



Poland: 1980

The Russell Commission
by Tony Topham



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The Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation's Commission to visit Poland in order to study the settlement of the strikes of July-September 1980, and to discuss peace and detente, was refused visas on September 3rd. On September 4th, in a somewhat more widely reported affair, the same fate befell the British TUC delegation when the official Polish Trade Union Council cancelled an invitation to that body to visit Poland. Thus the Polish authorities appeared to be closing the doors against any contacts between the labour and peace movement of two countries, the links between which reach back for over 100 years.

Historic Links

In the 19th century, London was the chief haven of refuge for exiled revolutionaries from the continent. Already in the 1840s, prominent English Chartists like George Harney and Ernest Jones were active supporters of a London committee of exiled Polish nationalists, and campaigned energetically for the support of British workers.

It was in 1865 that the first conference of the International Working Men's Association (the 1st International) took place in London. The Association, in which Karl Marx, himself a political exile from the continent living in London, played a decisive role, was supported principally by the English craft trade union leaders, and by important elements in the French socialist and workers' movement. The issue which first brought the English and French together was precisely the need to solidarise with the Polish workers' movement for independence from Russia, a cause which was, in Marx's own mind, of crucial importance.

"Any revolution on the Continent stood a good chance of being strangled by Russian military intervention combined with financial pressure from England. Reaction was therefore being maintained by the most backward and the most advanced of the great nations."¹

The relationship between the national and social questions was hotly debated at that Conference, in which the Polish workers' leaders in exile participated fully. Of course, the nature of the Russian and English states, and their relative influence in Europe, have changed dramatically since then, but the geo-politics of the Polish situation in 1980 bears an interesting relationship to that of the 1860s. Clearly, since the Russian invasions of Hungary in 1956, and Czechoslovakia in 1968, it can be said that apprehension of Russian military intervention against European states in the East which aspire to independence and democracy remains as realistic under Brezhnev as it was under the Tsar. Clearly also, in the case of Poland at least, Western finance – including German and American bank loans – continues its interest in "stability" and the status quo, as strongly as it did over 100 years ago.

TUC's Aborted Visit

However, the TUC's initial response to the Polish events of 1980 was rather less forthright and generous than that of their predecessors – men like Odger and Applegarth, leaders of the craft unions – in the 1860s. A high-level TUC delegation to visit Poland as guests of the official trade unions had already been planned well before the strikes, to take place in early September 1980. The stike movement, and its highly significant demand for free trade unions, transformed the meaning of the TUC's visit. Whilst the TUC was right to declare its intention to go ahead with the visit, it gave the impression that it was embarrassed by the workers' mass action and found it very difficult to express the simple message of solidarity which was required. This was probably due in part to disagreement within the politics of British trade unionism, which had little to do with events in Poland. Be that as it may, the TUC found it difficult to reach an objective evaluation of the necessary response. Rather late in the day, it discovered its conscience during the annual September Congress proceedings in Brighton, by declaring its support for the Poles' demand for independent trade unions. Whilst the communist unions in France and Italy were sending donations to the Gdansk strikers, and putting severe pressure on the Polish authorities through the WFTU to accede to the workers' demands, whilst the three trade union federations of Italy sent a joint delegation to the strikers, whilst the French CFDT also sent a delegation to Gdansk with donations and with fervent cries of "Vive la lutte des travailleurs Polonais", the equivocations of the British TUC during August did its international reputation no good at all.

Development of the Polish Labour Movement

To resume the historical narrative; the Polish labour movement was fragmented by foreign domination during the rest of the 19th century, whilst Poland remained partitioned between Russia, Austria-Hungary, and Germany. Beginning in Austrian Galicia, early trade unions were based on the craft principles of apprenticeship and limited membership, but a new unionism, late in the century, including miners, railwaymen and municipal workers developed along industrial lines, with mass membership. In the German areas, Polish workers joined German unions. (There were also of course the closest links between the socialist movements of Poland and Germany, symbolised in the career of Rosa Luxemburg, herself a Pole, who first participated in the formation of a Polish Socialist Party, and then assumed German citizenship to become one of the great leaders of German and international Social Democracy.) In the Russian areas of Poland, trade unions were illegal, and depended on such activities as the holding of clandestine workers' education classes. These schools

bear an interesting resemblance to the "flying universities" which developed in the Poland of the 1970s, organised by the Committee for Social Self-Defence (KOR) – formerly the Workers' Defence Committee. Tamara Deutscher has described this Committee as "an unstructured vanguard of intellectuals. It is from these" (she writes), "mostly young writers and intellectuals, that the staff of the so-called 'flying universities' come – irregular, unofficial and much harassed groups, meeting in private homes and listening to lectures conducted outside normal and approved educational channels. Needless to say, the curriculum would not have met with the approval of the Ministry of Education".² Nor, presumably, of the Tsar.

Socialist organisation then, emerged in the late 19th century, alongside and sometimes as founders of, trade unions; the Polish Socialist Party itself was formed in 1892. It appeared at a time of great labour unrest, during which Cossacks carried out massacres of striking Polish workers. The Polish socialists continued to debate the strategic choice between national and social struggle, originated by the pioneers of the 1st International. Rosa Luxemburg reversed Marx's own emphasis on the need for national independence, and asserted the supremacy of the political struggle for socialism, relying on the parallel revolutionary movements in Russia, Germany and elsewhere (which were united in the 2nd International), to deliver the Poles from imperial oppression.³ The dichotomy between national and social questions, and the problem of their reconciliation, can thus be seen as a continuous theme of Polish history, which re-emerges in new, but still deeply complicated forms, in the crisis of 1980. Although it is now not articulated as such by the socialist activists of the opposition in contemporary Poland yet, seen from the perspective of the international peace and labour movements, the Polish campaign of 1980, for trade union freedom and the right to strike, has a most intimate relationship with the question of Russian hegemony, the nuclear arms race, and detente in Europe. We shall return to this issue later.

Historically, the Polish national question was at least partially resolved, and for the time being, by the Versailles settlement after the 1914-18 war, which established an independent Polish state. For a time thereafter, trade unionism was able to develop in the context of a capitalist economy. In 1918 a Central Committee of Labour Unions (CKZZ) was formed, uniting most of the unions from the former colonised regions of the country. The dominant form of organisation was industrial, with the strongest unions being in mining, the railways, chemical, textile and municipal employment. They made some economic gains for their members, and ran welfare facilities independently of the state. The links between these unions and the Socialist Party were very strong – the Party promoted union legislation and socialist MPs were often themselves union leaders. As a result of this combined influence, Poland became a pioneer of progressive labour legislation, and the unions won the exclusive right to carry out collective bargaining.

In 1926, the right-wing Pilsudski government tried to divide the trade unions by ordering all employees of publicly-owned industry and services to enrol in a government sponsored Association of Labour Unions (ZZZ). (It is interesting to note here the reversal of roles in 1980, in which it is the *workers'* initiative which has led to dual – state-controlled and independent – trade unionism emerging again.) During the 1930s, government became increasingly repressive in its attitude to both trade unionism and socialist political activity. However, the Polish working class had, prior to the Nazi invasion and over many years, developed a long experience of independent and militant trade unionism,

allied with a socialist political movement.

The Trade Unions Post-War

After the second world war, and the accession to power of the Polish United Workers' Party (the Communist Party) the trade unions were reconstituted, under the Central Council of Polish Trade Unions (the CRZZ), by a Trade Union Act in 1949. Although nominally the structure of the unions was not radically altered (they preserved their industry-division of organisation), their functions were transformed. The CRZZ became the only authority over all union activities, and in carrying out this role, it acted as the transmitter of Party decisions. By 1950, after the purging of opposition which sought to retain the unions' independence, the unions had to all intents and purposes become organs of government.⁴ (No clearer evidence of their relationship to government is needed than the promptitude and arbitrary authority with which the government was able to dismiss the unions' President in August 1980, in one of its moves to conciliate the strikers. He may well have deserved his dismissal, but that is not the point!)

The post-war history of Polish labour is divided into phases demarcated by a series of mass movements of unrest and strikes, in 1956, 1970, 1976 and now in 1980. From the end of the war until 1956, Polish political and economic policy was marked by an extreme imitation of Stalinist methods in Russia, save only that no mass collectivisation of agriculture was attempted. Emphasis was placed on capital investment, and industrial enterprises adopted the one-man management model wherein the manager's role was to fulfil the instructions of the central plan, and the unions' role was to enforce work norms.

Workers' Councils Emerge

To the unsatisfactory performance of the economy under this regime was added, in 1956, as a cause of disaffection, the revelations by Khrushchev about Stalin at the Soviet Union's Twentieth Party Congress. Workers' resistance to the bureaucracy and to low standards of life boiled over into strikes (most dramatically in Poznan during June-July), and street demonstrations which ushered in the Gomulka era. Gomulka was at first identified with the nationalist wing of the Party, and with a policy of decentralisation and democratisation in industry. The Poznan strikers themselves advanced the demand for "industrial democracy" – the degree to which they were influenced in this by developments in Yugoslavia remains uncertain. But even before the strikes, the Polish Communist Party had begun in 1955 to encourage workers at plant level to make their own proposals for a new economic plan. The result of this ferment, in the case of the famous car plant in Zeran, with its 6,000 workers, has been described by the then secretary of the party cell in the factory, L. Gozdick, who became one of the driving forces behind the idea of workers' councils.

"When we learned the facts [revealed in the report by Khrushchev to the 20th Party Congress in the Soviet Union] we understood what had happened to the Communist Party in Poland, our Comrades and later in the Yugoslav affair. Our eyes were opened regarding the 'nationalist rightist deviation' [the ousting of Gomulka in 1948] and the reasons which led to it. We started looking for ways to repair the damage . . . This was on the eve of the Party Activists Conference in Warsaw in April . . . There . . . we said everything that was on our minds. This meeting was tumultuous . . . But this was the first real discussion after the period of silence and of lies; things reached a stage where many people in the room were horrified and almost fainted. This conference was followed by prolonged discussions in our midst

... We examined the ways which would permit the working class to have the feeling that it was really administering the enterprise. Many ideas were agreed upon. Many differences appeared. Cautiously we proposed setting up a technical council capable of co-ordinating our efforts in the economic field . . . Then we thought that it would not be bad if we had in the plant a workers' council to direct the enterprise, to determine its economic administration and its organisation and at the same time to guide it and make recommendations to the directors for execution. We examined this proposal, first in the party committee, then in the other meetings which in those days occurred frequently. The discussion was often stormy."⁵

Many plants set up workers' councils spontaneously in 1956, following the lead of the Zeran car factory; their aims and aspirations at this time were wide and often political — they debated the reorganisation of the state, the party, and the unions, to free them from bureaucratic control. The seventh plenary session of the Communist Party's Central Committee in July 1956 went so far as to speak of "the extension of workers' democracy in the plants". A government decree legalised the workers' councils, and prescribed rules and regulations for their operation. Yet at no time did the state and the bureaucracy sacrifice any large area of decision-making to the councils, and despite the enthusiasm with which they had been inaugurated, the regime was able in a relatively short time to claw back what influence the councils had enjoyed, and to subject them to the control of unreformed party and trade union structures in the plants. Unions continued to be obliged to follow "the strict observance of labour legislation and collective agreements in enterprises" and "to struggle for a correct attitude to the production tasks of the enterprise". The government at no time relinquished its power over wage determination. Thus the events of 1956 followed a certain pattern which was to repeat itself in later events. First, a poor economic performance and political disaffection led to strikes and demonstrations. These were met by both repression (the demonstrations of 1956 were suppressed with police action in which many were killed and injured) and by concessions. Later, the concessions were withdrawn and no fundamental change in the system was made.

Crises in the Seventies

On the next occasion of working class strike action, in 1970, the immediate cause, which was to re-appear in 1976 and again in 1980, was an attempt by the government to raise the retail price of food and particularly that of meat. In 1970, as in 1956, the Polish leadership, this time under the ailing Mr Gomulka, ordered police to fire on demonstrators — an action which killed some 200 people. It also led directly to the replacement of Gomulka by the party leader of Upper Silesia, Edward Gierek.

The new leader went directly to the strikers' meetings to negotiate a settlement. He had to listen whilst, at a mass meeting, the President of the strike committee read out the workers' demands. The first of these was for a return of food prices to their previous level. Then followed point 2:

"We demand, following the workers' wishes expressed in all departmental meetings open to all workers, that there be immediate legal elections to trade-union posts and to the Workers' Councils; also, following the wishes of the majority of Party members, that there be democratic elections in the Party and youth organisations, both on departmental level and for the whole enterprise. We would like the provincial authorities of these organisations to guarantee the application of this demand within a strict time limit."

Gierek's reply in part is recorded as follows:

"As to your demands, we will do our utmost. The Party will be renovated, we will get rid of the incompetents. As to lowering the price of foodstuffs, we must be realistic. I tell you, there is no possible way of going back to the pre-12 December prices.

(*Stirring, shouts in the hall; 'There is! Why not?'*) Because comrades, in all truth, it isn't possible. But all elected bodies will be democratically reconstituted. That, yes. (*Applause.*) So that these bodies are open to all — party members or not! Open even to members of the strike committee, why not? (*Ovations, shouts*) . . ."

Gierek eventually *did* revoke the proposed price rises; the workers had won a concession in the economic field, but again the structures of politics and society remained unchanged and Gierek's promises to the strikers went unfulfilled. Six years later, in 1976, the new government itself attempted to raise food prices — which had remained essentially unchanged since the mid-1960s — but was forced to back down in the face of renewed strikes and demonstrations. The strikers on this occasion again indulged in the discussion of reforms going beyond the purely economic; the call for egalitarianism was plainly heard, as were demands for free trade unions — "our own". During the 1976 action, the setting up of workers' councils, strike committees, liaison and co-ordination of action between groups and factories were achieved with speed and efficiency; all democratic processes were also duly observed during debates on policy plans and in decision-making.⁶ This time the police did not open fire, but — after the concession on prices — the demonstrators and strike leaders were thrown out of work, imprisoned, and generally intimidated.

Nevertheless, something new did emerge in 1976. In 1970-71, the dockers and textile workers had acted on their own; in 1976 some of the intelligentsia finally moved to support of the workers and, after the main battles had been fought, this element came together to form the Workers' Defence Committee — later renamed the Social Self-Defence Committee (KOR). This signalled a general increase in unofficial political activity — we have already referred to the "flying universities" — and in 1977, all the detained workers were released from prison by a combination of pressure from KOR and the Catholic church.

1980

It is hoped that this excursion into recent Polish history demonstrates quite clearly that the strikes and demands of 1980 emerge from a background of profound experience on the part of the Polish working class, but that, at the same time, 1980 is far more than a mere repetition of 1956, 1970 and 1976. To start with, the 1980 strikes have been conducted in an entirely peaceful atmosphere (at least up to September 15th, the time of writing). The workers were careful to stay off the streets, and to give the authorities no excuse or opportunity to deploy physical repression against them. Secondly, the strikes have been on a much more widespread scale than any of their predecessors; at one stage in late August 1980, it appeared very likely that the government would be faced by a general strike, as the wave passed through tractor plants, public transport, including the railways, the shipyards of the Baltic coast, the mines of Silesia, and into towns on the very border with the Soviet Unions. Thirdly, the strikes represent a protest which, though once again sparked off initially by a proposed rise in the price of meat, is aimed at the heart of Poland's gathering and unprecedentedly serious economic crisis. Fourthly, the strikers have won major political concessions in the form of the right to strike and to set up independent trade unions. (One must again add the caution that this is true up to the time of writing, although at this stage it does appear as though a serious attempt is to be made by the new government under Mr Kania to legislate and to legalise

Right: Lech Walesa — the chairperson of the Joint Strike Committee at Lenin Shipyard, 27.8.80.



the concessions agreed in Gdansk and elsewhere.) Fifthly, the liaison between the strikers, their own leaders, and the advisers from KOR came into action at any early stage, has proved fruitful and mature, and has led to a new relationship, in which workers are prepared to defend the intellectuals from official repression and arbitrary arrest and to co-opt them as advisers to the new unions. Sixthly, the solidarity of the strikers presented the government with a united front; the latter was unable, as it wished, to negotiate separately with individual groups of strikers, but had to face a "Combine Committee" of strikers representing the whole of the Baltic region.

Economic Background

Before examining the strikers' demands and their agreement with government, some analysis of the background economic crisis in Poland is necessary. Poland's present economic plight is severe in the extreme. Falling production, food shortages and a massive foreign debt are the most obvious manifestations. £8 billion have been borrowed from the West's bankers and multinational companies to finance a technologically updated version of a classically Stalinist "development plan".⁷

"There is something to be said for the view that western credits gave a new lease of life to the bad old practices; economic distortions were not corrected and social participation in decision-making was not developed. Both issues were set aside as politicians and the media settled down to sing a long hymn of praise to the god of capital investment; both were to return with a vengeance. Today Poland has an economy whose distinguishing features is a gross structural imbalance. Side by side with a vastly extended and energy-hungry manufacturing capacity, the country has a totally inadequate communications and supply network, a depopulated and unproductive countryside, acute shortages of food, housing and other social facilities – and that 20 thousand million dollar debt. Even the modernised industrial plant is often of dubious economic value."⁸

It is worthy of note by Western labour movements that the economies of Eastern Europe are inter-dependent with those of Western capitalism. Quite simply, there is no such thing as a socialist world market, and certainly the frail structures of Comecon cannot insulate the East from the effects of the dominant Western economy. At least 50 per cent of Poland's foreign trade is with the West; the relationship between the periodic phases of labour unrest in Eastern Europe, and the cyclical behaviour of the world economy, would bear closer investigation. If such a relationship exists, then the need for common responses and policies by workers in both regions is even more clearly demonstrated.

If it is clear to us in the West that neither Thatcherite-Friedmanite techniques, nor the diffident fine-tuning of the social-democrats, can make capitalism work any more, it is equally, traumatically obvious to the Polish people that centralised bureaucratic management on the Stalinist model cannot make a socially-owned economy work either. The necessary response of workers and their independent organisations is the same in both contexts; the demand for genuine workers' control and democratic influence over policies and plans.

The crisis of the Polish system of government does not manifest itself alone in economic mismanagement. It is reflected deep in the structures and mode of life in the society. Corruption abounds; Party members and functionaries enjoy preference in housing allocation, in education, and in access to scarce consumer goods. The former director of Polish television is being investigated in connection with a multi-million pounds embezzlement scheme, in which Party funds were used to provide luxuries for high officials.

"It is the rottenness, the corruption we can't stand. I waited nine years for a flat in the housing co-operative, and then found people only three years on the list had got in first, because they were Party members or had bribed somebody. Corruption is like a wart; it always grows again after a bit. But now, out in the town, everything feels so different. People are usually pretty tough, but now everybody is so kind and gentle to one another ..."⁹

(The strikes produced a classic transformation of working class morale: drunkenness and crime, widespread problems in towns such as Szczecin, are reported to have almost disappeared during August 1980.)

The large police tyrannies of the regime are well known; KOR has also documented in assiduous detail evidence of widespread petty brutalities by local, provincial police forces. In July and August 1980 people's tolerance for this whole state of affairs became exhausted; the depth of disillusion with Party and State in the minds of ordinary people is quite devastating.

Workers' Gains

So what, exactly, have the Polish strikers demanded and gained by their recent agreements with the special government negotiating commission? The following is the text of the final agreement between the two parties, which was signed in Gdansk on August 31st, 1980.

1. The activities of the trade unions in Poland have not fulfilled the hopes and aspirations of the workers.

It has been found necessary to call up new, self-governing trade unions which would become authentic representatives of the worker class. No one's right to remain in the present union will be questioned, and in the future we see a possibility of entering into co-operation between the two unions.

2. By creating new, independent, self-governing trade unions, the joint strike committee declares it shall observe the principles of the constitution of Poland. New trade unions shall defend the social and material rights of the workers, and they do not intend to become a political party. They stand on the principle of the social ownership of the means of production which is the basis for the socialist system existing in Poland.

They recognise that the Communist Party is the leading force in Poland and do not question the existing system of international alliances. They shall strive to assure working people the proper means of control to express opinion and to defend their interests.

The government commission declares that the government shall guarantee and assure full respect for the independence and self-government of the new trade unions as concerns their organisational structure as well as functioning at all levels.

The government shall assure the new trade unions the full possibility of fulfilling their basic function in the field of defending workers' interests to meet their material, social and cultural needs. At the same time, the government guarantees that new trade unions will not be subject to any discrimination.

3. The creation and activities of the independent self-governing trade union corresponds to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention Nos.87 and 98, already ratified by Poland. The activity of more than one union will require proper law. Therefore, the government undertakes legal initiatives, particularly a law on trade unions, on workers' self-government, and a labour code.
4. The existing strike committees can be transformed in their enterprises into worker representations such as worker committees or councils or as founding committees for the new trade unions.

The joint strike committee, as the founding committee, has the freedom to pick either the form of one union or to become an association in the Baltic area. The government undertakes to create conditions to register new trade unions outside the register of the existing council of trade unions.

5. New trade unions should have the real possibility to criticise publicly decisions which determine the living conditions of the workers, the principles of dividing the national income into consumption and accumulation, the division of funds for

social consumption and for various aims such as health, education and culture, for the basic principles of salaries and wage policy, and in particular of the automatic wage rise as a condition of inflation, for long term economic planning, investments and price alterations. The government assures conditions to fulfil these functions.

Conclusions

1. The government shall within three months make a motion to the parliament for a new law on censorship based on the following principles; Censorship should protect the interests of the country. It means protection of state and economic secrets as defined by law, matters of state security and important international interests, protection of religious beliefs and the expressions of non-believing persons as well as halting the publication of indecent material.

The draft law will also contain a provision for suing against the decisions of the censorship board through the Supreme Administrative Court. This law shall also be inserted into the administrative code.

2. Access to mass media by religious associations shall be implemented in the manner of settling problems between state organisations and the interested religious associations. The government shall assure the radio broadcasts of Sunday mass after a detailed arrangement with the episcopate.
3. The activities of radio, television, the mass media and publications shall have the opportunity to express a variety of thought, views and opinions. This should be controlled by the society.
4. The press, like citizens and their organisations, must have access to public documents, particularly administrative acts, social and economic plans, etc., issued by the government and its agencies. Exceptions to the principle of open administration activities shall be determined in accord with Point Number One.

The government undertakes:

1. The immediate check of the rightfulness of dismissals from work after the strikes of 1970 and 1976. In all cases in which irregularities will have been proved, the people will be rehired if they wish, taking into consideration their possible improved qualifications in the meantime. This will also be valid for students who have been expelled from universities.
2. Cases of persons listed . . . (Edmund Zdrozinski, Jan Kozlowski, Marek Kozlowski) will be submitted to the Justice Minister, who within two weeks shall review the cases and if the listed persons are currently jailed will stop the execution of the prison term pending a review of the case.

The Minister will also review all temporary arrests and free the persons listed in the annex. (Referring to dissidents recently arrested in Poznan, Warsaw and Gdansk).¹⁰

The text represents an achievement by the strikers and their advisors and negotiators of historic proportions, and is quite certainly unique in the history of any country living under bureaucratic communist rule.

The concept of independent unions living alongside the official unions raises enormous questions which have still to be resolved. The official trade unions administer much of what in the West would come under the provision of fringe benefits and of state welfare — sick pay, holiday pay, social security, housing and so on. That Polish workers can contemplate abandoning this substantial provision for their new organisations says much for the depth of feeling against the old order. Of course, Polish social provision was decentralised, and maybe its control can be passed over to the new collectives. But how, in practice will the division and duplications of function between the two types of union be ordered? This question remains unanswered.

The Russell Commission

The Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation, having followed the mounting strike action and other events in Poland very closely, was convinced that the Agreement, together with the preceding events, and the interpretation and application of its clauses, merited a careful enquiry on the spot by a special commission. Moreover, the Foundation felt that close links should be established with the new union

organisations, in order that their views could be reported back to the labour and peace movements in this country, and their advice sought as to how we might best assist them to consolidate their gains. At the same time, we felt the need to discuss with representatives of the government negotiating committee, in order to understand the spirit and the intent with which they had conducted their negotiations with the strikers. It was quite apparent that there were different views within the Polish United Workers' Party, and indeed within the Government, on how the strikes should be interpreted and what should be done about them. We wished to understand these, going beyond the stereotypes which were presented in the press.

Further, the Foundation interprets the issue of trade union freedom and the right to strike, the abolition or modification of censorship, etc., and the freeing of political prisoners, as having very clear human rights connotations, going beyond any purely economic programme of reforms. The defence of human rights has been one of the central concerns of the Foundation from its inception, and it sees these as unavoidably connected to questions of detente and disarmament. For, just as Imperial Russia and Imperial England froze all attempts at freedom and democracy in Poland during the 19th century, so the great, nuclear-armed power blocs place the greatest possible constraints on the evolution or preservation of open, democratic societies on both sides of the Iron Curtain, today. Who can doubt that a nuclear-free Europe would also be a freer, more open society than it can hope to be in the present state of mutual hostility between the major powers? Who can doubt that Britain, whilst locked into the arms race, faces its own threats to civil liberty? Who can doubt that the further progress of Poland *and* Britain towards a democratic socialist society would be made infinitely less painful, where it not for the ever-present, nervous, part-aggressive part-defensive context in which a nuclear Warsaw Pact confronts a nuclear NATO across the continent of Europe?

Of course, the Foundation accepts that the question of missile deployment and disarmament is, for the present, not necessarily the most pressing of preoccupations in present-day Poland, and that the whole question of Poland's position in the Warsaw Pact is extremely delicate.

Indeed, neither the Foundation itself, nor the campaign for European Nuclear Disarmament, believes it likely that the Warsaw Pact and of NATO can be dissolved easily. This would be quite unrealistic until the runaway arms race has been halted. Yet the fact remains that the missiles of the West are pointed at Gdansk and Warsaw, and that those of Poland's allies in the Warsaw Pact threaten us. Our aim is to break the log-jam in which Europe is trapped, by fostering discussion and movement in both East and Western Europe for mutual nuclear disarmament. We firmly believe that the social, economic and human gains made by the recent Polish workers' movement, remain precarious unless a relief of East-West tension can be achieved, and until the military-industrial complex in the West, and the rigidly bureaucratic apparatus which administers society in the East, can be prised apart from their mutual threats of destruction. These paradoxically make partners of them in their tendency to suspect any spontaneous popular, democratic movements.

This was the rationale behind the decision to send a Russell Commission to Poland in September 1980. The Commission comprised Bob Cryer, MP, former industry minister in the Labour Government, Dan Smith, Vice-chairman of the CND, and myself. The rest of the story is soon told. After spending an intensive period in preparation and research for the visit, (in which we were reinforced by herculean efforts by Ken Fleet and Ken Coates), we



The strikers in the Lenin Shipyard.

finalised plans to visit, first Gdansk, to interview the representatives of the new trade unions, then Warsaw, to seek meetings with the government negotiating team and with other informed persons who could appraise the situation for us. During this preparatory period, we of course contacted the Polish Embassy in London, in order to obtain visas. We were given the impression that we could be accommodated if we explained our purpose to the officials at the Embassy. However, when we interviewed a high official on the Embassy's staff, he informed us that we could not have the necessary visas, on the grounds (a) that officials in Poland would be too busy to talk to us, and (b) that we had no invitation for our visit from any official organisation in Poland.

The Foundation issued a press statement regretting the decision. The following day, the TUC delegation to Poland was also told that its visit was no longer possible. These decisions of course represent a set-back for the cause of Anglo-Polish labour movement discussion and mutual assistance. But we believe that exchanges will go on in the future, and that, short of massive military intervention by the Russians, the Polish reform movement will gather strength, enabling us thereby to promote the cause both of industrial democracy, and of peace, with it.

My own most lasting feelings arising from the period of study of the Polish events on which I embarked in preparation for the trip, are of unbounded admiration for

the solidarity, enterprise, and maturity of judgement shown by the strikers and their leaders, as well as for the courage and careful servicing of the movement provided by the KOR activists. May the alliance between these two elements and the hoped-for reforms in the Polish system, provide a springboard for the further evolution of Poland towards the ideal of a self-managing socialist democracy, living at peace with its neighbours and the world, and engaging in fraternal exchanges with its friends and supporters abroad.

Footnotes

1. Henry Collins and Chimen Abramsky, *Karl Marx and the British Labour Movement*, Macmillan, 1965, pp.106-107.
2. Tamara Deutscher, "Voice of Dissent", *Socialist Register*, Merlin Press, 1978, p.24.
3. See Paul Frolich, *Rosa Luxemburg*, Left Book Club, 1940, especially Chapter 2, "The Fate of Poland".
4. A.P. Coldrick and Philip Jones, *International Directory of the Trade Union Movement*, Macmillan, 1979, pp.952-955.
5. *Nowa Kultura*, October 20th 1957, under the title "Tell the Truth! This is how everything started!", quoted in Adolf Sturmthal, *Workers' Councils*, Harvard, 1964, pp.123-124.
6. See Tamara Deutscher, *loc.cit.*
7. See Information Centre for Polish Affairs, (UK), *Poland's Wave of Strikes*, 1980.
8. *Ibid.*
9. Neal Ascherson, *The Observer*, Sunday 31st August 1980, quoting a striker in Gdansk.
10. The text is that supplied by Associated Press, and published in *The Times*, September 1st, 1980.

Appendix

1. Statement of the Inter-factory Strike Committee (MKS) consisting of 308 representatives of 304 Gdansk region enterprises on strike, based in the Lenin Shipyard in Gdansk.

Gdansk, 20th August 1980.

The first of our demands is of crucial importance. Without independent trade unions all the other demands can be ruled out in the future, as it has happened several times in the short history of the Polish People's Republic. The official trade unions have not only failed to defend our interests: moreover, they have been more hostile to the justified strike action than the party and state organs. Chairman of the CRZZ (Central Trade Union Council – the official trade unions) Jan Szydłak has delivered the strongest attack on the strikes; although he considers himself to be representing the workers, he in fact represents the institution which is responsible for the recent situation in Poland. In his latest statement at a meeting of the so-called activists of the Gdansk voivodship (with 14 representatives – a fraction of the existing factory councils) Mr Szydłak did not deem it right to criticise the official trade unions. He described our strike as a result of hostile forces and terror. He threatened: "We will not give up power nor will we share it" – he said, thereby informing the public opinion that he wants to represent us without our consent. Our mandate is for him of no consequence.

MKS and the workers on strike cannot be indifferent towards this official stand of the CRZZ. Our reaction is the decision of all the strikers within MKS to leave the party- and state-controlled trade unions. The decision was taken this morning at 10.20 am.

Our strike enjoys the support and sympathy of all the country and of other countries in the world, because our 21 demands are deeply humanitarian. The strikers and society at large are well aware of this and it is a source of our strength. The workers are not fighting for a mere pittance for themselves but "For justice for the whole nation". We have to oppose the local authorities attempts to disrupt the unity of our strike movement. We live up to the words: "Man is born free".

Only in unity can we find strength. On 20.8.80 MKS also resolved the following:

Individual strike committees should not negotiate any of our common demands with state authorities.

Strike committees are responsible for order and safety in their enterprises and for readiness to resume work as soon as our demands are met and the MKS informs them about it. Negotiations with a government representation concerning the 21 demands of the strikers will be conducted by the MKS.

We are still calling on the government spokesman to undertake negotiations. Any delay of the talks means cutting off of their own roots.

We were ready for talks already on Saturday the 16th of August. MKS is the only guarantor of the workers demands being met by the government of the Polish People's Republic.

2. Statement of the Inter-factory Strike Committee (MKS) based in the Lenin Shipyard in Gdansk.

Gdansk, 21st August 1980

In connection with the increasing official propaganda of slander and provocation, the MKS wishes to state the following:

The workers are not surprised by the vile methods of psychological warfare carried out by the authorities aiming to provoke and mislead public opinion. Mendacious leaflets

are being distributed which meet with condemnation of the whole nation. Everybody knows that the authorities deliberately defer negotiations. In this way the authorities once again reveal themselves to the people. All the working people have never failed and will never fail. Today they prove it again with their political wisdom, discipline and a fervent desire for the good of the whole nation.

MKS – representing all enterprises – once again calls on the authorities to start talks concerning the demands submitted on 18.8.80 by the MKS delegation to the Gdansk voivode, Prof. Jerzy Kolodziejewski. Only honest and democratic dialogue can bring the strike action to an end. Only by listening to the voice of the working people and by meeting their demands can normal life be resumed in our country. Workers on strike do not destroy national unity and do not harm the Polish state. If the authorities want to find this out, let them come to the strikers and acquaint themselves with the resolution of the MKS which represent the workers. The truth is to be found here, not in the headquarters of the Voivodship Town Council. Workers of the Gdansk shipyard – which is the headquarters of the MKS – as well as the MKS itself guarantee full safety of the government delegation here during the discussions.

3. Peasant Self-Defence Committee of the Grojec County, Zbrosza Duza, 24th August 1980. A Proclamation to the workers striking on the Baltic Coast (Summary).

Brother workers,

Following the appeals by the state and party authorities, urging the people to carry out a national debate on the bad state of affairs in the Polish Republic, we, the peasants from a number of villages in Radom Voivodship, (country-trans.) gathered on Sunday, 24th August, in Zbrosza Duza, to discuss in public spirit the fate of our country. We considered whether the demands, which you (workers-trans.) had to support by the civic action in the form of strike, are just. We decided that they are just and worthy of our support. Your rightful struggle for trade unions, independent from the party and state apparatus, aids our own attempts to establish a similar trade union organisation for agricultural workers. With this aim in mind we have already established in several parts of the country the Peasants' Self-Defence Committees and the Farmers' Trade Union. We assure you that despite the harassment and obstacles created by the official authorities we shall continue our activity. We understand that these actions are necessary to bring changes leading to such an agricultural policy which will insure that there is enough of our own Polish bread for everybody and we do not have to humiliate ourselves by begging abroad for credits to buy grain. We join your struggle to put an end to repressions and arrests and together with you we call for the release of political prisoners, amongst whom there are also peasants, like Jan Kozłowski, a farmer from Tarnobrzeg County, imprisoned because he had expressed his concern with the welfare of the nation. We insist that the authorities accept your demands without delay, which is damaging to the country, and make it possible for you to go back to work. Whoever can deny the righteousness of your demand for your family allowances to be raised to the level paid to the police and the security service? The Polish media keep silent about your demands out of fear that the whole Polish nation is ready to support them. We want to tell you, brother workers, that the state and party dignitaries, who demand sacrifices from you, in the name of the common welfare, do not set an example themselves. They pay themselves high salaries, yet want to economise on the money paid to the workers. They have passed a government bill granting privileges to the families of the party and state dignitaries, even to the third generation. Because of his family relation, even a grandson of a high ranking official may collect a state pension, equivalent to 75% of that dignitary's salary. Let it be known to you, brother workers, that the authorities who take such care of their own families



forget about the families of the peasants. Only peasants' families are deprived of any allowances. We are concerned that in their latest speeches neither the first secretary of the party nor the prime minister announced any changes in the present disastrous agricultural policy, which has resulted in the poor food supplies in the whole country. You must know that in recent years an official government bill was passed which changed the status of the rightful owners of farm holdings to that of the temporary occupiers. In order to pass on your own farm to your son or daughter, one has to have permission from a head of a local administrative council and heads of local councils rule according to their own wishes. The education system in the villages is also a blow against peasant families. The farmers are deprived of all rights to defend themselves against the mis-use of power. The publicly advertised bill concerning the so-called benefits of the farmers' pension scheme, in practice should be called a bill dealing with the methods of destruction of family farming. The only sensible way to run the Polish agriculture is to support family farming. We hope, brother workers, that you win the fullest possible concessions. We declare our solidarity with you. We present you with 12,312 zloties which we have collected on your behalf. At the same time we inform you that we do gather and we shall gather in Zbrosza Duza on each Sunday after the high mass and we invite everybody to take part in these meetings in order to consider the ways of resolving the country's difficulties, resulting from the present official policy.

4. Journalists' Statement, Gdansk, 25th August 1980.

We, Polish journalists present in Gdansk during the strikes state that numerous informations published so far, but primarily the way these information has been commented on, do not correspond with the nature of developments here. This state of affairs is conducive to disinformation. The existing restrictions on telecommunications, together with the impossibility of publishing written material which would truthfully present the situation is painful to us and prevents us from an honest fulfilment of our professional duties. We consider that the provision of full information on all the developments in the country can only help to solve conflicts – and, in the future, can aid social development.

Copies to: Press Department of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party, Main Board of the Association of Polish Journalists in Warsaw, Gdansk Branch of the Association of Polish Journalists, Integrated Strike Committee in the Lenin Shipyard in Gdansk. (37 signatures follow.)

5. Extracts from Solidarity No.2, Strike Newsheet, Gdansk Shipyard 24.8.80.

Visit by the delegation from the Szczecin Joint Strike Committee

We had a visit yesterday, 23rd August, late in the evening. The delegates from the Szczecin Joint Strike Committee came to tell us that the Szczecin Committee was established on Monday 18th August and it now represents 134 plants. Negotiations with the governmental commission led by K. Barcikowski started on Thursday 21st. The list of demands closely resembles our own. In contrast to Gdansk, the police and the security services refrained from interfering with the strikes. The telephones have not been cut off. Mr Barcikowski appears, according to the Szczecin delegates, more flexible than the vice premier Jagielski and readier to concede workers' demands.

The visit of the Szczecin delegates is likely to initiate a regular exchange of views and we hope that it may lead to a long term co-operation between our two centres.

Talks with the Government Commission

The Commission under the leadership of vice premier

Mr Walesa (right) with Vice-Premier Mieczyslaw Jagielski – the strikers meet the Government.

M. Jagielski, arrived at the shipyard at 8 pm last night, 23rd August for talks with Joint Strike Committee. It is hoped that the talks will lead to an agreement on the 21 points presented by the strikers from 388 plants and therefore to a settlement. The meeting was chaired by Lech Walesa, who at the start, asked the vice premier to present the attitude of the government to the strikers' demands. As the whole meeting has been broadcast on the shipyard radio, we will give here only the salient points of talks. As the authorities have not complied with our precondition regarding the re-establishment of the telephone service, the meeting did not in practice proceed beyond the statement by the vice premier Jagielski. The strikers were disappointed as it was couched in very general terms and did not contain any definite offers.

Referring to the key demand for the establishment of trade unions independent of the party, Mr Jagielski admitted that there was a need for a trade union capable of effectively defending the workers' interests. The present Act of 1949, fell short of these requirements, according to the vice premier and it needed modification. Our own experience, however, after December 1970 has shown that the agreement under which the strike Committee were made to join the existing trade union structure did not achieve a genuine representation of workers' interests. The proposal put forward by Mr Jagielski, for new elections to the works councils, does not therefore represent a solution: it is no more than yet another sly attempt to avoid discussion on the establishment of free trade unions. The vice premier repeatedly refused to publish in the media the full text of our demands (nr.5 on our list). Demands for "guarantees of the right to strike" (nr.2 on our list) required, according to Mr Jagielski, further thorough discussion but he assured us that there will be no victimisation of the strikers or their supporters. The vice premier appeared surprised by the news of harassment of some strike supporters and promised to investigate our allegations. We repeat that the vice premier promised us that neither the strikers nor anyone who supported us shall suffer for it.

It seems worthwhile to remind you that Mr Jagielski expressed his "sincere" belief in the existence in Poland of freedom of speech and publication as guaranteed in the Constitution. He remarked that "censorship should be made to work more smoothly". The vice premier dismissed demands for putting an end to repressive measures against independent publications, described by him as anti-socialist and socially harmful. Mr Jagielski conceded that our economic demands were right in principle (except point 14 stipulating lowering the retirement age) but it was out of the question in his opinion to implement them in the present economic situation. This he illustrated with a great many figures to prove that such innovations would bring the country to ruin. Only partial changes could be considered at the moment but he omitted to specify what they were. To sum up, the statement by the leader of the governmental commission was vague, filled with platitudes, at times inept and devoid of any definite proposals. It is possible that it was meant to do no more than to establish contact with the Joint Strike Committee before the meeting of the Party Central Committee which is due today. We have to hope that the governmental commission, having started the talks, will now consider seriously the matter of allowing free trade unions, crucial for the settlement of the strike.

Letter from the Secretariat of the Party Central Committee

We have obtained a copy of a letter sent out by the Secretariat to all party members. It concerns the attitude of the Party to the present wave of strikes. We quote from it without comment. It displays a blinding obtuseness of approach:

"... the anti-socialist elements amongst the Gdansk Shipyard workers made political demands and hostile stipulations in order to seize control of the strike. Their

demands threaten the essential security of the country. They put in danger our national survival, our common achievement and our unity built at such a high price and in such difficult conditions, at the cost of so many sacrifices. The most important of their demands are those concerning free trade unions, changes in the electoral law (there is no such demand on our list – Editorial Committee), removal of the medial controls and freeing of political prisoners.

Those demands have one purpose only: to give the anti-socialist campaign directed against us the vital interests of the working class and the state at least a jumping off point, if not complete freedom of action . . . those political enemies demand the establishment of free trade unions, not for the sake of a better representation of the workers' interests but in order to obtain a platform for activities aimed against our party and the people's democracy. The call for the alteration in the electoral law aims at the very core of our constitution which the concerned effort of the democratic, progressive and patriotic political elements representing the whole nation have built . . . They demand the release of political prisoners but there are no political prisoners in this country . . . this is accompanied by acts of terror and intimidation against anyone who is not with them, against anyone who dares to question their demands. The anti-socialist forces aim at introducing their own system in the factories under their control . . . All of us must realise that our safety and our independence are not secured for ever. They depend on national sense, unity and discretion, on our own effort and solidarity of our people with our government. The disturbances in Gdansk and Gdynia have already encouraged the West German revisionists, who openly admit that the recent events in Gdansk and in other towns on the Baltic coast are extremely welcome to them . . . We must support the public services, the police and the security services who are in charge of law and order . . . Our party is a party of struggle and of toil. This indeed is the time for toil but we have been also called to a battle. This battle we have to win . . .”

6. Extracts from Solidarity No.3 Strike Newsheet, Gdansk Shipyard 23 August 1980.

Latest news

On 22.8.1980 a team of three members of the Joint Strike Committee submitted to the vice premier yet another request for negotiations. The vice premier received the delegation and acknowledged the request. It has been agreed that the Governor of Gdansk will conduct preliminary talks with the Joint Strike Committee on 23.8.1980.

On 23.8.1980 the Committee informed the authorities that they accepted the offer of the governor to initiate the talks. The Committee appointed a group of four members to represent them at the talks, which started at 2 pm in the shipyard. Taking part are: the Governor Jerzy Kolodziejski, on behalf of the authorities and Lech Badkowski (chairman), Bogdan Lis, Andrzej Gwiazda and Zdzislaw Kobylinski on behalf of the strikers. Lech Walesa (chairman of the Joint Committee) and Klemens Gniech (Director of the Gdansk shipyard) attended as observers. It has been established that a governmental delegation will arrive to start talks with the Joint Committee at 8 pm.

Statement of the Joint Strike Committee 23.8.1980

The whole country awaits genuine and accurate news from the strike bound Baltic Coast. But the news in the press, radio and television is both distorted and incomplete. The existence of the Joint Strike Committee in Gdansk, Szczecin and Elblag is ignored. Nothing has been said about the fact that the strike action is co-ordinated and directed by the democratically elected Joint Strike Committee. The plant committees empowered the Joint Strike Committee to represent all strikers in the negotiations with the authorities. The public have not been told that the governmental commissions although they arrived, refused to talk

with the Joint Committees which are the only representatives recognised by the body of strikers. The full solidarity of the strikers with the Joint Committees, on which all the striking units are represented is being concealed from the public. All the attempts by the authorities to break the solidarity of the workers by trying to negotiate with unit committees or even with individual workshops have failed. The list of strikers' demands submitted by the Joint Strike Committee to the authorities as early as 18.8.1980 and containing the crucial stipulation of the free trade unions, has been kept from the public. The attempts to negotiate with individual plants and to buy off small groups of workers with offers of large pay increases are presented in the media as negotiations likely to satisfy the whole workforce and to settle the strike. A false impression is being created that the workers in public services have not joined the strike. In fact, they joined us very early but continue to maintain essential services with full consent of the Joint Strike Committee in order to provide for the basic needs of the community and to safeguard the public property. We are accused of anti-socialist tendencies, while in fact our demands are completely within the law and in no way in conflict either with the existing system or the government's political alliances. We point out that the lies about the situation and the intentions of the strikers destroy all remnants of confidence in the official press, radio and television, and they do not lessen public disquiet. We demand that all Poles be given full and accurate information about our demands, about everyday conditions on the Coast and about the whole situation.

Members of the Presidium, Joint Strike Committee:

Lech Walesa – Gdansk shipyard Zremb (electrician), Joanna Duda Gwiazda – Ceto (shipbuilding engineer), Bogdan Lis – Elmor (labourer), Anna Walentynowicz – Gdansk-Lenin Shipyard (welder), Florian Wisniewski – Elektromontaz (electrician), Lech Jedruszewski – Paris Commune Shipyard (mechanic), Stefan Izdebski – Gdynia Poart (docker), Henryk Krzywonos WPK (driver), Tedeusz Stanny – refinery (electrician), Stefan Lewandowski – Gdansk Port (crane driver), Lech Sobieszak – Siabkopol (metal worker), Jozef Przybylski – Dubimor (metal worker), Zdzislaw Kobylinski PKS (storeman), Andrzej Gwiazda – Elmor (engineer), Jerry Sikorski – Repair shipyard (mechanic), Herzy Kmiecik – North Shipyard (hull building mechanic), Andrzej Kolodziej – Paris Commune Shipyard (welder) and Wojciech Gruszewski – Gdansk College of Technology (doctor of chemistry), Lech Badkowski (writer).

The list is followed by quotations from the texts of ILO Convention nos 87 and 98, both ratified by the Polish Government.

What to demand and how to conduct strikes:

Strikes are the workers' most effective weapon. It is however essential to determine the demands to be submitted to the management before a decision is made to go on strike. Until recently, all demands tended to be over pay. Claims for wage increases have been and are likely to continue the most common reason for industrial action in view of the constant price rises. It is important to demand an increase in basic wages and not in the bonus, which can easily be withdrawn by the management in a month or two. It is better to ask for an increase of a definite amount, say 100 zl and not for a percentage increase, which would benefit most those who already earn more. Claims should be made for cost of living allowances to be related to price changes and to be made an integral part of family allowances. When pay claims are put forward it is the workers advantage to discuss the over-complicated pay system as a whole. There are so many tables, groups, classifications and special allowances for this and that that it is difficult to see what the rate of pay is. This makes it

possible for the managements to cheat on pay. The rates should be made uniform, simple and easily understood by all. The analysis of previous strikes shows that the working conditions, transport to work and housing have not been subject to negotiations. Despite the fact that the living conditions are often extremely difficult and that solutions to those problems are possible, people have got so used to their lot that they fail to demand improvements. The transport situation provides a good example: the time tables of train and buses are at odds with the works time tables, both buses and trains run late. It is essential to demand improved social amenities and to negotiate definite dates for action on such matters as the badly organised in-factory transport, lack of air conditioning, lack of anti-noise and anti-vibration devices, absence of special clothing, lockers, the appalling sanitary arrangements and the failure to provide special meals to which some categories of workers are entitled. The strike committee should insist on seeing the accounts. Demands should also include a condition, to be acknowledged by the management in writing, that no one involved in the strike would be victimised. The organisers should put demands in writing and make them known to all the workforce. If everyone is in agreement that they should be submitted to the management, every shop and section should proceed to choose a delegate. The elected representatives then confront the management with

the demands and request answers. If the management delays or refuses to talk, further steps must be considered. The optimum solution is for the management to agree to the talks and the settlement demanded by the workers. In that case the need for a strike does not arise. If the management refuse, the representatives form a strike committee and the work stops. There are exceptions to this: stoppages which would involve very great losses, such as closing blast furnaces, or too much inconvenience to the community, such as closing power stations, must not occur. The strike goes on until demands are met. The workers report at their work places but refrain from working. During the strike, the committee is responsible for the workers' conduct and it must prevent hooliganism and drunkenness. In the end the management will have to talk. It is normal for the strikers to make some concessions and to modify their original claims: the strike is then settled. The term of the settlement are agreed as well as the dates for their implementation. The terms are then presented to the workers. The authorities have in the past cheated so often that it is essential to exercise control over the implementation of the agreement. For that purpose the strike committee continues to function as a Workers' Commission. If the terms of the settlement are not observed by the management the Commission must make a protest and if that does not work it may be necessary to threaten another strike.

Strikers meeting at Lenin Shipyard in Gdansk.



7. Communique of the Inter-Factory Founding Committee of the NSZZ in Gdansk, 19.9.80. An announcement about the meeting of NSZZ delegates.

On Sept. 17th 1980, at the headquarters of Inter-Factory Founding Committee of the Independent Autonomous Trade Unions (NSZZ) in Gdansk delegates from other areas of Poland assembled. At this meeting a review of the state of the NSZZ in various towns and regions of the country was carried out. Participants in the discussion were representatives from the Founding Committees of the NSZZ in Szczecin, Krakow, Katowice Steel Works, Mazowsze, Bdygoszcz, Walbryzych, Krosno, Elblag, Lodz, Prudnik, Jastrzebie Zdroj, Stalowa Wola, Wroclaw, Andrychow, Lublin, Bytom, Opole, Siemianowice, Torun, Tychy, Plock, Kolobrzeg, Poznan, Slupsk, Gorzow Wielkopolski, Rzeszow, Zywiec, Kozle, and Gdansk and also a representative of the NSZZ of Scientific, Technical and Educational Workers in Warsaw.

The review of organisational matters revealed that at the present moment over 3 million people from about 3½ thousand factories had joined or expressed the wish to join the NSZZ. The situation varies considerably and is dependent on the strength of workers' solidarity, the attitude of the local authorities and the sizes of the workplaces. While noting the progress being made in the foundation and organisational work of the independent autonomous unions, it was revealed that it is taking place in difficult conditions and must wrestle constantly with obstacles. In workplaces where a majority are female, the activities of the NSZZ are hampered by a policy of discrimination and by the pressure of the economic administration. In weaker or less numerous centres the emergence of the new unions

is accompanied by fear of victimisation and reprisals. Several actions of the authorities such as detention and interrogation by the security forces of workers delegates, or burdening them with police surveillance, creates a source of new tensions. In most regions access to the mass media for the independent trade unions remains closed, and in certain areas there is evidence of disinformation techniques. The old unions from the CRZZ (Central Trade Union Council) try to conduct a propaganda full of lies about alleged losses suffered by workers crossing over to join our unions. Local and regional authorities in many parts of the country do not carry into effect the spirit of the August agreements. Our unions grapple with local difficulties, while the management of many companies create continuous obstacles to the activities of the NSZZ. The Independent Autonomous Trade Unions arise throughout the whole country, also in many cities and regions which had not been represented at the conference. Representatives of the NSZZ assembled at the Gdansk conference stated that the establishment of new trade unions expresses the aims of the broad areas of working people of the whole country to possess independent and authentic representation. Concern was expressed that achieving conditions of the Agreement concerning the creation of new unions and guaranteeing that they would not be the object of any discrimination, is being met already at this inception stage by varied and essential difficulties. Note was taken at this meeting of the resolution by the Council of State on Sept. 13th which outlined the temporary principles of registration. Representatives of the NSZZ in expressing uneasiness in certain sections of that resolution, stressed with considerable vigour that an efficient and speedy conduct of that registration by the appointed channels lay

Strike meeting at Gdansk.



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Workers' Control Bulletin

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in the public interest. The position of the NSZZ in the matter of the present state of the union, and in the matter of registration was outlined in special declarations. The conference recognised that the further activities of the NSZZ in the spirit of solidarity and caution require broad understanding and co-ordination. With this aim in mind a Provisional Liaison Commission of the NSZZ was set up. The proposal of the Gdansk NSZZ that the seat of the Commission be in Gdansk was accepted. During the first meeting of the Commission Lech Walesa was elected Chairman of the Commission. It will be the task of the Commission to organise common action for the NSZZ at national level and to ensure the participation of the NSZZ in work on new legislation on trade unions, labour law, social and economic policies and consultation and co-ordination in controlling the fruition of the agreements between workers and the government, as well as to conduct interventions. It will also be one of the tasks of the Liaison Commission to outline the methods of actions in the context of a homogeneous single union. The Liaison Commission will carry out the formalities of registering that union, which will encompass the Inter-Factory Founding Committees, and whose region of operation is the entire country.

8. Declaration of KSS KOR, 19.9.80.

The Inter-Factory Founding Committee of the Independent Autonomous Trade Unions of the Coastline, in its declaration of Sept. 17th, made a categorical statement about the mass media campaign of assessment of democratic opposition activists: "Throughout the country, in both the national and local press, attacks are multiplying against forces described by the authorities as anti-Socialist, and which allegedly are trying to force their way into the independent trade unions. Before the Agreement, those who had demanded independent unions, were called the opponents of socialism for that very reason. This campaign already began during the strike. Now the same thing is being repeated at various closed meetings. In the press

meanwhile it is not the independent trade unions which are being attacked, but those who apparently are trying to infiltrate them. The Inter-Factory Founding Committee declare that it knows nothing about any anti-Socialist forces which now or at any other time are trying to take over the independent union movement. We know, however, that a network of old compromised trade unions is trying by the use of lies and provocation to hinder the development of this movement. We know that in many areas the activities of the NSZZ are being sabotaged by the administration, while those trying to join our union, are being intimidated. The press campaign to which we refer, we consider to be one more indication of that sabotage and intimidation, and at the same time an attempt to interfere in personal politics of the new unions. In the cause of independence we will not link ourselves, let alone subordinate ourselves, to any political or social organisations, and in the cause of our independence we will not discriminate against anyone who will want to undertake union activity and be of assistance to it." (This is the text of the declaration of the Inter-Factory Founding Committee of NSZZ.)

Recently insinuations in the Western press have appeared which seem surprisingly similar to remarks in the home press. A particularly outrageous article appeared in No.37 of the weekly *Der Spiegel* which was falsely introduced in the Polish mass media as an interview with Jacek Kuron. The author does not quote any sources and states that the striking workers on the Coastline were directly managed by the Public Self-Defence Committee KOR. This conspiracy theory interpretation insinuatingly reduces a great social movement to the activities of a group hidden in the wings. It is offensive both to the workers and to the good name of KSS KOR. The July and August strikes which terminated with the signing of the agreements between the Inter-Factory Strike Committees and the state authorities, revealed the impressive maturity of the worker and of Polish society in general.

Its service to the independent social movements the Public Self-Defence Committee KOR always considered to be its highest obligation.

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