



# THE POLISH SUMMER

ROBERT  
POLET

12413  
75



## The author

**Robert Polet** is a technical engineer and has a degree in Social and Economic Politics. He is one of the organizers of the Belgian branch of MIR/IRG (Mouvement Internationale de la Reconciliation/Internationale des Résistants à la Guerre) and co-ordinator of the working group on popular nonviolent civilian defence. He is author of the book "Défense nationale: défense de classe" (Les fonctions de l'appareil militaire dans la formation sociale belge), published jointly by MIR and CONTRA-DICTIONS, Brussels. 1977.

**Robert Polet** was elected to the Council of the War Resisters International in 1979 and served on its Executive Committee until 1981.

"The Polish Summer" was translated into english on behalf of the WRI by Margaret Curran in April 1981.

*Published by the WRI, 55 Dawes Street, London SE17 1EL.*

## Note

The reader should note that this study deals with the Polish summer within certain well-defined time limits — ie July to September 1980 (the work was completed on 12 October 1980).

Where social and political activities are concerned, nothing can ever be said to be final.\*

Since September, many events have thrust themselves on to the Polish scene, and many more will do so before this study comes off the presses . . .

We can only suggest that readers keep abreast of the latest events by reading about them and interpreting them in the light of this analysis.

But whatever the final outcome of these events, we believe, in any case, that the story of this "Polish Summer" represents and immensely valuable asset for the Polish workers' movement, for the workers' movement world-wide, for our efforts in bringing about a nonviolent alternative to armed defence, and for those who believe, as we do, in socialism based on self-determination.

**R.P. 1981**

\*Any assessment of the "achievements of the Polish Summer" will, in particular, have to be modified accordingly should the authorities resist the correct implementation of the agreements.

# THE POLISH SUMMER

**Workers' victories  
and popular non-violent  
civilian defence**

by

**ROBERT POLET**



## INTRODUCTION

- 1 Economic and political context
- 2 Traditions of struggle and the preparation of the action
- 3 Causes of the strikes — what triggers them off
- 4 The demands
- 5 How the action and negotiations are controlled
- 6 The organisation of the strikes — democracy at work
- 7 Deterring a Soviet invasion
- 8 Links between workers and intellectuals
- 9 An opposition strategy
- 10 The achievement of the Polish Summer

### Document No 1

The twenty One demands of the Gdansk inter-factory committee

### Document No 2

Text of the agreement signed at Gdansk

## SOURCES

Le Monde July — September 1980

Le Drapeau Rouge, Belgian Communist Party daily

Numerous cuttings from Belgian daily papers — Le Soir, La Cité, La Libre Belgique, Vers l'Avenir

Le Nouvel Observateur

Le Monde Diplomatique, October 1980

La Pologne: une société en dissidence, ed 1978 by Francois Maspero, no 338 in the series *Cahiers Libres*. The book is a collection of writings by the Polish political opposition.

## INTRODUCTION

### WORKERS' STRUGGLES AND DEFENCE: WHAT CONNECTION IS THERE BETWEEN THEM?

Why should a work in a series on civilian defence be devoted to an event — however fruitful — in the realms of industrial struggle? By interpreting defence so broadly, do we not run the risk of confusing our thoughts on the subject and our prospects of organizing a real (nonviolent) alternative to the classic (military) form of defence?

Whereas in 1968 the Czech people were up against a military invasion by Warsaw Pact troops\*, in summer 1980 the Polish workers had neither a military invasion nor a domestic coup to fear. Are we therefore justified in speaking of the "Polish Summer" in terms of popular nonviolent **civilian** defence, when it is quite clear that what we are dealing with is a popular workers' struggle?

In our opinion several factors justify including this particular work in a series on civilian defence.

- 1 If the function of defence is to safeguard the basic values of a nation — even supporters of military defence talk in these terms — then the struggle of the Polish workers do indeed fall under the heading of defence because their aim was to protect fundamental freedoms, personal and social responsibilities, collective participation in political and economic choices and decisions . . . In short, the Polish strikers were defending socialist democracy by demanding that these values be made real through the adoption of certain economic, political, social and cultural policies.
- 2 The development of the capacity of popular defence goes hand in hand with the achievement of democratic goals and the assumption by the people of responsibilities in the area of collective (or self-) management.

Indeed, we believe that the events of the summer, for which we here try to draw a few lessons, appreciably increased the will and ability of the Poles to defend their rights and freedoms and the cultural identity of their nation. In this sense, the capacity for popular defence was strengthened, not by presenting the Polish armed forces with any new weapons, but by the workers putting into practice a method of organization along independent, nonviolent lines.\*\*

- 3 The methods used in the action, intervention, control, negotiations, and deterrent activities of the Polish workers belong to the "arsenal of nonviolent defence".\*\*\* By examining how these methods were applied, we can draw lessons which are extremely useful both for the struggles of the democratic workers' movement and for the preparation of a system of popular nonviolent civilian defence.
- 4 Finally, the Polish Summer will also have had some effect on international relations as a whole. These workers' strikes have altered the strategic East/West equations. They even struck at the very equilibrium of the socialist and capitalist worlds. In each of these camps there was a real fear that the Polish experience



would spread. What, after all, would be the effect if workers everywhere rose in a body and launched a solid and confident movement demanding control over economic choices, over investments, over the distribution of the "plus value" resulting from their work, over the economic planning of needs and the social usefulness of products etc.

It thus seems obvious to us that the events in Poland, and the course they took in summer 1980, have a profound significance for our search for an alternative to armed defence.

\* See MIR Monographies de la Défense Civile No V.

\*\* Note in this connection that in September 1980 when the Central Committee of the Rumanian Communist Party decided to reduce its military budget again in 1981 it declared that its capacity to defend itself would not be diminished because, by the re-allocation of resources, the social and economic achievements of Rumanian socialism would be consolidated and developed and this would strengthen popular cohesion and the people's allegiance to socialism. (On this see "Fiches Documentaires pour UNE AUTRE DEFENSE" No 8, December 1980, MIR/IRG, rue Haute-Marcelle 11, 5000 Namur.

\*\*\* See MIR Monographie No XII "Résistance civile et "arsenal" de la défense nonviolente".

## 1 ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

### a ECONOMIC ASPECTS

*"The great socio-political crises which Poland has experienced since the war have begun with claims relating to the standard of living. On 18 June 1956, for example, rioting broke out at Poznan following the return from Warsaw of a delegation of workers from the Zispo factory, who had failed to obtain satisfaction from the central authorities. The slogan of the rioters was "We want bread". In October, Mr Gomulka, recently freed from prison, became the leader of the party. There was talk of workers' councils, of self-management and of liberalism. The "Polish October" began to blossom as the first days of November put a bloody end to the "Hungarian October". Subsequent crises were destined to share the same characteristics.*

*"December 1970. The era of liberalism and self-management is over. During the "Prague Spring" of 1968, Poland has experienced a definite ideological hardening and a wave of anti-semitism. A few days before the Christmas holidays, a substantial increase in the price of foodstuffs exhausts the patience of the population. The result is the bloody rioting on the Baltic coast. Workers' committees are formed and Mr Gierek, Silesia's skilful manager, is chosen to replace Mr Gomulka. The price increases are revoked.*

*"Summer 1976. The rapid industrialization of the country during the previous five years, together with the enormous foreign debts which have accumulated, force the authorities to order an increase in food prices (still highly subsidized). Strikes break out — notably at Ursus and Radom. Measures taken to repress them are harsh, but the price increase is revoked."*<sup>1</sup>

The strikes of the Polish Summer which occur on 1 and 2 July 1980 at Ursus and Tczew, are also destined to begin *"as a result of the huge increase in the price of the meat sold direct to the workers at their place of work. The prices had just been adjusted in line, not with those of the normal butchers' shops, but with those of the so-called commercial networks which offer plentiful supplies of better quality meat at prices 50 to 100% above the norm"*.<sup>1</sup>

How could Edward Gierek, who, before his accession to the highest position of responsibility in Poland, had been the extremely successful manager of Silesia, "preside" over such a grave economic decline?

The new strategy adopted after the Sixth Congress of the Polish United Workers' Party (PUWP) was one of rapid industrialization. It had as its basis three factors: a substantial growth in productive investment, increased employment and increased wages. This implied a parallel strategy of systematic recourse to foreign credit and the importing of advanced technology. The direct consequence of this policy was a period of unprecedented development accompanied by social peace. It meant, on the other hand, growing debts to foreign creditors (mostly western countries) and an agricultural system which was less favoured than other sectors and was therefore structurally weak. Agriculture was indeed the poor relation as regards this development, on the one hand because priority was given to industry, but also because there



was a determination not to help the farmers who in 1956 had regained a significant proportion of land for private enterprise. The joint effect of the large debts and the weakness of the agricultural sector was to bring about a shortage of foodstuffs and to make the Government engage in a search for "the true price level". This "truth" is distorted by massive subsidies from the state which can no longer afford them because of the size of its foreign debts. This economic phenomenon explains the attempted price increases of 1976 with their well-known social consequences, and those of 1980. In the interim period, the Government had abandoned the policy of sharp increases but had developed the so-called "commercial" network for the sale of foodstuffs at substantially higher prices. Alongside this, there developed a "parallel economy" based on fraud, sharp practice, black market activities, moonlighting, alternative currency markets etc.<sup>2</sup>

Gierek's daring industrial policy was also impaired by something which could not be foreseen in 1971: "the effect of the worldwide oil crisis on the economies of the socialist countries. Oil prices within COMECON (a sort of Common Market for Eastern-bloc countries) could not remain unaffected by the price developments on the world market. Although appreciably lower within COMECON, oil prices would nevertheless experience a substantial increase<sup>3</sup> which affected Poland enormously, importing as she did a large amount of Soviet oil. What is more, the USSR had a tendency to reduce its own oil exports and other Eastern-bloc countries — Poland in particular — were obliged to make up the shortfall in their supplies by going to the world market, thus increasing their indebtedness. In 1980 Polish debts amounted to twenty thousand million dollars, a figure exceeding her total annual exports and representing an annual budgetary expenditure of 7.6 thousand million dollars in repayments.<sup>4</sup>

1 Le Monde, 26 August 1980, "Dix années de conflits" (Ten years of Conflict).

2 Jacek Kuron, one of the founders of KOR in 1976 (Workers' Defence Committee which subsequently became the Social Self-Defence Committee) describes these methods as *one* primary form of resistance — "an illegal business set up for the purpose of obtaining some personal gain and involving financial fraud and corruption" — and he denounces them as "socially harmful". Those who use them in order to fight a totalitarian power are at the same time harming society. *From*: J Kuron "Pour une plate-forme unique de l'opposition" (For a united opposition platform) in "La Pologne: une société en dissidence" (Poland — a society in dissent), F. Maspero, Cahiers libres, No 338, 1978 pp 123-124.

3 "The price of Soviet oil remains below the world price. In 1979 it stood at an average of 70 transferable roubles per tonne, ie 105 dollars, whilst the world price was almost 100 dollars in January and 179 dollars in December. The 1980 price will probably be of the order of 76-80 transferable roubles, ie 114-120 dollars, compared to an OPEC price of 200 dollars in September 1980". *From*: Marie Lavigne "Les particularités de la coopération au sein du COMECON" (Characteristics of co-operation within COMECON), Le Monde Diplomatique, October 1980, p 11.

4 On the economic aspects the following are especially recommended: "Pologne, un impossible redressement" (Poland, an impossible recovery), Bernard Lecomte, Vers l'Avenir, 15 July 1980. "40% des importations viennent de l'Ouest" (Forty per cent of imports came from the West), Le Monde, 21 August 1980. "Les fausses manoeuvres de la gestion économique" (False moves in economic management), Le Monde, 28 August 1980. "La Politique économique à la hussarde de Gierek" (Gierek's savage economic policy), J. Nagles, Le Drapeau Rouge, 3 October 1980. Marie Lavigne, op cit note 3.

## b POLITICAL ASPECTS

Since the Second World War, the Polish people in general, and the working class in particular, have experienced a series of ups and downs, of progress and setbacks in the sphere of political participation and of self-management by the people.

The accession to power of Gomulka in 1956 marks the end of a period of Stalinistic autocracy and the commencement of a period of "self-management". Workers, operating through their **workers' councils**, and the first **autonomous trade unions** participate directly in the economic management of the country's industries.

Nevertheless, this burst of activity is destined to be short-lived and from 1957 onwards, the Party gradually reassumes firm control over the situation. A law passed in 1958 cuts short the role of the workers' councils and replaces them with "autonomous workers' meetings" — tripartite institutions made up of workers, the Party and management — which in effect do away with any kind of self-management. The losses of October 1956 are being made good.

Following the crisis of December 1970, Edward Gierek promises the workers "if not the creation of truly free trade unions, then at least the chance to elect a few of their colleagues to the unions already in existence."<sup>5</sup>

In reality, the Central Council of the Polish Trade Unions, under the control of the Party, is gradually becoming no more than the driving belt, as it were, of those in power, and their function is being whittled down simply to that of controlling the workers and supervising production in line with the requirements of the Economic Plan.

Indeed, after the riots of 1976, as after those of 1970, the most active of the strikers are repressed — dismissals, arrests and imprisonment follow.

As far as the socio-political context of Poland is concerned, there is one last important element which should be mentioned, and that is the preponderance of the working class society.

*"Between 1946 and 1978, the population increased from twenty four to thirty five million; the urban population rose from 31.3 to 57.5 per cent; the working population increased from twelve million four hundred thousand to sixteen million four hundred thousand, and the number of wage earners now stands at about twelve million, of whom seven million are manual workers,"*

Furthermore, the working class itself *"is no longer mainly of rural origin. More than 50 per cent of it is made up of the children of workers; in large industrial centres, over 60 per cent of the working class have proletarian ancestry going back many years."*<sup>6</sup>

The significance of this factor will be appreciated after reading the next chapter which is devoted to the theme **"Traditions of Struggle"**.

It is against this political and economic background that the "Polish Summer" of 1980 will erupt.

5 K S Karol, "Vive la Pologne!" in Nouvel Observateur, 23 August 1980, p 24.

6 Victor Fay "Unité du pouvoir politique, pluralité sociale et idéologique", Le Monde Diplomatique, October 1980, p 12. "For all historical data concerning the working class" Victor Fay refers the reader to "Structures sociales en Europe de l'Est" (Social structures in Eastern Europe), May 1979, and "Le syndicalisme en Europe de l'Est" (The Trade Union Movement in Eastern Europe), September 1972, La Documentation Française "Notes et Etudes documentaires" Nos 4.511-4.512 and 3.823-3.825.



## 2 TRADITIONS OF STRUGGLE AND THE PREPARATION OF THE ACTION

### a TRADITIONS OF STRUGGLE

The following remarkable account of the tradition of struggle of the Polish people and of its working class is borrowed from the article (see above<sup>6</sup>) by Victor Fay in *Le Monde Diplomatique*.

*"If Gierek failed to create a new industrial Poland, he nevertheless succeeded, without wishing to, in creating a new social Poland. He helped to awaken a growing and more concentrated working class, conscious of its strength.*

*"It matters little, therefore, that the 'leading role of the Party' is laid down in the Constitution: the balance of power has changed because the leading role of the Party in the state is counterbalanced by the leading role of the working class in society. Through a succession of struggles, the working class, resuming its ties with its glorious past, has once again discovered its capacity to organize, determine and manage its own affairs.*

*"The question arises as to why, of all the Eastern European countries, it should be Poland's working class which periodically renews the class struggle, and why it should do so now. To answer this question, one has to go back to a distant past where an explanation of the tenacity and combative spirit of the Polish workers may be found.*

*"Almost two centuries of struggle for independence, almost one century of workers' struggles and the frequent conjunction of these two activities have forged an exceptional aptitude for resistance and for the struggle for national and social freedom. The parentage of the present workers is unmistakable: they take after those strikers at Lodz who in 1892 stood up to the local employers and the Tzarist police; after those who in 1905-06 gained the upper hand for a short period in Warsaw, Lodz and in the Dombrowa mining area; or after those who, following the re-establishment of national independence in 1918-19 created workers' councils and workers' management committees in many factories and set up, in that same mining area, a short-lived Councils' Republic. The class struggle against the new state and against the employers, who enjoyed police protection, was often difficult and sometimes bloody. In 1923, a riot placed the town of Krakow in the hands of the workers. Despite unemployment, misery and repression, strikes broke out and were followed by violent confrontations.*

*"Poland is second only to the United States and France in the number of strikes and strikers between 1926 and 1936.*

*"Once the country has thrown off the Nazi yoke, the workers set up councils in the factories and get them into operation again. They take over the management of what is left of the nation's industry. They set up trade unions operating independently of the Communist Party, which although in a minority is helped to power by the presence of the Soviet army. From 1948 onwards, however, the position of the unions is gradually whittled away and their autonomy reduced as the all-powerful state apparatus puts an end to their role as partners in industrial management.*

*"The official unions, integrated de facto into the state apparatus, are totally discredited. In June 1956, a workers' revolt at Poznan heralds the 'October Spring'*

*which forces the removal of the leadership and brings Gomulka, the ex-Secretary General of the Party back to power, following his dismissal and imprisonment on charges of Titoism and nationalist deviation."*

And that brings us back to the political context (1956-80) described above.

### b PREPARATION OF THE ACTION

The success of any social action, as of any nonviolent action in general, depends in large measure on its preparation. Without this preparation, it either fails miserably in mid-course, or else its achievements are rapidly dissipated because it lacks depth and popular support.

Was the Polish Summer of 1980 prepared?

The reply given to this question by Lech Walesa, the central figure and driving force of the Gdansk strikes, and, after them, of the newly organized independent trade unions, is astonishing.

*"What we do know is that there was no strategy in our case, that there was no preparation at all for the strikes. In any case, they started in other parts of the country."*<sup>7</sup>

Lech Walesa also adds however *"We are following the traditions of the 1956 and 1970: what we are doing is creating the next chapter of our epic"*.<sup>7</sup>

Walesa is doubtless right in maintaining that the strikes were not prepared in the sense that no direct or immediate preparation was organized — the strikes were indeed brought about by unforeseen decisions taken by those in power during July-August 1980, namely, the increase in meat prices and the dismissal of a militant female worker at Gdansk. (We shall return in the following chapter to the reasons for the strikes and what triggered them off.)

A long period of gestation had, however, preceded this movement, and gave it that qualitative and quantitative intensity against which the floodgates of power would not be able to resist.

We should here remind ourselves of the most significant events of this preparatory period.

**1975 "Letter of the fifty nine".** On the occasion of Government plans to modify the Polish Constitution of 1952, fifty nine intellectuals publish this letter to the authorities, in which they oppose the introduction into the Constitution of an article formally acknowledging Poland's allegiance to the USSR. They also demand freedom of conscience and religious observance, freedom of work, of speech, of information, and freedom in the sphere of university research. More than forty thousand signatures are collected for the letter at that time, and traces of the appeal will be found in the twenty one Gdansk demands of 1980, which include the abolition of censorship, Church access to the media, freedom of information and publication.

**1976 The creation of the Workers' Defence Committee (KOR),** whose first task is to organize the struggle — on both the legal and material level — for the release of the workers imprisoned after the strikes and demonstrations, to work for their re-integration into working life, and to provide material support for the families affected



by these events. In 1977, having realized this first series of objectives, KOR transforms itself into a **Social Self-Defence Committee (KSS-KOR)** and launches into non-official publishing with the production of three periodicals — the *Information Bulletin*, the mouthpiece of the Kuron/Michnik group, which has a circulation of six thousand, *Głos* (Voice) the democratic movement's publication, with a circulation of three thousand, and the most important of all *Robotnik* (The Worker) aimed at a readership of workers and with a circulation of twenty thousand.

With its "flying universities" KOR also organizes an alternative system of adult education. In true nonviolent tradition, KOR carries on its activities quite overtly, seeing that the public is at all times informed of its activities, and basing its right to publish on Article 71 of the 1952 Constitution, which guarantees the fundamental freedom (freedom of expression, of the press, of assembly . . . ). As regards organization and inventiveness, it nevertheless has to perform a series of minor miracles in order to resist police repression.

Other movements, unfairly labelled "dissident" (in relation to what?) are, so Jean Offredo notes<sup>8</sup>, blossoming in Poland — the Catholic Intellectuals Club (KIK), the research group "Experience and Future" (DIP) which brings together progressive Christians and members of the Communist Party, the Movement for the Defence of Human and Citizens' Rights (ROPCIO) etc.

**September 1979** *Robotnik* publishes a **Charter of Workers' Rights** demanding the right to strike, wage increases and better working conditions. Once again, this charter will not be forgotten when it comes to the twenty one demands made at Gdansk.

**October 1979** The Communist and Catholic intellectuals of the DIP publish a report entitled **The State of the Republic and Ways leading to its Reform** in which they warn the authorities of "the danger of an explosion of dissatisfaction". They deplore "the chaos and makeshift nature" of economic management, and accuse the leaders of ignoring reality.

**November 1979** On the anniversary of Polish independence (November 1919) five thousand people attend a demonstration in Warsaw. This demonstration is an expression of Polish nationalism and is given little recognition by the authorities for whom the date to be celebrated is 23 July, the day commemorating the birth of the Polish People's Republic (1944).

**December 1979** Raids are carried out by the authorities on opponents of all persuasions who wanted to celebrate the ninth anniversary of the bloody riots at Gdansk.

**February 1980** The first strike occurs in a workshop at the Lenin shipyard at Gdansk, in protest at the transfer of Mrs Anna Walentynowicz, the driver of a rolling crane. A militant member of the "free trade unions" she had already taken part in the strike committees of 1970.

**Spring 1980** Another report is published by the DIP. This document entitled **Which Way Out?** and "based on the opinions of one hundred and forty one scientists, journalists, industrialists and religious personalities in Poland, recommended greater freedom of the press, the reorganization of the unions, an extension of parliamentary powers, and a reform of the electoral system. Of the total number of persons consulted, fifty one were Party members".<sup>9</sup> Yet more solid foundations for the workers' claims!

**1 August 1980** "Anti-Soviet demonstrations took place in the Polish capital on the occasion of the thirty sixth anniversary of the Warsaw uprising. Responding to a call from the dissidents, several thousand of Warsaw's inhabitants gathered in the military cemetery at Powaski, at the grave which symbolizes Katyn. (It was at Katyn near Smolensk that about four thousand Polish officers were exterminated during the last war. The former Polish government in exile in London had attributed this massacre to the Soviets. Only the USSR and the official Polish version blamed the Germans.)"<sup>10</sup>

Anti-Soviet feeling amongst the Polish population is unmistakable. One should however note the determination of the Polish opposition not to exacerbate this situation.

"The worst service one could render to the cause of Polish independence and democracy would be to propagate traditional anti-Russian stereotypes in society. The Russian people, who have been through the worst ordeal in modern history, are still being used as tools in the imperialist policy of their masters. But they themselves are the victims of this policy — far more than any other nation.

"The anti-Russian nationalism of the Poles, by provoking a quite natural reaction, serves to reinforce the grand Russian nationalistic vision; it therefore helps to prolong the servitude of both nations.

"Those who do not make any contribution to the knowledge and understanding of true Russian national culture and instead foster anti-Russian stereotypes in Poland become — despite themselves — the defenders of that power which is keeping both nations enslaved."<sup>11</sup>

Here again we find a profound sense of nonviolence and of that international solidarity the emergence of which is a marked characteristic of the summer, when not one attack will be made on Poland's external alliances.

Since 1976, moreover, "workers have set up groups in the large industrial centres of Gdansk, Katowice and Warsaw, to form what they call "free trade unions", as opposed to the official unions which are totally dependent on the Communist Party. Their aim is to undertake the real defence of workers' interests, rather than simply to implement the plan. The groups are small and manage their own activities. There are no headquarters. What guarantees the democratic nature of the groups is maximum decentralization. Thus the groups often hold differing views, and these are reflected in the paper *Robotnik* (sixty thousand copies of which are produced every fortnight off a simple duplicator)".<sup>12</sup>

All this is a measure of the degree of interpenetration between the political opposition movement and the independent workers' organizations, as well as of the real importance to the workers of the "free trade unions".

In August 1980, the Gdansk strikers will include in their demands "the erection of a monument to the dead of 1970." (it was in that year that Gomulka had ordered the army to fire on the workers at Gdansk) and thus affirm the continuity of their struggle.

On 14 August 1980, at the very time of the development of the strikes, almost five thousand people will take part in a demonstration at the grave of the Unknown Soldier, in order to pay tribute to the memory of the Polish soldiers who died in 1920 on the battlefields of the Russo-Polish War.<sup>13</sup>



Finally, it would be wrong to close this chapter without recalling that Lech Walesa, forty-year-old father of six, was himself a member of the December 1970 strike committee; that he was dismissed after the strikes of 1976; that he then became a militant member of the opposition and a contributor to the work of *Robotnik*; that he was dismissed again from his new post in January 1980 as a result of his militant activities, and that he was finally re-instated on 14 August 1980 at the Lenin shipyard in Gdansk, as a result of the workers' demands.

These reminders provide clear evidence that the extraordinary actions of the Polish summer were indeed preceded by a deep and lengthy period of preparation.

- 7 Walesa in an interview with French journalists. Extracts published by the Belgian weekly "Pourquoi pas?", 2 October 1980.
- 8 "Une quête d'authenticité et d'honnêteté" (A Search for authenticity and honesty), Jean Offredo, Le Monde Diplomatique, October 1980, p 8.
- 9 "La Pologne en quête d'un dialogue" (Poland in search of dialogue), Le Drapeau Rouge, 22 August 1980.
- 10 Le Monde, 3 and 4 August 1980.
- 11 Leszek Kolakowski, "Thèse sur l'espoir et le désespoir" (Thesis on hope and despair) in "La Pologne, une société en dissidence" (Poland — a society in dissent) op cit pp95-96.
- 12 Bulletin of the Agence de Presse Libération (Brussels), 11 December 1979, p12.
- 13 Le Monde, 16 August 1980.

### 3 CAUSES OF THE STRIKES — WHAT TRIGGERS THEM OFF

As regards the event which triggers them off, and the nature of the claims which arise from them, one should distinguish between two different waves of strikes as the movement develops.

#### First Wave — July 1980

On 1 and 2 July, strikes break out at Ursus, in the suburbs of Warsaw, and at Tczew, in the Gdansk region. The cause is the sharp increase in the price of meat sold direct on work premises. The prices have just been adjusted in line with those, not of normal butchers' shops, but of the so-called commercial networks which offer a plentiful supply of better quality meat at prices 50 to 100% higher than normal.

Other strikes take place during the month of July.

- 9 July at the Rosa Luxemburg electrical equipment factory at Warsaw;
- 8 July at the aircraft factory at Swidnik, near Lublin, where fifteen thousand people are employed;
- 9 July in an agricultural machinery combine at Ursus;
- 10 July at Zeran in a car plant employing twenty thousand workers.

This first wave of strikes is destined to continue throughout July, and notable amongst them is the Lublin strike. The resolution of this is brought about by Mr Jagielski, who in August will chair the Government's negotiating commission at Gdansk.

What sparks off the strike is thus something material, and the demands made reflect this — ie a lowering of meat prices and an increase in wages.

The movement is temporarily placated by a series of different agreements with each concern, but other demands gradually follow on from the first — the demand for worker representation in the (official) trade unions, a reduction in production rates etc.

#### Second Wave — Mid-August 1980

One development within the movement in the week beginning 15 August causes the country's authorities considerable anxiety. Warsaw is deprived of public transport for four days, and then comes the turn of the shipyards at Gdansk. Gdansk, moreover, is something of a symbol. It was the historic site of the 1970 movement and it was there that dozens were killed by the militia . . .

Then on 14 August the management of the shipyard thinks it advisable to **take preventative steps by dismissing three workers**. Two of them, Mrs Anna Walentynowicz and Mr Nowicki are ex-members of the 1970 strike committee. All three have links with the opposition and help in the production of the *Robotnik* bulletin, widely distributed in Gdansk.

This will be the spark which sets off the second wave of strikes. The result will be a deeper movement and claims of a more "political" nature. The "cause" of the strikes however, is in itself of minor importance and thus justifies Walesa's remark that there had been no **preparation** for the strikes.



But to return to the shipyard, Bernard Guetta of *Le Monde* reports the events of 14 August as follows.

*"All that is required is the time to discuss countermeasures, to draft texts and to set the Roneo machines in motion. By Thursday morning 14 August, the leaflets have been handed out and the strike is on."*

*"Three hundred people demonstrate outside the management's window, brandishing banners bearing the legend 'Re-instate Anna!' 'Increase our wages!' A strike committee has been formed, and its original membership of ten has now swollen to one hundred. The movement spreads to the whole of the Lenin shipyard. By early afternoon, Mrs Walentynowicz has been re-instated, but there are still seventeen thousand workers on strike, and negotiations have to be opened. These are destined to go on until one in the morning, under the chairmanship of the First Secretary of the Voivodship\*, and are heard over the loudspeakers by all the workers."*

*"A political motive — solidarity — lies at the heart of the movement, a political group has played a decisive role in the movement's organization. But that is nothing in comparison with the bombshell of claims being made."*

*"In addition to wage increases (two thousand zlotys)\*\*, pensions and family allowance, the workers also demand: the erection in the shipyard of a monument in memory of the victims of the repression of December 1970 (when dozens of workers died); the re-instatement of all those dismissed at that time; recognition of a representative trade union; the disbanding of the national leadership of the official unions; the release of political prisoners; the closure of the growing number of so-called 'commercial' shops where prices are higher; talks with the Prime Minister; a guarantee that no reprisals will be taken against members of the strike committee and finally, the publication of these demands in the press."*

*"At six in the morning on Friday, management announces that the dismissals are revoked, that family allowances will be granted, as requested, in line with those of the police (an increase of one thousand two hundred zlotys), that no reprisals will be taken and — incredibly — that the monument will be erected for the tenth anniversary of December 1970."*

*"As for the remaining claims, the management says these fall outside its competence, and work must be resumed. Not only is work not resumed, but the city's bus drivers also stop work as do several other shipyards. The inhabitants have organized collections, and they bring along what they have gathered, together with provisions. That evening, Gdansk, suddenly cut off from all telephone communication, seems paralysed."*<sup>14</sup>

\* Voivodship — administrative district.

\*\* £1 = 76.18 zlotys

<sup>14</sup> Bernard Guetta "La grève s'étend dans la région de Gdansk" (The strike is spreading in the Gdansk region), *Le Monde*, 17/18 August 1980.

## 4 THE DEMANDS

We have seen that the strikers' demands were primarily of an economic nature — a reduction in meat prices, an increase in wages.

The 14 August marks the appearance of three astonishing and especially interesting phenomena — the emergence of new demands of a qualitative or "political" kind, the gradual and unmistakable transfer of priority to these, and lastly, the progress of the action in a dialectical form between a moderating thrust (let's not go too far!) and a maximist one (let's go the whole hog!).

### a NEW DEMANDS

The demands of the Gdansk strikers, already described by Bernard Guetta (see above) take definite shape in the list of twenty one joint demands set out by the **Inter-factory Strike Committee** (MKS) established at Gdansk on Sunday 17 August (see Document No 1).

Here we draw attention only to the newest of these claims.

- Recognition of free trade unions.
- The right to strike.
- Freedom of expression and of publication.
- Complete rehabilitation of the workers dismissed during the strikes of 1970 and 1976.
- Release of political prisoners.
- Publication by the media of the workers' demands.
- Dissemination of information on the social and economic situation of the country.
- Appointment of managers on the basis of their abilities and not their membership of the Party.

These new demands clearly change the character of the movement completely.

Also noteworthy is the fact that the erection of the monument to the dead of 1970 is no longer included in this list of twenty one demands — this demand has, in fact, already been met during the local negotiations of 16 August.

### b PRIORITY FOR 'POLITICAL' DEMANDS

This priority is evident even from the order of the demands alone. All the demands highlighted above head the list (Nos 1-6) except the one relating to the appointment of managers (No 13).

But the political priority will make itself felt primarily in the actual struggle, and most strikingly in the matter of **free trade unions**.

Thus on 17 August at Gdansk, a twenty-three-year-old worker (this is the average age of the members of the strike committee to which he belongs) has a perfectly clear idea of the objectives involved.

*"Why are there so few economic claims?"*

*"Because, given the size of the country's foreign debt, they can't give us very much, but we, on the other hand, are in a position to secure changes in the system."*



*"What is most important to you?"*

*"First and foremost union freedom, then salaries and the supply of goods. We must have unions which defend us."*

*"If the Government rejects the political demands and meets the financial ones, what will you do?"*

*"If we don't have any political success, it will start all over again. We must be able to influence Government policy."*<sup>15</sup>

Even on 23 August, when the Government delegation opens negotiations with the Inter-factory Strike Committee (MKS) at the Lenin shipyard in Gdansk, Mr Jagielski (Deputy Prime Minister and Chairman of the delegation) still tries to present partial solutions and to refer the investigation of certain demands to other responsible bodies . . . The talks are on the verge of breaking down. Mr Walesa clearly reaffirms the aims of the MKS.

*"We want free trade unions, that is, we want a counterbalance which would give us the power to carry on discussions without having to strike and without fearing repression."*<sup>16</sup>

So the delegations take their leave of one another but promise to meet again on the twenty fifth . . . The reaction of a young worker from the rank and file —

*"He didn't understand a thing. He thinks we are idiots, that we can be taken for a ride. And he has forgotten our experiences in 1956, 1970 and 1976, and that we have been well-instructed and had a good education. It doesn't matter, 'they' will understand in the end."*<sup>16</sup>

Finally, at the close of the MKS/Jagielski talks of 26 August, Florian Wisniewski, a member of the presidium of the MKS again declares —

*"We shall make economic concessions, we are ready to forego the two thousand zloty increase, but as regards free trade unions, we shall not compromise."*<sup>17</sup>

There is no doubt about it — the choices are clear, the determination unshakeable.

### c MAXIMALISM AND MODERATION

As the action progresses, regular dialectical interchanges take place on the subject of the claims, between strong maximalist tendencies on the one hand and restraining influences on the other; and contrary to what one might have supposed, the political opposition (the "dissidents") will come down much more on the side of moderation.

When the first MKS is formed at the Lenin shipyard (after Gdansk, inter-factory committees will flourish all over Poland) and when the works delegates work out their first platform of demands, the militants amongst the opposition groups are petrified — there are only two demands of a quantitative kind (the two thousand zlotys and the sliding wage scale).

Lech Walesa tries to bring home the fact that this cannot be the definitive list, the sine qua non to a resolution of the strikes. What he says is accepted, because, though their demands are considerable, the worker delegates do not want to take unnecessary risks.

One of the organizers of KOR at Gdansk attacks the problem head on —

*"Demanding multi-party elections is maximalism. If the Party agreed, Moscow would intervene. We do not want demands which either force the authorities into violence or bring about their collapse. It was the abolition of censorship which brought about the intervention in Prague. We have to leave them some escape routes."*

*"One delegate ingenuously remarks —*

*'We have left them an escape route by allowing them to govern.'*

*"Borusewicz continues —*

*'We must have more economic demands, and political demands with some chance of success — for example, demanding the release of specific political prisoners.'*"<sup>18</sup>

This argument prevails without, however, convincing the strikers. The following morning, during the second inter-factory meeting, Borusewicz chalks up one or two successes —

*"Political prisoners have replaced free elections. The length of maternity leave and retirement age have appeared on the scene; the idea of negotiations being restricted to co-ordinators and the authorities only has been dispensed with, and individual factories will be able to resume negotiations themselves, after consultation with other factories on strike. In the evening there is a third meeting and the list of grievances is again toned down. But it is still a tough collection of demands and, most important, the movement has organized and structured itself and has settled down into the strike. Basically, what is going on is still a phase of preparation for a trial of strength."*<sup>18</sup>

Krzysztof Pomian, another militant member of the Polish opposition, declares, in an interview given to *Le Monde*,<sup>19</sup> that "compromise solutions do exist" and that "the idea that the Polish authorities have no room for manoeuvre is, quite simply, false". Recalling that "the inter-factory committee at Gdansk has declared that all the points on its programme are negotiable" he suggests —

*"It is not possible to conceive of a reform of the Polish trade unions which would be fundamental enough to be credible, but that would not destroy the foundations of the Government?"* (This proposal, made by Gierek himself after having dismissed the president of the official unions, is known to have been rejected by the strikers, whose constant demand was for independent unions.)

As regards censorship. *"if we could return to the point we had reached at the beginning of Mr Gierek's period of office, the country would have the impression of a sudden breath of fresh air."* (Here again, the strikers will not be satisfied with half measures.)

The twenty one point list from Gdansk finally comes to rest in a position in which basic demands are firmly secured but there is room for manoeuvre as regards material demands.

On the eve of the agreement of 30 August, however, a feeling of moroseness is re-appearing at grass roots level. During the week's negotiations, commissions of experts have frequently been consulted and the strikers are of the opinion that too much has been conceded. Negotiations are broken off and the intervening night is used to rework more than half the text of the demands — and victory nevertheless ensues!



To this chapter also belongs a description of how the authorities, who had previously harrassed the "dissidents", arrested a further twenty of these during the strikes (among them Jacek Kuron and Adam Michnik from KOR), and how they could, at one point, turn to them to act as mediators, in the hope, of all things, of moderating the strikers' claims! This is how Bernard Guetta reports this event which was, to say the least, unexpected.

*"Several renowned intellectuals in Warsaw are woken in the middle of the night by telephone calls from high-ranking officials. 'There are tickets to Gdansk waiting for you at the airport. Go there.' They are astonished. The explanation is that Tadeusz Mazowiecki and Bronisia Geremek, who are also signatories of the intellectuals' appeal\*, have arrived at the shipyard on the previous evening (Saturday) to suggest to the strikers that they should help them in their negotiations.*

*This proposal is accepted with great joy and the title they are given — "The Experts" — is not meant ironically, but respectfully. The task is, however, too much for two of them, so Lech Walesa then asks the Prefect to grant safe conduct to this or that other person. After some reflection and consultations with the highest authorities, back comes the answer — yes — because the authorities are hoping that these level-headed men will advise moderation. 'The world upside down!' "*<sup>20</sup>

It is in this way that a subtle "three-way dialogue" is established between the workers, the Government and the intellectuals from the opposition. We shall return later to the fruitfulness of the relationship between workers and intellectuals.

15 Bernard Guetta, "Des revendications très politiques"

16 Bernard Guetta "Nous n'avons confiance qu'en nous-mêmes" (We have faith only in ourselves), Le Monde, 26 August 1980.

17 Drapeau Rouge, 27 August 1980.

18 Le Monde, 19 August 1980.

19 Le Monde, 24/25 August 1980.

\* The appeal by sixty two intellectuals (among them six members of the Academy of Sciences) launched on 20 August, appealing to the authorities to negotiate with the MKS and to recognize the right to free trade unions.

20 Le Monde, 26 August 1980.

## 5 HOW THE ACTION AND NEGOTIATIONS ARE CONTROLLED

The course of events and the negotiations concluded by the Polish strikers are exemplary in many respects, but we shall here highlight only the most significant features of the self-control and nonviolent strength demonstrated by the movement.<sup>21</sup> Bernard Guetta shows considerable insight when he says *"this town, the whole area is after all on general strike, and one of the most fundamental crises in the history of popular democracy is smouldering here. This is no violent explosion which can swiftly be repressed. It is a massive demonstration of disapproval of the established regime — strong, sure of itself and therefore straightforward and calm in character"*.<sup>22</sup>

This capacity for self-control was enhanced — and the movement ultimately helped to success — by certain measures which the strikers took in actually organizing the action. These were:-

- the fact that the shipyards were occupied only by the workers on strike. Pickets were stationed round the clock at the factory gates, checking the comings and goings, the visits of journalists and delegations from other works. The general population, including families, stayed outside; workers whose families and friends had provisions or messages to give, were called over the radio;
- the formal ban on alcohol. Deliveries of provisions were checked at the gates and the few bottles of alcohol seized were immediately emptied — down the drain;
- The decision not to resort to street demonstrations. There are two reasons for this: on the one hand, the aim of the action was not to create awareness of the issue, but to satisfy certain specific demands — the large-scale occupation of places of work and the paralysis resulting from the strikes created, of themselves, the necessary balance of power. Secondly, mass demonstrations easily give rise to unplanned acts of an extreme nature, which in turn lead to repression and to the discrediting of the movement involved. The strikers at Gdansk had not forgotten the violent demonstrations of 1970 and 1976;
- the establishing of limits which were not to be overstepped in "the heat of the moment". Thus on 18 August the Lenin strikers want the restoration of the shipyard's public address system which has been cut off by the manager. Discussions take place, but to no avail. A fifteen-minute ultimatum is issued — if the manager does not give in, he will be "arrested". A short encounter ensues. Walesa adopts a threatening attitude, then says wearily "I have been arrested so many times that I cannot inflict it on you. Keep your radio, we shall manage without it". Walesa, former engineer and member of the strike committee of 1970, departs, leaving his adversary completely bewildered. This is a fine example of a situation in which anger can so easily break out, but where restraint can triumph (the public address system is later restored) and stir one's opponent's conscience.

The democratic way in which the action is managed is a theme to which we shall return in the following chapter. We now examine the actual technique in controlling the action and negotiations.

Firstly on the authorities' side. These resorted to the tactics usually employed by those in power: playing down the importance of the conflict, not publicising the movement (not until 14 August is there any mention of "strikes" in the official press), firm talk outlining "the limits which are not to be overstepped", the calling



of meetings/negotiations inviting individual strike committees to come and negotiate separately with the management or with local voivodeships, threats against particular strikers — more especially against "dissidents", attempts to refer the most important negotiations to other levels of authority, attempts to discredit the strikers (by blaming them for the difficulties in the supply of food, or by denouncing anti-socialists or anarchist elements as instigators of the movement) etc.

All these attempts to split up or hive off the strike movement have but one result — they increase the cohesion of the strikers and reinforce their determination. One must however give the authorities credit for their constant readiness to talk, a feature which always prevails against the temptation to break off contact and to use repressive measures. In his negotiations with the MKS at Gdansk on 27 August, Mr Jagielski lays down clearly the conditions necessary for agreement —

*"that future unions specify in their charters that they do not question either the 'Treaties of Friendship' signed by Poland, or the leading role of the Party within the state, or Socialism, and that they reject the idea of taking over the role of a political party".*<sup>23</sup>

These are conditions which Lech Walesa had accepted in advance when, on the previous evening, he declared that

*"it is not against Poland's social system that we are striking . . . We do not want to undermine the system of social ownership of the means of production . . ."*

And again his constant declaration that

*"I am not playing politics, but I am doing union work".*

As for the strikers, they keep a watchful eye on the action. As a preliminary to the opening of negotiations with Mr Jagielski, for example, they demand that telephone communications with Gdansk be re-established, a move which for them represents the chance of communicating with the whole country. Jagielski is ready to accept in return for a resumption of work by the public transport workers of Gdansk. The latter comply, but the following day, they hold a symbolic stoppage of a quarter of an hour in the city centre, as a reminder to the authorities that they are watchful and determined.

The strikers also demand the publication of the twenty one demands in the Polish press, and the broadcasting of the negotiations on regional radio. A compromise agreement is reached on this last point — live broadcasting of the first quarter-of-an-hour, then the joint production of an hour-long programme of recorded extracts which will then be re-broadcast.

Later on they will also demand — successfully — the broadcasting on radio and television of the signing of the Gdansk and Szczecin agreements, and the publication of the terms of the agreements in all the Polish papers. This enables the strikers to reduce the possibility of the authorities discrediting them: all the wind has gone out of their accusation that the movement has been infiltrated by antisocialist elements.

Another example of the way in which the action is controlled is the appeal Lech Walesa was due to make at the end of August, asking people not to extend the strikes to all the country's factories "in order to avoid bringing the country to the brink of collapse". This appeal was to have been broadcast with the agreement of the authorities, but in the end the latter gave up the idea. *"Faced with the risk of giving*

*the impression that the true centre of power had been moved from Warsaw to Gdansk, the authorities refused to let MKS go on air".*<sup>24</sup>

The running of the actual negotiations is just as firm. In the agreement, explicit mention is made of the conditions laid down by Mr Jagielski, but just as explicit are the rights of the new unions:

*"that the authorities undertake to respect the independence of the unions and not to discriminate in any way between the new unions and 'the others'; that the legal bases for their creation shall be the international conventions on labour law; that Polish laws and regulations shall be modified to conform with these conventions; that the strike committees shall be transformed into temporary structures within the unions, with a say in the matters of planning, budgeting, investments and price alterations; and finally, that they shall have at their disposal an independent institute to carry out studies on the cost of living."*<sup>25</sup>

Then comes a superb finale. When agreement is reached on the twenty one points — Mr Jagielski punctuates each separate item with the remark "I accept, let me sign" — Mr Walesa proposes that there be an interval of ten minutes. What follows is pure dramatic art.

Mr Jagielski (anxious to get it over with) *"The text is ready!"*

Mr Walesa *"Then we have plenty of time — there will be a twenty-minute break."*

Another member of the presidium says "During the thirty-minute break Mr Jagielski can go and telephone Warsaw to find out about the arrests and then we shall sign everything in the big hall."

This is done at three o'clock in the afternoon — ie one hundred and fifty minutes later — Mr Jagielski returns and declares that the Procurator will have released all the people concerned by Monday. He is taken at his word and what follows is now familiar.<sup>26</sup>

It would seem useful to close this chapter by reporting an incident during which the workers almost lost control. The way in which the situation was resolved — without violence — and the lesson the strikers learned from it, are again exemplary. It happened on 21 August during the MKS meeting at the Lenin shipyard.

*"A young man, a little flabby-looking and theatrical, takes the microphone, brandishing a piece of paper. He introduces himself — 'NumberTwo from the shipyard's social services' and, quite seriously, says 'I have come to join you. This is a historic moment. I can no longer stand idly by. Everything which you have the courage to say in public, the Poles are thinking privately.'"*

*He flatters himself, flatters the assembly. He is embarrassingly servile and spineless, but his melodramatic words are taking effect and he is applauded. Still reading from a sheet, he addresses his remarks to the foreign journalists to indicate the importance of what he is about to say. Then he appeals to Mr Gierek, 'the only one who . . ., the only one whom . . ., the only one — apart from the Pope — in whom one can have any confidence. Come to us, save us!' The applause has died down to a murmur and the crowd's perplexity is turning to consternation when, trembling with disgust, her voice strangled with emotion, Anna Walentynowicz, the dismissed worker in support of whom the strikes had broken out the week before, tells how this same man persecuted her and so many other protesters for years.*



When asked who wrote his text for him, this sad Dostoyevskian figure stammers and beats his chest. He is accompanied back to the shipyard gates, protected by twenty or so delegates. But the incident has sullied the atmosphere, people are ashamed that they allowed themselves to be fooled, and afraid to discover how easily it can be done".<sup>21</sup>

"Vigilance" that watchword always on Lech Walesa's lips, remains, without doubt, of paramount importance.

21 Jean Marie Muller has demonstrated the importance of strength (radically different from violence) in nonviolent action. See "Vraies et fausses idées sur la Nonviolence" (Right and wrong thinking on nonviolence) in Nonviolence et Société, No 16, August 1980, MIR/IRG Brussels.

22 Le Monde, 19 August 1980.

23 Bernard Guetta "Vers un compromis a Gdansk?" (Towards a compromise at Gdansk?), Le Monde, 29 August 1980.

24 Le Monde, 30 August 1980.

25 Bernard Guetta "Une concession audacieuse", Le Monde, 31 August — 1 September 1980.

26 Bernard Guetta "J'accepte, je signe!" Le Monde, 2 September 1980. Those concerned are indeed released during the first week of September, but the charges stand.

27 Bernard Guetta "Rumeurs, manoeuvres et psychose" (Rumour, machination and fear), Le Monde, 23 August 1980.

## 6 THE ORGANIZATION OF THE STRIKES — DEMOCRACY AT WORK

As far as the organization of the strikes is concerned, the Polish summer provides us with a remarkable lesson in direct democracy and the self-management of struggles.

Its main features are:

- the election, by all workers, of works strike committees;
- the co-ordination of these committees within the MKS (the inter-factory strike committee). The MKS at Gdansk numbers more than seven hundred delegates representing almost three hundred occupied factories. Furthermore, MKS's will be set up in all the industrial regions of the country;
- permanent supervision to assure the "delegation of power". The text of the demands is discussed at general meetings, delegates are replaced at regular intervals, the negotiations between the Government Commission and the MKS presidium are heard live thanks to the shipyard's loudspeaker system.

One particular event deserves to be reported here and that is the emergence, at Gdansk, of the first MKS. Before it was formed, negotiations were going on between the strike committee at the Lenin shipyard and the management, about the first set of demands — basically, the increase in wages. The date is Saturday 16 August. The third round of these negotiations is under way.

*"The management will not budge. The workshop delegates, hard-pressed during the night by the supervisory staff are ill at ease. The strike committee does not want to give in. From outside come chants of 'Two thousand! Two thousand!' and the name of the man who has established himself as the leader of the movement 'Walesa! Walesa!' The management requests a break in the talks — during which time the factory's free trade union will be founded — and returns at eleven o'clock with a proposal of one thousand five hundred zlotys on condition that the occupation ceases immediately. Unlike the strike committee, the workshop delegates accept at once. Lech Walesa demands an additional assurance signed by the First Secretary of Gdansk that no-one will subsequently be victimized. The papers arrive an hour later. It seems to be all over — but it is all just beginning. On leaving the conference hall, Walesa receives the wild acclaim of several thousand workers who do not want any compromise.*

*"They throw him in the air with the traditional cry —*

*"May he live a hundred years! A hundred years!"*

*"Delegations from other factories in the city arrive at the shipyard. They are dismayed. 'If you go back to work now' says the representative of a bus depot 'no-one else will get anything.' He is applauded. Walesa, forty-year-old father of six, with a huge moustache and a cheerful friendly face, a practising Catholic and member of the strike committee of December 1970, dismissed after the 1976 strike, since that time a militant member of the opposition, dismissed again in January from his new post because of this, re-instated at Lenin on the Thursday in response to workers' demands, Walesa gets up to speak and quietly manages to reverse the situation.*

*"We must respect democracy" he says "and therefore accept compromise, even if it is not wonderful. But we have no right to abandon others. We must carry on with the strike in solidarity, until victory has been achieved by all."*



Then, with his flair for politics, Lech Walesa adds that this strike is different from the first one, that new workshop delegates must be elected and that those who wish to go home may do so. About half the strikers leave the factory, most of them frightened, some of them dissatisfied. The others remain knowing that what they are about to do is to decide to carry on to the bitter end.

#### AN INTERFACTORY STRIKE COMMITTEE

"People from all the other factories come in search for news. 'Is it over? Not over?' 'Is it true as the management says that it's only the dissidents left occupying Lenin?' No — not unless all those welcoming them have suddenly become opposition militants (which by now wouldn't exactly be untrue). However there is no time to lose. Since there are representatives present from twenty factories, let's set up a co-ordinating body. No, let's go further — a joint platform to be defended against the authorities by a central strike committee — the MKS."<sup>28</sup>

These were the democratic conditions under which the MKS was formed. It was set up in accordance with the wishes of the majority of the workers but without putting pressure on the minorities, and was later to formulate the twenty one demands and win the agreement signed on 31 August.

28 Le Monde, 19 August 1980.

## 7 DETERRING A SOVIET INVASION

The Polish summer of 1980 gave rise to the most profound changes since de-Stalinization in the Eastern-block countries. (See further on "The Achievements of the Polish summer".) How could such profound changes have been brought about without the Soviet Union, that guardian of "socialist orthodoxy", intervening militarily, as it had done in Budapest in 1956 and Prague in 1968?

Some have attributed this restraint to the difficult military situation of the USSR which was already involved in Afghanistan. This explanation is, to say the least, a little brief. In my opinion, it was the behavior of the principal actors, or groups of actors, who, displaying as they did, remarkable restraint, played a decisive deterrent role.

#### The Official Polish Press

On 24 July the Warsaw daily *Zycie Warszawy* takes stock of the workers' discontent. Far from condemning the strikers as in 1970 and 1976, the paper explains —

*The workers not only have the right but also the duty to eliminate irregularities and bureaucratic barriers in the factories, to criticize all hindrances to production, to see to it that production plans are carried out and to keep a check on the distribution of wages and bonuses."*

*"Zycie Warszawy also denounces the inertia of the administration and of the official unions which, it says, did not react in time to the workers' demands. It blames them to a large extent for the strike which on that day affected about one hundred factories across the whole of Poland."*<sup>29</sup>

As early as the beginning of July Mr Rakowski, a member of the PUWP's Central Committee and editor of the weekly magazine *Politika* was underlying the necessity of "taking the initiative immediately and introducing far-reaching structural reforms which would, so he believed, create the climate of confidence indispensable to the mobilization of effort and the acceptance of sacrifices."<sup>30</sup>

On other occasions, however, the official press lets itself be carried away by antisocialist hysteria...

#### The Church

It is known that the Catholic Church in Poland intervened during the strikes, both to lend its approval to the workers' claims and to call for a fitting and just solution to the conflict, but also to extend an invitation to the strikers —

*"It is all up to you. You can choose to put an end to the stoppages."*<sup>31</sup>

It is also known that Gierek himself had hoped that once the moral weight of the Church had been placed in the balance, the movement would return more rapidly to normality.

This was not the case. The Church's appeal was not heeded — at least as far as an end to stoppages was concerned. On the contrary, the number of strikes increased.

Nevertheless the Church's intervention had a stabilizing influence, and it too acted as a deterrent. The following is an assessment of this intervention by Adam Michnik, a KOR activist.



"In Poland, as abroad, many people think the Church made its first political error at the time of the strikes, especially when the Primate, in the course of a television appeal, invited the workers to resume work.

"I do not share this view. I was in prison at the time, so I did not really know what the atmosphere was like at the time the Primate made this remark. Since then, I have read the text delivered by him, the text of the Episcopate's declaration. In my opinion, it was a very clear and realistic position, and one may well ask whether the intervention did not, all in all, contribute to the achievement of the final compromise between the Government and the strikers. The Church defended the principle of seeking a solution which did not leave room for any violence. I would also add that the Church is not, thank God, a political party. Its attitude is undoubtedly traditional, but also extremely responsible."<sup>32</sup>

### The Strikers Themselves

Their main "deterrent weapon" was never to call into question the actual basis of the Polish state. Earlier we described how they accepted the conditions placed by Mr Jagielski on the agreement about free trade unions — ie respect for Socialism, for Poland's alliances, for the leading role of the Party, and the non-political nature (in the sense of a political party) of the new unions.

Nevertheless, whilst respecting these "foundations" of the State, they were at the same time introducing an element which was radically new to Eastern-bloc society — the acknowledged existence of organizations independent of the Party. On 25 September Pravda condemns the free trade unions in the name of Leninist doctrine and describes them as "bourgeois provocations".<sup>33</sup>

The strikers' 'tour de force' proved to be the formulation "of demands which go far beyond the economic confines without in the process challenging the actual foundations of the system".<sup>34</sup>

The nonviolent nature of the action, which was destined to come to an end without a single drop of blood being spilled and without a single window being smashed, also played a deterrent role. So did the fact that the production plant was kept in perfect condition by regular maintenance checks, and the fact that this practice was made public.

### The Authorities Too

It would be wrong to imagine that the Polish CP (PUWP) is monolithic. There is within it an unmistakable element of pluralism. Moreover, thanks to the strikers' behaviour and to the existence of an open, progressive wing within the Party, the Party's conservative wing proved unable to resort to the classical tactic of lumping together the strikers and the subversive antisocialist activities of a dissident minority.

This immediately made it impossible for the Kremlin to respond to "the appeal of our Polish brothers to save Socialism for counter-revolutionary machinations directed from abroad."

On the contrary, there were cases of Party officials defending the strikers' integrity.

According to an account published in the local press, the First Secretary of the Party in Gdansk, Tadeusz Fiszbach, declared in the course of the assembly held in Warsaw on Sunday, that —

"It is wrong to maintain that the strikes were instigated by a small group of dissidents" the proof being that "the strikers have at no point undertaken any actions directed against the power of the people, the foundations of the State or Poland's alliances."

"As far as he is concerned, to find the cause of the events at Gdansk one need look no further than the "dissatisfaction of the population" the "excessive centralization of the decision-making process" the "planning errors" the "management errors" the "bureaucracy, especially in the unions" and the "defective way the democratic socialist system functions".<sup>35</sup>

### A Certain Degree of Complicity

On Thursday morning, during the third full session of negotiations (devoted to censorship and political prisoners) a member of the presidium cites as one of a number of examples of abuse, the fact that Mr Fiszbach's remarks at the assembly of the PUWP's Central Committee on Sunday (Le Monde, 21 August) had not been published in the national press. This text was highly critical of the Party's shortcomings and expressed great understanding for the workers' dispirited state. As soon as he is allowed to speak, Mr Fiszbach replies —

"I spent a long time preparing what I said in the assembly" (which could be taken to mean "You did well to notice it, it was meant for you").

"I know the picture painted of the strikers is not correct and I said so in my remarks" (which could be taken as "I defend your action").

"My remarks will be published in Polityka" (ie "I am not alone and you should not lose all hope in the Party").

"As for censorship, it is a result of the whole socio-political system and the style of government; the problem must therefore be handled on a larger scale" (which could imply "We could do much more if we worked together").

Fiszbach, an outstanding professor, said all this in a serious and unemotional tone of voice, and few people noticed at the time. This was because the atmosphere was, quite naturally, earnest and at times contentious — but it was also basically one of complicity."<sup>36</sup>

### "Then they would have to accuse me as well"

Shortly afterwards "a worker declares 'Are we sure that one of these days, witnesses will not be found who are willing to make the members of the MKS out to be a band of criminals . . . ' Mr Jagielski interrupts him 'What do you mean! Here I am holding discussions with you, I treat the MKS with great respect, and you say things like that!'

"Lech Walesa 'There are times when I have been treated like a criminal'.

"Mr Jagielski — 'Then they would have to accuse me as well!'

A somewhat demagogic reply, but not at bottom completely false."<sup>36</sup>

Speaking about the efforts made by those in power to open negotiations, Gerard Delfau gives us a clear picture of the way in which Government and strikers combine to act as a deterrent.



*"Wishing at all costs to save their country from the ordeal of direct Soviet occupation, they (the men in power) attempt the impossible. They too, in their own way, are patriots. It is this same Polish patriotism which could, if need be, drive the Soviets back, such is the truth of the saying that a united nation can never be defeated".<sup>37</sup>*

This deep-rooted sense of unity and complicity of the Polish people, quite distinct from any chauvenistic and impulsive patriotism a national call to arms might evoke, is fundamental in deterring all forms of aggression from whatever source.

29 Le Drapeau Rouge, 25 July 1980

30 Le Monde, 26 July 1980.

31 Le Monde, 26 August 1980.

32 Questions à . . . Adam Michnik, Polish dissident. Interview given by A M in Warsaw; La Libre Belgique, 3 October 1980.

33 La Cité, 2 October 1980.

34 Manuel Lucbert, "Un mouvement à la recherche de son autonomie" (A movement in search of autonomy) Le Monde, 27 August 1980.

35 Le Drapeau Rouge, 27 August 1980.

36 Le Monde, 31 August — 1 September 1980.

37 "Solidarité" Personal point of view given by the National Secretary of the Socialist Party in Le Monde, 19 August 1980.

## 8 LINKS BETWEEN WORKERS AND INTELLECTUALS

The degree of co-operation between workers and intellectuals during the summer of 1980 was exceptional and was, in fact, the fruit of a long period of effort.

### Areas of co-operation during the strike

\*Firstly in the circulation of information.

*"Since 1 July, as soon as a new strike breaks out, the strikers' first move has been to inform Mr Jacek Kuron, chief organizer of the Social Self-Defence Committee (KOR). Popular discontent has spontaneously and unanimously endorsed the moral and political authority of the main opposition group."*<sup>38</sup>

KOR thus plays a privileged role as a channel of communication between different strike centres, then between the various inter-factory committees (MKS's) which are subsequently set up. Similarly, KOR is the Polish and international press's best source of information. It helps to sustain the impetus of the action, helps to prevent the movement being stifled, and helps to bring about the birth of an important international movement of solidarity.

\*Secondly **solidarity**. Returning to the Appeal made by the sixty two intellectuals (several of whom were Party members) and published on 20 August, we find that in the days that followed, a further two hundred signed the Appeal. This Appeal invited the authorities to seek a solution through dialogue, to acknowledge the right to free trade unions, and to enter into negotiations with the MKS at Gdansk. The Appeal played a part in establishing a dialogue between the MKS and the Government Commission, and the fact that the authorities acknowledged its validity was confirmed when on 24 August Edward Gierek actually quoted from the Appeal —

*"No-one has the right to put the fate of the country at risk, nor by his irresponsibility to let slip the chance of a better future".*

\*Lastly **direct participation in negotiations**. This was the role, as described above, of "The Experts". They acted as moderating influences and the authorities also tried to exploit this by despatching these intellectuals from the opposition into the arena.

The co-operation between workers and intellectuals meant that the strikers could stay in control of the action but at the same time draw on the economic and legal skills of the experts.

The result was that the agreements were drawn up in the correct language and in accordance with International Labour Law (eg ILO conventions signed in Poland more than twenty years before). The co-operation enabled the strikers to avoid being duped by the evasive legal or institutional language of the Government negotiations. In fact, at the general assembly of strikers on 24 August, one member of the MKS, knowing he has these reserves of expertise to fall back on, confidently asserts that *"the legislation we draw up here will serve future generations"*.<sup>39</sup>

### The origins of co-operation

These have already been referred to indirectly when we described the "Preparation of the Action" in Chapter 2. The joint action of intellectuals and workers is however so fruitful and so important that it justifies a second and more detailed examination.



As pointed out by Maurice Duverger in the following clear-sighted analysis, these links are quite remarkable within the general context of the Eastern-bloc countries.

*"In the East, political protest does not usually develop in this context. It arises within the Party, where the nationalists oppose those who unreservedly toe the Moscow line, and where the liberals oppose the neo-Stalinists. Or else it often arises in university circles and among scientists, writers and artists who are stifled by the conformist atmosphere and want freedom of expression. The formation of links with the working class is not always easy. In the USSR intellectual opponents of the regime find themselves more or less isolated. In Hungary in 1956 the works councils refused to allow political organizations to enter the factories. In 1968 the Czechoslovak intellectuals who went to preach revolution to the workers found they were 'divided into two camps: in the one, they sought refuge in complete silence and in the other they either viewed the changes with great misgivings or were prepared to accept the reforms only if they were told to do so from above, that is by the Party or the leaders of the trade unions'. (\*)*

*"Even in Poland where the workers have always been more dynamic and more independent, they demonstrated against the liberal unrest in the universities in 1968. Two years later at Gdansk, they asked the professors and students to forgive them for this and invited them to join their cause. Most of the experiences show that such a link is essential. There was one at Poznan and at Budapest in 1956. Only the 'Prague Spring' took a different turn: there, the impetus came from the politicians and intellectuals who won control of the state apparatus and carried along with them the workers who were, so to speak, jumping aboard a moving train.*

*"It may be that some of the elements present in the current Polish movement could also develop in other Eastern-bloc countries, because they offer the chance of a permanent link between economic demands and political protest. After the strikes of 1976 and their harsh repression, university staff and writers struggle to obtain the release of all the workers who had been arrested. Once this had been achieved, their organization turned itself into a Social Self-Defence Committee which set up popular universities and developed semi-clandestine publications, both of which institutions were designed mainly for factory workers. It is worth pointing out that the co-operation between the intellectuals and the working class corresponds exactly to the ideas formulated by Lenin in **What is to be done?** except that he envisaged the proletariat struggling against the capitalist bourgeoisie and not against the socialist state structure."*<sup>40</sup>

Another important point is that large numbers of workers are deeply aware of the importance of the co-operation between workers and intellectuals. So, for example, when a young worker is asked by Bernard Guetta what importance the workers attach to the demand for the abolition of censorship, out comes the retort —

*"Do you know what it is like, living in a country where you don't know anything. Go and talk to the people, you will soon see whether they are willing to sell themselves, even for three thousand zlotys."*<sup>41</sup>

The reason for this is that the abolition of censorship does not just mean freedom of expression for writers and artists — though this too is fundamental — it also means the workers have the chance to communicate with one another; it means that their self-governing organizations have the chance to share their worries; that the strikers can let the public know what their demands are.

*"The consequence of this deep-rooted action has been that for the first time since 1965, links have been forged between young intellectuals of the opposition and militant workers. Traces of this solidarity can be found right down to the twenty one demands of the Gdansk strike committee — the demand, for example, for the release of Mr Zadrozynski, a member of the editorial staff of Robotnik; or for the cessation of representative measures against the independent publications. For, in addition to desiring autonomy, the mass of the working people and the nation as a whole longs for, is thirsty for information not previously monitored by the State, not previously subjected to the State's cosmetic treatment."*<sup>42</sup>

The demand for more detailed information about the social and economic situation of the country should also be viewed in this context and is a demand which reveals the high degree of development of the Polish working class.

38 Le Monde, 17-18 August 1980.

39 Reported by Bernard Guetta, Le Monde, 26 August 1980.

(\*) V V Kusin, Political grouping in Czechoslovak reform movement, London, MacMillan, 1972.

40 Maurice Duverger "La classe ouvrière dans les régimes communistes" (The working class in communist countries), Le Monde, 26 August 1980.

41 Le Monde, 19 August 1980.

42 Manuel Lucbert "Un mouvement à la recherche de son autonomie" (A movement in search of autonomy), Le Monde, 27 August 1980.



## 9 AN OPPOSITION STRATEGY

Can a popular movement as solid and determined as that of the strike action of the Polish summer be spontaneous? Is it conceivable that such a movement could come about without any political planning?

We began this account by recalling the traditions of struggle of the Polish people. We should, at this point, examine the **strategic** basis of the action.

### A split between society and the state

The Polish workers believed that the reforms promised by those in power after the angry outbursts of 1956 and 1970 would materialize. Each time, however, their hopes were dashed and they thus came to feel that there was a deep cleft between the state, with its bureaucracy, its press, its unions completely controlled by the Party, and society, with its faith, its hopes, its daily life, its culture and its sufferings.

Since 1976 in particular, the intellectuals from KOR and other groups from the opposition have carried out an analysis of this split. In 1980, the Polish people no longer believed that the authorities can initiate any form of democratization of society. This sentiment is expressed in harsh terms by Jacek Kuron.

*"From the time Poland came into existence as a popular state, it has been incapable, at all levels of its hierarchy, of rewarding anything other than prudence. All those who have taken a risk of any kind, or taken any courageous decision, all those who have expressed support for some programme of reform, or have supported one power faction against another, have inevitably been the losers. Numerous individuals have been shunted off down a side-track now jammed full with revisionists and dogmatists, liberals and iron-fisted officials, cosmopolitans and nationalists. The only ones to survive and to sit enthroned on high, are those who managed never to take a stand on an issue, or to take any decision or any risk."*<sup>43</sup>

Kuron himself is the son of a Government official and an ex-member of the Communist Youth Movement and Party. "But he has come to examine power — its institutions and the way it functions — in a more global context. He has become more aware of the incredible gap which exists between the authorities and society or, as Kafka would put it, 'those above' and 'those below'."<sup>44</sup>

### Organizing society independently from the state

This is the strategy chosen by Jacek Kuron and his friends.

*"After his release from prison in 1971 (his first sentence had been for three years in 1965) he gets down to work with others, especially his friend Adam Micknik, another victim of the post-1968 repression, to organize society. The days of 1964, when he and Karol Modzelewski addressed their remarks directly to the Party, are long since over. Jacek Kuron has not however become a radical who wants to wipe the slate clean overnight.*

*He knows what the limitations of power are, and the limitations of the men who hold it, with all their qualities and faults. He is well aware of the geopolitical situation of his country. He also knows however that without the creation of areas of freedom for the working class and for society as a whole, the situation of the country would become dangerously explosive.*

*"The 1976 crisis comes as a perfect illustration of the points he is making. With KOR, of whom he is the founder member, he takes a leading role in preventing the repression of the strikers, then with the help of semi-clandestine papers, alternative universities and free trade unions, he helps to organize social self-management. Harassment, physical attacks, interrogation follow one upon the other. Jacek Kuron's determination is unshakeable, and the authorities are reluctant to strike too hard against him because he has become something of a symbol. The current revolt is, in large measure, due to day-to-day activities undertaken by him, Adam Michnik, Jan Litynski and many others since 1976."*<sup>45</sup>

As far as Kuron is concerned, organizing society is the role of the opposition. He no longer believes the political powers and the Party capable of putting forward a programme of reforms which could satisfy society.

*"On the other hand, I am sure that the Poles themselves are capable of resolving the crisis against the will of the authorities, and of setting out on the road to democratization. It is the job of the opposition to initiate a movement of this kind. We do have a certain measure of influence amongst the workers, and we can extend this, because they need help, information and suggestions. It is part of our task to help the workers themselves into independent bodies, into workers' commissions or unions, or — as the railwaymen of Lublin will probably soon do — to take over the state unions. In Poland, there is a whole network of works' publications with very small circulations. They should become independent workers' papers. By demanding a large cost of living allowance, the workers will be induced to organize themselves for discussion, and the authorities will be forced to accede to this. What is more important is that, in order to defend their position, the authorities will have to permit a nationwide discussion of the economic situation. Whether or not they then decide to propose a programme of economic reforms, the democratic opposition circles must do so — as part of a larger programme of democratization. Independent workers' movements, including those of the agricultural workers, as well as groups of experts, the Society for the Teaching of Science and all other independent institutions must take part in the preparation of this programme. It seems to me that, given the present crisis, sacrifices will have to be made in order to get society back on its feet. This is not a contradiction: prices cannot be fixed by referendum. To rise against high prices would cripple the economy — supposing, of course, someone wished to improve the economic situation. Salaries on the other hand must be the subject of preliminary bargaining (especially when the standard of living is falling). The main task of the democratic opposition is, however, to transform economic demands into political ones.*

*"The Soviet Union and its armies still exist, we must remember that.*

*"It is however legitimate to assume that the USSR will not risk an armed intervention in Poland as long as the Poles refrain from overthrowing a Government which is obedient to it. Let us therefore restrain ourselves. The plan for the time being is a society democratically organized into trade associations or co-operatives which manage their own affairs and have their own local areas of operation. We shall, for a time, have to live side-by-side with our totalitarian state and Party machinery. It will do its best to destroy our democratic organizations: it will sabotage their decisions, it will try to compromise and corrupt their militant members, it will play a game of intimidation and blackmail. We shall have to defend ourselves and piece by piece wrest from it the ground over which it holds sway. In other words, the*



autonomous organizations will have more and more to do. *We can accomplish all this successfully, as long as we have the whole of society on our side, ready to take action.*"<sup>46</sup>

### A strategy of civic resistance

Ignacio Ramonet has made a remarkable analysis<sup>47</sup> showing how this political strategy developed during the seventies, and how it managed to bring together in various democratic trends in the country into one popular thrust which was both varied and cohesive. We quote below the most significant elements of the analysis, but invite readers to read the whole of Ramonet's account.

*"The political success of the Baltic strikes which forced the authorities to accept the Gdansk agreements is a victory for all the opposition forces in Poland (eg the working class, the Catholic Church, the intellectuals) who since 1976 have managed to unite with precisely this aim of forcing democratic reforms. It is this alliance which gives the present crisis its unique character and distinguishes it completely from the sectional outbursts of 1956, 1968, 1970 and 1976.*

*"This time it is the Government which finds itself isolated (the farmers have not yet made their views known, but the indications are that they sympathize with the protestors); it sees itself confronted with a well-organized and widespread civil disobedience movement which, were it not for the possibility of Soviet military intervention, would already be able to overthrow it.*

*"This strategy of civic resistance was devised by the intellectuals of the opposition after a long analysis of the failures which had gone before. It was unquestionably they who laid down the "general line" the resistance should take, who spread word of it to every corner of the country, and who managed — no mean achievement — to win over the whole of the working class to this strategy."*

After a 'revisionist' phase of opposition during which, from 1956 onwards, militant Catholics and communists put into practice the doctrine of "positive compromise", attempting to avoid conflicts and refusing to regard themselves as an opposition, there came the regression of the sixties, when Gomulka returned to the use of authoritarian measures. Finally came the ruthless suppression of the university protest movement in 1968, followed by a period of total demoralization. By 1970 when the massacre of workers occurred on the Baltic coast, this demoralization had reached such depths that the intellectuals were totally incapable of any expression of protest.

*"The sojourn in the wilderness lasted for four years and from 1972 onwards, the intellectuals of the opposition re-established themselves on a wider base. From this time on, solidarity appears as one of the fundamental features promoting the "rapprochement" of the three main schools of thought opposed to the regime's methods, in order to work out a joint platform of opposition. First there were the Marxists, the heirs of a revisionist trend and supporters of a Polish form of Eurocommunism. Their members included the two leaders of the 1968 revolt — Adam Michnik and Jacek Kuron. Secondly, the Catholics, defending human rights and favouring a Christian-based socialism. Finally, a whole host of anti-communist intellectuals who up till then had been living in internal exile. Most of these described themselves as supporters of democratic socialism and nationalism."*<sup>47</sup>

At the time of the Ursus and Radom strikes in 1976, *"the intellectuals react at once and eventually manage to achieve the desired union with the working class. In September 1976 they create a Workers' Defence Committee (KOR) to provide the workers with legal, medical and financial assistance. It is the first time that an independent organization has been set up in Poland without the consent of the Party.*

*"As a result of its action on behalf of the ex-strikers against whom punitive measures have been taken, KOR quickly gains popularity. It halts judicial harassment and obtains the release of the prisoners. It stops torture and wins the re-instatement of the dismissed workers. Right from the outset, KOR acts quite openly and keeps the public informed of its activities. In addition, basing its action on Article 71 of the 1952 Constitution, which guarantees the basic traditional freedoms (freedom of expression, of the press, of assembly . . . ) KOR undertakes to publish several magazines which, though edited and distributed in secret, carry signed articles, whose authors are in some cases very influential people and are thus defying the authority of the Government."*<sup>47</sup>

KOR's publications break the authorities' monopoly in the area of information and the expression of ideas. They increase the number of areas of freedom of thought and, within these, citizens who up to now have been forced to remain silent can at last express their views.

*"This resistance strategy, which is strengthened by the growing number of dissident groups, by the multilateral alliances between the opponents of the regime, and by the close co-operation with the working class, is worked out mainly by three men — the philosopher Leszek Kolakowski, the historian Adam Michnik and the teaching specialist Jacek Kuron."*<sup>47</sup>

The theory behind this opposition strategy is due in large measure to Kolakowski. It will be seen that there is a great deal of affinity between this "strategy of resistance and revolt" (as Ramonet describes it) and our traditional concepts or "civil resistance" and "civil disobedience".

"Kolakowski is the most renowned Polish philosopher of the present day. He is a former "revisionist" theoretician, was expelled from the university in 1968 and forced to emigrate. At present he is teaching at Oxford. He is the author of *Main Currents of Marxism*.

"Kolakowski believes that the time for resistance has arrived since 'a resistance movement is most effective not when there is a high level of oppression and terror, but rather in times of relative relaxation resulting from the disintegration of the machinery of government', and he adds that 'it is to Lenin that we owe this observation'. Furthermore, he believes that the system has been in a state of crisis since the end of the Stalinist era. 'The present-day institutions are demoralized, suffering from the chronic sickness of internal strife between rival groups.' Neither does he think it unreasonable to imagine 'an active form of resistance which can put the natural contradictions of the system to good use'. In particular he believes that the free circulation of information would destroy the system within a very short time, and he suggests escaping from the shackles of censorship by increasing the number of offences against it. 'The best way to react against prosecution for these types of "offences" is to commit them in very large numbers.' (\*)



*"Taking the offensive in this way is also Adam Michnik's policy.*

*'The only course of action' he says 'that the dissidents of the Eastern-bloc countries can take is to fight continuously for reforms and for developments which would extend civil liberties and would guarantee respect for human rights.'*

*"He believes that one must never relax one's pressure on the ruling bureaucracy.*

*'When the authorities give in to a revolt instead of organizing a bloody suppression of it, democratic opponents must not regard this either as a sufficient concession ("At least they're not shooting at us") or as an indication that the conflict has lost its purpose. Their job is to participate constantly and systematically in public life, in order to bring about political events in the form of collective action, and to propose alternative solutions.'* (\*\*)

.....  
*"For Michnik, however, this strategy cannot be realized unless it is linked to workers' institutions and associations which are independent of Government. These institutions he sees as modelled on the Spanish workers' commissions."*<sup>47</sup>

.....  
*"In the light of these views, it is difficult not to see in the events of the Polish summer, the application of the strategy of resistance jointly devised by Kolakowski, Michnik and Kuron. From 1977 on, KOR organized within the working class movement the idea of autonomous trade unions. It is known, for example, that these trade unions have existed at the Gdansk shipyards since 1978 and that, moreover, what actually triggered off the strike in August last year was the punitive measures taken by the management against Mrs Anna Walentynowicz, a crane driver transferred to the hull section."*<sup>47</sup>

### **A force independent of the Party but in contact with the Government**

Although the break with the ossified state and Party structures is a serious one, it is nevertheless not a complete one, and the idea is not — as it is generally in "nonviolent revolutions" — to ignore the "opponent's" institutions completely, and recreate outside these a totally new and totally different society. The dialogue between society, which is organized on autonomous lines, and the state and Party in power, remains a central preoccupation. This is why there is a demand that **the right to strike be incorporated into the legal framework** even though this right has been exercised for years in the best traditions of civil disobedience. This is why negotiations have been opened with the Government in order to secure **the legal recognition of independent, self-governing trade unions.**

In this sense, the nonviolence of the Polish strikers goes further than that of many activists and nonviolent groups over here: it aims to hold a dialogue with all parties; it aims to reconcile society — not in some airy-fairy myth, but in the concrete reality of the existing structures.

On this level, their victory is tremendous: from now on, they will have a say in the direction economic planning takes, and in the decisions relating to investments and the accumulation of capital. (See the text of the agreement in Document No 2). They will also take part in the drafting of the new law on the organization of the country's trade union bodies.

We have a clear illustration of the two alignments present in **popular nonviolent civilian defence**: the horizontal one, where the democratic, autonomous bodies in society form links with one another whilst retaining their independence, and the vertical one, consisting of the structures and institutions of the state. What the Polish summer has achieved is to make it possible once again for society and the state to engage in a constructive dialectic interchange.

Aleksander Smolar, a Polish economist engaged in research at the Centre National de Recherche Scientifique in France, and a representative of KOR at the Socialist International, confirms this view, at the same time reminding us that vigilance is indispensable.

*"The determination, degree of organization and realism of the workers, apart from being absolutely astonishing for a working class deprived for thirty five years of any institutional bodies, also shows what possibilities there are for changing the system — possibilities which only yesterday seemed unacceptable both to Moscow and to the authorities in Warsaw.*

*"Only a few days ago, when I was claiming that there was nothing to prevent the communist Government from recognizing the right to strike, I was being called Utopian. And here we are with the principle acknowledged. In reality, the Poles have been exercising this right for years.*

*"The same is true for autonomous trade unions. Only a few days ago, these were believed to be inconceivable in a communist system. They would, it was thought, constitute an attack on its very foundations. And here we are with them officially sanctioned — even though one can, of course, remain sceptical about how long the achievements of the workers will last. The authorities will do everything in their power to undermine them. Their continuation will depend on the future behaviour of the workers, on their vigilance and determination."*<sup>48</sup>

This movement, independent of the Party, but in constant contact with the authorities, has continued since the Gdansk agreements. In September, for example, dozens of independent unions applied for official registration. During the same period (22 September) an "Independent Students' Association" was created at Krakow. It lies outside the official bodies of the Communist Youth Movement, but it was preparing statutes which it was planning to submit to the Minister in charge of Higher Education for approval. The journalists' union too was seeking to recover the dignity and prestige which it had almost completely lost in the eyes of its readership...

It is clear that this movement would not be an easy one to halt.

43 Jacek Kuron "D'abord renforcer l'autogestion" (First strengthen self-management), Le Monde, 20 August 1980.

44 Manuel Lucbert "Jacek Kuron, le symbole de l'opposition", Le Monde, 24 — 25 August 1980.

45 Manuel Lucbert op cit.

46 "First strengthen self-management" Le Monde, 20 August 1980. (Our italics)

47 "La stratégie des intellectuels: vers la solidarité", Le Monde, Diplomatique, October 1980.

(\*) "Thèse sur l'espoir et le désespoir" (Thesis on hope and despair) in "La Pologne: une société en dissidence" (Poland — a society in dissent), F. Maspero, Coll. Cahiers libres, No 338, Paris 1978, p77 ff.

(\*\*) "Une stratégie pour l'opposition" (A strategy for opposition) in La Pologne: une société en dissidence op cit, pp99 ff.

48 "Que peut faire l'opposition?" (What can the opposition do?) Le Monde, 2 September 1980.



## 10 THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE POLISH SUMMER

In mid-October it is not possible to do anything more than give a provisional appraisal of the extraordinary events of the Polish summer.

A reading of the text of the agreement signed at Gdansk on 31 August (See Document No 2) will indicate not only the economic victories achieved with regard to prices, wages and social benefits and advantages, but also the vitally important political victories: the right to strike, freedom of expression and of publication; autonomous unions with important rights; a reduction in the system of privileges (in the selection of factory managers, for example, or in material advantages enjoyed by the militia); the non-victimization of strikers; the release of political prisoners.

It is clear, however, that the results go even deeper and are more far-reaching than this.

From now on, the workers will no longer be fooled by the machinations of any management, of whatever kind. The experience which they have gained for organizing "their own" trade union (a process which is still going on), from conducting the action autonomously, from the fruitful co-operation with the intellectuals — all this has increased the capacity of the workers and the Polish people to carry out "their" responsibilities.

We have also witnessed the extension of this movement to the universities and to writers' circles. It has even taken hold of the Party, where much doubt is now being cast on aims, management methods, the decision-making process and the system of promotion. In September, even Parliament itself (the Diet) experienced "wild days" when the degree of activity, the opening up of ideas, the heckling reached a level rarely experienced in popular democracies.

The journalists of the official press also stirred, and demanded to be allowed to "inform" in the proper sense of the word. All this too is a result of the strikes. It does not constitute a backward step for socialism — on the contrary, it represents a great stride forward in improving the quality of socialism and democracy.

From now on, any internal repression or outside intervention would be confronted with a nation which is more determined, shows more solidarity and is more difficult to overcome and to subjugate.

In this sense it can be said that the potential of the Polish people to defend themselves has been considerably increased — and this has been achieved without the purchase of any missiles or fighter planes!

Robert Polet  
12 October 1980

## DOCUMENT No 1

### THE TWENTY ONE DEMANDS OF THE GDANSK INTER-FACTORY COMMITTEE

- 1 Recognition of free trade unions, independent of employers and the Party, based on Convention No 87 of the ILO (International Labour Organization), ratified by Poland.
- 2 Guaranteed respect for the right to strike, for the safety of strikers and those who help them.
- 3 Respect for freedom of expression, freedom to publish and print as guaranteed by the Constitution. A stop on the victimization of independent publications and access to the media for representatives of all religions.
- 4 A. Restoration of rights to those dismissed after the strikes of 1970 and 1976 and to those students barred from higher education because of their political opinions.  
B. The release of all political prisoners, including E. Zadrozynski, J-M Kozlowski; and a stop on reprisals against people because of their views.
- 5 Publication by the media of information on the setting up of the inter-factory strike committee and publication of its demands.
- 6 The launching of concrete projects with the aim of getting the country out of the present crisis — eg the dissemination to all members of the public of information on the social/political situation of Poland. Giving all the different social groups and classes the chance to participate in discussions on a programme of reforms.
- 7 Payment of strikers on the same basis as holiday pay.
- 8 A 2,000 zloty increase on basic wages for each worker in order to offset the increase in meat prices.
- 9 A sliding wage-scale.
- 10 Maximum food supplies on the domestic market and the restriction of exports to surpluses only.
- 11 Introduction of ration cards for meat until such time as the market becomes stable.
- 12 Abolition of commercial prices and of sales in foreign currency on the domestic market.
- 13 The appointment of managers on the basis of their qualifications alone and not of their membership of the Party. Abolition of the privileges enjoyed by the police, the security forces and Party officials by equalizing family allowances and removing the system of special sales.
- 14 The right to retire after 35 years' work; 50 years of age for women, 55 for men.
- 15 Abolition of the differences between the two pension and retirement systems by adjustment in line with the most favourable one.
- 16 Improvement in the working conditions of the medical services in order to ensure the proper treatment of the workers.



- 17 Setting up enough crèches and nursery schools to cater for the children of working mothers.
- 18 Extension of paid maternity leave to three years.
- 19 A reduction in the waiting time for the allocation of housing.
- 20 An increase from fifty to one hundred zlotys in removal allowance and removal subsidy.
- 21 Longer holidays or the introduction of specific days off for those working in factories on full-time where there are no free Saturdays.

## DOCUMENT No 2

The following is the text of the agreement signed by the presidium of the inter-factory strike committee (MKS) and the Government commission on 31 August 1980 at the Lenin shipyards, Gdansk.

*The signatories for the strikers were: Lech Walesa (President), Andrzej Kolodziej and Bodgan Lis (Vice Presidents), L Badkowski, W Gruszewski, A Gwiszda, S Izdebski, J Kmiecik, Z Kobylinski, H Krzywonos, S Lewandowski, A Peinkowska, J Przybylski, J Sikorski, L Sobieszek, T Stanny, A Walentynowicz and F Wisniewski.*

*The signatories for the Government commission were: Mieczyslaw Jagielski (Commission president and Deputy Prime Minister), Mr Zielinski (Member of the Central Committee of the PUWP), T Fiszbach (President of the Voivodship Party council for Gdansk), J Kolo Dziejski (Prefect of Gdansk).*

The Government commission and the inter-factory committee, having analysed the twenty one demands of the strikers of the costal region, have reached the following conclusions:

In respect of point 1 which runs as follows —

*"To accept free trade unions, independent of the Party and of the employers, on the basis of Convention No 87 of the ILO (International Labour Organization) ratified by Poland and dealing with trade union freedom"*

it has been agreed that:

- 1 The activities of the trade unions in Poland have not fulfilled the hopes and aspirations of the workers. It is deemed useful to create new autonomous unions which would truly represent the working class. No-one's right to continue to belong to the old union will be called into question and the possibility of future co-operation between the two unions will be examined.

IT WILL BE POSSIBLE TO SET UP NEW TRADE UNIONS

- 2 In creating, independent and autonomous trade unions, the MKS declares that these shall observe the principles laid down in the Constitution of the Polish People's Republic. The new unions will defend the social and material interests of the workers and do not intend to act as a political party. Their principles are those of the social ownership of the means of production — the basis of the socialist system in existence in Poland; they acknowledge that the PUWP (Polish United Workers' Party) plays a leading role in the state, and do not oppose the existing system of international alliances. They wish to guarantee workers the appropriate means of controlling, expressing and defending their interests. The Government commission declares that the Government will guarantee full respect for the independence of the new union and for their right to manage their own affairs both as regards the way in which they organize themselves and the activities they undertake at various levels. The Government will make sure that the new unions have every opportunity to carry out their basic functions in respect of the defence of workers' interests so that the material, social and cultural needs of the workers may be satisfied. At the same time it guarantees that the new unions will not be the victim of any discrimination.
- 3 The creation and operation of independent, autonomous trade unions is in accordance with Convention No 87 of the ILO concerning trade union freedom and the protection of the trade union rights, and with Convention No 97 concerning the right of association and collective bargaining, these two conventions having been ratified by Poland. The existence of several different representative trade union bodies will necessitate legislative changes. For this reason the Government undertakes to initiate legislative measures, particularly in regard to laws on trade unions, on workers' councils and the Labour code.
- 4 The strike committees may transform themselves — at works level — into bodies representing the workers, either workers' councils, workers' committees, or founding committees for the new autonomous trade unions.  
  
The Government undertakes to create the conditions which will enable the new unions to be registered outside the present Central Council of Trade Unions.
- 5 The new unions must have a real opportunity to intervene in key decisions which determine the workers' living conditions. These include decisions on the principles governing the way in which the national income is distributed between consumption and accumulation, the way in which the funds for social expenditure are allocated to the various objectives (health, education, culture), the basic principles governing pay and wages policy — especially as regards the automatic increase of wages in line with inflation, long term economic planning, investment policy and price alterations. The Government undertakes to create the conditions necessary for the exercise of these functions.
- 6 The inter-factory committee shall set up a centre for social/economic research, the aim of which shall be to carry out an objective analysis of the workers' situation and living conditions and of the correct ways in which workers' interests may be represented. This centre shall also carry out the expert analyses required for the indexation of salaries and prices, and shall put forward proposals for methods of compensation. This centre shall publish the results of its research. In addition, the new unions shall have their own publications.



- 7 The Government promises to respect Article 1, Point 1 of the 1949 law on Trade Unions which guarantees workers the right freely to form trade unions. The new trade union at present being formed will not belong to the association represented by the Central Council of Trade Unions (CRZZ). We agree that the new law on trade unions shall respect these principles. We also guarantee to allow the representatives of the workers to participate in the drafting of this law.

*In respect of Point No 2 which runs as follows —*

*"To guarantee the right to strike and ensure the safety of the strikers and those who help them"*

it has been agreed that:

The right to strike shall be guaranteed in the law on trade unions. The law must lay down the conditions under which the declaration and organization of strikes are allowed as well as the methods to be used in resolving conflicts and the penalties in cases where the law is broken. Articles Nos 52, 64 and 65 of the Labour Code (which prohibits strikes) could not be applied against strikers up until the time of the adoption of the new law. The Government guarantees the personal safety of strikers and those who help them, as well as the continuance of their existing working conditions.

*In respect of Point No 3 which runs as follows —*

*"To respect freedom of expression and publication as guaranteed by the Polish Constitution, not to take repressive measures against independent publications and to grant the mass media to representatives of all religious groups"*

it has been agreed that:

- 1 within three months the Government shall introduce into Parliament a bill concerning the control of the press, of publication and of public entertainment which will be based on the following principles: censorship must protect the interests of the state. By this is meant the protection of state secrets and economic secrets (such as will be defined more precisely in the law), safeguarding of the security of the state and of its important international interests, the protection of religious belief and also of the rights of non-believers, and prohibiting of the distribution of indecent publications.

The bill shall include the right to appeal to the Supreme Administrative Court against the decisions of those bodies which control the press, publication and public entertainment. The code regulating administrative activities shall be amended to include this law.

- 2 Access to the mass media for religious associations acting within the sphere of their own religious activities shall be organized by means of agreements made between state institutions and religious associations. This shall apply in respect to content and organization.

The Government shall, within the framework of a specific arrangement with the episcopate, guarantee the broadcasting on radio of Sunday mass.

- 3 The activities of radio, television, the press and publishing houses must serve to express a variety of thoughts, points of view and opinions. They should be placed under the collective control of society.

- 4 The press as well as citizens and citizens' organizations must have access to public documents, in particular to administrative acts and socio-economic plans etc which are published by Government and the administrative institutions under its control. Exceptions to the principle of open administration shall be defined in the law in accordance with Point No 3 Chapter 1.

## RELEASE OF POLITICAL PRISONERS

*In respect of Point No 4 which runs as follows —*

*"a) to restore the rights of those dismissed after the strikes of 1970 and 1976 and of students excluded from establishments of higher education because of their opinions;*

*"b) to release all political prisoners (including Edmund Zdrozinski, Jan Kozlowski and Marek Kozlowski;*

*"c) to halt repression on the grounds of opinion"*

it has been agreed that:

- a there be an immediate review of the grounds for the dismissals following the strikes of 1970 and 1976. In all cases where injustice is proven, immediate reinstatement, if so desired, taking into account any new qualifications. The same principle to be applied in the case of students.
- b the cases of those persons mentioned in b) be referred to the Minister of Justice and be examined by his staff within a period of two weeks; in cases where the persons involved are in prison, the suspension of their prison term until the review of the judgement is complete.
- c where preventive custody has occurred there be an examination of the reasons for it, and that the persons listed in the appendix be released.
- d there be complete respect for the free expression of ideas in public life and in one's job.

*In respect of Point No 5 which runs as follows —*

*"To inform the public by means of the mass media of the creation of the MKS and to publish its demands"*

it has been agreed that:

this demand shall be met by publishing this agreement nationally in the media.

*In respect of Point No 13 which runs as follows —*

*"To introduce the principle of the appointment of managers on the basis of their qualifications rather than of their membership of the Party. To abolish the privileges enjoyed by the police (MO), the security services (SB) and Party officials, by equalizing family allowances and abolishing the special system of sales etc."*



it has been agreed as follows:

We accept the demand that the choice of manager be based on qualifications and abilities and that they should be drawn from the membership of the United Workers' Party, the SD (democratic party whose membership is, in theory, composed of various small-scale craft concerns), the ZSL (united peasants party which along with the other two parties forms the unified basis of the National Front) and those not belonging to a Party. The programme of equalization of family allowances for all groups of workers shall be introduced by the Government before 31 December 1980. The Government commission declares that direct-sale shops exist only within the party organization, as in other factories and institutions.

Of the remaining points of the agreement we have, due to lack of space, quoted only No 13 dealing with the selection of managers. The other Points related to all the material demands made. (The complete text was published in Le Monde, 2 and 3 September 1980)

Typesetting: Sue Cutten.

Layout: Alan & Ken Breese.

Cover from "Gdansk 1980 — Pictures from a Strike" Puls Publications, £5.50 BCM Box 697, London WC1N 3XX. U.K. Orders taken from this address.

# war resisters international

55 DAWES STREET, LONDON SE17 1EL, GREAT BRITAIN.



"WAR IS A CRIME AGAINST HUMANITY. I AM THEREFORE  
DETERMINED NOT TO SUPPORT ANY KIND OF WAR AND  
TO STRIVE FOR THE REMOVAL OF ALL CAUSES OF WAR"

*Australia*  
Federal Pacifist Council

*Belgium*  
I.O.T.  
M.I.R./I.R.G.  
M.C.P.

*Britain*  
F.O.R.  
Peace Pledge Union  
Green Peace (London)  
Housmans  
"Peace News"

*Denmark*  
Aldrig Mere Krig

*France*  
L'Union Pacifiste  
M.I.R.

*India*  
Shanti Sena Mandal  
"People's Action"

*Ireland*  
"Dawn"

*Israel*  
W.R.I.

*Italy*  
Movimento Nonviolento  
Partito Radicale  
L.O.C.

*Japan*  
W.R.I.  
Japan Buddha Sangha

*Netherlands*  
'T Kan Anders  
Werkgroep Voor De Vrede  
Vereinigung Dienstwigeras

*New Zealand*  
Christian Pacifist Society

*Norway*  
Folkreising Mot Krig

*Sweden*  
S.F.S.F.

*Switzerland*  
I.D.K./I.R.G.

*U.S.A.*  
War Resisters League  
Movement for a New Society  
Resource Centre for N.V.

*West Germany*  
D.F.G./I.D.K. Hamburg  
D.F.G./V.K.  
I.D.K. Berlin  
K.G.W. Koordination  
Societas Popularum  
"Grasswurzelrevolution"