identified again with the national one. The "service" paid to the strikers' solidarity by those "élites" in the Baltic cities gained in value, due to the memory of that December, which could have been forgotten by the amazed gentlemen from Warsaw but not in those cities. Not without a profound reason was one of the first claims of shipyard workers concerned with raising a memorial of the victims of that strike. They were, after all, their nearest: colleagues, husbands, sons, neighbours, friends. Ten years are not enough to forget them. Also, social consciousness along the coast was quite different from that in the other parts of the country because of one largely unnoticed fact: the circulation of information, even *official information*, at the time of the first and second act of that shipyard struggle was entirely different there from that in other places.

After the strike, a week before Christmas 1970, the newspapers in the Coast province wrote openly about these events. This was not the whole truth but a good piece of it: there were, for instance, detailed accounts of the events in Gdansk and Gdynia, day by day, hour by hour. Copies of the local newspaper *Glos Wybrzeza* I carried then to Warsaw as underground publications. Now, in August 1980, the information was even more complete and up-to-date. Large crowds gathered at the shipyard gate to listen to the transmission of negotiations, communiqués, and explanations broadcast over the loud-speakers; 50,000 copies of the information bulletin *Solidarity* were circulated daily; even local television in its II programme a week before the conclusion had had live transmission from the negotiations between the strike

committee and the government commission; it was only then that other parts of the country saw and heard the shipyard workers on television. Energetic protests by Walesa against cutting off communication with other cities sounded to the people in the Coast as a protest against something totally odd.

The strikes in the Baltic cities were organized by young people, under thirty, today the majority of industrial workers — people who were not there in December 1970 but who, nonetheless, were able soberly and wisely to draw tactical conclusions from past experiences: from that old mistake of going out into the streets, and from the achievements that gave them victory then. From that victory they learnt first of all: putting forward economic and welfare claims, political responsibility, solidarity, good organization, securing public property, keeping order in the shipyard. All that so much astonishes Warsaw egg-heads today was already there in December 1970. Even the organization of the strikes itself had then been perfect, given their ad hoc, urgent calling and the imminent intervention of the security forces.

In August 1980 the shipyard was not cut off from the city anymore, and lack of militiamen around helped to keep the atmosphere peaceful. People standing by the gate talked to the workers, their wives contacted them everyday, later imparting the news to the neighbours. The same happened in other plants. Note that Gdansk, Gdynia, and Sopot make a great industrial agglomeration, having everything from heavy to precision industry; in Gdansk Shipyard alone 16,500 people work. Add to this other shipyards, longshoremen, dockers at the three ports, workers in the machine and electronics industry, students at the polytechnic, and workers at the refinery and other co-operating plants. Numerically, the modern working class dominates here; demographically, the workers are spread across the whole area — there is no ghetto, no "workers' district." This may further help explain why just here the class and national consciousness coincided earlier and more fully and why the Coast province was in August so solidly determined, quiet, and optimistic, so unified in its mood.

Wojciech Gielzynski described it very accurately by comparing the Coast province cities with Warsaw: "Everyone in the shipyard, from strikers to observers, felt that Gdansk was separated from Warsaw not only by a distance of 300 km but by its own, individual scope of thinking and emotions. Warsaw saw Gdansk events first as a surprising but still naïve attempt to improve the Republic and set her hopes on changes at the top. Gdansk was busy with advocating its list of 21 claims (most of all, the first of them) and for this reason saw Warsaw as a whirl of scrambles involving the authorities. The people in Gdansk turned a deaf ear to the most persuasive arguments that television was able to conceive to propitiate them. Gdansk remained indifferent to all that Warsaw scrambling, ignored it."

In all that he is right, but he takes it a step further and confusion sets in. Gielzynski writes: "For both sides — because of cutting or a lapse in information channels — the only thing that was clear was what had happened here. Besides, Gdansk looked at everything from a local perspective, although it was not without concern for the country's fates; Warsaw had a national perspective related to the world situation." No, this was not so. The "lapse" in information affected mostly one side: Warsaw may have known little about Gdansk but Gdansk knew a lot about Warsaw. It was enough to watch television to see Warsaw hysteria and a "local perspective" of the capital. But the "national perspective," as it soon turned out, was more credible on the side of Gdansk; the same can be said of its much more sober assessment of the "world situation." Everybody understood it and knew that it was not possible to exclude the use of force but, in logical terms, neither side could profit from it, as it *wouldn't have brought any results*. Such total solidarity couldn't be — they thought — broken by force, especially in a situation of rampant economic crisis. The workers drew then a logical conclusion from what they had been told for many years: that they are genuine owners of the production means. Machines stand still. Can you move them without us? No. So, try to negotiate with us, there is no other way out.

The accuracy of this diagnosis was for long neither conceived nor

accepted in Warsaw. Why? To be frank, because in Warsaw more than anywhere else there were people who suddenly realized how much they could lose. Those days many of them saw power, money, privileges, impunity slip out of their hands. The nervousness and hysteria of this interest group spread widely as in Warsaw opinion is mostly shaped by administrative employees and intellectuals, that is, the strata whose existence is not bound to production but depends directly on the power apparatus. That is why these strata react most vividly to changes and shifts at the top and to strictly political slogans, paying much less attention to social and welfare claims. Besides, intellectuals carry with them a burden of tradition which sometimes blinds them to reality. For instance, they still assume paternalist attitudes toward the "masses" which finds its manifestation only in amazement and sudden raptures over workers and peasants, then resolves itself in panic. Usually they refer to themselves as "the intelligentsia," borrowing this name, today completely outdated, from another epoch. This is old-fashioned not only because the last 15 years have brought a general growth in average education levels but also because even among people with a university degree the social divisions are by now vertical: the so-called technical intelligentsia is today either a part of the working class (in industry) or belongs to the stratum of clerks (in various institutes and in management). The "egg-heads" are also clerks: they sit in offices, scientific institutes, newspapers, radio, and television; some of them even try to earn their living with the pen. Dependent on the authorities, uneasy about this, they try to loosen the ties that bind them, but there is not much they can do. They would not be so weak if they could win steady support from the public. In the past, however, a single gesture of the censor's hand has been enough to cut them off from society, and they dance attendance upon the authorities. "Don't you play the worker bit," some might say to me. "You, yourself, are an egg-head after all." Indeed I am, that's why I am writing this. It is obvious that my personal and immediate interest is contained not in points 1 and 2 of the Agreement but in point 3.* For more than five

* Not so much the right to establish free trade unions and the right to strike as a limitation of censorship.

years I have been sitting with a gag in my mouth, hardly ever saying a word, and if I did say something it was on a foreign or historic subject. My immediate interest is a struggle for wider information and a limitation of censorship powers, or at least more overt signs of the censor's intervention — dots marking the part of the text that has been removed instead of pure forgery.

I will tell you more: my trade is the theatre, and independent trade unions in the theatre mean a disaster. It is enough to see it in the West, where the unions are strong: complaints from art directors are heard everywhere, to say nothing of theatre managers. I am also the editor of a literary journal, and because of my functions I always keep in touch with the printers. For years I have observed what was happening among printers. Before the war they belonged to the best-paid groups of workers; today they sit at the bottom of the table. Of course, one can simply shrug one's shoulders and say: "None of my business." I realize too that the claims of the printers are likely to cause me problems, that I can expect from them hindrance more than co-operation. And yet, even if it's to the detriment of my own situation, I regard the matter of independent trade unions, as do all people in the Coast province, as being right on the mark. Why? Who knows? Perhaps because I was there at that time.

Or perhaps because I don't like the romantic tradition — not romanticism itself but just the romantic tradition and what romantics write about it. Intellectuals from Warsaw and Cracow have always been attached to the gentry-intelligentsia tradition, and in the last 15 years this attachment has reached the stage of mental deviation. Once they flirted with realism and attributed to realism all that was to be praised; now it's romanticism, and everything becomes romantic — however inappropriate — from Gombrowicz to wartime partisans. I feel sick at the sight of this *Eintopf*, as we called a one-course meal during the occupation. Especially when we are served it with a penetrating look and with a discreet clanking of sabres, paper ones to be sure. Wyspianski mocked that patriotism and referred to it scathingly as so much show as early as the beginning of the century.

All this can but strengthen traditional stereotypes: catchwords like "armed struggle," "uprising," "confederation," "death to tyrants," "for your freedom and ours" can still find a vivid response in Poland. But the trade unions? The right to strike? In a country like ours which hardly ever experienced parliamentarism (there never was enough time) such slogans sound strange. They look as if they were taken from another language, from another school of thought.

Not along the coast, though. Here, a sense of reality was always obligatory. This area, after the partition of Poland, fell to Prussia, where romantic ideology was least developed; secondly, the Coast province means also Gdynia, a big modern port built from its very foundations between the wars (like today's Northern Port in Gdansk); the origins of our fleet, pride of the whole country; the Marine School in Tczew and the sailing ship *Dar Pomorza*, built by public subscription, all society's spontaneous but skilfully stimulated fascination with the sea that practically led to acceptance of a maritime moral code — strict division of duties aboard, reliability, strong nerves, co-operation. Thirdly, after the war the Coast, full of new-comers, has remained a young region, for 35 years open to the world, to foreign ships, to imports and exports, a region whose people know foreign ports where strikes are an everyday matter and trade unions represent a power every businessman, every shipowner, every captain must take into account. In such a setting, the establishment of independent unions was not a surprise and sounded something quite obvious.

A close examination of the "local perspective" of the three Coast cities (and of comic, old Warsaw) is the first thing to be done in order to understand the process. This examination was taking place not only between Gdansk and Warsaw; it is not difficult to guess that the whole country felt and thought the same, lived the same conflicts. Gdansk remains but an illustration of it, the most outstanding and clear illustration, precisely because of its "local" character. There is much more to it than this, some colour, some shade I see but can't get hold of. In the Polish language we lack a word to define that

"something" associated with the idea of neighbourhood, one's own land, something that can be expressed only through a metaphor.

So, perhaps, I should add one more detail. On that sunny Sunday afternoon, 31 August, when I was leaving Gdansk I saw in the vicinity of the Lenin Shipyard scores of people who came there to watch the "finish," the signing of the agreement between the strikers and the government. I missed this spectacle, but I did not need it. Leaning out of the window of my compartment, straight after pulling out of Gdansk Central Station I noticed a freight train with three cigar-shaped tanks bearing the sign "liquid gas." On the first tank I saw this carefully painted sign: "From striking refinery - to the Three Cities." It was a fine job. It must have taken them a lot of time to draw such even letters.

Haven't they enough time there? Yes, but it is not only that. In the graphic composition, in the careful precision of the letters, in the joyful elegance of the paint glittering in the sun, and, finally, in the text of the dedication you can read much, much more.

September-October 1980

QUEST FOR A SENSIBLE SOLUTION

Jan Szczepanski

After more than five months of social upheaval, having some of the characteristics of a revolutionary movement but resolving itself mostly in protests, after claims for settling accounts and instituting reforms, Poland is in a situation that calls for a careful analysis and action aimed at strengthening the achievements of the movement and protecting them from being annihilated. Now, in mid-December 1980, the movement can still develop in various directions, but the basic elements of the internal situation and those placing the country in a wider pattern of international relations have already been outlined or defined clearly enough so that we can abandon the realm of general suppositions and step onto the ground of more or less reliable forecasting. In the domestic arena we are able to define the character of both spontaneous and organized forces, their demographic and structural base, which, in turn, can help us outline a possible range of activities they may become involved in. Methods of operation of various forces have also become apparent within the movement itself, with ideological positions and attitudes. Thus we can try to present the general nature of the social forces existing within this movement, as well as those opposing it, to picture society's attitudes and aspirations and other aspects of the current events to make a basis for consideration of possible ways of finding a reasonable solution of the existing situation. I would like here to offer a set of draft proposals.

1. Headlines appearing in various newspapers in socialist, NATO, and third-world countries have cast considerable light on Poland's international relations. It is, then, easy to figure out the degree of interest born of the fact that changes in international relations

brought about by the current events in our country and their possible consequences affect many political, economic, and military interests.

First of all, the economic situation in Poland raises anxiety in the socialist countries obliged to help us and trying to find out how such aid would be used. Appeals from Poland to capitalist countries for economic assistance encounter quite natural questions. Let me quote some of those I heard during a recent visit to the United States and France. What benefit is there for taxpayers in various countries in helping Poland out of its troubles? What guarantees can they have that the money lent to Poland will be properly used, better than the credits provided in the 1970s? When will the social and political situation there return to normal and when will the economic machine start working at its full capacity? What is the West's political interest in helping Poland? Maybe the bankruptcy of Poland is good for the West. When will the Poles set their national economy along more reasonable principles, as they have been talking about doing since 1956, without actually accomplishing anything? Why does Poland, which has great resources of coal, copper, sulphur, and other raw materials, large areas of arable land, and a climate favourable to agriculture, remain poor and unable to produce enough food for her own needs? To these concerns about the chronic malaise of the Polish economy appearing in various places in the world add some other factors. First of all, the political situation in Poland gives rise to a feeling of danger in other socialist countries. The Soviet Union has stated unambiguously that Poland's remaining within the communist bloc is a primary condition of her security. Mindful of the experiences of World War II in which more than 20 million Soviet people lost their lives, the Soviet Union in its foreign policy is guided by the idea that this cannot be repeated ever again. With the idea of assuring its own security, the Soviet Union carefully watches developments in Poland and claims for itself a right to protect its interests with all available means. It is, thus, good to be able to see Poland's international relations with the eyes of her neighbours, as only this makes it possible to properly define our interests and assess the probability of their being successfully defended. Policy-making consists, as is

commonly known, in applying force in pursuit of one's interests. This can be military or economic force, force arising from scientific or technological potential, international prestige, or force derived from the role played in international relations, e.g., the power of small Switzerland. At the moment, Poland, in defence of her political interests, cannot resort to any of these kinds of force. Therefore, the role we play in the international arena is determined by our alliances and our remaining within the block of the socialist countries.

The state of our international relations makes, then, a first group of premises for consideration on the ways of overcoming the existing crisis.

2. Other premises dwell on a clear definition of the internal situation. Let us begin with a quick look at the chain of domestic events after World War II. In 1944-45 leftist forces, then a clear minority in Polish society, established in the country the system of people's democracy. The nation, ravaged and broken by war, and the people, many of them displaced or exiled from their dwellings, longing for peace and their normal existence, accepted this regime. In 1948, after the reaction against "rightist deviation," the people's democracy was superseded by the programme of "building socialism." But soon, in 1956, the workers of Poznan rose in protest against that form of socialism, winning in October '56 nation-wide support for their claims. The attempts at renewal had, however, been interrupted and the party returned to its old methods, giving them yet a slightly more palatable form. Meanwhile, in the country there grew up a new generation, but the educational methods were far from adequate to win youth over to the new system. Lip service was paid to it, obviously, but this did not mean a real acceptance. Therefore, the unrest of 1968 involved mostly the young, and in the worker riots of 1970 and 1971 a leading role was played by young people. The efforts made in 1971 to stabilize the economy and political system along more rational lines were again abandoned and the regime returned to the methods of government and economic management that had nothing to do with the promised reforms and were seen with disapproval by a wide range of the people. The warning of 1976 was ignored; no significant changes were

initiated. Then in summer 1980 there began this new and rapidly solidifying movement of mass protest that we are living with today. This movement is "carried" on a powerful popular wave as a result of the "baby boom" of the 1950s, when the population grew at a rate of 19.5 per thousand.

This chain of events - 1948, '56, '68, '70, '76, '80 - can be considered in all its economic, political, and social complexity. To me, however, it is conditioned by demographic and sociological factors, having manifested itself in the way the successive age-groups and generations entered social, economic, and political life in the 36 years of existence of the People's Poland. In this process the education of the young generation and binding the young into the system was of strategic importance. All this failed. One by one, successive disillusioned generations have repudiated the existing forms of the system, a symbol of this being the fact that among political emigrants and in political opposition circles in this country the people who in their student years were "the hope of the party" and leaders of the party youth dominate.

I think socio-demographic analysis of these tendencies leads us to many interesting conclusions. To put it briefly, there is an ever-smaller number of people in the mould of those who in the early post-war years had accepted the system and had tried to work so that the nation could develop within the framework of this system; in successive generations and age-groups entering, every year, into active social life the proportion of people ready actively to support the existing system has for some time been steadily diminishing; unsuccessful attempts to reverse the trend in 1956 and 1971 cast doubts as to whether self-improvement was possible; successive age-groups have been showing a passive acceptance of the existing conditions but also exerting a certain pressure toward change. In the 1970s people who were born in the 1950s started their active life, people who did not remember either the war or Stalinism, to whom even the events of 1970 are known more from history than from their personal experience. These people raise energetic claims for reforms, and their successors will

be even more demanding. So, the system cannot ignore these social moods and has to take into account that the new generations will have their own vision of acceptable socialism.

If this demographic hypothesis is valid, reforms are an urgent necessity and any form of suppression of the present movement will result in several years in another upheaval of much wider scope.

3. A solution of the present crisis should be looked for in the area marked out by these two groups of conditioning factors: limits to the reform movement imposed by the state of Poland's foreign relations and the expectations stemming from society's frame of mind, first and foremost that of the young people beginning their active participation in public life. What, then, are the optimum objectives that the reform movement can set itself when the stages of laying claims and "settling accounts" have been completed.

First, let me point to several constant elements. It can be taken for granted that the socialist system, in its basic principles, will remain unchanged. Here, socialism means social ownership of the means of production, to the extent to which it exists in Poland; the leading role of the communist party; the dominance of the working class; political, economic, scientific and technological, and cultural co-operation within the CMEA; central economic planning in which the Planning Commission matches economic decisions made in the private sector with those of the state sector by means of a peculiar system of economic levers.

The same principles may, however, provide grounds for rational and effective policies as well as for quite arbitrary measures, like the ones that have contributed to the present catastrophe. There can be a well-to-do and prosperous socialism, as well as a poor and hopeless one. If the nation is not willing to accept a paltry form of socialism, and since socialism is a precondition of its existence, then it has to give its own socialism a rational, efficient, and prosperous shape. This idea is easy to accept, but how is it to be put into effect?

Let us begin with the party that should take upon itself most of the blame for the state of socialism in Poland because it was the party that supervised its construction. In my opinion, the most important moment in the whole history of the Polish United Workers Party came several years ago, when the party's leading role found its legal confirmation in the Constitution. Only few among both those who wanted this state of affairs and those who launched passionate protests against it were fully aware of the significance of this fact. I think this constitutional amendment brings a decisive change in the party's situation in society. Without the constitutional regulation, the party existed above the state and above the law, and had the status of a revolutionary force reshaping the order of a capitalist state and the state's legal principles, which were not binding on it. The role of the party can become a subject of constitutional regulation only if the socialist state and its law have become reality and the party becomes a part of the state, assumes constitutional, not revolutionary, obligations and a legal responsibility for their fulfilment. What we need now is to define the guiding, or leading, role of the party in legal terms and clarify its tasks and the scope of its legal liability. I suspect that hardly anyone among the proponents of this constitutional amendment could have expected such consequences.

Another area of political matters calling for an urgent solution is the much-discussed problem of socialist democracy. It concerns the range of independence of all elected representatives, beginning from the Diet, through regional and local people's councils, down to self-government in the co-operatives, social organizations, local communities, etc. Here too the central problem is to define clearly their relation to the party and the party's leading role in these organs. Does the party intend to have the last word in all matters, to keep control over the country through the repressive organs it has at its disposal? Or is it prepared to respect the majority's will wherever it does not undermine socialist principles?

The 1970s brought an important change within the party: its leaders,

no matter for what reason, gave up using force to stifle social tendencies that did not arise from party policies. They did not create, however, any new mechanisms for managing society and steering its developmental processes.

However, a major part of the professional party apparatus did not accept those policies of the leadership that have eventually brought to the fore political opinions and forces, treated indifferently by the party and government, but tacitly allowed to exist. Consequently, in summer 1980, when the authorities were caught on the hop by the massive size of the movement, people in the apparatus, local secretaries and activists, thought that they should oppose it by sheer force, as they did not know other mechanisms and political methods of handling the crisis.

Then, if the party wants now a political renewal it must define its role in legal terms; it must define its place in the democratic system and create political mechanisms of leadership, different from the rigid commandeering of people. For years there has existed in the party a "comradely" concept of domestic policy based on the conviction that the only threat to members of the ruling group could come from colleagues also wielding power. So it was thought necessary to appoint to all important posts only "good colleagues." They did not anticipate the emergence of such forces as Solidarity or other social forces capable of causing them real trouble. When such real problems emerged, the party leaders, so skilful in "comradely" policy-making, turned out helpless and had to pack up and go.

What goals, then, must the party set itself under the present circumstances? It has to work out quickly a programme of restoration of unity in its own ranks; political needs create mechanisms for governing society. It must urgently find administrative and managerial cadres capable of using political methods in the governmental process, knowing how to talk to the people and solve their problems. It must replace party bureaucrats with true activists who can mould the collective life through psychological and socio-

technical means. Finally, a leadership must emerge able to react to society's problems and solve them, not merely juggle with dismissals and appointments.

The leading role in the nation can only fall to the party that clearly realizes its own objectives, knowing how to present this programme to the nation in a suggestive form to win people's support for it, and, finally, able to successfully implement it. There have been several changes of leaders, and the issue of programme and methods of action becomes more and more urgent. The professional party apparatus can no longer make an impression on the people, who passively await someone's help in restoring the situation, someone who does not set them tasks that are beyond them. Such conditions must not return, under any circumstances.

The change of generations has also occurred in the party. Executive posts are now filled by people in their mid-thirties and forties who are better fitted to understand the attitudes and aspirations of young generations, attitudes which shape the national consciousness. It is also much easier for them to understand that holding back and "freezing" this nation-wide movement without solving the country's problems can only bring a postponement of conflict.

4. The best programme for Poland at the end of 1980 seems to be strengthening socialism in the country, a programme in which there would be a place for reasonable economic planning, individual worker initiative, and utilization of economic potential, in which the party would be able to use the existing social forces and handle them by politically effective methods; social, cultural, scientific, and technological creativity would not be frustrated by senseless censorship, dull repression and ill-functioning administration. Several months of discussion have brought so many elements forward in the attempt to define socialism that the Central Committee, with all its working groups, was hardly able to work out a coherent and comprehensive synthesis. Under present conditions, a personal pattern will not decide the fates of the party. What is needed are proposals for a

solution of the current, acute problems. The party should, then, change its "personalist" stand to a "problem-oriented" approach.

The thing is that in society two forces came to the fore of a clearly political character, in spite of their apolitical declarations, i.e., the Church and Solidarity. The Church is a religious community and its primary goal is to fulfil its pastoral duties. But the fact that the Church in the whole history of People's Poland has been independent of the party and remained beyond its control is of decisive political significance. In the crisis months of 1980 it has gotten involved in political activity as another organized framework of social life coexistent within the state, and when the state and party apparatus began to falter the Church was the only organized body that could have been expected to fill this gap. The Church, however, for many years has not wanted to be a political force, and, therefore, in 1980 it did not have in its hands any political instruments, judging that the crisis was first of all of a moral and religious character. True, if all Roman Catholics in Poland followed the teachings of the Church and strictly observed Christian ethics, the state of society would be entirely different. But in the current political crisis the Church has had to resort to political methods which it purposefully had not worked out in the past; as a result, events slipped out of the control of the Church. The experience of the church hierarchy, their caution and composed, religion-oriented attitude restores the Church to its role as a factor for stability, thoughtful consideration, and pacification of mounting emotions. At the time of a quest for reasonable solutions of the crisis, solutions that would be marked out between the principles of a socialist system and the nation's aspirations, the voice of the primate and the episcopate is again an important political factor.

The social movement initiated by the strikes in July 1980 but having its roots in a distant past has brought to the fore institutional forces in the form of independent, self-governed trade unions among which the major role is being played by Solidarity.

What are the possibilities of and limitations to Solidarity activities?

It is carried forward by a demographic wave composed of the people who, in the words of Mieczyslaw F. Rakowski, do not feel that subliminal fear of terror because they do not remember either the German occupation or the 1950s. Solidarity was created in the atmosphere of strikes, i.e., in a specific psychological climate in which collective emotions had a powerful significance. This psychological climate has survived and is still with us. From its origins the movement has been permeated with a Messianic spirit that manifested itself not only in religious attitudes assumed by the workers during the strikes but also in its ideology, treating itself as a renewal on social, political, and cultural planes. An analysis of the evolution of the movement from economic and social claims put forward during the strikes to political and cultural demands submitted later would be very interesting. A powerful factor was demands for a "setting of accounts," exposing and punishing the people who either contributed to the existing economic and political crisis, abused their powers, or committed ordinary crimes. These aspects provided an opportunity for action for the intelligentsia rather than for the masses of workers. Needless to say, all these elements were strongly permeated with national sentiments.

The boundaries of Solidarity's activity had been delimited in the agreements signed with striking workers and later confirmed in its statute. In spite of its declarations to remain only a trade union, with, admittedly, wider competence, Solidarity, due to its independence and self-government, becomes, like the Church, a factor in political life. The line separating trade union work from political activity is as subtle as the boundary between religious and political work for the Church. Solidarity, however, has neither the centuries-old, experienced, and disciplined hierarchy of the Church nor the consideration and calm of the clergy. If Solidarity allows itself to take the road of political activity, if its activists attempt to dictate to the state the principles of its functioning, it will lose its *raison d'être* as a trade union organization. Moreover, Solidarity activists and ideologists must first themselves learn the principles and techniques of trade union work, must learn how to transform

their ideology of protest to everyday, routine solving of workers' problems.

Solidarity was born out of a movement of a patriotic and Messianic character. The transformation of this movement into a regular organization is a critical experience, and for this reason Solidarity leaders, consciously or not, perpetuate the transitional character of a movement carried on a wave of emotions. But soon the time will come when the masses of its members seat their activists at a desk and set them to that everyday, routine work, typical of all trade unions in developed societies. Ideologists will then be replaced by highly trained clerks free of emotions in charge of dealing with unionists' problems. The transformation of reformist processes and revolutionary movements into formal structures, changes in the character of leaders, a shift from Messianism to organization, and professional routine organizers and specialized functionaries superseding revolutionaries are issues that have for a long time been discussed in sociology textbooks and everybody can read about them. Solidarity is not an exception to the rule; in addition, in its union work it will have to cope with competition from the branch unions.

Sociologists specializing in studying the character of organizations speak of "organizational imperatives," a phenomenon consisting in the fact that any organization able to fulfil its functions must have a certain structure, specialized sections, established rules and methods of conduct, and means for action. A social movement able to pursue permanent action has also to obey that "organizational imperative." And here, in my opinion, dwell sociological limits to Solidarity's activities; a social movement can be initiated by people driven by emotions, but the organization should group together people directed by common interests. Thus, the transition from movement to organization will change the nature of Solidarity, which still maintains its original character as a movement—for example, getting involved in legislative works at an early stage. But when work on the new laws is taken over by professional lawyers, ideological declarations will be replaced by meticulous analyses of the coherence of the bills, their consistency

with the Constitution, with establishing their intentions and interpretations — all this, precise and boring work, giving no emotional satisfaction.

Finally, as Solidarity, ever more actively participating in solving everyday problems, shifts from criticism to joint responsibility for the matters of the country, its attitude toward the authorities and toward working people is changing.

5. Along with the party, the Church and Solidarity, another socially active force engaged in the process of transformation is the Polish intelligentsia, intellectuals, journalists, and scientists. This is, however, a different power, scattered across all the above institutions, having also its own unions and its own professional tasks. The role of the intelligentsia, as in 1956 and 1970, consists in opinion-making, formulating the programmes, advising all parties engaged in the transformation movement, launching accusations, etc. Certain professional groups feeling the need to propitiate and seek an improvement in their reputation, damaged in the past, have been trying to manifest their dissatisfaction and launch a drive toward spectacular, noisy actions. It is no accident that accusations and calls for a "settling of accounts" have been most audible from members of the intelligentsia. By its very nature, the intelligentsia is best fitted to work out new programmes, prepare reforms, show the way forward and work out solutions. Groups of experts have played an essential role in negotiations, formulating principles, statutes, bills, etc. In seeking "reasonable solutions" for the existing problems the role of the intelligentsia is crucial.

I have not discussed yet the working class and peasants who, given the present state of society, will decide about the future shape and fate of the country, that is about its economy and social structure. These issues would call for a separate account if one were to deal with them thoroughly. In brief, the alliance between workers and peasants, in its authentic form, based upon real co-operation, is a powerful factor still to be set into motion.

What problems have yet to be solved?

- a. We have to work out functional principles for a socialist society of multiple forces, where the leading role of the party would consist in inspiring and indicating general directions of development, not in giving direct orders. In this society, the Catholic masses, aware of their strength and the role they played during the crisis, along with the trade unions, would never be willing to return to their previous roles as passive observers. So, an urgent need appears to be to build a new model of democratic socialism.
- b. We ought to establish reasonable and efficient principles of planning and economic management and clear the rules governing the economy of senseless and idiotic restrictions, so acutely exposed these days by the media. A fitness test for thousands of economists working in the national economy would be to work out and implement these principles.
- c. We have to restore the eagerness to work, the spirit of organization, morality, and culture of work, undermined by non-sensical planning and management in the 1970s and recently, in the moments of emotional "levitation," by anarchic tendencies. By formulating their economic and welfare claims the Polish workers must set tasks also for themselves, as it must be clearly seen that meeting these claims can be done only by a good performance of the whole national economy.
- d. The gains of 1980 should be backed up legally, which demands intensive work from the Diet and other associated institutions. All that is reasonable in the hundreds and thousands of claims, demands, proposals, suggestions, memorandums, petitions, open letters, agreements, and the like, if they are to play their part in securing a better functioning of the state, must find a firm expression in new laws. Groups of experts, then, should select the most valuable opinions and formulate a programme of legislative works going beyond the already existing framework.
- e. We ought to initiate a process of national education in democracy, which is not a golden freedom of the old gentry, not a *liberum veto*, nor a ridiculous formalism, but first of all observance of

the law, respect for the opinion of the majority in public life, discipline and obedience to elected leaders, etc. We should also explain to the nation that democracy is not a magic wand ready to solve all problems; as we remember, in 1926 the nation rejected parliamentary democracy, finding in it a cause of the decline of the state, and gave its support to the coup staged by Pilsudski in which 400 people died and 1,500 were wounded.

6. Is the state, i.e., the organized power of the administration, the civic militia, the security forces, the army, really weak? The party leaders have given up using force to solve the current crisis; this does not mean, however, that the whole state and party apparatus fully accepts this policy. Indeed, in recent months, political conditions have been at their least favourable for the authorities, but they should be given credit for preventing bloodshed, securing the external interest of the country, and maintaining the essential qualities of the political system. Some who lacked experience in assessing the strength of the state thought that in Poland a revolution was taking place leading a straight way to the destruction of the system. Slow, controlled, unhasty action, allowing some tendencies to peter out, adopting a calm posture in the face of world-wide hysteria about the possible intervention of neighbours, all this is also evidence of the government's strength in refraining from action when the result is not clear. Ultimately, calm and self-controlled people will gather around them those who seek stability and certainty.

With the beginning of the new budget year a programme of economic improvement must be immediately implemented. Another urgent task is to raise agricultural efficiency. A precondition for overcoming the crisis is to free all active forces from overpowering bureaucratic ties. The time has also come to discharge the "fire brigade" of emergency appointees. The government appointed a minister to deal with the unions. The claims of the employees are to be dealt with by the management or through arbitration. The nation's will has been manifested in a comprehensive way — the nation has defined the social framework it wants to live in. Within this framework there is no room

for divisions into "us" and "them." It is not up to "them" to create a new condition of living, but up to "us," together with "them."

The crisis has one positive aspect in it — it demonstrates the need for co-operation of all forces to cope with the problems exposed by the wave of social dissatisfaction. All social classes and strata, all political parties and forces within the state, the Church, trade unions, all employees and housewives — the whole nation understood the lesson and passed the exam of maturity. Don't let them forget their knowledge before the stamp on the certificate fades.

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