POLISH INDEPENDENT PRESS REVIEW

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1. Echoes of the Hungarian Revolution

Summary: The 30th anniversary of the Hungarian Revolution was commemorated in Poland by a joint appeal by East European dissidents and the publication of several books and spécial articles in the independent press.

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One of the first uncensored documents on the Hungarian Revolution, *Uwagi o Rewolucji Węgierskiej w 1956* [Comments on the 1956 Hungarian Uprising],1 was published unofficially in Poland in 1979. The monograph was dedicated "to all those who died or were executed in the 1956 uprising." Its author said that the original text was written in 1956 and 1957 and was based on documentary materials that were available at the time. This chronological account of the uprising on 23 October 1956 and its subsequent history noted that:

The 1956 Hungarian Uprising heralds the dawn of a new type of revolution: revolutions that are directed against those who wield power in the name of the working people but against their will and against their interests. This was a revolution against the dictatorship of the communist party.

To commemorate the 30th anniversary of the uprising, the independent press in Poland has published a translation of *The Hungarian Revolution* by George Mikes2 and a monograph edited and issued by Solidarity under the title *Budapest 56 Oczami Polskich Dziennikarzy* [Budapest 56 Observed by Polish Journalists].3 The editor of the latter book, Marian Sabat, explained in the preface that

We are presenting our readers with a fairly unusual text, unusual not because it adds any significant new material to our knowledge of the 1956 Hungarian Uprising but on account of its authors and the circumstances under which it arose. It is a typescript of a live tape-recording (probably incomplete) made at the first discussion meeting... organized by a youth group describing itself as "a group of communist youth." In the wake of the October "thaw" many such groups were formed; they tended to be short-lived.

This was a meeting held with Polish journalists who had recently returned from Budapest where they had witnessed the recent events. It can be assumed from one of the comments that the meeting took place on 6 or 7 November 1956, that is, just a few days after the second Soviet invasion that put a bloody end to the Hungarians' hopes. Hence the acute emotional tension of these accounts, in which the dominating factor is a feeling of bitterness and great disillusionment with the notion of communism and "Soviet allies." Almost every participant stresses, in some cases several times, that the "brotherly aid" was nothing but undisguised raw aggression. One of them ends his statement with the words:
"Perhaps this will have to do, it is really difficult for me to find the [right] words. Perhaps when we meet again some time in the future, I will be able to tell you more." It was as if he had still not recovered from the shock of the events that it had been his lot to witness.

These events exerted an influence on their future lives as well as on the lives of their audience . . . the majority of these young people ultimately found themselves in the ranks of the active opposition.

Those present at the meeting included Wiktor Woroszylski and Hanna Adamiecka from the official youth paper Sztabad Młodych, Marian Bielicki from Polish Radio, and Krzysztof Wolicki from Trybuna Ludu. Adamiecka had arrived in Budapest with a Polish medical aid transport; she recounted her impressions of the character of the uprising:

The authentic character of this revolution was best illustrated by the fact that right from the start there was no looting. The revolution was genuine and idealistic. We were amazed as we walked through the devastated streets. At every step we saw shop displays with their windows smashed and all the goods on show—ladies’ handbags, shoes, sweaters—were still there, untouched. Nobody stole.

The case was the same with the total lack of speculation. This also never ceased to amaze us. Peasant carts and cars loaded with food were driving into Budapest right from the start. Shops were set up to sell the food. Cars from the villages stopped at street corners and distributed the food for free. Meat and potatoes were delivered to the revolutionary councils . . . . The villagers told us that they were not charging anything for this, since the Budapest workers and freedom fighters were making their sacrifice in blood. So it was [the peasants’] duty to support the revolution in this way.

Adamiecka went on to describe that once the government of Imre Nagy was installed on October 28, order prevailed:

As we were returning to Budapest we were astonished at the discipline on the streets and roads. Every few hundred meters we were stopped by National Guard patrols . . . these meetings then developed into declarations of great trust toward Poland and demonstrations of Polish-Hungarian friendship . . . we had the impression that the Hungarian nation would not allow itself to be provoked. Full of hope that all would end well, we returned to Budapest. At 4.00 A.M. we were awakened by the sound of bombs and gunfire. The attack on the capital had started.

The independent press also commemorated the anniversary. The full text of a joint statement issued by 122 dissidents from Czechoslovakia, the GDR, Hungary, and Poland to coincide with the 30th anniversary of the Hungarian Uprising was published in
the independent biweekly Kos (no. 101) and the weekly Tygodnik Mazowsze (no. 185) on the eve of the anniversary.

A full-page article in Kos entitled "The Hungarian Example" ended its account of the uprising with:

The nations of Eastern Europe had followed the Hungarians' struggle with bated breath; they finally came to realize that the Kremlin was willing to pay any price to preserve the status quo: in 1968 there was no need for gunfire in Prague to restore order; in 1981 the Red Army was present in Warsaw in spirit only, not in the flesh.

The anniversary issue of Tygodnik Mazowsze carried an extensive interview with the Hungarian dissident Gyorgy Krasso (now living in the West), who founded the independent M. O. [Magyar Oktober—Hungarian October] publishing house, which devotes much of its activity to documenting the Hungarian Uprising. Krasso described his participation in the events and the circumstances of his arrest; he claimed that the uprising had had a chance of success in view of the Soviet Union's proposed change of policy toward its Eastern bloc allies. He also said that:

I consider it tragic that the Hungarians and Poles were not able to fight together against the Russians, at a time when the situation in their countries was so alike. It just so happened that someone like [Wladyslaw] Gomulka appeared in the Polish party at the right time and was able to bring the situation under control. That chance unfortunately never repeated itself: over the next 30 years, Poland and Hungary never again found themselves at the same stage of political development at the same time... .

The events of 1956 were Hungary's harshest experience in the last half century. About 20,000 people died in the fighting; about 180,000 escaped to Austria (the border was open). About 2,000 were tried and executed; between 30,000 and 40,000 went through prison or internment. The vast scale of the repression created a political vacuum for many years; when I left prison as a result of the 1963 amnesty, no one even wanted to talk of the uprising. It was not until the 1980s that the Hungarian democratic opposition began to demand an appraisal of the events that today constitute the 1956 tradition.

Anna Pomian

1 Henryk Bak in a supplement to Postep, no. 9, September 1979.
4 For further details, see Vladimir V. Kusin, "East European Dissidents' Appeal on Hungarian Anniversary," RAD Background Report/151 (Eastern Europe), Radio Free Europe Research, 28 October 1986.

5 No. 101, 22 October 1986.

6 No. 185, 22 October 1986.
2. Vaclav Havel, 1986 Erasmus Prize Winner, Through Polish Eyes

Summary: The 1986 Dutch Erasmus Prize was awarded to Czechoslovak playwright and dissident Vaclav Havel; Havel's contribution to the East European dissident movement as well as his long-standing connection with the Polish opposition have been reflected in the number of translations, literary criticisms, and polemical articles published in the Polish independent press since 1978.

* * *

On 13 November 1986 the Czech playwright and dissident Vaclav Havel received the Dutch Erasmus Prize, an award given annually to individuals or institutions that have produced works of outstanding merit for European spiritual or cultural values. In his acceptance address delivered at the award ceremony in Rotterdam, Havel said that the prize was a sign of recognition for all those in Eastern Europe "who go on trying to say out loud what they think and feel, who take the side of their fellow man against all the various dehumanizing pressures . . . of the tiny part of the universe which we inhabit."1

Vaclav Havel has cooperated with the Polish opposition for many years. In particular, he contributed to the political quarterly Krytyka, which has been published in Warsaw since 1978 and reprinted in the West. The first issue of Krytyka in the summer of 1978 named Havel a member of the journal's editorial board. Several of Havel's works have been published there. The first issue of Krytyka carried a translation of Havel's "Letter to Gustav Husak." An article entitled "Second Communiqué Concerning My House Arrest" appeared in the fourth issue published in 1980. The article was followed by a postscript by Adam Michnik, who described Polish reactions to Havel's arrest:

At the beginning of this year Vaclav Havel and several other Charter 77 activists were arrested. . . . The arrest of these intellectuals in Czechoslovakia is symptomatic of the increasing degeneration of the Soviet-imposed regime and has called forth numerous protests throughout the West. . . . This is a matter of particular concern to us, the editors of Krytyka. Havel is one of our editorial colleagues. We invited him to join our board during the meeting between KOR and representatives of Charter 77 on the Polish-Czech border. This was to have been a symbol of the unity of our common ideals and aims. Havel immediately agreed. The gesture on his part was more than symbolic: during the following months we received concrete signs that Havel was alive and well--these were excellent texts written by him and by his friends. We will publish them in our next numbers.
Havel is now in prison for the second time and for the same crime: for having uttered the truth. How weak are the authorities who are forced to compromise themselves by imprisoning an author and how foolish they are . . . because Havel in prison is able to cry out to the world about his own fate and that of his and other countries far more loudly then if he had all the world's television cameras at his disposal.

A prison cell is hardly the best place for anybody, let alone for one of contemporary Europe's most interesting writers and essayists. Every one of us who participates in the democratic movement of the countries of "real socialism" has to consider this possibility. Perhaps a prison cell is an integral part of the humanist culture in our part of the world? . . . Perhaps it is a distinction, a medal of "honor" awarded to us by murderers. Perhaps it is a paradoxical proof of the effectiveness of what we are doing? . . .

My wish is that Vaclav Havel, dramatist and essayist, a man of great personal charm and inner lucidity, representative of Charter 77 and a friend of the Poles, should count us among his closest friends.2

A subsequent issue of Krytyka,3 devoted to contacts with other East bloc countries, carried an article emphasizing the literary significance of Czechoslovak writers, particularly the work of Havel. The introduction, written by Marek Beylin, Konrad Bielinski and Adam Michnik, said:

The editors of Krytyka share the view that European culture and civilization continue to be of vital importance and that the Polish question is a matter of concern to the whole of Europe. . . . In our view, however, the links that bind us to Europe are not only the spiritual bonds that connect us with Paris, London, Rome, or Cologne but also those that connect us with Prague and Budapest, with Vilnius and Kiev, and also with Moscow and Leningrad. We wish to document these interconnections on our pages. We start with our Czech friends. Our common aim was to publish a number consisting of Czech, Slovak, and Polish reflections on "the specter of dissent" in Eastern Europe. Fate forced us to change our plans. Some of our friends were arrested, among them Vaclav Havel.

That same issue contained articles by Vaclav Benda, Jiri Nemec, and Petr Uhl, as well as a translation of Havel's "The Power of the Powerless." This essay had been translated into Polish in 1979 by Pawel Heatman, who has translated all of Havel's essays that have appeared to date in Poland.

Must be Destroyed." In his introduction to the book, the translator Pawel Heartman said:

The extensive essay "The Power of the Powerless" elicited a broad response in Polish intellectual circles; it was originally intended to be part of a joint Polish-Czech volume of sketches and articles presenting the views of a considerable number of those active in the democratic opposition and in the defense of human rights. ... This collection of essays by Havel and about him was originally to be published at the end of 1981 with an introduction by Adam Michnik, who had first conceived the notion of this book.

The independent journal Kultura Niezalezna [Independent Culture], which publishes uncensored literary works, polemical articles, and commentaries, issued a review of Havel's Eseje Polityczne. The reviewer also mentioned another book by Havel that had been printed by the Polish independent press: a translation by Andrzej Jagodziński of all of Havel's dramatic works of the 1970s. The reviewer in Kultura Niezalezna described the edition containing Havel's plays and then went on to discuss the basic tenets of "The Power of the Powerless":

The refusal to live a life of lies and the attempt to live in truth is the first step, the moral, and the political minimum. ... The power of the powerless [the opposition] resides in the fact that in order to oppose this ideology, they do not need to combat it or to suggest an alternative one. It is enough to reject it: to reject the lies and to attempt to live a life of truth. This is the only option available anyway, since all political life has been extinguished under the system described by Havel. For that reason every refusal to participate in deceit becomes a political fact. Havel reminds us that the creation of Charter 77 was preceded by the trial of The Plastic People; it was not a political trial but a trial of artists who were nonconformist.

In order to understand Havel, his analysis of the "opposition," and "dissidents," it is necessary to be aware of the basic aim of Charter 77, which did not formulate political aims as such but moral and humanitarian objectives. ... Havel's essay also analyzes the origins of the Charter ideology in Czech history (Masaryk) as well as the similarity of its aims and tactics to those of the Polish KOR and Helsinki monitoring groups in the USSR.

The author concluded with a general assessment of Havel's achievements:

Today, Havel is one of Czechoslovakia's most outstanding authors; and his personal experiences undeniably endow his work with the hallmark of credibility. The publication of Havel's plays and essays by Jagodziński and Heartman is an important event. Aside from Kundera, Havel is the only Czech author who has had two books published in the Polish independent press.
Havel's "The Power of the Powerless" evoked an immediate response among Polish intellectuals when it appeared in 1979. That same year, Jan Walc replied to Havel with an essay entitled "The Weakness of the All-Powerful"; Walc is a dissident author who has published scathingly biting essays for over 10 years and who was also one of the editors of Krytyka and the Biuletyn Informacyjny published by KOR. His dissident activity dates back to the student protests in Warsaw in March 1968. He was an active member of KOR; and, in addition to publishing, he worked as a printer for the independent publishing house Nowa before August 1980.

Walc's essay first appeared in Krytyka and was then reprinted in 1985 together with Havel's essay as a monograph in the National Educational Notebooks series, which is aimed at independent educational circles. The editorial preface to the monograph described both texts as "optimistic" and as "attempts to find the foundations within the communist system on which the opposition could base its existence"; at the time it was written the existence of the opposition in both countries was a "novelty that few believed would prosper."

In his introduction, Walc explained that his essay was intended to supplement Havel's conclusions rather than argue with them:

The Czech author concentrates on all that is individual, private, and personal; he considers man only from a psychological perspective and rejects everything that is social, collective, and beyond the individual, that is, all that is the subject of sociological analysis. . . . When I say that Havel's text makes me uneasy, it is because he considers that to be a dissident it is enough to "live in truth"; and he rejects the need to analyze political forces. The question arises, however, of whether such an attitude can be reconciled with a feeling of responsibility toward one's fellow citizens; surely a desire to understand the structures that surround us ought to be the duty of everyone who opts for public activity and, by doing so, affects the lives of others to a greater or lesser degree.

Walc described the basic weaknesses and limited practical possibilities of communist states that "even with the help of tanks are unable to force their constituent organizations to function correctly"; he also examined the nature and mechanism of the authorities' power structure as well as the pressure that can be exerted on the authorities by dissident movements rather than by individuals:

It is for this reason that the authorities are, practically speaking, powerless in the face of dissidents: there is no way that they can ever agree to a dialogue with them, since this would reveal that the authorities are acting contrary to the slogans they proclaim; nor can they resort to mass repressions, since this would reveal the same.
Events that have taken place in both countries since these essays were written testify to the unchangeability of the ruling system and the continuing relevance of the spiritual resistance advocated by Havel.

Anna Pomian

1 From the acceptance speech, as released to the press by Stichting Praemium Erasmianum.


3 No. 5, 1980.

4 Jiri Lederer, a journalist and active member of the Czech democratic opposition, had published the book Ceske Rozhovory in the years 1975 and 1976; it contained interviews with Czech authors who were forbidden to publish.


7 Vaclav Havel, Spiskowcy i Inne Utwory Dramatyczne (Warsaw: Nowa, 1984). Jagodziński was chosen on 14 October 1986 as the first winner of a prize awarded in the name of the late Jiri Lederer by two exile publications based in Paris, the Polish Zeszyty Literackie and the Czechoslovak Svedectvi, for "his work in disseminating Czech literature in Poland."

8 1979.
3. **The Problem with Mass Movements**

Summary: It is generally accepted that the political pressure exerted on the Polish authorities by the Solidarity mass movement yielded positive results both during and after the union's legal existence. In recent months, the independent press has featured several articles emphasizing the need to change the concept of Solidarity as a mass movement. This paper presents one of those articles.

* * *

It has been said at times that Solidarity's political strength was in its mass character; the union numbered 10 million members in the 16 months of its legal existence. In the opinion of many, this alone made the union capable both of forcing the authorities to accept demands and of defending the interests of its members.

Over the last year, however, the concept of Solidarity as an organization deriving strength from its character as a mass movement has been challenged in the underground press. It is true, of course, that most publications continued to stress the importance of Solidarity as a large organization acting as a protective shield for initiatives both on the factory level and in the educational and cultural sphere. Opinions have emerged within the opposition press, however, that deplore the "protectionist" and collectivist images of Solidarity. Those opinions have appeared in publications such as Kos (issued by the Committee for Social Resistance), Replika, (issued by Fighting Solidarity, a group independent from the union and its organization), and Tu Teraz (the newspaper of the independent education movement).

These publications have been issuing an increasing number of articles that further the idea of independent action by individuals rather than by large organizations and analyze the shortcomings of mass movements. Among those articles has been the text presented by the unofficial monthly Replika under the title "Let Us Kill Off The Great Guardian." It said:

Underground Solidarity persists in trying to be what it was during the 16 months [of its legal existence], and it is becoming increasingly more obvious that it cannot continue to be what it was.

What was Solidarity? It was what all trade unions are, only more so. A Great Guardian. A new Guardian, our very own, one that was far better than the socialist state. A democratic, benevolent and just Great Guardian. Solidarity was a Great Guardian created by the people themselves, people whose whole lives had been shaped by the socialist system. It was their socialist thinking that produced the blueprint for this invention. They were people who could not
imagine that anything could ever be achieved by individual efforts or risk-taking, people who were convinced that only the great masses marching in step, shoulder to shoulder, could bring about an improvement in their way of life.

For its many millions Solidarity, the Great Guardian, was a substitute for the socialist state, which is also a great guardian but a wicked one. The socialist state oppressed and cheated its people; it exploited them and told lies; it did not want to provide. The new Great Guardian did not tell lies; it did not exploit people or oppress them; and it was going to provide.

On December 13 [1981] the wicked old guardian crushed the new one. Millions of people became helpless and abandoned overnight. The good Great Guardian was gone. Hundreds of thousands of people started to try to recreate Solidarity, the good guardian; but the majority lost hope and went back under the wing of the old one who said outright: I am a bad guardian but I am the only one you have got. Despite all the myths about those 16 months, not many people actually straightened their backs during this time or managed to shake off socialism. One of the fundamental characteristics of socialism was transferred to Solidarity: the domination of the individual by human masses. It was engraved in human consciousness and in the programs for the union’s campaigns. Solidarity expected its members to march in step, to toe the line, and to comply with the rules and principles that had been centrally established by democratically elected leaders.

The article went on to argue

What is probably socialism’s greatest enticement survived in Solidarity: the lack of risks. Although life under socialism is miserable and shabby, no one has to take any risks here. If he keeps quiet, he will get a job that will not tire him out, a pension, subsidized holidays once a year, medicine on prescription, and a refund of his funeral costs. Solidarity also protected people from risks, because that is a guardian’s duty.

I remember the elation that I and those around me felt at the ease with which we had gathered together so quickly and in such vast numbers and at the creation of one union that was united by a common spirit. We did not not realize then--and the few who did were shouted down by us--that this spirit was the specter of communism.

Solidarity had many admirable characteristics, but it also contained all the evil that the socialist system has instilled in us over many years. This evil consists of a basic inability to act individually and of a lack of awareness that it is the efforts and the risks taken by single individuals fighting for their own aims that constitute the greatest social values. . . . There is only a handful of people left who have been liberated from a socialist perception of reality, who are capable of individual actions and are ready to take risks in order to realize their aims; but
probably the majority, who still cannot accept the state as their protector, are living in the hope of recreating the good Great Guardian. It is these people, filled with nostalgia, who constitute the underground Solidarity structures; they still believe that it will be possible to recreate another good, new guardian; they still attempt to organize a mass movement that will gain in strength and unity, and that will, above all, protect them.

The article then described how these activists "devote all their intellectual and organizational talents to campaigns that carry no risks, such as boycotting the official press or public transport" and concluded:

Possibly the greatest harm inflicted on people by "real socialism" is the fact that it makes the individual dependent on mass structures in one form or other: the state, the collective, the group, the trade union. From this standpoint, the opposite of socialism is individualism.

At present we are witnessing the decline of trust in all guardians; for even the PPR is a grotesque guardian that is acknowledged with great difficulty and then only as a necessary evil that must be tolerated since there are no other options. That is why we now have a chance, one that we keep on wasting, of undermining the very foundation of socialism that has taken root in our consciousness: the conviction that we must have a guardian at all.

If underground Solidarity is to survive as an organization of social significance, it must orient its operations in this direction. The fact that Solidarity still has many members and an efficient clandestine network enables it to conduct genuinely effective campaigns that would be designed to liberate people from the need to surrender themselves to any sort of guardian.

Anna Pomian

1 No. 48, spring 1986.
4. What Next in Solidarity?

Summary: The flurry of activity in the ranks of the opposition following the recent amnesty culminated in the creation of the overt Provisional Council of the Independent Self-Governing Union Solidarity. Now that the initial excitement has subsided, the opposition's internal debate about the forms and methods of future action is gathering momentum.

* * *

In recent months the underground press has featured several articles about the opposition's future strategy and priorities. One of the more important was an interview with Jacek Kuron, who suggested that the opposition's main goal was and would remain the fostering of the public self-organization. The interview was published in the biweekly Kos.¹

What is most important now is self-organization. There is no one particular sector that I see as being more important than others; all of them are essential and none of them can exist independently of the others. We must take on all the problems that people consider vital, and we must involve all interested parties in their solution. We must offer help where new initiatives have emerged.

Events have shown that it is possible to impose considerable limits on the state monopoly of culture or education. This is [also] impossible in the sphere of the economy as it stands now. Although there are a few authentic workers' councils in some factories (about 2% or 3%), their chief task is to defend the workers. There are a few genuine cooperatives [and] several joint farming ventures, but their overall number is insignificant when viewed on a national scale.

From our experience to date, we know that all sorts of problems can be solved in the independent sector. All the groups that act in this way make up a social movement that is successful in breaking the authorities' monopoly of organizations and information. This movement can be very effective in exerting pressure on the authorities, but what it primarily does is to restore and develop the social bond that is being eroded under totalitarianism. When circumstances become more favorable, this movement might be able to generate democratic organizations of a more advanced nature.

An article written in an influential independent publication² considered the postulate of self-organization against the background of East bloc policy in general:

The events taking place in Poland today are only one element of a global strategy that East bloc leaders have been following for a considerable time. The aim of this policy seems clear: what is at stake is the restoration of credibility in the world . . . . The
attempt to resolve these problems. So what we are witnessing is a struggle on the part of the bloc to retain its position in the international arena but this time not by way of military blackmail, nor by threat or the use of terror, but by a "peace offensive," by "acts of good will" and by "generous gestures of reconciliation" that are also being applied toward the opposition at home. In their desire to regain credibility and influence, East bloc leaders hope to disarm their opponents by creating a vision of a possible "evolution of the system" . . . .

There is, however, another side to this: the vital necessity of the communist bloc to defend itself against a genuine erosion of the system. The problem here is to prevent this "seeming evolution of the system" that is being created for the benefit of world opinion from developing into a real evolution and to prevent the "conciliatory solutions" from resulting in the genuine liberation of societies and nations within the East bloc.

So what are the leaders of the bloc counting on in the game they are playing? Everything seems to indicate that above all they are counting on the passivity of their people, who have been consistently Sovietized over the decades; on their fear and distrust; on the inertia that stems from bitter experiences in the past. The Polish authorities are probably counting most of all on the weariness and internal divisions within the opposition centers and on the passivity and resignation of a society that is tired out by difficult living conditions. So the communist bloc leaders are playing a game, the success of which depends above all on the reaction of the societies they rule.

The essence of the political game that the communist leaders have been forced into by circumstance constitutes a unique chance for the societies of the East bloc; but part of their game is that this chance should not be noticed or exploited. We must be aware of this situation in order not to waste this chance by stereotyped reactions, by analogies with the past that are not necessarily relevant today, by a lack of political imagination or flexibility in reacting to new circumstances.

The author explained how the present chance can be best exploited:

The recent about-face in the East bloc leaders' strategy has given us an opportunity that can only be exploited one way: by embarking on a policy of faits accomplis. We must create social facts that the authorities will be forced to accept in the name of the peaceful strategy that they now advocate, or they will be forced to counter with violence, which would automatically reveal their true intentions. We must exploit the present cease-fire to create overt opposition centers and legal groups that would exert pressure on the authorities; we ought to implement our human and civil rights with all the means at our disposal.
The creation of the Provisional Council of the ISTU Solidarity is the first step along this path. Now that the example has been given by the leaders of the Polish opposition, we all ought to make a positive effort to create a genuine self-governing society. Attempts to save our country from ruin, poverty, and economic disintegration ought to be undertaken not in the name of some dubious "reconciliation" with the authorities but as the realization of our own national and social interests.

Some problems facing Solidarity since the creation of the provisional council were presented in an article by the Solidarity activist and former KOR member Henryk Wujec, who saw the creation of open regional councils as a positive step:

Despite the difficulties, this process will probably breathe new life into Solidarity; this will only happen, however, if the central and regional Solidarity leadership tries to come to a common agreement and to seek positive solutions that include various trends and campaign methods. What is happening now must be clearly understood by all Solidarity members and sympathizers if they are to take an active and useful part in this new campaign. So I consider it essential that those who took part in the recent events should give a clear account of them.

The whole process of creating open Solidarity councils ought to "integrate opposition activity in these regions and not cause divisions," Wujec continued. In addition, "personal animosities and rivalry between groups ought to be avoided." Now that the initial confusion generated by conflicting statements and appeals had died down, he concluded, the time had come "to sober up and harmonize our actions." He called on all overt and clandestine councils to work out and define their field of competence and the roles they intended to play: their programs ought to be clearly presented as soon as they became available.

Anna Pomian

1 No. 101, 22 September 1986.
2 Kos, no. 102, 6 October 1986.
3 Tygodnik Mazowsze, no. 185, 22 October 1986.
5. The Agricultural Fund: End of an Illusion

Summary: The Catholic Church-sponsored Agricultural Fund was intended to aid private farmers. After negotiations lasting almost five years, the authorities' insistence on retaining control of the fund forced the Church to abandon the project.

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A bulletin issued by the Secretariat of the Polish Church on September 2 of this year announced that the Church had abandoned all plans for the creation of an agricultural fund.¹ The history of the fund has been documented by the independent press:

The plan to organize help for Polish agriculture first appeared in 1981. This was not going to be a charitable venture. The West wanted to help the Polish economy by organizing the sort of aid that would mobilize new independent economic initiatives in the villages and that would help to solve the food problem. It was decided that the best way to achieve this would be by aiding private individual farms (which, in fact, account for 75% of Poland's arable land and 83% of all agricultural produce).

The fund was going to purchase machinery, equipment, and chemical products abroad and then sell them at home on the normal market at a moderate price (more expensive machinery would be sold on credit). The Polish currency obtained this way would go into a fund for subsidizing and financing various farming initiatives designed to increase agricultural production or to modernize the village infrastructure. The final program amounted to 1,800 million dollars, the pilot scheme to about 28 million. These sums were pledged by the Episcopates of Western Europe and the USA.²

The fund subsequently intended to finance individual farming projects:

The founders of the fund published a "Program of Aid for Polish Farmers and Skilled Workers" that mentioned the possibility of creating irrigation schemes, joint machinery ventures, small dairies, fruit-processing enterprises, brickyards, and small workshops. It was also planned to supply the Ursus plant with the parts and materials it lacked for producing the Ferguson model tractor and to subsidize the chemical industry's production of herbicides and pesticides as well as basic fodder constituents. A separate program was worked out to cover supplies . . . of essential parts that were unobtainable on the Polish market and had to be imported. The fund's main ambition, however, was to stimulate economic initiatives among the farmers themselves: the point was not to help any one particular person but to promote the idea of self-help. The water and milk plans best illustrate this. The hard-currency contribution provided by the fund for the
construction of a new irrigation system for pastures would amount to a mere 10% of the undertaking: this money would buy the necessary pipes and depth pumps. The construction program would require setting up an irrigation cooperative and obtaining credits in złoty. The milk program also envisaged setting up modern dairies as well as equipping the farms that supplied them with milking machines, cooling tanks, and refrigeration plants. The pure milk obtained this way would be distributed to schools, nurseries, and hospitals.

All these plans, however, came to nothing, since the Church was forced to abandon the fund project; the authorities had laid down conditions that would have deprived the fund of its autonomy. A leading article entitled "The End of an Illusion" in Przegląd Wiadomości Agencyjnych commented³:

The current crisis in Poland has caused agriculture in particular to be neglected. The fact that the authorities are unable to obtain hard-currency credits and in this case are being offered the money for nothing surely ought to be a source of great satisfaction to them; and yet they react by imposing all sorts of conditions, finally sabotaging the whole undertaking.

The authorities' obvious reluctance to accept the project might have reflected their general attitude toward Polish agriculture:

The authorities finally came to accept the fact that the collectivization of agriculture would certainly not be implemented in the foreseeable future. Individual farming, however, continues to be a thorn in the flesh of the system; it is an anomaly condemned by neighboring bloc countries. It challenges the whole socialist economy, particularly because it happens to be one of its most effective sectors; it is efficient despite its backwardness, fragmentation, and lack of investment. . . . The authorities cannot permit the development and modernization of this alien sector; nor can they allow work in this sector to become easier, profits greater, and so on, especially at a time when the whole national economy is sinking into an ever-deepening crisis.

The authorities viewed the fund as a direct threat to their control of the economy:

The authorities are able to stay in power not only by means of force or the threat of using it but also by [controlling] distribution: distribution of everything, to everybody. Every company, institute, or person is to have what the authorities give out. For this reason as much as possible ought to be in the authorities' hands; it is a good idea if there is not too much available, since those goods will then be greatly sought after and can be used as a convenient bargaining factor . . . so the authorities can hardly allow the appearance of a new competitive donor or new investments or highly attractive goods that lie outside their control. Hence their insistence on retaining control.
One of the members of the organizing committee of the Agricultural Fund revealed that those taking part in the negotiations had had their reservations about the authorities' intentions for long; they had obtained a confidential document, dated 24 May 1984, from the Ministry of Finance that contained the following paragraph:

The so-called pilot schemes that the Church is insisting on carrying out in order to justify the aid project in the eyes of the donors, Polish society, and the authorities may become an attempt to create specialized farming enclaves that would be supported by imported machinery and production means and that would at the same time give rise to socially harmful comparisons. The possibility of this danger ought to be kept in mind during consultations.\(^4\)

According to the fund's representative, this document showed that the "basic reasons for the fund's failure was the authorities' fear that an enclave of healthy economic mechanisms might begin to develop in Poland; this is something the system cannot tolerate." He added that the authorities feared that "the party's monopoly might be broken in this one sphere and that this "disease" would then begin to spread." He concluded that "the failure of the fund will hardly make negotiations with the West over credits any easier; since a donation is being rejected, how can one possibly justify the need for a loan?"

Anna Pomian

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1 For further details, see Polish Situation Report/14, Radio Free Europe Research, 17 September 1986, item 5.

2 Tygodnik Mazowsze, no. 113, 17 January 1985.

3 [Press Agency Survey], no. 28, 14 September 1986.

4 Tygodnik Mazowsze, no. 180, 10 September 1986.

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