INTERVIEW

Solidarność in Łódź: An Interview with Zbigniew Marcin Kowalewski

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After serving as an organizer for the independent labor union Solidarity ("Solidarność") during Poland's 1980–81 upsurge, Zbigniew Marcin Kowalewski was elected to the union's regional leadership in Łódź in 1981. Poland's most populous city after Warsaw, Łódź grew rapidly in the late nineteenth century after a torrent of foreign capital investment. Known as the "Manchester of Poland" because of its concentration of textile manufacturing, the city and its mills were the setting for *The Promised Land*, the story of a German, a Jew, and a Pole seeking to make their fortune in the brutal new world of industrial capitalism, as told in the 1899 realist novel by Władysław Reymont and the 1975 film by director Andrzej Wajda. The Łódź working class has a militant history dating to the strikes of May 1892, when, as Tamara Deutscher writes, "more than two hundred rioting textile workers were cut down by Cossacks."[1]

Kowalewski's recollections make several valuable contributions to the literature on Solidarność. First, his account of its growth in a major industrial city in the center of Poland provides an instructive counterpoint to accounts focused heavily on shipyard workers on the Baltic coast in Gdańsk. Second, his vantage point is that of a mid-level activist, neither shop-floor worker nor prominent national leader. Third, he provides unusual insight into the initiative for workers' self-management that swept the country in 1981, an effort in which he played a critical role. Fourth, his account corroborates interpretations emphasizing working-class self-activity rather than intellectuals or the Catholic Church as the primary factor in the Solidarity uprising of 1980–81.[2] Finally, Kowalewski's political perspective is that of a Marxist whose opposition to the Communist regime was informed by a desire for socialism and democracy, not the market privatizations that came after 1989.

The portrait of Solidarity in 1980–81 that emerges from Kowalewski's retelling is of a heterogeneous, often radical, mass movement from below comprised of workers who frequently sought to recast, not discontinue, the socialized economy. After he was forced into exile by martial law, Kowalewski witnessed a total alteration of the movement. Solidarity's top leadership in

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Poland, isolated from plant-level rank-and-file workers in its underground phase, began to rely upon American agencies and other Western institutions, notably the Central Intelligence Agency and the Vatican. This reliance upon Western powers proved the fulcrum for the metamorphosis of the bold Solidarity at the factory gates, ten million strong, into a tiny, nationalist, socially conservative group.

Kowalewski was born in Łódź in 1943, during the Second World War, when the city was occupied by Nazi Germany. He was one of three children born to a father from working-class origins and a mother who was the daughter of a government official. Both had training as lawyers but could not pursue their avocations after the war. His father ran a small electronics shop until 1953, when psychological troubles forced him to withdraw from professional life.

As a young man, Kowalewski became interested in Latin American revolutionary movements. He moved to Cuba in 1975 to train translators. After returning in 1980 to Łódź, he became involved with Solidarity, helping to organize workers at mass meetings in the plants. In May 1981, he was elected to Solidarity's presidium for the Łódź region. At Solidarity's national congress in Gdańsk in September 1981, he joined the Fourth International, an association that traced to Leon Trotsky (1879–1940) and whose leading contemporaneous theorist was Ernest Mandel (1923–1995), the Belgian Marxist.

Kowalewski left for France in December 1981 to give talks to unions about the Polish situation. Three days after his arrival in Paris, on December 13, 1981, the Polish regime imposed martial law. Unable to return to Poland, Kowalewski lived as an émigré in France until December 1989. Today he again lives in Łódź and is assistant editor-in-chief of the Polish edition of the French monthly *Le Monde Diplomatique*.

This interview was conducted in English on July 11, 2005, in Łódź. The transcript has been polished for style and reviewed by Kowalewski.

Early Political Development

Christopher Phelps: Did you attend university here?[3]

Zbigniew Marcin Kowalewski: Yes, I studied ethnology.

CP: And graduated what year?

ZMK: In 1966. It was during this period when I was in the university that my interest in politics began, under the influence of the liberation movements in the Third World: Algeria and, very quickly, Cuba. I became a socialist and Marxist under the influence of the Cuban Revolution, not the Polish regime.

I was formed at home under the Polish bourgeois-democratic tradition, if you like, of the Second World War resistance. In primary school, the climate was a very sharp Stalinism with strong ideological pressure. This was a problem for me. I was under two very strong influences, one at home and a very different one in school. I was open to the influence at school of leftist

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ideas, even if in the extremely Stalinist manner of the period before the so-called de-Stalinization. The official doctrine was very strongly pro-proletarian in discourse. In school, I was denounced as a bourgeois, an alien element.

The very strange, contradictory situation there was that I was denounced as a petty-bourgeois element in a very proletarian school with very poor children, but I had better conditions, so I was also for the school a good person to be representative of socialism, with good food, good dress, and so on. (*Laughs.*) So I was selected for some ideological purposes, for example to give a speech on the anniversary of the October Revolution.[4] Also I had the support of an intelligent father and mother, so it was easy to have a good speech, written by my mother. That was not the case for other children from proletarian families without any university education.

At university, I established a very strong link with students from the Third World, from Latin America and other parts of the Third World. I spent a lot of time with them, and it was a very important part of my politicization. They were militants of different left-wing currents, not only from the official Communist parties but also from pro-Chinese Communist parties, Castroists from Latin America, left-wing nationalists, and so on. So there was a lot of debate—you hadn't any in this society—about political problems of the world, confrontations between different political currents.

My first job was a continuation of my activity among the Third World students, because I was director of the university's international student residence hall. Three years later, in 1969, I began work for the Polish Academy of Sciences. Formally, I worked in the field of ethnology, but in reality I was in the institute of the history of this academy, in the department of the modern history of Latin America. In 1975, I traveled to Cuba to work there and to train translators from Polish to Spanish. It was my second visit to Cuba. The first was in 1968, for one month.[5]

The Working Class in Łódź

CP: Daniel Singer in *The Road to Gdańsk* refers to Łódź as "the proletarian fortress."[6] Could we discuss Łódź as a center of Polish working-class militancy and politics? In the 1930s, for example, Łódź had a left-wing government, despite the national authoritarian right-wing government.

ZMK: That reflected the political history of this city, especially 1905. Łódź was a center of the 1905 revolution, with a very strong Polish Socialist Party, a relatively strong party of Rosa Luxemburg, and the Jewish Socialist Party, the Bund.[7]

But the working class in Łódź at that moment and later was divided between the influence of these three socialist parties and the nationalist current inside the working class. In the thirties and after, there was always this division between the left-wing workers and nationalist workers. During the 1905 revolution, there was sharp conflict between the nationalists and

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socialists, with armed struggle between them in the factories. On Piotrkowska Street, ambushes after work.[8] Yes, it was absolutely incredible! At the end of this revolution, during the period of the degeneration of this revolution, there were a lot of assassinations, workers killing workers, by 1907.

In independent Poland, the Polish Socialist Party was especially strong here—and always there was rivalry between the socialists and nationalists.[9]

CP: The history of Łódź is complicated by it being so multinational, with German, Jewish, Russian, and Polish workers.

ZMK: Yes, so there was also the influence of German social democracy, the German Social Democratic Party. Of course, the German and Jewish populations disappeared by the end of the Second World War, nearly completely.

CP: One thing I want to know about Łódź and Katowice in the 1930s: I've seen several writers claim that here is where the sit-down strike, or occupation strike, was born. This interests me, because in the United States the sit-down strike is most famously associated with the Flint strike in 1937. When I've read about that, people say, "Perhaps they got it from France." But actually there were sit-down strikes in Akron, Ohio, in 1934–36—and, of course, many Polish workers in Ohio. These references to the sit-down as "the Polish strike" say that before the French strikes of 1936, the occupation strike was known as "the Polish strike."[10] I understand that even in the Solidarity period, later, when Polish workers struck they didn't do what American workers do, set up a picket line and go home. They sat in the plant. They occupied the factory.

ZMK: I discovered this case of Łódź two years ago in an article I translated for a union journal on the historical experience of strike movements in France. Before that, I knew nothing about it. I think that this story is probably told in a journal that existed before the war published by left-wing socialists called *The Chronicles of the Revolutionary Movement in Poland*. In any case, the term "Polish strike" was not known in Poland in 1980. There was absolutely no tradition, no reference, to the sit-in strikes. It was an invention of the moment.

CP: Interesting: without any awareness of what had come before.

ZMK: Totally without any reference. And without reference to any Western experience. All of it was completely unknown.

CP: Another question about Łódź: In 1970–71, during the conflict over prices of meat and other commodities seen as—along with 1956 and 1968—the precursor of Solidarity, there was a women's textile strike in Łódź.

ZMK: Yes. They defeated the government. The government price increases were defeated, but not by the strikes in Gdańsk and Szczecin, because there they accepted the agreement with the new leadership of the party. But the price hikes were not accepted in the textile industry by the women here in Łódź.

CP: And do you remember those strikes?

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ZMK: Yes, I remember the strikes, and it was an extremely complicated history, because there was an intervention during the strike by strange, mysterious forces. Probably a faction in the party tried to do something on the basis of the strike. No work has been done in Poland on this history. You have some histories of the strike, but very superficial. It seems that probably the nationalist faction in the party behind the anti-Semitic campaign in 1968 tried to use the strike.[11]

I was witness to very provocative behavior by groups of men on Piotrkowska Street during the strike, a lot of them in different places, crying, "Down with Gierek!"[12] And these men were strange. At the moment when the government tried to negotiate, a strong group of representatives of the leadership of the party was sent to the city. They completely changed the leadership of the party in the city in one night, established a new leadership that was more agreeable to discussion with the strikers. But negotiation was impossible, because there were no strike committees. So Gierek asked members of the former strike committees from Gdańsk to go to Łódź and to explain, "If you strike, you must establish strike committees, because if not, it is impossible to discuss."

CP: There must have been some sort of natural leadership. It wasn't utterly spontaneous.

ZMK: You know, it is possible that there was something, but no one knows anything about it. There are some things written on the strike, but extremely superficial.[13]

In any case, on the last day in the evening, the government declared a return to the old prices. There was only one strike demand: prices. But at the moment of this statement by the government, there was an appearance in some parts of the city of strange groups calling to expand the strike. They provoked fights with the police at some places in the street. I observed it, because I was returning home. It was a very, very strange situation. I think of this faction because Gierek took power in December 1970 and the strike was in February 1971. Gierek arrived in power with the support of this nationalist faction, but very quickly there was a split, and probably they tried to change the relationship of forces, by trying to use the strike.

This was not exceptional, because there were other cases in Poland where factions inside the party tried to use workers' protest. In August '80, three agreements were signed with three different regional strike committees—Gdańsk, Szczecin, and Jastrzębie.[14] Each of these agreements was signed by one of three different factions inside the party. It seems that the third strike was a little manipulated, because another faction needed its strike committee to sign an agreement. (*Laughs.*) Of course, all these strikes in August '80 were authentic, but there were attempts to use them in some manner for the factional struggles inside the party. With this type of bureaucracy, this is more or less normal.

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Solidarity in Łódź

CP: Regarding Solidarity, let us start with Łódź. Histories of Solidarity in the English language are Gdańsk-centered. Some mention that the 1980 strikes began in Lublin, but barely. Presumably this is because all of the journalists arrived in Gdańsk.

ZMK: Yes, yes. When the strike was very known and famous.

CP: Exactly, but here and there I get the sense that Łódź was very important.

ZMK: It was not very important in August, because the strike movement here was very chaotic, very spontaneous, without a center. Strikes in one factory today, later they work, some days later a new strike. It was completely chaotic. The thing that changed was the appearance of the center. This center appeared in a very natural manner, with a transit strike. At this moment the strikers were aware that if you want to coordinate with others you must go to the tram depot.[15] That was the case in two cities that I know, Łódź and Wrocław. This is why the Solidarity leaders there were from these occupations, tram and bus drivers. When the strike of trams and buses began, all the strike committees in different factories began to coordinate. They sent delegations to the depot of the central strike committee for trams and buses. The strike committee for trams and buses was recognized as the leadership of the city strike committee.

One sympathetic moment came when a journalist from the official Łódź press asked the leader of the tram and bus strike committee, "For what are you striking?" He named several demands, then added, "And all twenty-one demands from Gdańsk." They asked him, "What are these twenty-one demands from Gdańsk?" He said, "We don't know." (*Laughs.*) Because it was impossible to know. All communications with Gdańsk were broken. "But we are sure that they have just demands, so we will end the strike if the strike ends in Gdańsk. We know that there are twenty-one demands. We don't know the demands." It was something extremely fantastic: a sense of working-class solidarity and confidence.

CP: You were on the citywide committee of Solidarity?

ZMK: I joined Solidarity at the beginning of October. August was a huge victory. The movement seemed on a national scale, because at the end of August there was practically a general strike in the country. But I thought these independent unions would develop only in the very strong regional centers of the strike movement, in Szczecin, Gdańsk, Jastrzębie—in my opinion, Łódź was not a strong center. It would not be a national movement. Later, I thought, it will be partially incorporated by the regime and partially destroyed with some repressive measures, like after the strikes of 1970 in Gdańsk and Szczecin, which were liquidated through cooptation and repression. In this city, there was an Inter-Enterprise Founding Committee of Solidarity—its official name—based on the former strike committees of August, but it seemed to me more or less marginal. I was completely mistaken.

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I changed my opinion completely on the first of October, when there was a nationwide strike of one hour organized by Solidarity at the national level. That was the first very sharp conflict between Solidarity and the government after the agreements, over the problem of the legal registration of Solidarity. The government accepted the registration, but demanded that the statutes of Solidarity include a formula on the "leading role" of the party. That was not accepted by Solidarity, because the first point of Solidarity was that Solidarity is independent of all political parties, government administration, and so on. Solidarity organized a one-hour national strike, and I observed the strike where I was living. What I saw made it clear to me that I was completely mistaken in my opinion on the situation in Poland.

My corner of the city was relatively important for the tram lines. At the moment of the strike at twelve o'clock, all the trams stopped. At this moment, a truck arrived with workers. They stopped at the side of the tram at the corner, and they dismantled the line for the first half hour. And for the second half hour, they put it back together. I was watching this as it happened. At the same corner, there were two men from the district committee of the party. Like me, they were observing all this. One of them said, "It's a revolution." And the other one said, "Yes, so it seems."

So I said to myself, "It's a strong movement, very determined." Some days later, I found the local of this Inter-Enterprise Founding Committee of Solidarity in the city. I met one of the vice presidents of this committee, and I said, "I have a lot of time." I was not working. After my return from Cuba, I was without a job. It was not a problem, because I had a lot of money from Cuba, because it was impossible to spend the money there, and we had two contracts, me and my wife. In Poland, I had problems finding a job. I don't know exactly why. I was looking for a job in the academic field, a return to something in the Academy of Sciences, or something like that. I was very well-received, but later it was always a refusal to give me a job. Three times, the same story: "Yes, of course, we'd be very happy to have you work for us," and then, nothing. I think probably because I was expelled in 1974 as a member of the party at the Academy of Sciences, for reasons that were never explained.

CP: What year had you joined the party?

ZMK: I joined the party when I was director of the students' residence, in 1967. This residence was linked to the school of Polish language for foreigners. So it was the party organization there in this school, because the residence was physically linked to it. And later I was a member of the party at this institute where I had a job in the Academy of Sciences. I don't know exactly why I was expelled. I was saying things in party meetings sometimes, when there was a representative from the government talking about Polish foreign policy. Questions like, "What help are we giving Vietnam?"

CP: This is always the problem with intellectuals. They ask questions.

ZMK: "Why are we not aiding the liberation movement in Africa?" And so on.

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The Cuban ambassador, he was my friend. I said, "Last week I was expelled from the party." He said, "You are a revolutionary. What are you doing in this country with this terrible socialism? Do you want to go to work in Cuba? I know very well that you are interested in the guerrilla movements in Africa. You can meet a lot of people from these movements when you are in Cuba." He very quickly visited his friend, the minister of education in Cuba, and they offered me and my wife jobs training translators.

CP: To return to Solidarity, you were eventually in the city leadership. How did that happen?

ZMK: I had a lot of time because I was not working, and I immediately joined, because it was the proposal of this vice president that I join a special team that they were forming at this moment. There were founding meetings of Solidarity in different factories and enterprises. It was in reality the beginning of the organization of this movement. Solidarity didn't exist in October 1980 in ninety percent of enterprises here. So this special team would go to meetings and explain Solidarity. So I participated at the founding of Solidarity in nearly forty enterprises in the city. I have a list. Sometimes three times a day, even.

CP: So you mean that you would go from enterprise to enterprise? You would have the meeting in the factory?

ZMK: Yes. The group of initiators of Solidarity in the factory organized a meeting and communicated to the city leadership to ask for a person who would speak there.

CP: It's interesting, because a lot of the Western literature is not clear on this. There is a nationwide strike movement in August, but apart from Gdańsk no one is thinking of Solidarity as an organization. It's spontaneous. Only after the recognition of the right to form trade unions does Solidarity begin organizing.

ZMK: Yes, yes, of course. So I was a member of this team. I was the most active member of this team. A group of workers who wanted to form Solidarity in their enterprise would ask their manager for a place for the meeting. In many cases, there was a refusal to give it. But such meetings were completely legal because Solidarity was recognized by the August agreements. So in the city leadership there was a so-called "special intervention section" formed by young workers who had led the August strike committees in the factories, very strong personalities. They would visit the manager and say, "Give the place to these people or we will expel you from the factory. We will call the workers to expel you from the factory. The workers have the right to meet and establish Solidarity here if they like." So there were many factories without managers, managers who were expelled by the workers. But there were many cases where the managers said, "Okay, we accept it."

My role was to go to the meeting to speak there, to confront the old union bureaucracy. They were present, saying, "If you join Solidarity, you will lose

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funds, because these funds are in the hands of our unions." We would respond: "That is not true. These funds are independent. These funds belong to the enterprises. They were managed by the old unions, but that is not very legal, and in any case there is no problem with these funds. If you join Solidarity, you will lose nothing." It was necessary to fight with these people, sometimes very aggressive, drunken.[16]

CP: You went from being skeptical about Solidarity to being a supporter in October. It must have been a very fluid moment. Here is this person just off the street: you. And yet the leadership is willing to send you into the factories to argue for the union. You haven't even been involved up until this point.

ZMK: When I said that I can be at their disposal, this vice president of Łódź Solidarity asked me, "Are you able to go to the factories and agitate among the workers?" And I said, "Why not? I have no experience, but why not?" So the next day we were together at this type of founding meeting of Solidarity at one of the enterprises, and at the end, when it finished, he said, "So, if you like, we will go to two or three more meetings like this." And I said to him, "Next time, I can go alone." I was completely unknown to them, no reference. And they asked me nothing: "Who are you? What are your political opinions?" Nothing.

State and Movement

CP: When you were organizing factories, did you have nervousness about what would happen to you personally, given that repression would surely come in the end?

ZMK: At the beginning, in autumn and early winter—October, November, December—there were several moments of very big tension between Solidarity and the government, a danger of repression. People were saying, "Probably this night or another night, the repression will arrive." But the situation was so open. There was not a special reaction.

The biggest tension before martial law was in March '81, the so-called provocation in the city of Bydgoszcz organized by the government or some faction of the ruling party: a strong physical repression against the leadership of Solidarity in Bydgoszcz. To protest against it, there was a call by Solidarity for a national general strike without limit. It was an extremely dangerous situation, with a visit to Poland at the time of the meeting of the central committee of the party by the Soviet commander in chief of the Warsaw Pact. There was an enormous mobilization of the workers to prepare to occupy the factories, organizing for a long occupation, studying how to sleep there in large numbers, how to eat, how to drink. An enormous mobilization—and at this moment, a very real danger of repression.

With the announcement of this strike, there was formal transformation of all leaderships of Solidarity into strike committees. The regional leadership

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and the staff operated inside one big factory in Łódź, a factory with enormous buildings in the north of the city, with 12,000 textile women, because our local on Piotrkowska Street was easy to take by the police. So our office was closed, and we spent days and nights inside this factory as a regional strike committee. And during this crisis of March '81, we had very strong propaganda toward the police: "If you have an order, don't shoot the workers." It was very effective, because contacts were established by the police with us, asking for leaflets, telling us that the secret police is mobilized with arms.

CP: The local police were friendly to you?

ZMK: Yes. One night, we left this factory in a car to pick up leaflets produced in a print shop in the city, and we were followed all the time by a police car in the empty streets. We were nervous. But they wanted to establish contact with us, it was clear. They stopped a distance behind us, and we stopped also, to see what they wanted. A policeman came up to our car and said, "Hello, we are following you because we are protecting you. We know that you took leaflets from the print shop. Have you leaflets for the police?" We said, "Yes, why?" They said, "Because we would like to have some leaflets." We said, "Okay, and tomorrow we will have more leaflets." So they discussed with us how to distribute them the following day in a discreet manner. They said, "If you accept, we will follow you back to the factory, but to protect you." (*Laughs.*)

All this tension and mobilization finally ended with an agreement between the government and Wałęsa. This agreement, reached just before the scheduled beginning of the strike, was not accepted by the general assembly of delegates of the city here.

My first organizing role came to an end in January '81, because the success in forming the union in the enterprises diminished the need for factory meetings, so the regional leadership of Solidarity proposed that I become a full-timer in the organizational department of Solidarity. I was the second person in Łódź who was a full-timer in Solidarity. Of course, in reality, the members of this regional committee were full-timers, but this is a question of the staff. They were organizing an apparatus, if you like. In January, I became a full-timer.

I took initiative to propose to the regional leadership of Solidarity to engage Solidarity here in the city to support the movement for workers' self-management. Such an idea had been discussed a little in different sections of Solidarity. In October '56, there were workers' councils here in Poland. We in Solidarity had an independent union. But we knew of this important question from 1956: Who would run the enterprises, the managers appointed by the state, or democratically elected workers' councils? A law passed in November 1956 had as its first point that all public enterprises were to be managed by workers' councils. All the other points of this law were not so interesting because they established very strong limits on the power of the workers' councils. But the first point was very important: not mere participation, not co-management, but self-management. In 1980, some people thought that this law still existed. It was not true, because in 1958, it was replaced. But that

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parliament had once passed a law establishing that every public enterprise should be run by a workers' council was interesting to me, and in January '81, I elaborated a long report on worker self-management.

Working-Class Democracy and Self-Management

CP: How were you elected to the leadership of Solidarity in Łódź?

ZMK: After May '81, I was not a staff member. There was a process of establishing regular democratic leaderships. Before then, founding committees were based on the people who led the strikes in August '80 and took the initiative to establish Solidarity, but they were not elected in a regular manner. The regularizing process began with enterprises, then regional congresses, and, finally, the national congress. In the first phase, from the beginning of '81, there was a process of formal elections of Solidarity committees in the enterprises. The second step was the election of regional leaderships by the regional congresses. In our city it was in May. I was elected a member of the presidium, the nine people who were the executive committee for the region.[17]

CP: How did that happen, technically? Did all members of Solidarity in the region vote?

ZMK: No. From the beginning, you had a regional assembly of delegates representing all the enterprises organized by Solidarity, practically all enterprises. In this city, it was a body of more or less 800 people, meeting once each month.

CP: Did each enterprise get one delegate? Or was it based on the number of workers in the enterprise?

ZMK: In the beginning, it was not very regular. But it became strictly established. For example, you have in this big factory 9,000 people in Solidarity, so you have this number of delegates. It was based on the number of Solidarity members in the enterprise.

CP: I see. Very proportional.

ZMK: The election of the regional president and regional leadership by the assembly of delegates of the region in this city was completely exceptional inside Solidarity because there was an initiative. I was a member of this initiative. We called for voting for platforms—not people, but people supporting platforms. So we launched the first platform, and there was a second. We called ourselves "Group of Independents" because we declared also independence toward the oppositional political groups, including KOR.[18]

In our platform, you had workers' self-management in a very radical manner: we sought a second chamber of parliament representing the workers as a state body of social and economic power. Of course, in my political philosophy this was a transitional demand.[19] Our platform was that social and economic power must be in the hands of a representative body of the workers. The normal parliament would be the political chamber and make political decisions. A new and second chamber of self-management would set economic

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policy. It was clear to me that there was no economic power without political power, but the moment was not ripe to pose the question of political power, at least not directly, so the slogan was an important step. It was very easy to advocate that all power in the enterprises go to the workers' councils. It had massive support. Some months later it was possible to advance to the idea that all power in the national economy go to a chamber of self-management in parliament because many workers by then understood that there is no self-management of the enterprise without self-management of the whole economy.[20] In May 1981 or so, a moderate leader of Solidarity in Warsaw, Bujak, linked to KOR, said, "It is necessary to pose the problem of national economic power." I said, "If this moderate leader is saying that, it is very important. It means this question is developing."[21]

Workers' councils formed in spring 1981 in different places. In July, there was an important step forward with two initiatives in Solidarity, without mutual knowledge. In Gdańsk, there was a conference of the network of Solidarity organizations in the sixteen greatest enterprises in the country. This network was formed by the people linked to Wałeşa, his base inside Solidarity, but it had its own dynamics.[22] I was not involved because I was outside this network. They adopted their own self-management policy based on a proposed law of "social enterprise." They said, "A nationalized enterprise is not enough. We want a social enterprise. A social enterprise means an enterprise run by the workers' council." This term—their invention—was very important because it was a very good term. It was a very popular term. We adopted this term, "social enterprise."[23]

A few days later, we had a conference in Lublin. We called it "interregional," because it was not really national. We established the second center of this movement. Our center was more radical than the first one. Why? Because our initiative was to work for the coordination of the workers' councils, regional and national—a pyramid. That was a point of conflict with the other network, because they were against it. Their idea was workers' councils in managing factories, a very radical position on the question of management but also an opening toward a market economy in a limited manner, without answering the question who is regulating the whole. So our conference in Lublin some days later established a second center. You have two centers of this self-management movement, with some collaboration and some competition, because for the network of these big enterprises, we were too radical.

We used some ideas of Oskar Lange's in our propaganda, because Lange in 1957 published an article—much quoted by me—in the central organ of the party on the idea of a "self-management chamber." The term itself was Lange's. Also we used some things of Kalecki's, who in 1956 also supported workers' self-management.[24]

CP: Besides Kalecki and Lange, were you also influenced by French sources? I'm thinking of '68, and all of the writings on self-management in the 1970s.

ZMK: No, that was unknown here. Our inspiration was only 1956 and, to a lesser extent, experiences with workers' self-management in Yugoslavia.

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The premise of this workers' self-management movement was that in the management of the enterprises there must be a separation between strategic decisions that must be taken by the workers' council and a specialized management. The workers' councils, not a vote in the factory, would select the managers. There would be a public call in the press by the workers' council for candidates for manager. Anyone from the factory or outside could present themselves as candidates. A team of specialists appointed by the workers' council would select two or three candidates out of all the candidates, following the guidelines set by the workers' council, because it was clear—I saw it when I was in the factories—that there was huge knowledge of "what we need." For example, "We need a good manager in the organization of work, because our problem is the organization of work. That is very inefficient." So this workers' council should orient this team toward what kind of manager, fundamentally, they need. You have fifteen, twenty candidates presented. The team chooses the two or three best candidates, and the workers' council decides who to take, or to refuse them all.[25]

But we had a problem with this Gdańsk-based network, with their idea of workers' self-management. Theirs was limited to the top level of the enterprises, with no conception of workers' self-management inside departments. In summer '81, the problem of worker self-management was a national issue inside Solidarity. In the big enterprises, election of workers' councils was prevalent. There was a big problem, though. From my point of view, the election of the workers' councils was only the beginning of the struggle. You do not have worker self-management just because you elect a workers' council. The workers' council is not instantly an organ of self-management. It is only an organ of the *struggle* for worker self-management. So we fought the idea that if you have a workers' council you have worker self-management. No, you have a body to lead the *struggle* for self-management.

There was a group of miners from different mines in Upper Silesia at our conference in Lublin. They were listening through the conference, saying nothing, but even smoking cigarettes in the door to listen—not going outside. When this conference finished and we were in a restaurant, they said, "We thought we understood something about worker self-management before this conference. But we understood nothing. Now we understand. We will establish workers' councils. There will be a huge movement in the mines of Upper Silesia." The next step was a regional conference on worker self-management in Upper Silesia, with representatives of 800 enterprises and with people sent from our group to speak there. It was incredible and very important. It had a very substantial base, this movement.

CP: To what extent was the memory of 1956 important? Could the workers remember it?

ZMK: It was important. But the active members of Solidarity were very young workers. I, like Wałeşa, was an old person in this movement, because at the level of the enterprises the leaders of Solidarity were people twenty years old, more or less.

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CP: I guess by "memory" I meant something looser, the working class's capacity to think back to an earlier moment, the lore of '56.

ZMK: There were a lot of old people who had been involved in '56, and these people reappeared at different levels, telling the story of the workers' councils from before. One very important example was at the first conference organized by Solidarity, in March 1981, on the subject of worker self-management. There was a debate. The main personalities involved were Geremek and Bugaj.[26] Should Solidarity support worker self-management, or not? Geremek was against it. Bugaj was for it, though in a limited manner, because my conflict with Bugaj started at this conference. For him I was too radical. But he was for it.

At this conference, also speaking was Seweryn Jaworski, who worked in the Warsaw steelworks.[27] He was in the workers' council in '56. Now he is a terrible right-wing clerical, and between '56 and '80 he was involved in a sectarian Catholic group, but that is not important. He arrived at this conference and said, "If you are discussing worker self-management, 'We need worker self-management,' and so on, let me tell you one thing: you must build it upward very quickly, immediately, because the party destroyed us after '56, not accepting any coordination between the workers' councils. Our disaster after '56 began with that, because they said 'no coordination.'" It was formidable.

CP: This is interesting because many of the English-language histories of Solidarity contrast 1980–81 with 1956 and say that '56 was a combination of revisionism on the part of intellectuals who still believed in reforming the party—something that for them would be shattered in '68—and workers' councils, but that in 1980–81, workers' councils weren't the main theme, then the main theme was free and independent trade unions. But you're saying that once free and independent trade unions were established, the question was, what would they advocate? And the old theme of workers' councils was revived in the form of workers' self-management.

ZMK: Yes, yes, yes. There were many initiatives in the country in different places. The first elaborate project was here in Łódź, laid out in my report for the regional leadership. They accepted it immediately. I don't know what the discussion was between them, because I was not present, but some days later they said, "Okay, but you lead it." I said, "Of course." They asked me, on the basis of this report, to write a short statement, one page, why we are against the idea of "co-management" launched by the party.[28] So I wrote this short statement. It was signed by the regional leadership of Solidarity as an official position and massively distributed, with a call to form workers' councils. And I wrote several papers for broad propaganda. The first was on the experience of '56 and how it was liquidated by the regime. The second was why we refuse co-management and demand workers' self-management, with this historical precedent in '56.[29]

CP: Explain a bit more, then, about the 1956 workers' councils. Did they emerge in Poznań? They were, I take it, later absorbed by the state.

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ZMK: Not in Poznań because Poznań is the insurrection. It is later, in autumn '56, with the change of the party leadership, the rise of Gomułka, that this movement arose in the car factory in Warsaw.[30] It was a broad national movement. Two years later, in March '58, when the so-called "normalization" of Gomułka's regime began, a new law replaced the law adopted in November 1956. The new law established that the organ of workers' self-management in the enterprise was no longer the workers' council alone but a tripartite body made up of the workers' council, the party committee, and the official union committee. That blocked the workers' councils with two other forces. This meant a bureaucratization of the workers' councils. Ultimately, the workers' councils disappeared, so that only the party and the unions were left by the 1970s. At the moment of Solidarity, there was nothing, although the law of March 1958 was still on the books.

CP: That's the problem in a party-state of proposing worker self-management. Can the party ever accept that? It's a revolutionary demand, isn't it?

ZMK: Of course, but in Solidarity finally it was the main point of conflict. Even if Wałęşa in reality didn't support it, there was so strong a dynamic of it that it was a central dispute in the national congress of Solidarity in September '81.[31]

Role of the Church and the Right

CP: Regarding the role of the Church, David Ost writes, "It's certainly fair to say that Solidarity always felt closer to the Church than the Church felt to Solidarity."[32] That is, because of the movement's radicalism, the clergy was wary. Today, of course, they claim to have identified with the movement wholeheartedly.

ZMK: You have the first problem in August. Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński, the Primate of Poland, called for ending the strikes before the agreements.[33] It is interesting, because during the August strike there were masses held in the Gdańsk shipyards, with all striking workers taking part, but Wyszyński's remarks had no effect even though the television news stated that the chief of the Catholic Church is calling for an end to the strikes because they destabilize and endanger the Polish nation.

It is difficult for me to say how this was in smaller provincial industrial centers. My personal experience is that there was very strong support of the workers of Solidarity for the Church, and no following of the Church in its political orientation, which was very much for national conciliation. There was no pacification of the conflicts. Of course, Wałęşa would tender his agreements with the government with reference to the Church, but it did not influence the conflicts. The Church was promoting reconciliation, and you have very strong strikes.

CP: So you are saying that the Church's role was to attempt to have a conservative effect, but its influence was limited, except in spiritual dimensions?

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ZMK: It was very complicated. I was elected to the regional leadership of Solidarity by Catholic workers in a situation where at least an important part of delegates who voted for me were conscious that I was a Marxist because there was a campaign, meetings where all the candidates presented themselves. I said, "I am a Marxist. I am a supporter of the Cuban Revolution. I was in Cuba." There was absolutely no problem. The KOR people campaigned against me, but without any effect. I was elected.

A small illustration from this city. There was a celebration of the independence of Poland after the First World War in 1918. We were engaged in it, our leadership, but in a very passive manner. Several factory committees asked that we request a mass in the cathedral. We did, and then we forgot about it. We were in a meeting of the presidium, and someone arrived and said, "The bishop will start the mass in five minutes." We were near the cathedral. Now, we had never discussed between the members of the executive committee our conceptions of the world, not at all. But one of the members of this executive committee said to me, "Hey, Zbigniew, I will not go to this mass because I am an atheist." But we decided to go to the mass because the workers' delegations from the big factories were in the cathedral and expected us to be there. When we arrived, we were astonished to find that the bishop had placed nine seats for us beside the altar. We decided immediately and almost unanimously—eight to one—not to sit there. The bishop was furious, because during the mass the nine seats beside the altar were empty, and for him it was a snub.

This tells a lot about the relationship of Solidarity and the Church. Solidarity was independent. Some leaders of Solidarity conformed to the Church, especially Wałęsa. But Solidarity was a mass democratic movement, and the personal opinions of one or another leader were neither decisive nor important.

CP: Let me ask you about the 1981 defeat and the rise inside the movement of a right-wing critique. As I understand it, right-wing dissidents gained momentum from martial law, because they could claim that the reason for the defeat was that Solidarity was too left.

ZMK: No, not too left, but too radical. With the exception of intellectuals, including me, of course, it was not a movement thinking in terms of left and right. These categories were too political and meant nothing to the people in a country where the "left" was the ruling party. The real division in the movement as it was understood by many people was between moderates and radicals. But moderate and radical about what? On the questions facing Solidarity. So a person who was for parliamentary democracy was a radical. But it was never discussed, never in the minds of the people, the problem of parliamentary democracy. You are right that there is an analysis of some right-wing people saying that Solidarity was too radical. But who is saying it today, when the right wing is saying that the cause was to smash Communism? These are the same people who then were very moderate, because the right-wing people in Solidarity were in general moderates. I don't know who would say today that it was too radical.

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CP: My understanding is that in 1984–1985, the right was saying that Solidarity was too socialist and its assumptions too socialist and that this over time persuaded the people around Wałeşa and accounts for their turn to market liberalism.

ZMK: I have some difficulty identifying this. I think it was more in the sense that the movement was too radical, asking for too much, provoking too much, no?

CP: No, too left, too interested in preserving, like you're saying, "social enterprise." David Ost paraphrases a number of Polish authors saying, in effect, "The problem with Solidarity is that it is still too tied to the workers, too tied to a socialized economy. Therefore, what we need to do is embrace Hayek, neoliberalism. We need to go in the other direction completely. We need to accept the need for marketization, privatization. Solidarity never understood that properly before 1981." He says that this is why the Solidarity national committee embraces market reforms as the objective by 1986–1987.[34]

ZMK: In September 1985 came the first statement by the leadership of Solidarity without any mention of worker self-management, turning toward the market economy, even if still in a limited way. We observed in Paris that there was a change. It turned out to be decisive. Because of martial law, the leadership was underground. They were no longer responsible to their now-disorganized constituency. They were no longer looking for the support of a mass workers' movement, but instead to the Western powers. They were abandoning the social enterprise and the democratically planned economy.

In the debates of 1981, in the whole press of Solidarity, there was absolutely nothing on privatization. I am sure that in 1981 there were people with pro-capitalist positions, but they never said it. Their position was to block the movement for workers' self-management, to criticize us for being too radical, for leaving no space for negotiation with the government, for national reconciliation. Among them were Wałeşa, people from his team, and at least some people from KOR.

Critique of KOR

CP: You have several times mentioned KOR. They are heroes in all Western accounts of Solidarity, and yet you are a critic of them. What is the nature of your differences?

ZMK: The open letter of Kuroń and Modzelewski in 1965 was for anti-bureaucratic revolution and workers' control.[35] After 1968, when they leave the prisons, they are no longer for this position. At the beginning they were Marxist dissidents attacking the system from the left. They leave that behind after the government anti-Semitic campaign in 1968. They had no more activity for several years. They reappeared in 1976, after the suppression of the workers' protest, with the formation of this committee, KOR.

The fundamental change was in this moment. The maximum program for the working class, not accepted by the whole group of KOR, was the program

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of the people around the journal *Robotnik* launched by a sector of KOR.[36] Their most advanced demand at this moment was free trade unions. Kuroń was against it. At this moment, he was saying the aim must be the independence of Poland and parliamentary democracy—but nothing more concerning the working class. But for a group around *Robotnik,* people like Lityński and some people now around the editorial board of *Gazeta Wyborcza* with Michnik, the most advanced demand was free trade unions.[37] It was their most advanced demand, but they offered nothing more. When you have in August 1980 the victory of the demand for free trade unions, they are absolutely empty in the programmatic sense. Michnik says that when you have the strikes in Gdańsk, Kuroń tells people from KOR to go there and tell the workers to end this adventure. It is too advanced, this demand of free trade unions.

CP: Yes, Michnik says that he didn't get there in time. Therefore, he says, they consider Solidarity a child of KOR, but an "illegitimate child."[38] It's a good line.

ZMK: Kuroń at the end of his life said, "I was always a Marxist," but only after several decades when he never said it. At the meeting here when we invited him in autumn '80, a person asked him about his position toward Marxism. I was there. He said, "It was a major philosophy of the social movement in the nineteenth century, and it is historically finished."

After 1989, however, they were not able to do anything as a social-democratic party, because the Social Democratic party appeared on the basis of the old party, and occupied the field. At the beginning, they think that is not important because they think the apparatchiks will not return to political life. But that ends in 1993 with the victory of these new Social Democrats.[39] So they are a group without a social base. They left Solidarity at the beginning of the 1990s. They are smashed because they have no credentials for the left-leaning electorate in Poland. The former Stalinists have legitimacy as social democrats, not these people.

Lech Wałeşa

CP: What is your analysis of Wałeşa in the 1980s? I have been thinking about this very contradictory figure. On the one hand, he's an authentic working-class leader, a dynamic speaker, very courageous. At the same time, his instincts are very conservative. He is always compared in the literature to Piłsudski as a personal model—that he shaped himself consciously on Piłsudski, wanted to dominate the movement personally in the way that Piłsudski did, thought that he was owed that.[40] But I wonder if Wałeşa is typical of the contradictory nature of the trade union bureaucracy in every country. Do you think I'm onto something? Or does the Piłsudski model make more sense, given Poland?

ZMK: I would pay attention to the model of Piłsudski because I think that the model of Piłsudski is fundamental for the KOR people. There is a very strong statement by Michnik in the 1970s regarding Piłsudski. It was very important for the group. Wałeşa knew nothing of Piłsudski. The KOR people, yes, they

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know history. Piłsudski is an important leader of the workers' movement, with a strong background as leader of the Polish Socialist Party. His famous phrase was "leaving the red train at the station of independence."[41] He took the red train. That was never the case with Wałeşa, but it was in some sense the thing with KOR. They were on the red train in the sense that they were sons and daughters, with the exception of Kuroń, of the Stalinist bureaucrats. Their first dissidence is the open letter. So their background is very similar to Piłsudski—Marxist, socialist—but leaving those politics behind, gradually, at the station.

For me, in 1981, Wałeşa was the representative of the moderate wing of the movement, always looking for a compromise, always protesting against too-radical initiatives, and saying to us in Łódź, "You are provoking civil war." He had an extremely important base. It was a big problem for the radicals like me. Wałeşa had formidable legitimacy with the workers, because he was a worker. It was the same even when I returned from France. In 1990, before the presidential elections, I had only one meeting with a group of workers' leaders of Solidarity who I had worked with in 1981. They had a lot of confidence in me, this group of fifteen of them. Later, they disappeared from Solidarity. They were true working-class militants. And they asked me, "So, we vote for Wałeşa in this election?" I said, "No, no. He is responsible for the biggest treason toward the working class—not made by an intellectual, but by a worker." We had a discussion. They said to me, "Zbigniew, if we discover that you are propagandizing against Wałeşa, we will attack you physically, because it will be treason toward the working class. You were always with us. There is only one person in whom we can have confidence as the leader of this movement: Wałeşa. He is our man, from the working class. Now you are like all these intellectuals we know. Our opinion was that you were not from these intellectuals, that we are the same. Now you are against our leader, like all these intellectuals engaged in treason against the working class." It was terrible.

But Wałeşa, he ended very quickly, in this new republic. Now with his votes of three percent, as a historical personage he is not ending like Piłsudski.[42]

1989 and After

CP: Let me ask you about the events leading to the transformations of 1989. You said earlier that your analysis in 1980 was that the party would react partly with cooptation and partly with repression. Isn't that precisely what happened after 1981? Didn't they decide to work with that part of Solidarity that they could strike a bargain with? Meanwhile, of course, the party is changing, and they are beginning to envision something different. But the left wing of Solidarity gets eliminated. Not physically, like the Stalin period, but in more subtle ways. So you get to the Round Table, and it's a very self-selected Solidarity—and a party-selected Solidarity, too.[43] Why the agreement between Solidarity and the government leading to capitalism in 1989?

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ZMK: Objectively the agreement made at the Round Table—independently of what the persons had in their minds at the time of the agreement—was between the pro-capitalist factions from the two sides. But it is extremely complicated.

On the part of the party and the government, it is not true that all of the bureaucracy in Poland was for the establishment of the market economy. A lot of state officials did not seek the restoration of capitalism and did not take advantage of it. Today they are more or less on the left, social democrats in the traditional sense of the term. The desire for capitalism was greatest among bureaucrats linked to management of the economy, but they were not represented at the Round Table directly, because the bureaucracy was represented there by its political leaders, party leaders, who are not guaranteed a place in the system established after 1989. As for the opposition, the very strong Gdańsk proliberal group was only weakly represented there. So it is very complicated, very hard to identify the different interests represented at the Round Table.

It was very decisive for the opposition that Kuroń was persuaded of these reforms. Jeffrey Sachs in a program on Polish television said that he personally convinced Kuroń.[44]

CP: Shock therapy.

ZMK: Yes. I don't know if it is true, but certainly Kuroń's behavior was, to say more or less explicitly, "We can fight for the rights of the workers from the basis of the capitalist system. First we need to establish this system. Social democracy, workers' rights for all, but on the basis of the system."

CP: Do you think that it is accurate to say that Solidarity wasn't much of a trade union anymore after 1981?

ZMK: I think that there is a very important break of continuity between the Solidarity of '80–'81 and this new Solidarity today. It is a relatively small movement. It is a movement with hegemony of the right wing. Even the neoliberals are no longer there. The former KOR, even they are eliminated completely. It is clerical, dominated by right-wing groups completely. The left disappeared completely.[45]

In '81, we had a very confused ideological situation inside Solidarity, with only some people with very strong ties to the Church. What reappeared as Solidarity is something like one very strongly crystallized element of the former Solidarity. The people I collaborated with in '81 were supporters of workers' self-management, some of them even anticlericals. This vice president of Solidarity of Łódź who brought me onto that first team was an anticlerical. He finished as president of the National Christian Union in this city.[46] Kropiwnicki, the mayor of this city now, was another vice president of Solidarity. He was formed in social politics in the United States. He told me in '81, "Watch out with this workers' self-management because you are breaking the planned economy. It is dangerous because if you have no planned economy, you will have a market economy." Of course I had my response. Today he is a supporter of the market economy and a Catholic nationalist.[47]

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CP: Did the events of 1981, then, give momentum to the right within the movement?

ZMK: Until martial law, Solidarity was an extremely democratic mass movement with control over the leadership at the factory level and regional level. There was always a problem at the national level, which was more difficult to control democratically. In any case, it was a movement where you had legitimacy if you had mass support for your positions. It was not a fight in a room among a small elite. Leaders had to represent a real mass base, more or less, or risk being recalled. I was a member of the executive committee here, and at every meeting of delegates of the region there was a danger that we would be revoked.

CP: So there was accountability. And after 1981, that did not exist?

ZMK: After martial law, it completely disappeared, and it was never reestablished. Solidarity was no longer, after its reestablishment in 1989, a democratic union. There is no mobilization of the base controlling their representatives. Between martial law and the reappearance of Solidarity as a legal organization, you have small groups linked to the Church, where it was possible to have meetings, so they became more and more dependent on the Church, without any control from the base because there was no more link. When it was reestablished, it was as a very bureaucratic organization.

The Western Powers

CP: Let me ask you about the geopolitical context, because when Ronald Reagan died, the US media credited him for the end of Communism because of his military buildup. When Pope John Paul II died, he was credited for the end of Communism, because of his 1979 visit here. When Gorbachev dies, somebody is going to credit him for the end of Communism. We could throw Margaret Thatcher and Helmut Kohl into the mix. To what extent is the rise of the right in the West or the rise of the new generation of Soviet leadership personified by Gorbachev responsible for 1989? We've been talking exclusively about a mass movement from below, but in journalistic accounts in the West, the Polish working class gets almost zero credit.

ZMK: The history here is a different one: that it was Solidarność that smote the system, in Poland and on an international scale. The big hero of ending Communism is Wałeşa.

CP: I have my own objections to this idea that great men, Reagan and the Pope, are responsible, but I'd like to hear your reflections.

ZMK: In the first year after martial law, Solidarity existed in the underground in this country on the material basis of the support of the workers' movement of the West. I was a witness to the enormous campaign in France. It was the unions, the left wing of the unions, the committees of Solidarity with Solidarność, and so on.[48] In one moment, things changed completely. The underground leadership of Solidarity made a political choice, without control by

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any social base. They decided that their supporters in the struggle were Reagan and the Pope.

Carl Bernstein reported that in June 1982 there was a deal between Reagan and the Pope.[49] I was at that moment one of the leaders of a very effective organization, the Coordinating Committee of Solidarity in France.[50] I was eliminated three months later from that committee. Bernstein is probably right. There was a strong offensive in the West to take control of aid for Solidarity, to liquidate all of this working-class support, from unions and the left. In March 1982, our committee had a fund of one million dollars, collected in French society without any institutional aid. From December of '81 to the summer of '82, our committee had something like 400 public meetings. All of them were organized by French unions and the many French committees of solidarity with Solidarność. These efforts were totally left-wing. The right wing was not present in them. And you had checks arriving every day. Fifty, two hundred checks a day. It was left-wing in a broad sense. The whole anti-Stalinist left, along with part of the Communist unions in France, the first historical appearance of a mass movement of opposition toward the party leadership, in the form of a group called the National Coordination of the CGT for Solidarność.[51]

Our Coordinating Committee of Solidarity in France was broken by a representative of Wałęşa, the chief of his network. At the moment of martial law, he was in the United States. He arrives in Europe, and he liquidates all of it. He expels me from the committee, takes it over, and establishes institutional links between Solidarność in the West and different American agencies.

CP: What was his name?

ZMK: Milewski.[52] He ended up as chief of the national security council of Kwaśniewski.[53] He arrives just before the summer of 1982 and calls a meeting of the most representative people of Solidarity in the West, all delegates to the congress of Solidarity. I am at this meeting in Brussels. Very quickly, after two hours of discussion, his demand is clear: This meeting is to send a letter to Reagan thanking him for the show he put on after martial law. Milewski broke people completely. I alone refused to sign this letter.

He became the ambassador of Solidarity in the West, eliminating everyone who was against his conception. I was the first victim, because the first selection was, "Who is signing the letter to Reagan?" Our committee in France, formed immediately after martial law with the support of one of the main social-democratic unions in France, the French Democratic Confederation of Labor (CFDT), was very strong, the strongest in the West. And in autumn '82, I am expelled from this committee. This committee represents a rare force, links with unions in France and other countries, the hundreds of local French committees of solidarity with Solidarność. It becomes subordinated to Milewski, as the French section of the Solidarność embassy in Brussels. An incredible history.[54]

CP: What was the role of American intelligence in the movement before martial law?

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ZMK: There is a book called *Victory* on how Reagan smashed Communism, with a chapter on Poland, on Solidarity.[55] It tells how the first contact by the CIA was established. I don't know if it's true. He tells things that cannot be true on other subjects. But he says that the first contact was established many months after martial law.

CP: I talked to someone else, another veteran of the movement, who said that in student circles in '80–'81 there was speculation about who was CIA and who wasn't.

ZMK: It is possible, but those were probably minor informants of the CIA, filing information reports, not agents of the CIA.

Nobody knows the following history, but it's absolutely authentic: In autumn 1980 there was an extremely secret meeting of a very select delegation of leaders of Solidarity with the American ambassador. They asked him what is happening in American politics toward Poland. It was a period of very strong tensions here over the registration of Solidarity and so on. It was not clear that Solidarity would sustain itself for a longer period. There was a danger of repression. In this delegation was the president of Solidarity of Łódź. It was an attempt to learn the American position. The ambassador said it is not their business. Absolutely not their business. He had nothing to discuss in an underground manner with the leaders of Solidarity.

CP: That's before Reagan, though. Reagan came in January '81.

ZMK: Aha, yes. This is Carter.

CP: I suspect US intelligence had much better contacts with the government than with the movement at that early point. Poland was so deeply in debt to the West, they were probably worried about stability. They wanted it, a debtor nation, to meet its payments.

My own answer to the Reagan question, by the way, is that 1956, 1968, 1970, 1980—all of these uprisings precede Reagan. The system is in deep crisis and suffering a crisis of popular legitimacy long before Reagan. From '70 to '80 there is this economic crisis that, despite the use of borrowing from the West to create an illusion of development, never really diminishes. The command economies are so inefficient. They are not delivering, well before the military buildup and Star Wars.

ZMK: Another point to consider in why Solidarity did not sustain a revolutionary quality is that the defeat of Solidarity appears at the end of a long wave of mass movements, revolutionary struggles, in the world. At that moment, 1981, I did not have this impression, because you had, just before, the revolution in Nicaragua that was very important from the perspective of stimulating struggles in El Salvador and Guatemala.[56] You have the Iranian Revolution. In 1981, it was not clear that the clerics would take over.[57] Recently I wrote a long article analyzing the waves since the Second World War on a world scale, with reference to Poland. I think it was really a very bad situation, because the wave was finishing. My analysis was that the biggest point of this wave

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was the Vietnamese victory in 1975, and after that was a terrible downturn on a world scale. There were, of course, exceptions, even at the end of the 1970s: Poland, Nicaragua, Iran.

CP: I would add South Africa: Soweto, COSATU, the strikes.[58]

ZMK: Aha, yes, before the return of Mandela to power. You know, I studied closely the history of what happened in Cambodia.[59] I think it's a terrible break in the history of all the national liberation movements, what happened there, just after the Vietnamese victory, the defeat of American imperialism. What happened there is a history without precedent. So right after reaching its high point in 1975, the worldwide revolutionary wave began to recede. It even degenerated into reaction like the Khmer Rouge or the Islamist dictatorship in Iran. I think this must be taken into consideration when we try to explain the turn of the Solidarity leadership to the right after the defeat in December 1981.

Contemporary Poland

CP: Let me ask you about the Polish working class today. What's the state of the trade union movement? You are working, if I remember correctly, for the trade union federation that is the continuation of what used to be the official party trade union federation.[60] How did you make peace with those people?

ZMK: You know, it was relatively simple. It was impossible in the 1990s to have any work with Solidarity even at the level of interaction, even to have a left-wing leaflet at their demonstrations.

CP: They wouldn't allow it?

ZMK: No, no, no. It was dangerous.

CP: So when you returned to the country, you were not permitted to rejoin Solidarity?

ZMK: At the beginning, I tried a little. I discussed it with the president of Solidarity here, who was the same one from 1980–81. But very quickly I abandoned any idea of any personal engagement in it. It was absolutely impossible to go to a demonstration of Solidarity in Warsaw—not, mind you, with doctrinaire propaganda, but simply with a leaflet easily identified as left-wing. But with the other union federation, you were well-received as a socialist. We published a journal at the beginning of the 1990s subtitled *Socialist Journal*. At the May Day rally organized by these unions we sold 600 copies. Sold, not gave away. It was 1990 or 1991. It was also possible for us to sell our journal inside the building of this bureaucracy without any problem. We had maybe 200 more copies, and one person had the idea of going to the meeting of the Social Democratic party. We sold them. There was an attempt to expel us, and we discussed it with Kwaśniewski, who was then the party leader. We said, "We want to sell our left-wing journal." And he said, "Absolutely, no expulsion." Jaruzelski bought our journal! At the meetings of Kwaśniewski, for president in his first

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campaign, it was very clear that among those supporting him electorally there were people who were left-wing, open to socialist ideas. The old bureaucrats were cautious of it, but they were open. They were not attacking it, not aggressive—not because they had an interest in our journal, but because they had a sense that the people who will vote for them are on the left, even to the left of them.

CP: But they themselves have implemented all sorts of privatization and participated in Bush's war in Iraq.

ZMK: Yes, of course. But I met some people where I am working now, at this small left-wing publishing house, publishing my review, *Rewolucja*.[61] They were young people who were in the opposition at the end of the former regime. They were publishing the weeklies for these unions. They proposed that I collaborate in this weekly they published for the former official unions. I said, "Unions are unions. If you can work with the unions, you work. There is no problem with ideological choice. It is my culture in the Fourth International. You work with the unions where you can work and where your activity can be accepted. It is very simple." And I was very well-received there because these bureaucrats were very pleased that these people from former Solidarity were collaborating with them!

CP: What's the union density in Poland now, do you know?

ZMK: Formally it is fifteen percent, something like that. But I think it's lower.

CP: I read two stories recently. One is the woman who sued Biedronka for unpaid overtime who some call "a second Wałeşa."[62] The other is a former member of Polish Solidarity who moved to America. He was recently fired from Wal-Mart, the largest retail company in the world, viciously antiunion, with 1.2 million employees and not a single union member. He was fired for signing a union card.[63] These cases made me think that perhaps the Solidarity of 1980–81 remains an inspiration—that the movement might someday revive, just as 1956 was revived in 1980.

ZMK: I think that the big problem is the fundamental change in the economic structure of this country. We had the same structure in both 1956 and 1980. It was relatively simple. There was state employment, a factor in unifying the movement. Now, when you have large-scale private property, a private sector practically without unions in Poland, these unions are not present in the private sector and are doing nothing in the private sector. One day they may be replaced, like in 1980, but I don't know how it can happen and if it is possible that such a movement can emerge in this new economic system.

CP: What's happened to the textile industry, the mines, the shipbuilding industry—all those old centers of industrial militancy in 1980?

ZMK: They are fundamentally disbanded.

CP: The workforce is negligible?

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ZMK: Even if it exists, employment is five or ten percent of what it was in the past. They are no longer huge centers of big industry. They are no longer a center of reference in this society, that something is happening in these huge factories.

CP: Timothy Garton Ash quotes a wage differential between the average worker and the average official in 1979 of 1 to 20.[64] He presents this as a refutation of assertions of People's Poland as a classless society. But it looks pretty good compared to the West right now, where it must be 1 to 1,000 or something like that.

ZMK: I think that is too big a difference, 1 to 20. I think that is too big. I think it was more limited. After August 1980, even the official press carried strong denunciations of the bureaucrats' compensation. Later, after 1989, I visited some homes of very high-level bureaucrats. The former chief of a department of the central committee of the party had no personal car. He had an official car, of course, but he was without a personal car. This may have been a result of a factional struggle in the party, a populist propaganda of some faction against another against the Gierek regime, how they were rich.

I will not say "no," but I am very dubious of such stories of great wealth. It was not the case in Łódź. It is possible that it was the case of the manager of the Katowice steelworks, gigantic, built by Gierek. But these differences were not the case in normal factories here. Perhaps 1 to 10. The terrible pressure on these managers was that they were very lowly paid.

CP: You can see why polling data shows many people nostalgic for People's Poland. Nobody wants low pay or the one-party state. But that looks like a relatively egalitarian society, which is paradoxical given how inequalities fueled dissent. What is the wage differential now, do you know, between owner and worker?

ZMK: No. Only that it is enormous and that it is sometimes higher than in Western Europe.

CP: Is it your sense that Marxism will for several generations be impossible to revive in Poland? Haven't the old bureaucratic states and the experience of Stalinism forever discredited it?

ZMK: No. I think that among many radicals in the West there is a very strong exaggeration of this. They think that socialism was all terrible and discredited here. It was also our first experience. We had a big discussion about whether to call our publication a socialist journal, with some people saying, "It's discredited. You cannot do it because you will be rejected by the people." But it wasn't any problem in 1991 to sell it. Very limited hostile reactions to it.

I think the problem is different in these countries. The problem is to rebuild Marxist thinking here in a very difficult situation. Our publishing house issued a volume of some of Rosa Luxemburg's writings that were not available in Polish, for example. One thing is to rebuild Marxism theoretically, but it will collapse very quickly if it's only a group of intellectuals interested in theoretical debates alone. Only if you have a development of Marxism as politics will you have a true development at the theoretical level.

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NOTES

1. The textile industry has declined precipitously in Poland since 1989, as has Manchester's, so the phrase "Manchester of Poland" is no longer accurate, in either its English or Polish referents. The English-language historiography on Łódź is dominated by the Łódź ghetto, a major concentration point for Jews in Poland during the Nazi occupation of 1939–45, terminating in the Holocaust. Labor histories of postwar Łódź are scant, with the brilliant exception of Padraic Kenney's work; see especially "Working-Class Community and Resistance in Pre-Stalinist Poland: The Poznański Textile Strike, Łódź, September 1947," *Social History* 18 (1993): 31–51, and *Rebuilding Poland: Workers and Communists, 1945–1950* (Ithaca, 1997). Another article on postwar Poland refers to Łódź's "wildcat occupation strikes, street demonstrations, and clashes with police"; see Jaime Reynolds, "Communists, Socialists and Workers: Poland 1944–48," *Soviet Studies* 30 (1978): 516–39. For the quotation above, consult Tamara Deutscher, "Poland—Hopes and Fears," *New Left Review* 125 (1981): 63.

2. See, for example, Daniel Singer, *The Road to Gdansk* (New York, 1981); Stan Persky, *At the Lenin Shipyard: Poland and the Rise of the Solidarity Trade Union* (Vancouver, 1981); Roman Laba, *The Roots of Solidarity: A Political Sociology of Poland's Working-Class Democratization* (Princeton, 1991); Lawrence Goodwyn, *Breaking the Barrier: The Rise of Solidarity in Poland* (Oxford, 1991); and Jack M. Bloom, "The Solidarity Revolution in Poland, 1980–1981," *The Oral History Review* 33 (2006): 33–64.

3. The University of Łódź is a public university established in 1945. Its best-known graduate is novelist Jerzy Kosiński (1933–1991).

4. The 1917 Bolshevik-led Russian Revolution that established the Soviet Union.

5. Kowalewski's interest in Latin-American guerrilla movements led him to publish a small book, *Antropología de la guerrilla* (Caracas, Venezuela, 1971); a pamphlet, *El papel de la guerra revolucionaria en el desarrollo de la cultura* (Mexico, 1971; also published in Cuba, Chile, and Argentina); and a longer study, *Guerrilla latynoamerykańska: szkice z dziejów rewolucyjnych walk partyzanckich XX wieku* (Wrocław, 1978). He has translated into Polish a study by Maria Esther Gilio, *The Tupamaros Guerrillas*, as *Tupamaros* (Warszawa, 1973); Isabel Allende's *House of the Spirits*, as *Dom duchów* (Warszawa, 1998); Samir Amin's *Obsolescent Capitalism*, as *Zmurszały kapitalizm* (Warszawa, 2004); and Étienne Balibar's *Le philosophie de Marx*, as *Filozofia Marksa* (Warszawa, 2007). Kowalewski's many other writings include "Background to the Struggle in the Ukraine," in *Gorbachev's USSR: Is Stalinism Dead?*, ed. Carl Finamore (San Francisco, 1989), 161–171; a pamphlet, *The Revolutionary Message of Rap Music* (San Francisco, 1993); and an essay in the book *Malcolm X, révolutionnaire noir* (Montreuil, France, 1994). His thoughts on these varied subjects are linked by a theme of national self-determination.

6. Singer, *Road to Gdansk*, 184.

7. Łódź in 1905 was part of the Russian Empire and a center of the massive, unsuccessful revolution that shook the czarist order. Rosa Luxemburg (1870–1919) was a Polish-born Marxist who was a leader of the Social Democratic Party of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania (SKDPiL). The General Jewish Labor Union, or Bund, was a Jewish socialist party. Both the Bund and SKDPiL cooperated in 1905 with the left wing of the Polish Socialist Party (PSP), the largest of Poland's left-wing parties at the time. SKDPiL raised internationalist objections to nationalism, whereas the PSP catered to Poles' desire for national independence.

8. Piotrkowska Street is the central avenue in Łódź, dividing the city center from north to south.

9. "Independent Poland" refers to the Second Polish Republic, lasting from the end of the First World War in 1918 until the beginning of the Second World War in 1939.

10. Peter Green, who credits the Łódź proletariat for propelling Polish working-class resistance in 1905, 1970, and 1976, writes that occupation strikes among Polish textile workers as early as 1931 led the tactic to become known across Europe in the interwar years as "the Polish strike." "Third Round in Poland," *New Left Review* 101–102 (1977): 74; echoed by Neal Ascherson, *The Polish August: The Self-Limiting Revolution* (New York, 1982), 137. "Polish strike" may be a misnomer, however, because the sit-down dates to well before the 1930s; Sidney Fine, *Sit-Down* (Ann Arbor, 1969), 121–148.

11. In March 1968, after student demonstrations broke out at Warsaw University, Polish state security forces launched an anti-Semitic and antiintellectual campaign to suppress the

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liberal wing of the party and punish student dissidents. Thousands of Jews lost their jobs and emigrated.

12. Between 1970 and 1981, Edward Gierek (1913–2001) was head of state in Poland and first secretary of the Polish United Workers' Party, ruling party of the Polish People's Republic (Communist Poland).

13. In English, the historiography of the Łódź strikes of 1971 is limited. There is an overview in Laba, *Roots of Solidarity*, 81–82. By far the most complete account is Padraic Kenney's article, "The Gender of Resistance in Communist Poland," *The American Historical Review* 104 (1999): 399–425. A sophisticated gender analysis permits Kenney to explain why women textile workers succeeded in Łódź in 1971. The same article contains a rare treatment of Solidarity in Łódź, in a few pages about women's hunger marches in 1981. Neither Laba nor Kenney addresses party faction machinations in 1971.

14. On August 30 and 31, 1980, separate agreements were signed in Szczecin (very near the German border) and Gdańsk (on the Baltic Sea) between strikers and the government. These August Accords were the first agreements in the history of Communist single-party states to recognize workers' rights to form independent trade unions and to strike. On September 1, 30,000 workers struck in Silesia. Their comparable agreement with the government was signed on September 4. For the texts, see the special issue of *Labour Focus on Eastern Europe* devoted to "Polish Free Trade Unions," 4.1–3 (1980).

15. Trams are electric street trains that provide mass transit in Polish cities.

16. The official unions in the Central Trade Union Council were controlled by the ruling party and state. As such, they were instruments for disciplining the working class, not advocates of workers' interests.

17. Solidarity was not organized by trade or even industry but first by enterprise and then by region. Survey data drawn from Warsaw makes Kowalewski seem typical of the "second wave" leadership that supplanted the initial strike committees in 1981. According to this data, roughly half of 1981 leaders had completed higher education. Most were "intelligentsia": professionals, technicians, white-collar staff, or intellectuals. These leaders were more likely than rank-and-file workers to see Solidarity as a social movement, not merely a trade union; to be uncompromising toward the authorities; and to seek political goals, not just improved living and working conditions. Robert Biezenski, "The Struggle for Solidarity 1980–81: Two Waves of Leadership in Conflict," *Europe-Asia Studies* 48 (1996): 261–84.

18. Established in 1976, KOR (known by its initials) was the Committee for the Defense of Workers, an opposition group formed by a circle of intellectuals to oppose repression directed at labor activists and advocate civic freedom. A forerunner of Solidarity, its politics, generally speaking, were social-democratic.

19. "Transitional demand" is a phrase developed by Leon Trotsky to characterize a demand that expresses legitimate popular desires for reform but whose logic runs so deeply against the basic nature of the system that it cannot possibly be granted, pointing the way toward the necessity of a revolutionary transformation.

20. "In May and June of 1981," a French sociologist confirms, self-management was "the principal subject of discussion within Solidarity." Beyond its democratic idealism, self-management was popular for practical reasons as a way to address poor living conditions by improving economic performance. The arbitrariness, irrationality, and waste caused by bureaucratic corruption, fief-building, and nepotism would diminish, according to Solidarity, with self-management. Quotation from Alain Touraine et al., *Solidarity: The Analysis of a Social Movement: Poland 1980–81* (Cambridge, 1981), 94; see also Lawrence Weschler, *The Passion of Poland* (New York, 1984), 66–71.

21. Zbigniew Bujak (1954–) was a young worker at the Ursus Tractor Plant, head of the powerful Mazowsze (Warsaw-area) regional Solidarity leadership, and a member of the Solidarity national commission.

22. Lech Wałęsa (1943–) was the main figure in Solidarity, its spokesman and negotiator. As an electrician at the Lenin Shipyard in Gdańsk, he was on the 1970 strike committee and later led the August 1980 strike that sparked other Baltic strikes and gave birth to Solidarity, whose national chairman he became.

23. Solidarity spokesmen, according to a reporter for *The New Yorker*, answered the government's assertions that Solidarity was antisocialist by telling him, in May 1981, "On the contrary, socialism consists in *social* ownership of the means of production, which is *precisely* what we advocate." Weschler, *The Passion of Poland*, 44.

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24. Oskar Lange (1904–1965), a Polish Marxist economist, was the postwar Communist government's first ambassador to the United States. His pamphlet *Some Problems Relating to the Polish Road to Socialism* (Warsaw, 1957) includes remarks on self-management. Michał Kalecki (1899–1970) was a Polish economist whose writings have been published in English as *The Collected Works of Michal Kalecki*, 7 vols. (Oxford, 1990–97).

25. This elucidates the mediated manner by which workers would exert control under self-management as envisioned by Solidarity. Delegates, elected democratically from the shop floor, would comprise a workers' council. The workers' council, in turn, would appoint a hiring committee. That committee would select managerial finalists from the pool of candidates, after which the workers' council would vet and vote upon the finalists. This method, rather than a raw vote by the entire workforce, would help ensure that the facility's need for expertise would figure highly in selection of managers, not mere popularity or whim.

26. Bronisław Geremek (1932–), a historian, was an advisor to Lech Wałeşa in 1980–81. Ryszard Bugaj (1944–) was a social-democratic economist active in Solidarity.

27. Seweryn Jaworski (1931–) was a foundry worker and leader of Solidarity at the Huta Warszawa steelworks who became vice president of Solidarity's Warsaw-based Mazowsze regional organization.

28. "Co-management" was an attempt to co-opt Solidarity by making the union responsible for joint management of the Polish economy, although ultimate power would still rest with the party.

29. These and several other articles were collected and published by the Łódź regional body of Solidarity for distribution at the first national congress of Solidarity in September 1981: Zbigniew Kowalewski, *"Solidarność" i walka o samorząd załogi* (Łódź, 1981). Translated into English, this title would read *Solidarity and the Struggle for Workers' Self-Management*. A copy of the document is held at the Houghton Library of Harvard University.

30. In June 1956, a workers' rebellion in the city of Poznań set in motion a chain of events. In August, Władisław Gomułka (1905–1985), a top postwar Polish Communist who was expelled from the party and imprisoned at Stalinism's zenith, was readmitted to the party. In September, the first workers' council was formed at the large car factory in Żerań near Warsaw, influenced by Yugoslavian experiments in plant-level self-management. Workers, together with students, called in mass meetings for Gomułka to be returned to power, and in October Gomułka was made first secretary of the party. He spoke of a reform Communism, but the hopes he raised did not eventuate in a transformation of the state's basic structure. In 1970, Gomułka was ousted from power again after massive strikes erupted in protest against price hikes.

31. At this congress, Solidarity declared itself in favor of a "Self-Managed Republic." In his own history of Solidarity, Kowalewski writes, "The totalitarian regime definitively decided to smash our trade union under the boot of military dictatorship when Solidarność decisively raised the banner of workers' self-management and began to build self-management bodies; when the workers' councils began to take increasing power inside the factories and began to coordinate regionally and nationally; when Solidarność declared at its congress that it was ready to violate the restrictive legislation imposed on the workers' councils; and when increasingly large sectors of the working class began to prepare to seize economic power in the country through the revolutionary means of the active strike." (In the "active strike," or "work-in strike," workers continued to produce while managing their own enterprises independently, in disregard of party and state directives.) First published in France in 1985, this passage is reproduced in the pamphlet *Poland: The Fight for Workers' Democracy* (San Francisco, 1988), 20. See also Zbigniew Kowalewski, "Solidarnosc on the Eve," *Labour Focus on Eastern Europe*, 5.1–2 (1982): 25–29; reprinted as "The Eve of Martial Law," *Against the Current* 2 (1982): 48–51.

32. David Ost, *Solidarity and the Politics of Anti-Politics: Opposition and Reform in Poland since 1968* (Philadelphia, 1990), 157.

33. Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński (1901–1981).

34. The chapter in which Ost makes this case is on pp. 149–86.

35. Jacek Kuroń (1934–2004) and Karol Modzelewski (1937–) were dissident intellectuals whose *Open Letter to the Party* was a criticism of People's Poland from the standpoint of revolutionary socialist democracy. They were sentenced to prison for three years for writing the letter. Later, Kuroń was the dominant figure in KOR. Modzelewski is credited with suggesting

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the name "Solidarity" in 1980. The open letter is included in *Revolutionary Marxist Students in Poland Speak Out* (New York, 1968).

36. *Robotnik* means *The Worker* in Polish. The Polish Socialist Party first used the title for its underground newspaper, established in 1894. KOR's *Robotnik* reached a circulation of tens of thousands between 1977 and 1981.

37. Jan Lityński, a 1968 new leftist, edited KOR's *Robotnik*. *Gazeta Wyborcza (Election Gazette)*, was the voice of Solidarity in the 1989 elections. It later became independent and is now a prominent daily. Its editor-in-chief is Adam Michnik (1946-), a 1968 dissident involved in both KOR and Solidarity.

38. Michnik recounts his conversations with Kuroń in summer 1980 as follows: "Jacek, like me, was very uneasy about the situation in Gdańsk, where they seemed to have some pretty wild ideas. . . . The 'wildest' idea was the one that independent and self-governing trade unions could be formed. Jacek knew this was impossible in a Communist system. I also knew it was impossible and that's why I was supposed to go to Gdańsk, to explain to them that it was senseless to insist on such a demand. Since I was known and rather liked there, perhaps I might have convinced them. Fortunately, I was arrested. I couldn't go to Gdańsk and convince them and so Solidarity was created. . . . That's how Solidarity arose, without us and against us, although we always considered it to be our child. An illegitimate one, you might say." Quoted in Ost, 77.

39. Social Democracy of the Republic of Poland was the name taken in 1989 by the reconstituted Polish United Workers Party, the ruling party in Communist Poland. Later it became the Democratic Left Alliance. In Poland, therefore, the mantle of social democracy was quickly claimed by the former Communists. The same thing occurred in some other eastern European countries, such as Hungary.

40. Jósef Piłsudski (1867–1935) helped bring about Polish independence in 1918. A leader of the Polish Socialist Party, he in 1926 effected a coup d'état and ruled Poland in an authoritarian fashion thereafter.

41. Upon his return to Warsaw in 1918, Piłsudski was greeted by his old underground associates, who greeted him as "comrade." He rebuked them, saying, "Gentlemen, we both took a ride on the same red tram, but while I got off at the stop marked Polish Independence, you wish to travel to the station Socialism." Margaret Macmillan, *Paris 1919: Six Months that Changed the World* (New York, 2002), 208.

42. Wałęsa won the presidency of Poland in 1990 but was defeated in 1995. In 2000, he ran again for president but received only one percent of the vote (after polling at three percent). Afterward, he announced his retirement from any further electoral candidacies.

43. The Round Table talks—literally conducted around a gigantic round table—took place in Warsaw between February and April 1989 between the Communist government headed by Jaruzelski and a Solidarity contingent led by Wałęsa. The result was legalization of Solidarity and promised elections for a new senate and for the presidency. The party intended this as a compromise, based on a formula that would preserve its parliamentary power, but the resultant Senate elections of June 4, 1989, were so decisively in Solidarity's favor that they led to the toppling of the Polish government and set off eastern Europe's "velvet revolutions" of 1989, including the dismantling of the Berlin Wall, which inaugurated liberal civic systems and led to the return of capitalism.

44. During the early 1990s, Jeffrey Sachs (1954–), then a Harvard University economist, called for "shock therapy" or the immediate economic liberalization of the former Communist states, including withdrawal of all state subsidies, privatization, and removal of currency and price controls. The initial result was astronomical rates of unemployment.

45. In 2005, Solidarity supported the right-wing Catholic nationalist Law and Justice Party, which won the national election. The party's leaders, twin brothers Lech and Jarosław Kaczyński, became president and prime minister. This prompted Lech Wałęsa to quit Solidarity in 2006.

46. Grzegorz Palka (1950–1996), mayor of Łódź from 1990 to 1994 and a leader of the Christian National Union, a small right-wing party.

47. Jerzy Kropiwnicki (1945-) has been mayor of Łódź since 2002. Formerly a leader of the Christian National Union, he is now close to the Law and Justice Party.

48. Many local committees in France in 1981–1982 were named "Comité de solidarity avec Solidarność."

49. In "The Holy Alliance," *Time*, February 24, 1992, Carl Bernstein says that Pope John Paul II and Ronald Reagan met on June 7, 1982, agreeing to "undertake a clandestine campaign

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to hasten the dissolution of the communist empire," and that the "Solidarity office in Brussels became an international clearinghouse: for representatives of the Vatican, for CIA operatives, for the AFL-CIO, for representatives of the Socialist International, [and] for the congressionally funded National Endowment for Democracy, which also worked closely with [CIA director William] Casey." For further details, see Carl Bernstein and Marco Politi, *His Holiness: John Paul II and the Hidden History of Our Time* (New York, 1996).

50. Known in France as "Comité de Coordination du Syndicat Solidarność en France," this committee was established by Kowalewski and other Polish émigrés who were Solidarity veterans. Formed immediately after the declaration of martial law and announced in an appeal by Kowalewski published in *Le Monde* on December 17, 1981, it smuggled scanners, radios, walkie-talkies, and printing presses to the underground in Poland and encouraged solidarity efforts across western Europe with Polish Solidarity.

51. Confédération générale du travail (CGT) is a French trade union federation historically associated with the French Communist Party (PCF). The "Coordination Nationale de la CGT pour Solidarność" was a committee of CGT members in support of Polish Solidarity, in contravention of the PCF's line of suppporting the Polish Communist state.

52. Jerzy Milewski (1935–1997), a physicist who studied at Stanford and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, directed Solidarity's Brussels foreign office in the 1980s. He was appointed national security advisor under President Lech Wałeşa in 1991 and again under President Aleksander Kwaśniewski in 1995.

53. Aleksander Kwaśniewski (1954–), president of Poland from 1995–2005, was the candidate of the Democratic Left Alliance, the social-democratic coalition (and, after 1999, a unified party) which replaced the Polish United Workers' Party, the ruling party in the Communist period.

54. During his years in France, Kowalewski subsequently published a book-length account of the Solidarity uprising of 1980–81: *Rendez-nous nos usines! Solidarność dans le combat pour l'autogestion ouvrière* (Montreuil, 1985). Rendered in English, this title would be *Give Us Back Our Factories! Solidarity and the Fight for Worker Self-Management*. See also Zbigniew Kowalewski, "Solidarność Today: A View from the Left," *Against the Current* 4–5 (1986): 23–26, 29–32, 35.

55. Peter Schweizer, *Victory: The Reagan Administration's Secret Strategy that Hastened the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (New York, 1994).

56. The 1979 Sandinista Revolution in Nicaragua overthrew the military dictatorship of Anastasio Somoza.

57. The 1979 Iranian Revolution overthrew the Shah, a monarch who had ruled Iran since 1953. It led to the creation of an Islamic republic under the Ayatollah Khomeini.

58. A black township near Johannesburg, South Africa, Soweto erupted in mass protest against apartheid in 1976. The Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU) was formed in 1979, and merged into the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) in 1985. In May 1986, COSATU led the largest strike in South African history, of 1.5 million workers.

59. The Khmer Rouge, a Maoist movement led by Pol Pot (1925–1998), came to power in Cambodia in 1975. In four years, it annihilated two million people, a quarter of the population.

60. At the time of this interview, Kowalewski assisted in editing the newspaper of the All-Polish Alliance of Trade Unions (OPZZ), a labor federation created in 1984 as a result of the recasting of the old official trade unions linked to the party-state. The OPZZ is allied with the Democratic Left Alliance, but Kowalewski is a political supporter of the Polish Labor Party, a small left-wing party formed in 2001 out of the WZZ, "Serpien 80," a left-wing breakaway from Solidarity.

61. Kowalewski is coeditor of *Revolution*, a theoretical journal <http://iwkip.org/rewolucja/> (accessed January 28, 2008).

62. Bożena Łopacka, a worker at the discount supermarket chain Biedronka (Ladybug), sued the chain's Portuguese owner in 2004 for failure to pay her for completed overtime labor.

63. Ryszard Tomtas was fired from a Loveland, Colorado, Wal-Mart distribution center in 2005.

64. Timothy Garton Ash, *The Polish Revolution: Solidarity* (London, 1999[1983]), 30.

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