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“From Communism to Democracy: How Protests in Świdnik became a Catalyst for the Collapse of the Soviet System in Poland”

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Dott. Viktoria Mróz

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Abstract

The *Solidarność* era, which unfolded from August 1980 until June 1989, was critical in the process that ultimately led to the collapse of Communism in Poland. Nevertheless, the groundwork for these advancements had in fact been already laid before the creation of the Solidarity trade union, when in July 1980, protests that erupted at Świdnik's WSK precipitated strikes across the Lublin Voivodeship and at the Gdańsk Shipyard in August. This thesis uses a local history as a case study to illuminate the broader political, economic and social developments that differentiated Poland's Socialist path from that of its neighbors and that profoundly impacted its post-Communist political landscape. Initially built as a model Communist town, Świdnik became the harbinger of the Soviet system's eventual demise. Leveraging history through political science, I show that Świdnik was a catalyst for the events that altered the course of Poland's future. Encouraged by John Paul II's election to papacy and propelled by their simmering discontent with the economic situation, the WSK employees spontaneously decided to halt working without taking to the streets. Accordingly, a new peaceful method of protest was adopted, which resulted in the first ever written agreement between the local Party authorities and the workers. Hence, Świdnik's success set a precedent for other factories in the country, demonstrating that change was possible without violence. When martial law was imposed in December 1981 and Solidarity was repressed, underground structures were formed across the country, with Świdnik figuring among the most active ones and the Church serving as a crucial sanctuary for their activity. Thus, the case study helps explain why patriotism, family and Catholicism have remained crucial values across Poland and particularly in the country's southeastern regions. Ultimately, the deficiencies of the democratic transition left a vacuum which resulted in the erosion of the country's hard-fought democratic pillars. This thesis demonstrates that the implications of Świdnik's story are twofold: while shedding light on the significance of local grassroots movements for history and political science, the town's experience reveals the crucial influence that local realities continue to exert on Poland's contemporary political developments.

Abstrakt

Die *Solidarność*-Ära, die von August 1980 bis Juni 1989 andauerte, stellte eine entscheidende Phase im Prozess dar, der letztlich zum Zusammenbruch des Kommunismus in Polen führte. Allerdings war der Boden für diese Entwicklungen bereits vor der Gründung der Gewerkschaft *Solidarność* bereitet worden – im Juli 1980, als Proteste beim WSK-Werk in Świdnik ausbrachen, lösten sie eine Streikwelle in der Woiwodschaft Lublin aus, die sich schließlich im August auf die Werft in Gdańsk ausweitete. Diese Masterarbeit bedient sich der lokalen Geschichte als Fallbeispiel, um die übergeordneten politischen, ökonomischen und gesellschaftlichen Entwicklungen aufzuzeigen, die den einzigartigen Verlauf des Sozialismus in Polen prägten und die Transformation des Landes nach dem Zusammenbruch des Kommunismus bestimmten. Świdnik, ursprünglich als kommunistisches Vorzeigemodell konzipiert, wurde letztlich zum Vorboden des Niedergangs des sowjetischen Systems. Mittels einer Politikwissenschaftlichen Perspektive auf historische Entwicklungen zeige ich, dass Świdnik als Auslöser entscheidender Ereignisse fungierte, die den Verlauf der polnischen Geschichte nachhaltig veränderten. Ermutigt durch die Wahl Johannes Pauls II. zum Papst und angetrieben von wachsender Unzufriedenheit mit der wirtschaftlichen Lage, beschlossen die Mitarbeiter des WSK spontan die Arbeit niederzulegen – jedoch ohne auf die Straße zu gehen. Auf diese Weise wurde eine neue, friedliche Protestform eingeführt, die in der ersten schriftlichen Vereinbarung zwischen den lokalen Parteibehörden und den Arbeitern mündete. Der Erfolg von Świdnik setzte damit einen Präzedenzfall für andere Betriebe im Land und zeigte, dass Veränderung auch ohne Gewalt möglich war. Nach der Verhängung des Kriegsrechts im Dezember 1981 und der Zerschlagung von *Solidarność* entwickelten sich im gesamten Land Untergrundstrukturen – Świdnik zählte dabei zu den aktivsten Zentren, wobei die Kirche eine entscheidende Zuflucht für deren Aktivitäten bot. Die Fallstudie trägt dazu bei, zu erklären, warum Patriotismus, Familie und Katholizismus in Polen – insbesondere in den südöstlichen Regionen des Landes – weiterhin zentrale Werte darstellen. Letztlich hinterließen die Defizite des demokratischen Übergangs eine Lücke, die zum Schwund der hart erkämpften demokratischen Säulen führte. Diese Arbeit zeigt, dass die Bedeutung der Geschichte Świdniks zweifach ist. Einerseits wird die Relevanz lokaler Basisbewegungen für die Geschichte und Politikwissenschaft verdeutlicht, andererseits offenbart Świdniks Erfahrung der entscheidende Einfluss, den lokale Realitäten weiterhin auf die gegenwärtige politische Entwicklung Polens ausüben.

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Introduction

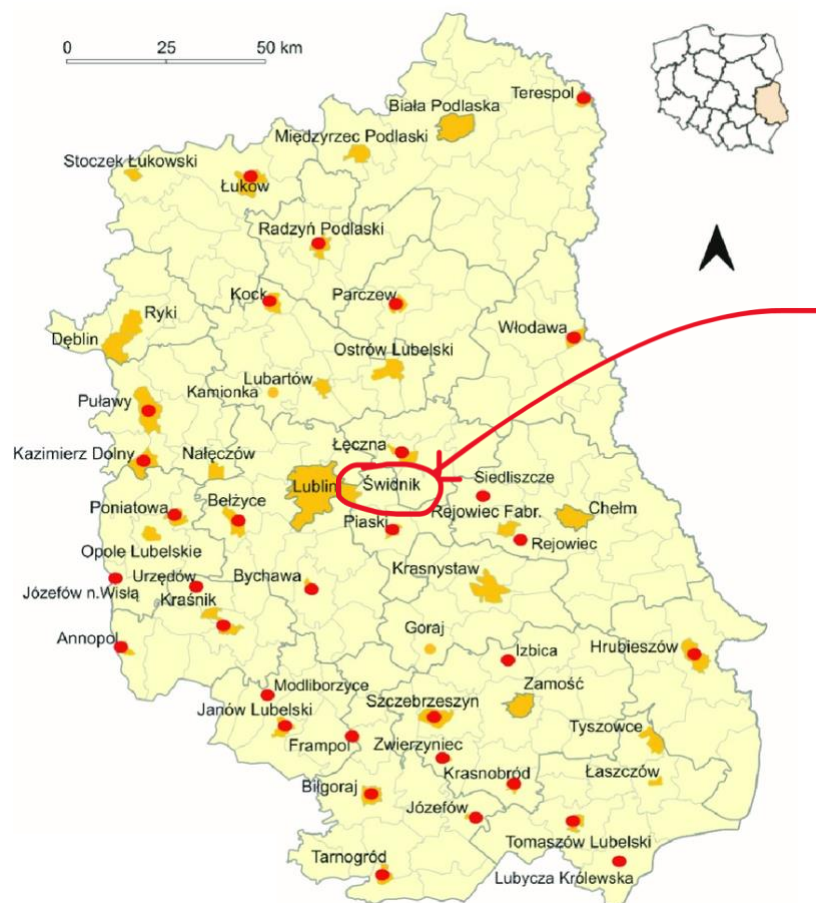
The history of Świdnik is one of a town that crucially influenced Poland's fight for a free and democratic country. Rarely does historiography examine local realities to understand broader national dynamics, which are usually considered more important. When analyzing Poland's Communist past, historians, experts and politicians have tended to overlook Świdnik's experience – as reflected by the limited number of sources –, centering public discussions on more well-known events, which were in fact usually the result of actions ignited at the local level. And yet, the latter often represent the lenses through which more complex developments can be understood. The following pages present an attempt to understand Świdnik's crucial role in the eventual demise of Communism in Poland, while illustrating the elements that differentiated the country's socialist path from that of its neighbors. Through an underlying and guiding interdisciplinary thread, the research endeavors to comprehend how Świdnik's local and spontaneous political opposition, which preceded the formation of *Solidarność*, impacted developments in Gdańsk, and ultimately influenced Poland's post-Communist socio-political landscape. What prompted the WSK workers to protests? How were brutal repressions avoided? To what extent did causality link events across local, regional and national levels throughout the 1980s?

The research strives to contribute, in the scope possible in a master thesis, to the discussions on Poland's democracy and the nature of its transition. By analyzing the factors and conditions that emerged before and throughout 1989 and that constituted the inherited fault lines in the country's democratization, the thesis aims not only to shed light on the importance of local-regional dynamics in Poland's transition process, but also to unveil the deficiencies that might have ultimately contributed to the recent democratic setbacks.

Four main periods will thus be examined by exploring the complex interactions of national and local developments, as well as by focusing on their interplay with external factors. Simultaneously, the socio-economic and political lenses will enable a

more comprehensive understanding of how the groundwork for the eventual demise of Communism in Poland was laid. If one seeks to acquire a deeper insight into the mechanisms that turned Świdnik from an exemplary socialist town to the seed of the Communist system's demise, it is important to first become acquainted with the circumstances and the main events characterizing the 1970s. Marked by economic disillusion and the brutal suppressions of workers' protests across the country, this decade also corresponded to the advent of the opposition – emerged despite the regime's repression or perhaps, because of it. Most importantly, the era – primarily defined by detrimental events – culminated with John Paul II's election to papacy in 1978, a turning point with a long-lasting and empowering impact on the Polish society.

The second timeframe extends from July 1980, when strikes erupted at the WSK plant in Świdnik, until the months preceding December 1981, when General Wojciech Jaruzelski declared martial law. Situated in the Lublin Voivodeship, Świdnik is strategically located in southeastern Poland, in proximity to the Belarusian



and Ukrainian frontiers. Thus, its twentieth-century history has been closely intertwined with its airfield and civilian aviation school and, since the 1950s, the crucial establishment of the WSK (Transport Equipment Factory) plant. Paradoxically, although built to become a model communist town, Świdnik¹ became the nerve center for a sequence of ruptures that would ultimately lead to the collapse of Communism in Poland. Similarly, despite the town's official atheist nature, the residents' strong faith and the eventual construction of a church in the early 1980s, significantly influenced their spirit of solidarity and their determination to oppose the regime's policies.

When considering the process leading to the end of the USSR's influence in Poland, the strikes at the Gdańsk Shipyard in August 1980 are often described as the starting point of the ultimate collapse of the Soviet-dominated system. However, while the events in Gdańsk certainly constituted a watershed moment, this representation overlooks the role of the local and equally important realities. The chain reaction which ultimately resulted in August 1980, was in fact sparked by the strikes erupted across the Lublin Voivodeship and started first in July at the WSK plant in Świdnik. It was the employees of this Transport Equipment Factory who, in July 1980, first decided to halt working as means to protest against the increasing living costs and the hardships resulting from the regime's policies. Their success, rooted in the peaceful nature of the strikes, their unity and the specific context of the time, became a source of inspiration for workers across the region and ultimately the country, thereby laying the groundwork for the more far-reaching protests on the Polish coast. Especially this year, which marks the 45th anniversary of Świdnik's and Lublin's July, it is paramount to take these facts into account when studying both the PRL's² era and Poland's contemporary socio-political landscape. Not only do the developments in Świdnik

¹ For the map on the previous page, source: Bernat, Sebastian and Małgorzata Flaga. "Distribution of Cities and Towns in the Lublin Province, and the Towns participating in the Survey." *Cittàslow as an Alternative Path of Town Development and Revitalisation in Peripheral Areas: The Example of the Lublin Province*. October 2022. Accessed November 20, 2024. doi:[10.3390/su142114160](https://doi.org/10.3390/su142114160).

² Polish People's Republic, *Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa*.

demonstrate the crucial role of the local realities as catalysts of processes with a national scope, but also, they reflect the context within which the Poles' struggle against Communism matured. They are thus a crucial element of the puzzle that enables a correct understanding of the strikes in Gdańsk and the emergence of the *Solidarność* trade union. Simultaneously, while the dynamism of Świdnik's WSK workers had a significant impact on the country, the events unfolding at the national level were equally important in affecting this local reality, as demonstrated by the declaration of martial law. Importantly, Świdnik's events had a crucial broader impact by revealing that the success of resistance movements significantly increases when their participants adopt peaceful actions, which inhibits the authorities' use of violence against non-violent action. The specific nature of the town's protests inadvertently presented the regime with a dilemma, forcing it to either address the movement's demands or sacrificing support for the Party, which could have further damaged its image and risk provoking stronger protests. The story of Świdnik's resistance against the regime also reflects how both within national and local realities, the boundary between the Party apparatus and the non-Communists was in fact fluid, and allegedly a necessity to begin talks with the authorities and reach a compromise – as demonstrated by Świdnik in July 1980, by Gdańsk in August 1980 and by the Round Table Agreement in April 1989.

In a third stage, attention will be drawn to the period between the implementation of martial law until the mid-1980s and thus, its impact on Świdnik's residents as well as across Poland will be evaluated. The case study of Świdnik helps to understand how Poland's Socialist path differed from that of its neighboring Soviet satellites and shaped its legacy to this day. Although built to become a Communist model-town, Świdnik became the epicenter of different fractures that would ultimately erode the system, including the spontaneous strikes and the strong Catholic influence. The construction of a church and the role of its priest Father Hryniewicz, reflected the regime's progressive tolerance towards Catholicism, which had served as an element to preserve and safeguard the nation's legitimate values since Poland's first imperial suppressions. Particularly, following John Paul II's papacy inauguration in 1978, events in Świdnik illustrated how Catholicism became a unifying force amid the

regime's oppressive policies, ultimately evolving into a bridge between the regime and the society. After December 1981, in Świdnik as in other towns across Poland, Solidarity's foundations survived thanks to the workers' engagement and the establishment of one of the most active underground structures in the country, as well as to the residents' ingenious ways to peacefully resist against the regime, prompted by the force of their deep Catholic faith. Accordingly, the case study illustrates how local realities survived and created a parallel independent culture despite the economic crisis and repression, escaping the regime's propaganda thanks to Solidarity's covert but vibrant press and radio, while finding shelter within the Church's premises and the priest's words. Ultimately, the section will focus on the controversial role of General Jaruzelski, whose initial repressive policies and eventual decision to lift martial law, must be interpreted within the context of Poland's relatively milder regime among Soviet satellites states.

The last segment of research will attempt to evaluate Poland's democratic transition by examining the regime's final stage of power and the increasing fragmentations within the Solidarity movement. The analysis will thus be structured in two separate sections, respectively dedicated to the final years of the 1980s and to the complex period between 1989 and 1990. These pages will argue that although a number of ruptures propelled the gradual collapse of Communism in Poland, they also served as the foundation for emerging fault lines which would eventually result in the country's democratic setbacks. Simultaneously, the case study offers a lens that enables the understanding of why patriotism, family and Catholicism have remained key values across the population, especially in the country's southeastern regions. This in turn, helps explain the strong appeal of more conservative parties in those areas. The nature of the April compromise and the shortcomings of the country's transition process, left a vacuum susceptible to exploitation by conservative actors, thereby ultimately laying the groundwork for democratic setbacks. These parties' foundational discourse, focused on criticizing developments in Poland since 1989 and advocating the cleansing of Polish politics through radical lustration and decommunization, enabled their self-definition as alternative platforms departing from the PRL period, and ultimately prompted southeastern regions to become their key political

strongholds. Furthermore, this final section strives to demonstrate that the collapse of Communism in Poland was neither merely the result of *Solidarność*, nor of the 1988 strikes. It was not even the sole logical outcome of Poland's geopolitical context at the end of the 1980s.

In the process leading to the Round Table Agreement, on the one hand, the regime's objective was to retain power while overcoming the political-economic impasse through a compromise that would increase its legitimacy; on the other hand, *Solidarność* – who neither aimed nor was able to overthrow the regime – strived to achieve the trade union's legalization and to create a democratic and pluralistic system. This, together with the intricate interplay of economic and socio-political factors that have made the Polish context unique compared to its Soviet neighbors, resulted in accords that enabled the first semi-free elections in Communist Central-Eastern Europe, and whose impact would be crucially amplified by the end of 1989. Thus, as neither the regime, nor Solidarity expected the June elections' revolutionary results, the sequence of events in autumn 1989 fundamentally altered the geopolitical landscape in favor of Poland's democratic transition.

Without understanding the internal and external processes unfolding since the end of the 1970s, one cannot fully comprehend why June 4, 1989, represented a democratic breakthrough for Poland while simultaneously marking a brutal crackdown on Tiananmen Square's democratic hopes. Poland's current political landscape and its predominantly right-wing-leaning divide are rooted in the developments that fundamentally altered the country's course of history since the 1980s. Any meaningful assessment of contemporary Poland must start by analyzing them.

Chapter 1. The Bloody 1970s and Gierek's Era

The 1970s were a decade marked by economic disillusion, rooted in Gierek's policies and false promises, and by the violent repressions of protests erupted across the country. Nevertheless, as public dissatisfaction intensified, the end of this era not only witnessed the emergence of a democratic opposition, but also it gradually sowed the seeds for the events of summer 1980. This first chapter enables the understanding of the framework within which Świdnik transitioned from a symbol of communist strength to one of the ruptures heralding the system's downfall. And while the brutal crackdown of the 1970s strikes would remain ingrained in the workers' memories and initially inhibit their actions, it would also eventually prompt the creation of a new form of protest in Świdnik. Remarkably, a period that begun with repression and social unrest, culminated with a reinvigorated and unified society inspired by the opposition's activities and by Karol Wojtyła's election to papacy. The decade thus ended with a new wave of resistance, which this time was both structurally distinct and no longer forcibly silenced.

1.1 Laying the Groundwork for Świdnik's July: between Economic Disillusion and Nationwide Repressions

The inadequate planning and implementation of First Secretary Władysław Gomułka's modest economic reform program of the late 1960s – intended to boost industrial productivity –, ultimately sealed the fate of his mandate. First, bad weather conditions in 1969-1970 had sharply reduced agricultural output and thus, the food available for domestic consumption and export. Second, the government's drive for self-sufficiency in animal fodder meant that the grain intended to feed livestock had virtually ceased to being imported. This led to a major decline in the number of cattle and pigs in Poland

and thus, worsened the population's already difficult access to meat.³ Consequently, with the aim of remodeling and modernizing consumer spending habits,⁴ the government decided to increase the cost of numerous essential food items⁵ while reducing prices on consumer durables to encourage their purchase.⁶ This, together with the fact that the sudden increase of food prices was introduced two weeks before Christmas (December 12-13), when Polish families engage in extensive and costly holiday preparations,⁷ prompted the already brewing resentment to erupt in major protests in the coastal cities of Gdańsk, Gdynia, Elbląg and Szczecin. In the morning of December 14, workers on strike from the Gdańsk shipyard clashed with the police, culminating in a violent confrontation, whereby public buildings were attacked and set on fire. The following day the disorders continued and spread to the neighboring city of Gdynia, inducing the government to authorize the employment of firearms and army units to suppress the unrest. On the 16th, disorders spread to Elbląg in the same region and the next day strikes broke out in Szczecin.⁸ Although the authorities' brutal response resulted in the shooting of protesters both in Gdańsk and Gdynia⁹, strikes continued across much northern Poland, prompting the Politburo to dismiss Gomułka and avoid a full-scale working-class revolt in the entire country. Edward Gierek was thus appointed First Secretary, marking the beginning of a period with improved living and working conditions, industrialization and relative liberalization.

³ R. F. Leslie et al., *The History of Poland Since 1863* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980): 403, <https://doi-org.uaccess.univie.ac.at/10.1017/CBO9780511622311>

⁴ It was argued that too much of the average consumer's budget was being spent on food: many working-class families spent approximately three-fifths of their budget on food.

⁵ Generally, prices augmented of 8 percent, although in some cases the percentage was significantly higher.

⁶ R. F. Leslie et al., *The History of Poland Since 1863* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980): 404, <https://doi-org.uaccess.univie.ac.at/10.1017/CBO9780511622311>

⁷ Jerzy Lukowski and Hubert Zawadzki, *A Concise History of Poland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001): 267.

⁸ R. F. Leslie et al., *The History of Poland Since 1863* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980): 404, <https://doi-org.uaccess.univie.ac.at/10.1017/CBO9780511622311>

⁹ Roman Daszczyński, "15 grudnia 1970. Komitet płonie, komuniści strzelają do gdańszczan", Oficjalny portal miasta Gdańska [My translation, "15 december 1970. The Committee is burning, communists are shooting at the people of Gdańsk", Official website of the city of Gdańsk], accessed January 15, 2025, <https://www.gdansk.pl/wiadomosci/15-grudnia-1970-Komitet-plonie-komunisci-strzelaja-do-gdanzszczan.f.160888>

Before becoming the catalyst for strikes across the Lublin region, Świdnik's and the WSK's general attitudes initially reflected that of an exemplary socialist town. After students' protests had erupted in Warsaw in March 1968, the WSK employees "clearly distanced [themselves] from [...] agitators disturbing public peace and order", demanding the punishment of the protesters and their leaders.¹⁰ When the local party organized a mass meeting at the WSK to show loyalty to the PZPR, the employees "[sent] full support to [the] party's policies, demanding the exposure of those responsible for turning students against the government and the working class".¹¹ Nevertheless, as they later realized, the WSK workers had been largely forced to attend the gathering and make these public claims as means to help the party justify its crackdowns.¹²

By December 1970, when protests erupted on the Polish coast, dissatisfaction in the country had been steadily growing, including in Świdnik. One year before the tragic events, a report of the MO's¹³ County Command in Lublin noted: "the market conditions in the supply sector are most frequently felt in Świdnik, leading to discussions and discontent, primarily among the employees of WSK".¹⁴ Although the poor supply had been a constant feature in most Polish towns since the beginning of the communist regime, from October-November 1970 it was evident that the situation was becoming particularly tense. As highlighted by an SB report, the fact that the shops' stocks were mostly sold in the morning hours and thus, the impossibility of purchasing goods in the afternoon, strongly affected the workforce's mood.¹⁵ This led

¹⁰ Głos Świdnika 1968 nr. 5, s. 1, nr. 6, s.1, quoted in Piotr R. Jankowski, *Świdnicki Lipiec* (Świdnik: Urząd Miasta Świdnik, 2011): 13,

https://bibliotekaswidnik.pl/strona-3431-publicacje_dotyczace_historii_miejsca_i.html

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Leszek Pietrzak, *Miasto Wolności. Historia Świdnika od Komunizmu do Wolnej Polski* (Świdnik: Miejsko-Powiatowa Biblioteka Publiczna w Świdniku, 2020): 31,

<http://archiwum.bibliotekaswidnik.pl/index.php/czytaj/nasze-publicacje/861-miasto-wolnosci>

¹³ The Citizens' Militia (*Milicja Obywatelska*).

¹⁴ My translation. Instytut Pamięci Narodowej (IPN) Lublin, Miesięczne meldunki operacyjne KP MO w Lublinie 17 I 1970–1 IV 1975, sygn. Lu-088/6, s. 7, 8v, quoted in Piotr R. Jankowski, *Świdnicki Lipiec* (Świdnik: Urząd Miasta Świdnik, 2011): 17,

https://bibliotekaswidnik.pl/strona-3431-publicacje_dotyczace_historii_miejsca_i.html

¹⁵ Ibid.

to apathy and frustration even among party members, complaining that a lack of sufficient food made efficient work unfeasible.¹⁶ The shortages particularly affected meat shops, and several reports from the authorities at the time indicated that the large industrial center of Świdnik was especially neglected. As WSK workers observed the events on the Coast through Western radio broadcasts, the fear of experiencing the same fate as the shipyard workers in Gdańsk and Gdynia would strongly influence their future actions.¹⁷

And yet, support for the protests did not cease and could even be found among PZPR's members working at the WSK. As revealed by another SB document, a senior instructor in the WSK's Technical Control Department had remarked that the price hikes would have not lead to any positive results, noting that "after twenty-six years of People's power, things should be better, not worse".¹⁸ Similarly, another employee encouraged colleagues "to listen to Western radio stations in order to learn the truth about the brutality of [Polish] authorities towards the working people".¹⁹

Despite the initial economic expansion propelled by Gierek's policies and based on increasing credit inflows from the West, already by 1974 inflation begun to grow. In Świdnik as in other towns across Poland, store shortages had remained persistent, as most prominently illustrated by the complete lack of fresh bread in early January 1971²⁰ and by the endless queues in front of butcher shops. Similarly, stores

¹⁶ My translation. Instytut Pamięci Narodowej (IPN) Lublin, Miesięczne meldunki operacyjne KP MO w Lublinie 17 I 1970–1 IV 1975, sygn. Lu-088/6, s. 7, 8v, quoted in Piotr R. Jankowski, *Świdnicki Lipiec* (Świdnik: Urząd Miasta Świdnik, 2011): 18, https://bibliotekaswidnik.pl/strona-3431-publicacje_dotyczace_historii_miejsca_i.html

¹⁷ Leszek Pietrzak, *Miasto Wolności. Historia Świdnika od Komunistów do Wolnej Polski* (Świdnik: Miejsko-Powiatowa Biblioteka Publiczna w Świdniku, 2020): 35, <http://archiwum.bibliotekaswidnik.pl/index.php/czytaj/nasze-publicacje/861-miasto-wolnosci>

¹⁸ My translation. IPN Lublin, Miesięczne meldunki operacyjne KP MO w Lublinie 17 I 1970–1 IV 1975, sygn. Lu-088/6, s. 32, 36 v, quoted in Piotr R. Jankowski, *Świdnicki Lipiec* (Świdnik: Urząd Miasta Świdnik, 2011): 18, https://bibliotekaswidnik.pl/strona-3431-publicacje_dotyczace_historii_miejsca_i.html

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ My translation. Ibid, s. 37, 40, 44v, 51.

were virtually deprived of sugar, dairy, clothing and everyday necessities.²¹ Most strikingly, for a population of 24,000, Świdnik had only 21 food shops, 13 industrial stores, and 12 kiosks.²² Therefore, it is not surprising that despite Świdnik's indoctrination throughout the 1970s as well as Gierek's apparent closeness to the workers – based on his working-class roots²³ and his factory-oriented slogans –, distrust of his true intentions remained widespread.

The mismanagement of western loans, together with the PZPR's impossibility to guarantee a market balance, resulted in increasing imports and thus, in a massively growing foreign trade deficit. Only 15 percent of the funds obtained from the West were used to meet the country's needs by importing feed, grain, and foods.²⁴ Even so, heavily subsidized sausage was sold at a low price and thus, rapidly disappeared from stores' shelves; while the government refrained from stabilizing the market by raising prices under the fear that it might provoke social unrest.²⁵ Accordingly, as the strain on Polish economy increased due to the mounting loan repayments, by 1976 meat prices continued to be the most politically sensitive topic in the country.

Nevertheless, considering the atmosphere throughout the country's large industrial enterprises as "good", the regime introduced new price increases in June 1976, thereby igniting renewed nationwide protests, including in Płock, Radom and Warsaw's district of Ursus.²⁶ In Radom, where the biggest street demonstrations erupted, the PZPR's office was burned, and the street fights were so violent that they

²¹ Leszek Pietrzak, *Miasto Wolności. Historia Świdnika od Komunizmu do Wolnej Polski* (Świdnik: Miejsko-Powiatowa Biblioteka Publiczna w Świdniku, 2020): 37,

<http://archiwum.bibliotekaswidnik.pl/index.php/czytaj/nasze-publicacje/861-miasto-wolnosci>

²² My translation. IPN Lublin, Miesięczne meldunki operacyjne KP MO w Lublinie 17 I 1970–1 IV 1975, sygn. Lu-088/6, s. 75 v, quoted in Piotr R. Jankowski, *Świdnicki Lipiec* (Świdnik: Urząd Miasta Świdnik, 2011): 18, <https://bibliotekaswidnik.pl/strona-3431-publicacje-dotyczace-historii-miejsca-i.html>

²³ He came from a coal mining family.

²⁴ Leszek Pietrzak, *Miasto Wolności. Historia Świdnika od Komunizmu do Wolnej Polski* (Świdnik: Miejsko-Powiatowa Biblioteka Publiczna w Świdniku, 2020): 34,

<http://archiwum.bibliotekaswidnik.pl/index.php/czytaj/nasze-publicacje/861-miasto-wolnosci>

²⁵ Ibid, 35.

²⁶ Anthony Kemp-Welch, *Poland under Communism. A Cold War History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008): 208, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511619779.011>

resulted in deaths and wounded. As they were all brutally repressed by the regime's security forces, the party leadership began instructing the PZPR's local structures on the implementation of a widespread propaganda action. As a result, on June 28, approximately 6,000 WSK workers were pressured to attend a rally organized by the local authorities to show false unity with the government: protests were condemned and criticized as "antisocial", while a banner was hung stating: "the WSK Świdnik workforce stands with you, Comrade Gierek".²⁷

1.2 The Emergence of the Opposition and John Paul II's Papacy

Although dissident groups had already been forming before the 1970s, the events of June 1976 were crucial in the definitive establishment of Poland's democratic opposition. The regime's reprisals against the protesters not only resulted in solidified solidarity among dissidents but also connected them with broader segments of the society, which transformed their initial strictly intelligentsia-based character in a movement closer to ordinary people.²⁸ Particularly, a Committee for the Defence of Workers (KOR)²⁹ was established in September with the aim of offering medical, financial and legal assistance to the victims of June 1976 and their families. By acting openly from the outset, KOR demonstrated that it was possible to resist the regime's demands to subservience. Furthermore, its informal character made the KOR's activity legal, since there were neither official rules nor any applicationa required for registration.³⁰ Thus, despite being largely composed of Warsaw-based members, the

²⁷ Leszek Pietrzak, *Miasto Wolności. Historia Świdnika od Komunizmu do Wolnej Polski* (Świdnik: Miejsko-Powiatowa Biblioteka Publiczna w Świdniku, 2020): 35,

<http://archiwum.bibliotekaswidnik.pl/index.php/czytaj/nasze-publicacje/861-miasto-wolnosci>

²⁸ Andrzej Paczkowski, *Revolution and Counterrevolution in Poland, 1980-1989. Solidarity, Martial Law, and the End of Communism in Europe* (New York: University of Rochester Press, 2015): 6.

²⁹ *Komitet Obrony Robotników*.

³⁰ Anthony Kemp-Welch, *Poland under Communism. A Cold War History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008): 213, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511619779.011>

small opposition group³¹ began to wield an influence far greater than its size would suggest.³² As their operations expanded by creating contacts with students, private farmers and workers, new organizations such as the Student Solidarity Committee (SKS), the Movement for the Defense of Human and Civil Rights (ROPCiO) and the Young Poland Movement (RMP) emerged.³³ In 1978, individuals associated with KOR and the RMP formed the illegal Free Trade Unions (WZZ) in Gdańsk and began to systematically interact with workers.³⁴ The WZZ activists, among whom figured the still unknown electrician Lech Wałęsa, trained workers and educated them to defend their interests, for instance when concerning safety regulations and their rights.³⁵ However, the KOR engaged in the widest range of activities, including collecting signatures for protests letters, organizing lectures on banned subjects, and creating a parallel system for disseminating illegally published books and periodicals critical of the regime.³⁶ At the time one of the KOR's most prominent members was Jacek Kuroń, who considered the support and the sponsoring of social initiative throughout the country as the KOR's main functions. As highlighted by David Ost, the opposition's objective in the 1970s was to encourage people to take any kind of action, as long as it was done without the state's involvement.³⁷ This included "organizing, promoting, and attending events such as lectures or distributing samizdat publications".³⁸ However, without the Church's support and direct involvement, these initiatives would have not achieved the same scope. Not only did activists meet with Church representatives, but also the latter, including Cardinal Karol Wojtyła and Primate

³¹ Which counted between 2,000 and 3,000 members.

³² Joseph Kay, "The Polish Opposition", *Survey*, Autum 1979, quoted in *ibid*.

³³ SKS stood for *Studencki Komitet Solidarności*; ROPCiO for *Ruch Obrony Praw Człowiecka i Obywatela*, and RMP for *Ruch Młodej Polski*. Andrzej Paczkowski, *Revolution and Counterrevolution in Poland, 1980-1989. Solidarity, Martial Law, and the End of Communism in Europe* (New York: University of Rochester Press, 2015): 7.

³⁴ *Ibid*.

³⁵ Andrzej Paczkowski, *Revolution and Counterrevolution in Poland, 1980-1989. Solidarity, Martial Law, and the End of Communism in Europe* (New York: University of Rochester Press, 2015): 7.

³⁶ *Ibid*.

³⁷ David Ost, *Solidarity and the Politics of Anti-Politics. Opposition and Reform in Poland since 1968* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990): 70.

³⁸ *Ibid*.

Wyszyński, helped the opposition's organizations. These activities constituted the core of the 1970s resistance against the regime and thus, laid the foundations for a renewed belief in the individuals' own ability to act publicly and outside state control.³⁹

In Świdnik, as in other towns across the country, the opposition's initiatives and steadily increasing underground publishing, would contribute to the evolution of workers' awareness and to the establishment of the first contacts between the intelligentsia – most prominently represented by the Catholic University of Lublin (KUL) – and the WSK workforce. Ultimately, the workers' engagement in the dissident movement paved the way for the development of a new mindset among them and thus, the crucial developments of July 1980.⁴⁰

An event that strongly impacted the country, including Świdnik, was Karol Wojtyła's⁴¹ election to papacy in October 1978. While critically impacting the Poles' mood, the presence of a new Polish pope represented a new concrete threat for the Communist system. This would be demonstrated not only by the millions of Poles attending the Pope's homilies during his Pilgrimage to the country in June 1979, but also by the increasing role that the Church would play in the country's events throughout the 1980s. As highlighted by Marian Król, a former WSK worker and later a member of the town's *Solidarność* branch, it was October 1978 that marked the real turning point.⁴² "It gave the residents and the workers a sense of hope, [whereby] Poles felt their worth and ultimately, an impulse to act".⁴³ Particularly after his pilgrimage, "a spirit of solidarity began to emerge among people", whose fear of being reported to the authorities had hitherto kept them isolated and cautious.⁴⁴ "After that moment, a

³⁹ Andrzej Paczkowski, *Revolution and Counterrevolution in Poland, 1980-1989. Solidarity, Martial Law, and the End of Communism in Europe* (New York: University of Rochester Press, 2015): 7.

⁴⁰ Leszek Pietrzak, *Miasto Wolności. Historia Świdnika od Komunizmu do Wolnej Polski* (Świdnik: Miejsko-Powiatowa Biblioteka Publiczna w Świdniku, 2020): 37, <http://archiwum.bibliotekaswidnik.pl/index.php/czytaj/nasze-publicacje/861-miasto-wolnosci>

⁴¹ Before that, he had been Cracow's Cardinal.

⁴² Marian Król, interview by Viktoria Mróz, Świdnik (Poland), March 25, 2025.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ "W Świdniku pokonano barierę strachu", interview by NSZZ Solidarność Komisja Krajowa, July 8, 2019, accessed March 29, 2025, <https://www.solidarnosc.org.pl/>

bond and sense of Christian community gradually strengthened”⁴⁵, thereby laying the foundations for the protests one year later.

⁴⁵ W Świdniku pokonano barierę strachu”, interview by NSZZ Solidarność Komisja Krajowa, July 8, 2019, accessed March 29, 2025, <https://www.solidarnosc.org.pl/>

Chapter 2. From Strikes to *Solidarność*: the Pivotal Months between July 1980 and December 1981

To understand the processes that led to the emergence of the Solidarity trade union and to General Jaruzelski's decision to impose martial law, it is important to analyze the roots of the events without limiting them to the context in Gdańsk. Therefore, this chapter will analyze the dynamics behind the eruption of strikes at the WSK in July 1980 and its catalyst effect on the region and ultimately, on the Coast. By focusing on the case study of Świdnik, this section will highlight not only the town's importance for national developments but also the framework within which the Poles' struggle against Communism matured. The main argument is that without the WSK's workforce protests, the sequence of events which ultimately prompted factories on the Coast to strike, would have not been ignited. This will be linked to the specific peaceful character of Świdnik's and the Coast's resistance which, in comparison to the 1970s actions, were more successful – as demonstrated by the authorities' non-violent response and by the Soviet decision not to intervene. Thus, through analytical lenses, the chapter will link the WSK's initiative with the concept of dilemma action while assessing the fluid boundary between party loyalists and the opposition as conceivably necessary to enable the latter's progress. As Poland's transition to democracy is a broad topic, analyzing Świdnik's resistance story and its interplay with national developments, helps to understand the processes behind the town's transition from a symbol of the communist order to a harbinger of the system's decline.

2.1 Świdnik's July

2.1.1 The Beginning of the Strike and the "Legend of the Porkchop"

It was a Tuesday morning, and the workers of the Mechanical Processing Department were having their breakfast break in the WSK's canteen. They were the first, around 9:30 am, to notice that the food prices had again sharply augmented. What immediately

caught their attention was the price of the porkchop, which had drastically increased of nearly 80 percent, from 10 to 18 złoty.⁴⁶ Not only was the porkchop one of the Polish most popular dishes, but the factory's canteen had remained the only place to buy it since stores were poorly stocked.⁴⁷

As demonstrated by a telegram message sent from Lublin by the Organizational Department of the PZPR's Central Committee⁴⁸ in early June 1980, discontent had already been accumulating for some time: "[...] dissatisfaction has been observed in various social and professional circles due to the unstable supply of grocery store items, mainly meat and dairy products. [...] There have been instances of dissatisfaction [...] [with people] who publicly criticize the authorities for the continuous rise in prices – both hidden and visible – and for severe shortages in supplies. The situation is being exploited by individuals involved in opposition activities. [...] There are not significant tensions, but [they are] disturbing phenomena."⁴⁹ It is therefore clear that the July increase in food prices was merely the spark that ignited the protests.

As Marian Król – a WSK worker at the time⁵⁰ – recalled, a week prior to July 8, a group of young employees had already attempted to halt their work at the WSK branch of the nearby town of Tomaszów Lubelski. However, the conditions were not yet ripe for the situation to escalate and the few individuals who had ceased operating

⁴⁶ Leszek Pietrzak, *Miasto Wolności. Historia Świdnika od Komunizmu do Wolnej Polski* (Świdnik: Miejsko-Powiatowa Biblioteka Publiczna w Świdniku, 2020): 42,

<http://archiwum.bibliotekaswidnik.pl/index.php/czytaj/nasze-publicacje/861-miasto-wolnosci>

⁴⁷ Maciej Replewicz, “‘Lubelski lipiec’ utorował drogę sierpniowym protestom na Wybrzeżu. 44 lat temu zaczął się strajk w Świdniku”, *Dzieje.pl*, July 8, 2024, <https://dzieje.pl/wiadomosci/lubelski-lipiec-utorowal-droge-sierpniowym-protestom-na-wybrzezu-44-lat-temu-zaczal-sie>

⁴⁸ Wydział Organizacyjny KC PZPR (Komitet Centralny PZPR).

⁴⁹ My translation. See appendix, document 1. Andrzej Szpringer, Wydział Organizacyjny KC PZPR Sektor Informacji, Informacja o Aktualnych Komentarzach i Opiniach w Województwie lubelskim na temat sytuacji rynkowej (June 2, 1980), Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza Komitet Wojewódzki w Lublinie Archiwum, Wydział Polityczno-Organizacyjny, Informacje bieżące o nastrojach i sytuacji społeczno-politycznej 1980, Sygn. 100/VII/31 t.19 (1075), teleks n. 123, Archiwum Państwowe w Lublinie.

⁵⁰ Particularly he was a milling machine operator and after martial law he was often moved to different position which required precise work. For instance, he was then a grinder and later was even transferred “to a room with machines just to keep (him) away from people”.

were not joined by others. It was only when the price surge was noticed in the WSK cafeteria that the strikes erupted, thereby becoming the decisive catalyst for the subsequent events.”⁵¹ Outraged, they decided to stop working and began discussing on the price increases, voicing concerns over the lack of wage adjustments to offset the increased expenses.⁵²

Mirosław Kaczan, who was among the first strikers, said “This can’t go on anymore. We turn off the machines and stop working.”⁵³ Thus, within the span of an hour operations in Hall One of the WSK’s Department n. 320 ceased entirely, with an increasing number of departments following suit. “It was all spontaneous, and even employees who did not know what was happening joined the protests.”⁵⁴ And yet, workers were fully aware that once they stepped outside the WSK gates, “bloodshed would be spread”.⁵⁵ At a time when at least 30 percent of the plant’s workforce belonged to the PZPR, it is striking that they protested alongside those who were not party members. As underscored by Marian Król, “we were all affected by the same concerns – poor governance, unfair promotions, and the rationing of even the most basic necessities. Everything was controlled and restricted.”⁵⁶ “The sense of solidarity⁵⁷ was so profound that it fostered a shared commitment of mutual responsibility, enabling us to stay united despite the numerous factory activists trying to sabotage the movement.”⁵⁸ With the WSK plant covering approximately 500

⁵¹ Marian Król, interview by Viktoria Mróz (author), Świdnik (Poland), March 25, 2025.

⁵² Leszek Pietrzak, *Miasto Wolności. Historia Świdnika od Komunistów do Wolnej Polski* (Świdnik: Miejsko-Powiatowa Biblioteka Publiczna w Świdniku, 2020): 42, <http://archiwum.bibliotekaswidnik.pl/index.php/czytaj/nasze-publicacje/861-miasto-wolnosci>

⁵³ Maria Radek, “Lubelski Lipiec ’80 – strajk w WSK Świdnik”, Ośrodek „Brama Grodzka - Teatr NN, <https://teatrnn.pl/leksykon/artykuly/lubelski-lipiec-strajk-w-wsk-swidnik/>

⁵⁴ Marian Król, interview by Viktoria Mróz, Świdnik, March 25, 2025.

⁵⁵ Particularly after Ms. Bartkiewicz and the director Czogała convinced them that their strength laid in remaining withing the WSK.

⁵⁶ Marian Król, interview by Viktoria Mróz, Świdnik, March 25, 2025.

⁵⁷ Solidarity with lowercase s refers to the mere feeling, whilst later, when used with uppercase S it will be referring to the Solidarity trade union.

⁵⁸ Marian Król, interview by Viktoria Mróz, Świdnik, March 25, 2025.

hectares and the massive scale of its production halls, the scope of the protest was immense, making any attempts to suppress it akin “to trying to stop a tidal wave.”⁵⁹

Around 10:00 am, they were joined by workers from the neighboring departments, and by 11:00 am, nearly 3000 workers had ceased working.⁶⁰ Efforts made by supervisors and PZPR’s activists to convince them to return to their duties failed and by 12:30 pm, the strike had spread to almost the entire workforce. Between 1:00 and 1:30 pm discussions begun between workers’ representatives, the management and party officials.⁶¹ There were numerous demands, each based on specific issues that the workers faced and included, *inter-alia*, the reversal of recent price increases or an appropriate compensation for their impact; improvements to the town’s food supply – especially meat – and explanations for Świdnik’s poorer supply situation compared to other towns. Questions were also raised regarding the preferential treatment afforded to the military and police officers in terms of food prices and social benefits.⁶² “Initially, during the negotiations – which I (Mr. Król) was part of – it was clear that people were most concerned with their immediate needs”: many employees complained of working outside regular hours, while others underscored the shortage of even the most basic tools required to work, which led them to often improvising at work.⁶³ Therefore, the systemic failures of the communist system were reflected in Świdnik’s residents’ everyday lives.

“It wasn’t just about money. To get promoted we had to join the party, which for us felt like coercion. The strikes were mostly led by people in their thirties with children, determined to shield their education from Communist influence. The division

⁵⁹ Marian Król, interview by Viktoria Mróz, Świdnik, March 25, 2025.

⁶⁰ Leszek Pietrzak, *Miasto Wolności. Historia Świdnika od Komunistów do Wolnej Polski* (Świdnik: Miejsko-Powiatowa Biblioteka Publiczna w Świdniku, 2020): 42, <http://archiwum.bibliotekaswidnik.pl/index.php/czytaj/nasze-publicacje/861-miasto-wolnosci>

⁶¹ See appendix, document 2. Władysław Kruk, Wydział Organizacyjny KC PZPR Sektor Informacji, Informacja. (July 8, 1980), Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza Komitet Wojewódzki w Lublinie Archiwum, Wydział Polityczno-Organizacyjny, Informacje bieżące o nastrojach i sytuacji społeczno-politycznej 1980, Sygn. 100/VII/31 t.19 (1075), teleks n. 145, Archiwum Państwowe w Lublinie.

⁶² Piotr R. Jankowski, *Świdnicki Lipiec* (Świdnik: Urząd Miasta Świdnik, 2011): 30-31, <https://bibliotekaswidnik.pl/strona-3431-publicacje-dotyczace-historii-miejsca-i.html>

⁶³ Marian Król, interview by Viktoria Mróz, Świdnik, March 25, 2025.

was clear: them – the Reds – on the one side, and us – the majority – on the other one. Our priorities were first, real change; second, more fairness and no privileged social groups⁶⁴ with access to special stores. Material demands were equally important. Families weren't starving, but we just wanted to eat better food and have meat during holidays. Not to mention shoes or clothes. These were basic things, and they were missing.”⁶⁵

“If it had only been about the price increases, then the employees would have probably returned to work that same day.”⁶⁶ Indeed, already after midday, as PZPR's authorities arrived at the plant, almost immediately promises were made to address the workers' concerns while the director of the company managing the WSK cafeteria was blamed for the price surges and dismissed. “However, despite the party's political maneuvering, we refused to return to work.”⁶⁷

The authorities could not believe that a strike had erupted in Świdnik, which had been created as a model Communist town and it had been granted relatively more privileges compared to other towns in the region: “waiting times for housing or for buying a car were shorter, there was greater access to services and there were more benefits available”.⁶⁸ This was primarily due to the WSK factory, which had brought numerous engineers and graduates from across Poland⁶⁹ and who were thus given housing as well as vouchers facilitating the purchase of cars.”⁷⁰ A factory like the WSK in Świdnik influenced almost every aspect of life in the town. “In a sense, it functioned as a partial owner of the city: it had its own housing blocks, kindergartens, nurseries, and it made decisions about key issues.”⁷¹ “If you weren't connected to the right

⁶⁴ Who were members of the party.

⁶⁵ Antoni Adam Czop, “Strajki lubelskie były ważne – Lubelski lipiec 1980 we wspomnieniach uczestników”, Ośrodek „Brama Grodzka - Teatr NN”, <https://teatrnn.pl/opowiesci/lubelski-lipiec-1980-we-wspomnieniach-uczestnikow/>

⁶⁶ Marian Król, interview by Viktoria Mróz, Świdnik (Poland), March 25, 2025.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Especially from Warsaw's technical university.

⁷⁰ Marian Król, interview by Viktoria Mróz, Świdnik (Poland), March 25, 2025.

⁷¹ Ibid.

people, you couldn't even get your child into the kindergarten. Nothing happened without the PZPR's authorization and people did not want to live under such control."⁷² And yet, the party's prevailing belief was that unrest in Świdnik would be impossible and refrained from referring to the events as "strikes", instead describing them as "work stoppages". Ironically, although "the system tried to control every part of people's life, it was in fact so dysfunctional that it could not even provide toilet paper."⁷³

As workers remained distrustful of the promises they believed would, like many before, remain unfulfilled, protests persisted. After 3:00 pm, whilst the majority of first-shift employees left the plant, small groups of strikers remained, thereby spreading the protest to the second shift and to the factory's main departments. Importantly, manual workers were joined by the WSK's intelligentsia, signaling the critical integration of two previously divided classes – which had long been marked by social tensions – within the plant.⁷⁴ Also known as "hat-makers"⁷⁵, the intelligentsia represented all employees from the administrative departments, including engineers, technicians and office workers.

In response, the authorities attempted to exert pressure on workers and change their stances: as store supplies were rapidly improved, a group of two hundred party activists was created to compel individual workers both at the WSK and at home.⁷⁶ As Stanisław Jadczyk, a Lublin journalist⁷⁷ noted, "Świdnik's streets in the evening were blocked by massive trucks carrying parts and products from WSK's suppliers [...].

⁷² Marian Król, interview by Viktoria Mróz, Świdnik (Poland), March 25, 2025.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Jan Czogała, "Lubelski Lipiec 1980 roku – Jan Czogała – fragment relacji świadka historii", interview by Tomasz Czajkowski, Ośrodek „Brama Grodzka – Teatr NN, January 28, 2014, accessed March 26, 2025, <https://teatrnn.pl/historiamowiona/fragmenty/lubelski-lipiec-1980-roku-3/>

⁷⁵ The original name used to describe them was "*Kapelusznicy*", which reflected the perceived divide between the manual workers and the technocratic-intellectual elite.

⁷⁶ Jan Czogała, "Lubelski Lipiec 1980 roku – Jan Czogała – fragment relacji świadka historii", interview by Tomasz Czajkowski, Ośrodek „Brama Grodzka – Teatr NN, January 28, 2014, accessed March 26, 2025, <https://teatrnn.pl/historiamowiona/fragmenty/lubelski-lipiec-1980-roku-3/>

⁷⁷ From the newspaper "Sztandar Ludu", the newspaper and official regional press organ of the PZPR's Provincial Committee.

The town, home to 30,000 residents, is calm but tinged with an air of tensions and fear of possible reprisals. The shops are unusually well-stocked with meat and cold cuts. On the main street of the city, *ulica Sławińskiego*, a meat shop is open, despite its usual 6:00 pm closing time; and even at 7:00 pm customers can easily and without queues buy items like ham, dry smoked sausage, and loin.”⁷⁸

2.1.2 The Strike’s Strength amid the Authorities’ Reprisals

Wednesday, July 9, 1980, second day of strikes. Only 10 percent of the first-shift workers returned to work, whilst nearly 4,000 employees from the WSK’s key departments (mechanical, assembly, and toolmaking) did not resume operations.⁷⁹

By 10:00 am over 2,000 people gathered outside in a spontaneous worker’s rally. As Zbigniew Puczek, one of the strikers, later noted, “it was a vivid and poignant example of mutual support among the workforce, which had been divided and pitted against each other for years [...]”.⁸⁰ Amid the employees’ refusal to resume work, the authorities blocked the factory’s telephone network, effectively severing the WSK’s communication with the outside world.⁸¹ That day, as the provincial party authorities arrived, together with the Minister of Industrial Machinery⁸², the Lublin Voivodeship

⁷⁸ My translation. Stanisław Jadczyk, “Diariusz lipcowych dni 1”, *Miesiące. Przegląd Związkowy* (1981): 55-56, [“Diary of the July Days”, *Months. Union Review*] quoted in Piotr R. Jankowski, *Świdnicki Lipiec* (Świdnik: Urząd Miasta Świdnik, 2011): 31, <https://bibliotekaswidnik.pl/strona-3431-publikacje-dotyczace-historii-miejsca-i.html>

⁷⁹ Leszek Pietrzak, *Miasto Wolności. Historia Świdnika od Komunistów do Wolnej Polski* (Świdnik: Miejsko-Powiatowa Biblioteka Publiczna w Świdniku, 2020): 43, <http://archiwum.bibliotekaswidnik.pl/index.php/czytaj/nasze-publikacje/861-miasto-wolnosci>

⁸⁰ Zbigniew Puczek, “Patrząc wstecz. Świdnik lipiec 80”, *Biuletyn Związkowy WSK PZL Świdnik* 33 (1981): 5, 28 and *Biuletyn Związkowy WSK PZL Świdnik* 34 (1981): 8, [“Looking back. Świdnik July ’80”, *Union Bulletin WSK PZL Świdnik*], quoted in Piotr R. Jankowski, *Świdnicki Lipiec* (Świdnik: Urząd Miasta Świdnik, 2011): 35, <https://bibliotekaswidnik.pl/strona-3431-publikacje-dotyczace-historii-miejsca-i.html>

⁸¹ Leszek Pietrzak, *Miasto Wolności. Historia Świdnika od Komunistów do Wolnej Polski* (Świdnik: Miejsko-Powiatowa Biblioteka Publiczna w Świdniku, 2020): 44, <http://archiwum.bibliotekaswidnik.pl/index.php/czytaj/nasze-publikacje/861-miasto-wolnosci>

⁸² Aleksander Kopeć.

governor⁸³, and the WSK's director Jan Czogała, they addressed the crowd gathered in front of the plant's office building, informing them of the actions already taken and those planned to improve the town's supply issues.⁸⁴ Not only did they announce the return of prices in the WSK's cafeterias to those before July 1,⁸⁵ but also attempted to deflect responsibility by declaring their intention to punish those responsible for the shortcomings.⁸⁶ That day, a special unit from the Lublin SB⁸⁷ arrived at the plant with the aim of establishing a network of secret collaborators. Their primary task was to identify individuals held responsible for "maintaining tensions" in the WSK and to exert pressure on them to withdraw from the strike.⁸⁸ Concurrently, units of the MO⁸⁹ and the factory's ORMO⁹⁰ were mobilized and placed on high alert, ready to intervene should the situation escalate, while subjecting strikers to daily acts of intimidation and blackmail.⁹¹

Important developments unfolded on the third day of strikes, July 10. Almost 4,000 workers from the first shift, 1,000 from the second and 70 from the third one continued protesting.⁹² The tense atmosphere at the WSK was further exacerbated by the fact that some workers had been threatened with dismissal had they not resumed

⁸³ At the time, Mieczysław Stępień.

⁸⁴ Leszek Pietrzak, *Miasto Wolności. Historia Świdnika od Komunizmu do Wolnej Polski* (Świdnik: Miejsko-Powiatowa Biblioteka Publiczna w Świdniku, 2020): 44,

<http://archiwum.bibliotekaswidnik.pl/index.php/czytaj/nasze-publicacje/861-miasto-wolnosci>

⁸⁵ Poland's Prime Minister at the time, Edward Babiuch, had personally called the WSK's director telling him that "prices in those bars had to be lowered without question".

⁸⁶ See appendix, document 3. Wydział Organizacyjny KC PZPR Sektor Informacji, Informacja o Sytuacji Południowej w WSK Świdnik w dniu 9 bm. (July 9, 1980), Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza Komitet Wojewódzki w Lublinie Archiwum, Wydział Polityczno-Organizacyjny, Informacje bieżące o nastrojach i sytuacji społeczno-politycznej 1980, Sygn. 100/VII/31 t.19 (1075), teleks n. 148, Archiwum Państwowe w Lublinie.

⁸⁷ The Security Services, *Służba Bezpieczeństwa*.

⁸⁸ Piotr R. Jankowski, *Świdnicki Lipiec* (Świdnik: Urząd Miasta Świdnik, 2011): 38, https://bibliotekaswidnik.pl/strona-3431-publicacje_dotyczace_historii_miejsca_i.html

⁸⁹ The Citizens' Militia, *Milicja Obywatelska*.

⁹⁰ The Volunteer Reserve of the Citizens' Militia, *Ochotnicza Rezerwa Milicji Obywatelskiej*.

⁹¹ Leszek Pietrzak, *Miasto Wolności. Historia Świdnika od Komunizmu do Wolnej Polski* (Świdnik: Miejsko-Powiatowa Biblioteka Publiczna w Świdniku, 2020): 46,

<http://archiwum.bibliotekaswidnik.pl/index.php/czytaj/nasze-publicacje/861-miasto-wolnosci>

⁹² Piotr R. Jankowski, *Świdnicki Lipiec* (Świdnik: Urząd Miasta Świdnik, 2011): 35, https://bibliotekaswidnik.pl/strona-3431-publicacje_dotyczace_historii_miejsca_i.html

operating.⁹³ A new rally was thus organized, whereby Zofia Bartkiewicz and Zbigniew Puczek addressed the strikers, urging them to stay united and to maintain order to avoid actions that could give the authorities an excuse to deploy law enforcement.⁹⁴

Remarkably, both Ms Bartkiewicz and Mr. Puczek – just as other prominent local strikers, including Ryszard Kuć – had been activists of the PZPR, with for instance Ms Bartkiewicz having been hitherto involved in the town’s local politics and administration.⁹⁵ Thus, the fact that Party members were present even in circles associated with unrest and then opposition, illustrates how deeply embedded they were in factories. Initially, as workers could not democratically choose the strike’s leaders, Ms Bartkiewicz’s and Mr. Puczek’s involvement and their positioning as the protests’ leaders created distrust. “It was they, the party loyalists, who stepped in”.⁹⁶ Nevertheless, the real power and direction of the strikes came from the workers, thereby consolidating the movement’s bottom-up character. Furthermore, as later demonstrated when choosing each department’s delegates to negotiations with the WSK’s management and authorities, fear initially dominated the atmosphere among employees: “although workers wanted to defend their rights and to negotiate, they dreaded retaliation on them and their families”.⁹⁷ With memories of the 1970s repressions still vivid, assuming a leadership role in such a politically charged and repressive environment, was extremely difficult for the WSK workers, potentially exposing them to surveillance, harassment, job loss, or graver consequences.⁹⁸ Thus, the fact that employees who had hitherto been PZPR activists emerged as the protests’ leaders, ultimately provided a safeguard and assurance to the protesters that their lives would be protected.⁹⁹

⁹³ Leszek Pietrzak, *Miasto Wolności. Historia Świdnika od Komunizmu do Wolnej Polski* (Świdnik: Miejsko-Powiatowa Biblioteka Publiczna w Świdniku, 2020): 45,

<http://archiwum.bibliotekaswidnik.pl/index.php/czytaj/nasze-publicacje/861-miasto-wolnosci>

⁹⁴ Ibid, 46

⁹⁵ Marian Król, interview by Viktoria Mróz, Świdnik, March 25, 2025.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

The leaders' eventual membership in the Solidarity trade union one month later signaled a broader realignment toward the workers' cause – an evolution that paralleled national trends in the following months and highlighted the increasingly blurred lines between PZPR loyalists and the opposition. As emphasized by Marian Król, “at the time, no one had a ‘clean record’”,¹⁰⁰ and as the decade advanced, the dual allegiances of certain activists evolved into a strategic, if controversial, necessity. While such duplicity compromised internal cohesion and trust within the opposition, these compromises allegedly facilitated Solidarity's progress and eventually, the 1989 negotiations.

When patriotic and religious songs started being sung, protesters were joined by their families, thereby marking another crucial and emotionally significant moment for the community and its common identity.¹⁰¹ Furthermore, albeit not recognized by the authorities, a Strike Committee¹⁰² with workers' representatives was selected to engage in talks.¹⁰³

Despite Prime Minister's Babiuch¹⁰⁴ suggestion to fiercely restore order by sending military helicopters, when Kopeć, the Minister of Industrial Machinery, visited the WSK plant to personally assess the situation, he reassured the director that there would be no military intervention.¹⁰⁵ As recalled by director Czogała, after the meeting he called some of the workers who had started the strike and highlighted that the protests could “last two or three more days, but not longer, because sooner or later

¹⁰⁰ Marian Król, interview by Viktoria Mróz, Świdnik, March 25, 2025.

¹⁰¹ Leszek Pietrzak, *Miasto Wolności. Historia Świdnika od Komunistów do Wolnej Polski* (Świdnik: Miejsko-Powiatowa Biblioteka Publiczna w Świdniku, 2020): 47,

<http://archiwum.bibliotekaswidnik.pl/index.php/czytaj/nasze-publicacje/861-miasto-wolnosci>

¹⁰² This Committee was formally called “the Work Stoppage Committee” (in Polish, *Komitet Postojowy*), as the authorities firmly rejected the name “Strike Committee”. Ibid, 46.

¹⁰³ Piotr R. Jankowski, *Świdnicki Lipiec* (Świdnik: Urząd Miasta Świdnik, 2011): 37-38

<https://bibliotekaswidnik.pl/strona-3431-publicacje-dotyczace-historii-miejsca-i.html>

¹⁰⁴ Was the Prime Minister of Poland between February and August 1980.

¹⁰⁵ Jan Czogała, “Strajk w 1980 roku – Jan Czogała – fragment relacji świadka historii,” interview by Tomasz Czajkowski, Ośrodek „Brama Grodzka – Teatr NN, January 28, 2014, accessed March 26, 2025, <https://teatrnn.pl/historiamowiona/fragmenty-strajk-w-1980-roku/>

the government could decide to crush it”.¹⁰⁶ People were thus encouraged to spread the strikes to other factories: as they went to the nearest plants in Lublin, including the Polmozbyt service station, the Car Repair Plant (LZNS), and the Heavy Vehicle Factory (FSC), Świdnik’s strike had resulted in a larger political struggle between the workers and the government, which extended beyond mere economic demands.¹⁰⁷

2.1.3 The Domino Effect of the WSK Strike

Friday, July 11 – the final day of strikes – began with an order by the directing management instructing the selection of three-person delegations to engage in talks.¹⁰⁸ By 9:00 am, 250 worker representatives gathered in the conference room, and a new Strike Committee was re-elected¹⁰⁹, while authorities strictly controlled and manipulated the process to influence the delegation’s final composition.¹¹⁰ Furthermore, to maintain order within the plant and ensure continuous communication with the Strike Committee, the workers formed the Industrial Workers’ Guard¹¹¹, led by Zbigniew Puczek.¹¹² When negotiations began, with the authorities represented by, *inter-alia*, Jan Czogała, Mieczysław Stępień and a delegate from the Metalworkers’ Union¹¹³, they were challenging and slow, with the party attempting to concede as little

¹⁰⁶ Jan Czogała, “Strajk w 1980 roku – Jan Czogała – fragment relacji świadka historii,” interview by Tomasz Czajkowski, Ośrodek „Brama Grodzka – Teatr NN, January 28, 2014, accessed March 26, 2025, <https://teatrnn.pl/historiamowiona/fragmenty/strajk-w-1980-roku/>

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Leszek Pietrzak, *Miasto Wolności. Historia Świdnika od Komunistów do Wolnej Polski* (Świdnik: Miejsko-Powiatowa Biblioteka Publiczna w Świdniku, 2020): 47, <http://archiwum.bibliotekaswidnik.pl/index.php/czytaj/nasze-publicacje/861-miasto-wolnosci>

¹⁰⁹ The three-person presidium was made of Zofia Bartkiewicz (chair), Zygmunt Karwowski (vice-chair), and Roman Olcha (secretary).

¹¹⁰ Leszek Pietrzak, *Miasto Wolności. Historia Świdnika od Komunistów do Wolnej Polski* (Świdnik: Miejsko-Powiatowa Biblioteka Publiczna w Świdniku, 2020): 47, <http://archiwum.bibliotekaswidnik.pl/index.php/czytaj/nasze-publicacje/861-miasto-wolnosci>

¹¹¹ *Robotnicza Straż Przemysłowa*.

¹¹² Piotr R. Jankowski, *Świdnicki Lipiec* (Świdnik: Urząd Miasta Świdnik, 2011): 39-40, https://bibliotekaswidnik.pl/strona-3431-publicacje_dotyczace_historii_miejsca_i.html

¹¹³ Zdzisław Mazur.

as possible and neither side willing to lose. What further hampered the discussions was the nearly 600 demands that the workers had prepared, which included different types of requests, mainly concerning social and economic issues, but also including some political ones, for instance concerning freedom of expression or addressing corruption in the town¹¹⁴, as well as holding state authorities accountable.¹¹⁵ For instance, they requested “an explanation as to why directives from the Central Committee and the party apparatus, as conveyed by the media, reached them in altered form.”¹¹⁶ Even following the authorities’ selection of the 110 most significant demands, the challenge persisted as the list encompassed different but interconnected proposals. Ranging from increased wages and the narrowing of income inequalities within the WSK, the workers’ concerns included the expansion of family allowances and broader access to social benefits.¹¹⁷

Particularly, the demands’ broad scope and primarily socio-economic nature reflected both the employees’ lack of experience and their most immediate needs, which emerged from their perception of a “society divided between those who had and were rich, and those who did not have and were poor”.¹¹⁸ As reported by Urszula Radek¹¹⁹ – a WSK worker and member of the Strike Committee – protesters in Świdnik were not directed by anyone and did not have any advisors, politicians, or economists like workers in Gdańsk would later have. Despite that, as highlighted by

¹¹⁴ Leszek Pietrzak, *Miasto Wolności. Historia Świdnika od Komunistów do Wolnej Polski* (Świdnik: Miejsko-Powiatowa Biblioteka Publiczna w Świdniku, 2020): 48,

<http://archiwum.bibliotekaswidnik.pl/index.php/czytaj/nasze-publicacje/861-miasto-wolnosci>

¹¹⁵ Świdnicki Lipiec, “Postulaty”, accessed February 25, 2025, <https://swidnickilipiec.pl/postulaty/>

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Leszek Pietrzak, *Miasto Wolności. Historia Świdnika od Komunistów do Wolnej Polski* (Świdnik: Miejsko-Powiatowa Biblioteka Publiczna w Świdniku, 2020): 48,

<http://archiwum.bibliotekaswidnik.pl/index.php/czytaj/nasze-publicacje/861-miasto-wolnosci>

¹¹⁸ Jan Czogała, “Strajk w 1980 roku – Jan Czogała – fragment relacji świadka historii,” interview by Tomasz Czajkowski, Ośrodek „Brama Grodzka – Teatr NN, January 28, 2014, accessed March 26, 2025, <https://teatrnn.pl/historiamowiona/fragmenty/strajk-w-1980-roku/>

¹¹⁹ After Solidarity was legalized, she took part in the union’s structures organization within the plant. She was a member of Solidarity’s Founding Committee, where she was addressed social issues, such as organizing aid for the poorest families and, during martial law, for the families of the interned. by Justyna Molik, “Urszula Radek,” Archiwum Programu Historia Mówiona Ośrodka “Brama Grodzka - Teatr NN”, <https://teatrnn.pl/historiamowiona/swiadkowie/urszula-radek/>

Marian Król, “people from Gdańsk and Silesia as well as from the KOR came to Świdnik and asked the protesters how they managed to avoid the police’s intervention and prevent any bloodshed”.¹²⁰ Although at first “it was all about food prices and wages”, “once the strikes gained momentum, it became about everything”.¹²¹ Therefore, the WSK workers had paved the way for other workplaces across the Lublin Voivodeship and ultimately for Gdańsk, where stronger and more political demands could thus be advanced. And while clear requests for free and independent trade unions would have to wait for August 1980¹²², discontent for the party’s labor unions was already widespread. “In order to work, everyone had to belong to a union, with the metalworkers’ union being the main one.”¹²³ However, they mainly represented the party’s interests, focused on addressing “alcoholism, lack of discipline and delays at the WSK” instead of prioritizing the employees’ working and living conditions.¹²⁴ As Alfred Bondos¹²⁵ recalled, during negotiations with the factory directory, instead of supporting the workers, the union endorsed the management and the party. “They neither represented us nor helped us achieve our demands; rather, they just criticized our approach.”¹²⁶

By the time the WSK strike approached its end, a powerful chain reaction had been set in motion. Already on July 9, work had been halted at the “Polmozbyt” service station in Lublin and the Lublin Agricultural Machinery Factory “Agromet”. Strikes had subsequently spread to the Lublin Car Repair Plant (LZNS), the Lublin Heavy Vehicle Factory (FSC) and the Lublin Leather Industry Plant (LZPS). By July 11,

¹²⁰ Marian Król, interview by Viktoria Mróz, Świdnik, March 25, 2025.

¹²¹ Łukasz Kijek, “Lubelski lipiec 1980 we wspomnieniach uczestników,” Archiwum Programu Historia Mówiona Ośrodka “Brama Grodzka - Teatr NN”, <https://teatrnn.pl/opowiesci/lubelski-lipiec-1980-we-wspomnieniach-uczestnikow/>

¹²² Although already during Świdnik’s July there had been workers advocating for free trade unions, these requests did not make it into the final list of demands.

¹²³ Marian Król, interview by Viktoria Mróz, Świdnik, March 25, 2025

¹²⁴ Świdnicki Lipiec, “Postulaty”, accessed February 25, 2025, <https://swidnickilipiec.pl/postulaty/>

¹²⁵ A WSK employee and later one of the main members of Solidarity in Świdnik. Famous for his underground activism during martial law.

¹²⁶ Alfred Bondos, “Strajk w WSK Świdnik – Postulaty”, interview by Tomasz Czajkowski, Ośrodek „Brama Grodzka – Teatr NN, June 7, 2005, accessed February 25, 2025, <https://teatrnn.pl/historiamowiona/fragmenty/strajk-w-wsk-swidnik-postulaty/>

operations had ceased at both the Lublin Locomotive Depot and the entire Lublin Railway junction.¹²⁷ Given Lublin's significance as a railway junction, the prolonged strike resulted in national trains avoiding the city and being re-routed through Ukraine, thereby causing major disruptions in the country's railway (and food) system.¹²⁸ As remarked by Marian Król, Lublin's public transportation's (MPK)¹²⁹ strike was particularly noticeable: "even when buses stopped running, no one got angry nor complained. People just decided to walk, as everyone identified with the workers' demands."¹³⁰ Consequently, by mid-July, an "avalanche" of strikes had extended across 33 cities and 93 factories in the Lublin Voivodeship.¹³¹ Although the Voivodeship's Party Committee reported that approximately 50,000 people ceased working, the figures were likely deliberately kept low: especially, if the scale and numbers of workplaces involved is considered, then the participants might have exceeded 100,000 people.¹³² Despite being tense and minutely observed by the authorities¹³³, the situation never escalated to the prior repressions and the bloodshed of the 1976 protests. Although the communist authorities attempted to provoke and

¹²⁷ Andrzej Szpringer, Informacja dotycząca przerw pracy w przedsiębiorstwach i zakładach województwa lubelskiego (July 15, 1980), Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza Komitet Wojewódzki w Lublinie Archiwum, Wydział Polityczno-Organizacyjny, Informacje bieżące o nastrojach i sytuacji społeczno-politycznej 1980, Sygn. 100/VII/31 t.19 (1075), teleks n. 159, Archiwum Państwowe w Lublinie.

¹²⁸ Marian Król, interview by Viktoria Mróz, Świdnik, March 25, 2025.

¹²⁹ MPK stands for Miejskie Przedsiębiorstwo Komunikacyjne, which translates to Municipal Transport Company.

¹³⁰ Marian Król, interview by Viktoria Mróz, Świdnik, March 25, 2025.

¹³¹ Leszek Pietrzak, *Miasto Wolności. Historia Świdnika od Komunistów do Wolnej Polski* (Świdnik: Miejsko-Powiatowa Biblioteka Publiczna w Świdniku, 2020), 51

<http://archiwum.bibliotekaswidnik.pl/index.php/czytaj/nasze-publicacje/861-miasto-wolnosci>

¹³² Marian Król underlined the fact that "despite the holidays' season, the main plant in Świdnik employed approximately 10,000 workers – not counting those in the WSK's subsidiary facilities –, the car factor counted around 14,500 employees, and there were thousands of railway workers too." Thus, "considering all the workers from the 170 workplaces across the Lublin Voivodeship who were affected by the wave of dissatisfaction and protest, the number of people involved must have been much higher than 50,000." Marian Król, interview by Viktoria Mróz, Świdnik (Poland), March 25, 2025.

¹³³ Andrzej Szpringer, Informacja o aktualnej sytuacji w województwie lubelskim (July 18, 1980), Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza Komitet Wojewódzki w Lublinie Archiwum, Wydział Polityczno-Organizacyjny, Informacje bieżące o nastrojach i sytuacji społeczno-politycznej 1980, Sygn. 100/VII/31 t.19 (1075), teleks n. 165, Archiwum Państwowe w Lublinie

divide the workers to get a pretext for harsher reprisals, Świdnik's residents were strongly aware of the imperative to avoid the previous' years patterns.

2.1.4 The Agreement with the Local PZPR and the End of the Strike in Świdnik

After nearly eight hours of discussions, at 5:35 pm a joint nine-point agreement was signed. Not only did it mark the end of the Świdnik strike, but it also represented the first ever written negotiated accord, whereby the Voivodeship's communist authorities agreed to meet the workers' demands. And while all major decisions required Warsaw's validation, the Świdnik agreement was in fact signed without the central authorities' explicit approval.¹³⁴ Particularly, although director Czogała had been in constant contact with Prime Minister Babiuch, the urgency of the situation¹³⁵ resulted in the accords being made locally rather than dictated from the top. Thus, it also represented the first agreement in Poland – and among communist countries – where the government was represented at the local level.¹³⁶

Pledging to “raise the average salary at the factory”¹³⁷ and improving the town's meat supply¹³⁸, the document primarily addressed wage issues, which constituted the workers' primary concern. Furthermore, given the authorities' refusal to accept any political conditions, their commitment to “consider all workers' demands and keep them informed about the progress in addressing them”¹³⁹ was recognized as

¹³⁴ Jan Czogała, “Sformułowanie postulatów i podpisanie porozumienia z przedstawicielami władzy – Jan Czogała – fragment relacji świadka historii”, interview by Tomasz Czajkowski, Ośrodek „Brama Grodzka – Teatr NN, January 28, 2014, accessed March 27, 2025,

<https://teatrnn.pl/historiamowiona/fragmenty/sformulowanie-postulatow-i-podpisanie-porozumienia-z-przedstawicielami-wladzy/>

¹³⁵ Inaction could have led to broader unrest.

¹³⁶ Jan Czogała, “Sformułowanie postulatów i podpisanie porozumienia z przedstawicielami władzy – Jan Czogała – fragment relacji świadka historii”, interview by Tomasz Czajkowski, Ośrodek „Brama Grodzka – Teatr NN, January 28, 2014, accessed March 27, 2025,

<https://teatrnn.pl/historiamowiona/fragmenty/sformulowanie-postulatow-i-podpisanie-porozumienia-z-przedstawicielami-wladzy/>

¹³⁷ See appendix for the text of the agreement, in document 6, point 4.

¹³⁸ See appendix for the text of the agreement, in document 6, point 5.

¹³⁹ See appendix for the text of the agreement, in document 6, point 6.

a major accomplishment. However, as reported in September 1981 by the magazine “*Głos Świdnika*”¹⁴⁰, the situation at the WSK plant did not significantly improve. Despite the promises, the canteen’s food’s quality and meat supply remained insufficient, with the poorest employees still having to rely on free food from abroad.¹⁴¹

Notably, as underscored by the seventh point in the contract, “no consequences would be imposed on the strikers for their stoppages”.¹⁴² The agreement was signed on the protesting workers’ behalf by Zofia Bartkiewicz, Zygmunt Karwowski, and Roman Olcha, while the authorities were represented by the WSK’s director, Jan Czogała, the WSK’s Workers’ Council chairman, and the WSK’s Factory Council chairman. Although the document could not be published outside the factory, by signing it the party had exposed the weaknesses of the communist system’s structures, thereby questioning their legitimacy.¹⁴³

An important role since the beginning of the strikes had been played by the WSK’s director, Jan Czogała, who helped prevent the authorities from resorting to violence. For instance, when Zofia Bartkiewicz was calling on people to calmly remain inside the plant, the director took the microphone to further convince the workers not to spread the strike on the streets. He also insisted that the situation be called “work stoppages” rather than “strikes” to avoid further pressuring the authorities. Thanks to them, workers understood that “their strength laid in staying within the WSK and not outside”. Furthermore, by underscoring how “singing and striking alone wouldn’t do anything”, Czogała pursued the protesters to write their demands. “Go back to your

¹⁴⁰ Meaning, “the Voice of Świdnik”. This local newspaper was fundamental in the town’s (communist) development. Initially, it functioned as the Factory Committee’s and Factory Council’s press organ. The newspaper still exists and is published weekly, figuring among the oldest ones in the Lublin Voivodeship

¹⁴¹ *Głos Świdnika*, “Na roboczo”, [my translation: Work in Progress or Provisional Reality] *Głos Świdnika* 23, September 11, 1981, 4, <file:///Users/vikto/Downloads/nr23-1981.pdf> quoted in *Świdnicki Lipiec*, “Postulaty”, accessed February 25, 2025, <https://swidnickilipiec.pl/postulaty/>

¹⁴² Text of agreement, point 7, in document 1, Appendix f.

¹⁴³ Piotr R. Jankowski, *Świdnicki Lipiec* (Świdnik: Urząd Miasta Świdnik, 2011): 41, https://bibliotekaswidnik.pl/strona-3431-publicacje_dotyczace_historii_miejsca_i.html

departments and write down what problems each division has. Then we'll meet in the evening and discuss".¹⁴⁴ Initially, the director was surprised by the strikes' eruption: since salaries at the WSK were relatively higher compared to other factories across the Lublin Voivodeship, he considered the July 8 to be "just a normal episode of work stoppage".¹⁴⁵ "We had those trips to Libya, in which almost 600 workers took part, and that was good money. [...] The plant was doing well, we were producing a lot and there was work, while other factories were laying people off".¹⁴⁶ As strikes persisted, he understood that they were in fact the result of the workers' increased awareness of their conditions. "First, underground leaflets had already been circulating at the WSK and in other plants, so the opposition had been active for some time; second, when workers went to Libya, not only could they compare their increased earnings, but also realize how different life was in western countries like Germany and Switzerland; lastly, despite the 600 people and the R&D department's better salaries, social differences were strongly felt among the workforce."¹⁴⁷

Although preceded by some work stoppages, including in the WSK's subsidiary in Tomaszów Lubelski, in the "Ursus" Mechanical Plants in Warsaw, as well as in factories in Mielec and in Tarnów¹⁴⁸, none of these had the same level of strength and organization as the stoppages in Świdnik. What made them unique and crucial for the region and the country were four key factors. First, despite lasting four days, the strike in Świdnik remained in the workplace, thereby avoiding possible military crackdowns. Albeit not formally coordinated and largely driven by independent actions, the protests in the small town unexpectedly led to the emergence of a new form of strike, wherein individuals refrained from street demonstrations and mass gatherings, and instead decided to cease operations within their workplaces. "Of

¹⁴⁴ Jan Czogała, "Lubelski Lipiec 1980 roku – Jan Czogała – fragment relacji świadka historii", interview by Tomasz Czajkowski, Ośrodek „Brama Grodzka – Teatr NN, January 28, 2014, accessed March 26, 2025, <https://teatrnn.pl/historiamowiona/fragmenty/lubelski-lipiec-1980-roku-3/>

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ When flying to Libya, they usually also stopped in Germany or Switzerland.

¹⁴⁸ Trochę Historii Kultury, "Gorące lato 1980", Polonijna Agencja Informacyjna, accessed April 2, 2025, http://pai.media.pl/historia_kultura_artykuly.php?id=319/

course there were moments of tension at the factory gates, but no one was marching through the streets.”¹⁴⁹ Then, it integrated the WSK’s intellectuals and the manual workers in a spirit of solidarity that overcame previous class tensions. Third, it resulted in the signing of an agreement whereby (local) Communist authorities promised to address the workers’ demands. Lastly, Świdnik was crucial in mobilizing and amplifying the movement across the region. Indeed, after July 11, the Minister of Interior, Stanisław Kowalczyk, had warned “the highest authorities” of a possible domino effect, highlighting that if other factories across Poland had learned about the agreement, they would have been prompted to do the same.¹⁵⁰

Despite the porkchop’s price important role as the immediate cause of the WSK’s work stoppages, it represented a mere pretext to strike and only one of the multiple factors that had been fueling the workers’ discontent for some time. Ultimately, as later underscored by Anna Walentynowicz – one of the central figures in the August strikes –, “in July the shipyard workforce was not yet ready to protest in solidarity with Lublin’s factories.”¹⁵¹ “If it had not been for the Lublin region, workers in Gdańsk, still frightened of the 1970s experience, would have probably not started striking”.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁹ Jan Czogała, “Lubelski Lipiec 1980 roku – Jan Czogała – fragment relacji świadka historii”, interview by Tomasz Czajkowski, Ośrodek „Brama Grodzka – Teatr NN, January 28, 2014, accessed March 26, 2025, <https://teatrnn.pl/historiamowiona/fragmenty/lubelski-lipiec-1980-roku-3/>

¹⁵⁰ Jan Czogała, “Sformułowanie postulatów i podpisanie porozumienia z przedstawicielami władzy – Jan Czogała – fragment relacji świadka historii”, interview by Tomasz Czajkowski, Ośrodek „Brama Grodzka – Teatr NN, January 28, 2014, accessed March 27, 2025, <https://teatrnn.pl/historiamowiona/fragmenty/sformulowanie-postulatow-i-podpisanie-porozumienia-z-przedstawicielami-wladzy/>

¹⁵¹ Mirosław Chojecki, “Opowiada Anna Walentynowicz”, Gdańsk-Sierpień 1980 (Warsaw: Instytut Wydawniczy Związków Zawodowych, 1981):5, quoted in Anthony Kemp-Welch, Poland under Communism. A Cold War History (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008): 237, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511619779.011>

¹⁵² Jan Czogała, “Sformułowanie postulatów i podpisanie porozumienia z przedstawicielami władzy – Jan Czogała – fragment relacji świadka historii”, interview by Tomasz Czajkowski, Ośrodek „Brama Grodzka – Teatr NN, January 28, 2014, accessed March 27, 2025, <https://teatrnn.pl/historiamowiona/fragmenty/sformulowanie-postulatow-i-podpisanie-porozumienia-z-przedstawicielami-wladzy/>

2.2 August 1980 and the Beginning of the *Solidarność* Era

2.2.1 The Gdańsk Shipyard and the Eruption of Strikes on the Coast

Although the strikes at the Gdańsk shipyard have historically been recognized as the landmark moment that eventually led to the end of the Communist regime in Poland, the groundwork for their eruption had already been laid in the previous month. The July strikes in Świdnik and the Lublin region had indeed marked the beginning of a fundamental process that eventually extended to the whole country.¹⁵³

Already in early August, work was halted in numerous factories across the People's Republic, including (again) Świdnik. The increasing social expectations since July, together with the brewing dissatisfaction for the price hikes and for the virtually unchanged economic situation, meant that a mere spark was enough to ignite new strikes.¹⁵⁴ The first disturbances arose with the dismissal of the crane operator and activist Anna Walentynowicz¹⁵⁵ from the Lenin Shipyard in Gdańsk¹⁵⁶. When on Sunday, August 10, 1980, the Shipyard's workers discovered about Walentynowicz's dismissal during one of their meetings, they knew they would be "the next on the list" and thus, that they had nothing to lose.¹⁵⁷ As one of them, Jerzy Borowczak, later recalled, Bogdan Borusewicz called the team¹⁵⁸ and said "So guys? If we're going to

¹⁵³ Leszek Pietrzak, *Miasto Wolności. Historia Świdnika od Komunistów do Wolnej Polski* (Świdnik: Miejsko-Powiatowa Biblioteka Publiczna w Świdniku, 2020), 55

<http://archiwum.bibliotekaswidnik.pl/index.php/czytaj/nasze-publicacje/861-miasto-wolnosci>

¹⁵⁴ Norman Davies, *Heart of Europe: The Past in Poland's Present*, New ed (Oxford: OUP Oxford, 2001): 15, EBSCOhost

¹⁵⁵ She was one of the leading forces in the campaign for free trade unions and had been dismissed on August 9, just before her retirement, thereby losing pension rights.

¹⁵⁶ Magdalena Kubow, "The Solidarity Movement in Poland: Its History and Meaning in Collective Memory," *The Polish Review* 58, no. 2 (2013): 10, <https://doi.org/10.5406/polishreview.58.2.0003>

¹⁵⁷ Borowczak: byłem tylko "zapalnikiem" strajku w sierpniu 1980 roku," PAP, Dzieje.pl, Portal Historyczny, last modified August 8, 2016, <https://dzieje.pl/node/46040>

¹⁵⁸ Who included Jerzy Borowczak, Ludwik Prądyński, Bogdan Felski, and Lech Wałęsa

do this strike, we need to prepare for it.”¹⁵⁹ Although they didn’t decide anything at that moment, the following days Borusewicz and Borowczak met to agree who to involve in the strike and how to begin, drafting a plan that only their group¹⁶⁰ would know.¹⁶¹ “We decided to meet at 5 am on August 14 at the main gate of the shipyard and enter the facility together. [...] I opened the locker where I kept my leaflets and started handing them out to the first workers who arrived at the plant. I told them that the entire shipyard was on strike [that day]. Then I went back to the hall, where I gathered about 100 people more [...]”¹⁶² and told them “Lublin rose up, now it’s our turn to fight”.¹⁶³ “When there were about 150 people and we were walking through the shipyard, more workers joined, asking us to wait [...]” [In the end] approximately a thousand people poured out of the hall shouting “hura, hura!”. At that moment, given the magnitude of our group, it was clear that we would succeed.”¹⁶⁴ Later that day, the strike encompassed almost the entire workforce, including the shipyard’s former welder Lech Wałęsa.¹⁶⁵ By that evening, thousands of workers from different factories in the Try-City (Gdańsk, Gdynia, Sopot) had joined the protests, spreading to other cities across Poland in the following days.¹⁶⁶

Although the strike in Gdańsk seemed to initially resemble those previously erupted in the Lublin region, it soon became clear that it would be different. As popular resentment grew significantly stronger, from the outset requests concerning price and

¹⁵⁹ My translation. “Borowczak: byłem tylko ‘zapalnikiem’ strajku w sierpniu 1980 roku,” PAP, Dzieje.pl, Portal Historyczny, last modified August 8, 2016, <https://dzieje.pl/node/46040>

¹⁶⁰ Made of the workers that had met on August 10th: Bogdan Borusewicz, Jerzy Borowczak, Ludwik Prądyński, Bogdan Felski, and Lech Wałęsa

¹⁶¹ To ensure that no one would accidentally disclose something. “Borowczak: byłem tylko ‘zapalnikiem’ strajku w sierpniu 1980 roku,” PAP, Dzieje.pl, Portal Historyczny, last modified August 8, 2016, <https://dzieje.pl/node/46040>

¹⁶² My translation. Borowczak: byłem tylko ‘zapalnikiem’ strajku w sierpniu 1980 roku,” PAP, Dzieje.pl, Portal Historyczny, last modified August 8, 2016, <https://dzieje.pl/node/46040>

¹⁶³ K. Wyszowski, Tygodnik Solidarnosc 20, 1980, quoted in Anthony Kemp-Welch, *Poland under Communism. A Cold War History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008): 238, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511619779.011>

¹⁶⁴ My translation. Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Who had been fired from the shipyard in 1976 because of his involvement in the 1970 protests and his continued involvement in illegal unions and strikes.

¹⁶⁶ Including Szczecin, Warszawa, Kraków, Poznań, Łódź, and Rzeszów.

wage adjustments were overshadowed by social and political demands, such as the erection of a monument for the December 1970 victims.¹⁶⁷ Particularly, the vivid memory of the previous massacre had a self-restraining effect on the actions throughout the protests.¹⁶⁸ Furthermore, rapidly taking the form of an occupation, the events in Gdańsk captured national and international attention thanks to Radio Free Europe and the BBC's coverage.¹⁶⁹ When KOR leaders arrived in Gdańsk to advise the strikers, the three forces that had consistently challenged the PRL were now united: the workers, the intellectuals, and the Church – now moving in solidarity.¹⁷⁰ A Strike Committee (led by Wałęsa) was thus created to represent the workers' demands and mediate with the shipyard's direction, which was forced to negotiate given the production's paralysis. Their demands included the reinstatement of Anna Walentynowicz and Lech Wałęsa; a wage increase of 2000 złoty monthly; the permission to erect a monument dedicated to the workers killed in 1970 and guarantees of safety for all strikers.¹⁷¹ Most importantly, they wanted the right to form their own trade unions.

August 16 would prove pivotal for the strikes. When the shipyard's direction agreed to meet the workers' demands for wage increases and the activists' reinstatement, the Strike Committee (hesitantly) accepted to end the plant's occupation. However, members of other enterprises' strike committees¹⁷² began accusing them of abandoning the smaller plants which would thus be “mercilessly crushed.”¹⁷³ While the resulting chaos prompted Wałęsa to reconsider his position, it

¹⁶⁷ Włodzimierz Borodziej, *Geschichte Polens im 20. Jahrhundert* (München: C.H. Beck, 2010): 360.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid, 361.

¹⁶⁹ Andrzej Paczkowski, *Revolution and Counterrevolution in Poland, 1980-1989. Solidarity, Martial Law, and the End of Communism in Europe* (New York: University of Rochester Press, 2015): 14.

¹⁷⁰ Mieczysław B. Biskupski, *The History of Poland*, 2nd ed. (Santa Barbara, California: Greenwood): 174, EBSCOhost.

¹⁷¹ Anita Prazmowska, *Poland: A Modern History* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010): 207, EBSCOhost.

¹⁷² For instance, the MKS in Szczecin.

¹⁷³ Anthony Kemp-Welch, *Poland under Communism. A Cold War History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008): 242, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511619779.011>

would be the refusal by the committee's women¹⁷⁴ to accept the compromise and their appeal to show solidarity with the other striking plants, to mark a turning point in the protests. At the women's initiative, a campaign was launched to unite all the groups protesting on the coast, thereby resulting in the establishment of the Inter-Enterprise Strike Committee (MKS)¹⁷⁵, named "*Solidarność*".¹⁷⁶ With the aim of coordinating their actions and maintaining order, MKS workers' representatives from the Gdańsk shipyard were thus joined by delegates from other coastal enterprises.¹⁷⁷ These were further supported by advisors and WZZ members¹⁷⁸ with considerable experience and steadfastness, including Jacek Kuroń, Andrzej Gwiazda and his wife Joanna, Bogdan Lis and Bogdan Borusewicz from the KOR. While the party's official trade unions remained passive, the protests had become a broader, unified movement, which altered the course of the August-1980 events.

The following day, a plaque listing twenty-one postulates made by the MKS was placed on Gate n. 2 of the Gdańsk shipyard: selected from hundreds of demands advanced by the MKS's constituent committees, the listed requests raised not only social concerns, but also highly political issues that challenged the core pillars of the communist system.¹⁷⁹ These included the right to strike, the freedom of speech, and the release of political prisoners, as well as wage increases, improved food supply and

¹⁷⁴ Particularly Anna Walentynowicz, Maryla Płońska, and Alina Pieńkowska. Leszek, Pietrzak, *Miasto Wolności. Historia Świdnika od Komunizmu do Wolnej Polski* (Świdnik: Miejsko-Powiatowa Biblioteka Publiczna w Świdniku, 2020), 56,

<http://archiwum.bibliotekaswidnik.pl/index.php/czytaj/nasze-publicacje/861-miasto-wolnosci>

¹⁷⁵ The MKS would be the only one authorized to conduct negotiations with the central authorities, as well as to decide when to end the strike. After the strike's end, the MKS would not cease functioning, but operate by overseeing the implementation of the demands and organize free trade union. Anthony Kemp-Welch, *Poland under Communism. A Cold War History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008): 244, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511619779.011>

¹⁷⁶ Leszek, Pietrzak, *Miasto Wolności. Historia Świdnika od Komunizmu do Wolnej Polski* (Świdnik: Miejsko-Powiatowa Biblioteka Publiczna w Świdniku, 2020), 56, <http://archiwum.bibliotekaswidnik.pl/index.php/czytaj/nasze-publicacje/861-miasto-wolnosci>

¹⁷⁷ Almost simultaneously Szczecin assisted to the establishment of an MKS.

¹⁷⁸ WZZ (Wolne Związki Zawodowe) was the illegal Free Trade Union formed in Gdańsk in April 1978 by a group association with KOR and the RMP (the Young Poland Movement).

¹⁷⁹ Anthony Kemp-Welch, *Poland under Communism. A Cold War History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008): 248, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511619779.011>

support for families with children.¹⁸⁰ In this context however, the first and most important demand was the right to form free trade unions, independent of the authorities: this not only prompted the strike's transformation from a spontaneous protest with local grievances to an organized social movement on the national level,¹⁸¹ but also menaced the PZPR's credibility, which had hitherto claimed to govern in the name of the working class.¹⁸² The following days were thus marked by the authorities' attempts to divide and provoke the workers within the MKS: separate negotiations with individual workplaces were sought, strike committees' members were put under surveillance or arrested by the MO and the SB, their families were threatened, and their apartments raided.¹⁸³ Furthermore, the Ministry of Interior declared a state of "serious threat to domestic security", preparing plans for an eventual use of force.¹⁸⁴ However, not only were they never enforced¹⁸⁵, but also the "psychological warfare" implemented proved largely ineffective. The strikes had indeed remained peaceful and prudent and by August 21, individual committees from over 400 coastal enterprises had joined the MKS¹⁸⁶, thereby virtually paralyzing the entire Baltic region.

On August 23, the government, represented by Deputy Prime Minister Jagielski¹⁸⁷, was thus forced to begin direct negotiations with the Gdańsk MKS¹⁸⁸. In other words, workers had again been accepted as partners in discussion by the communist regime. However, not at the local level as previously in Świdnik but, for

¹⁸⁰ Mieczysław B. Biskupski, *The History of Poland*, 2nd ed. (Santa Barbara, California: Greenwood): 174, EBSCOhost.

¹⁸¹ Anthony Kemp-Welch, *Poland under Communism. A Cold War History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008): 249, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511619779.011>

¹⁸² Leszek Pietrzak, *Miasto Wolności. Historia Świdnika od Komunizmu do Wolnej Polski* (Świdnik: Miejsko-Powiatowa Biblioteka Publiczna w Świdniku, 2020), 57

¹⁸³ One striker (Jan Lityński), under house arrest, was even beaten up.

¹⁸⁴ Known under the name "Lato-80", which means "Summer-80s". Anthony Kemp-Welch, *Poland under Communism. A Cold War History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008): 240, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511619779.011>

¹⁸⁵ Less extreme solutions prevailed among the party members.

¹⁸⁶ Leszek Pietrzak, *Miasto Wolności. Historia Świdnika od Komunizmu do Wolnej Polski* (Świdnik: Miejsko-Powiatowa Biblioteka Publiczna w Świdniku, 2020): 57-58, <http://archiwum.bibliotekaswidnik.pl/index.php/czytaj/nasze-publicacje/861-miasto-wolnosci>

¹⁸⁷ Mieczysław Jagielski.

¹⁸⁸ Time, "Shaking the Foundations of Communism", *Time*, January 5, 1981, accessed April 2, 2025, <https://time.com/archive/6856180/shaking-the-foundations-of-communism/>

the first time, directly by the highest authorities in Warsaw. And while the PZPR's approval of the official trade unions' reform and of the elections of the Strike Committee members had facilitated the end of the Lublin strikes, the context in August was remarkably different. For the coastal workers these proposals were insufficient, insisting instead that new trade unions, independent of the PZPR, had to be created.¹⁸⁹ In the next days, dialogue unfolded in a strained atmosphere, as the strikers' refusal to compromise on trade unions was confronted with the government's insistence on reforming the already existing official ones. Importantly, as protests spread beyond the Coast and deadlock on negotiations continued, authorities were increasingly pressured by the fear of a paralysis extending to the whole country. Meanwhile, the government's inability to restore order, prompted the reorganization of the Politburo which eventually led to Gierek's forced resignation in favor of Stanisław Kania.¹⁹⁰ Significant compromises had therefore become inevitable.

After preliminary concessions for some of the "twenty-one postulates" and in return for the confirmation of the Party's primary political authority, on August 31 the government accepted the most political demands: above all, the formation of self-governing, free trade unions, independent from the state.¹⁹¹ The Gdańsk Agreement was signed, and the strikes were officially over.¹⁹² Accordingly, trade unions would have the right to strike and access to the mass media; political prisoners would be released – though under several conditions – and the public had the possibility to influence economic policy. However, as reported in a KGB instruction to Warsaw in September 1980, the Gdańsk Agreement, which "legalized an anti-socialist opposition" was considered in violation of the Leninist state's core principles. Thus,

¹⁸⁹ Anthony Kemp-Welch, *Poland under Communism. A Cold War History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008): 249, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511619779.011>

¹⁹⁰ In September 1980.

¹⁹¹ Norman Davies, *Heart of Europe: The Past in Poland's Present*, New. Ed (Oxford: OUP Oxford, 2001): 15, EBSCOhost.

¹⁹² Although de facto in some cities they did not immediately cease and continued for some more days. Andrzej Paczkowski, *Revolution and Counterrevolution in Poland, 1980-1989. Solidarity, Martial Law, and the End of Communism in Europe* (New York: University of Rochester Press, 2015): 15.

for Moscow the compromise had merely a temporary character, suggesting that the concessions hitherto made would have been reversed.¹⁹³

While “August Agreements” were signed in different parts of Poland to halt the strikes that had hitherto continued¹⁹⁴, strike committees across the country begun transforming into “Inter-Enterprise Founding Committees”, thereby resulting in a network of regional interfactory committees that represented all factories and state-run institutions.¹⁹⁵ Their leaders were mostly young workers, engineers or lower level bureaucrats, who had become prominent for their strong communication and strategic coordination skills.¹⁹⁶ Only on September 17, when representatives of nearly forty MKZ met in Gdańsk, was a single organization created by their integration into the existing Gdańsk “Inter-factory Founding Committee of Independent Self-Governing Trade Unions” (MKZ NSZZ).

2.2.2 The Registration of *Solidarność* and the Soviet Non-Invasion

Although the events in August 1980 have often been described as the “workers’ revolution against a ‘workers’ state”¹⁹⁷, the aim of “Poland’s revolutionaries” was not to dismantle the Communist state. Rather, from the outset the labor movement distanced itself from political ambitions, stating that it did not want to become a political organization.¹⁹⁸ This was further made clear in the Gdańsk Agreement’s preamble, where the new unions recognized the “leading role” of the Party “in the

¹⁹³ Kramer, Special Working Paper, 35-43, quoted in Anthony Kemp-Welch, *Poland under Communism. A Cold War History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008): 271, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511619779.011>

¹⁹⁴ In Szczecin, Jastrzębie-Zdrój, Dąbrowa Górnicza.

¹⁹⁵ Timothy G. Ash, *The Polish Revolution: Solidarity*, 3rd ed. (London: Yale University Press, 1999): 81. Międzyzakładowe komitety założycielskie, MKZ.

¹⁹⁶ Andrzej Paczkowski, *Revolution and Counterrevolution in Poland, 1980-1989. Solidarity, Martial Law, and the End of Communism in Europe* (New York: University of Rochester Press, 2015): 16.

¹⁹⁷ Timothy G. Ash, *The Polish Revolution: Solidarity*, 3rd ed. (London: Yale University Press, 1999): 73.

¹⁹⁸ David Ost, *Solidarity and the Politics of Anti-Politics. Opposition and Reform in Poland since 1968* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990): 75.

state”.¹⁹⁹ Nevertheless, Solidarity’s “anti-political” approach²⁰⁰ rapidly became outdated and in contrast with the post-August era that had just begun. Once the objective of independent trade unions had been achieved, political changes were in fact needed for the socialist system to enable the functioning of the new trade unions.²⁰¹ Thus, while until the end of 1980 the movement concentrated on establishing the union’s structures within the existing political context, the new year would witness Solidarity’s increasing awareness and ultimate integration of political stances.²⁰² In other words, although unprepared and not planning for governing the country, the massive adherence to the movement and the Communist party’s reluctance to implement reforms, forced it to gradually shift its emphasis from acting as a mere trade union voicing workers’ grievances, to a catalyst of political change.²⁰³

When the strike’s leaders began laying the groundwork for a regional trade union organization, they did not initially aim to establish structures on a national level, but merely to create a trade union for the coastal region. Yet, the overwhelming support for the actions, together with the formation of local NSZZs in numerous cities, had made it impossible for Gdańsk to exclude the rest of the country.²⁰⁴ Hence, especially where strike committees had been created in August, they were transformed into local union founding committees. Furthermore, representatives from each region formed the National Coordinating Commission (KKP)²⁰⁵ empowered only to organize regional committees.²⁰⁶ Solidarity’s structures were thus organized geographically, whereby

¹⁹⁹ Timothy G. Ash, *The Polish Revolution: Solidarity*, 3rd ed. (London: Yale University Press, 1999): 74

²⁰⁰ David Ost, *Solidarity and the Politics of Anti-Politics. Opposition and Reform in Poland since 1968* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990): 76.

²⁰¹ Ibid, 77.

²⁰² Ibid, 78.

²⁰³ Andrzej Paczkowski, *Revolution and Counterrevolution in Poland, 1980-1989. Solidarity, Martial Law, and the End of Communism in Europe* (New York: University of Rochester Press, 2015): 19.

²⁰⁴ Tomasz Kozłowski, “From Strikes to Solidarity: The Diffusion of Protests in Poland in the Summer of 1980,” *East European Politics and Societies and Cultures* 35, no. 4 (November 2021): 1172, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0888325420953483>

²⁰⁵ *Krajowa Komisja Porozumiewawcza*.

²⁰⁶ Andrzej Paczkowski, *Revolution and Counterrevolution in Poland, 1980-1989. Solidarity, Martial Law, and the End of Communism in Europe* (New York: University of Rochester Press, 2015): 16.

almost all previous opposition groups were integrated into the union. During these initial stages, smaller factory representatives sought guidance from larger, more experienced factories and worked to establish ties with Gdańsk, which had emerged as a hub of support and change, and had thus become the emblem of the August protests.²⁰⁷ There, delegations from strike and founding committees from across the country requested instructions and advice, appealing for support from the Gdańsk MKZ in confronting the authorities' oppression.²⁰⁸ Former oppositionists, economists and intellectuals – including Jacek Kuroń, Adam Michnik, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, Edward Lipiński, and Lech Kaczyński²⁰⁹ – played a crucial role in advising Gdańsk when engaging with the authorities.²¹⁰

As Solidarity cells proliferated nationwide and across all sectors of society – from production lines and transport routes to state offices (even reaching courts and ministries), trade centers, universities, artistic spaces and media outlets²¹¹ –, the following months witnessed an extraordinary surge of a newfound civic engagement. Political discussions flourished, factory-halls meetings multiplied, and underground leaflets circulated while independent unions were formed.²¹² Simultaneously, the movement's membership further swelled as the PZPR's rank figures defected under the wave of decreasing confidence and the appeal of democratic ideals.²¹³

Importantly, as the threat of strike became the movement's new weapon to confront the authorities' obstructionism to the agreements' implementation, only in early November did the Polish Supreme Court recognize Solidarity's legal

²⁰⁷ Tomasz Kozłowski, "From Strikes to Solidarity: The Diffusion of Protests in Poland in the Summer of 1980," *East European Politics and Societies and Cultures* 35, no. 4 (November 2021): 1172, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0888325420953483>

²⁰⁸ Ibid, 1173. Incidents of harassment were particularly numerous in the smaller regions, where activists were deficient of the political backing that was provided in larger cities by experts.

²⁰⁹ Had been a KOR activist and at the time was a local lawyer.

²¹⁰ Andrzej Paczkowski, *Revolution and Counterrevolution in Poland, 1980-1989. Solidarity, Martial Law, and the End of Communism in Europe* (New York: University of Rochester Press, 2015): 16.

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² David Ost, *Solidarity and the Politics of Anti-Politics. Opposition and Reform in Poland since 1968* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990): 75.

²¹³ Anthony Kemp-Welch, *Poland under Communism. A Cold War History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008): 286, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511619779.011>

registration.²¹⁴ From that moment, the great players shaping Poland's direction were three: the State, the Church, and *Solidarność*.

Since August 1980, discussions on Moscow's possible military intervention had been engaging the party's highest ranks. For the Soviet leadership, allowing independent trade unions in Poland would have resulted in the working class's fragmentation, on whose unity the Party's rule was in fact based.²¹⁵ In other words, divisions among workers would have threatened the Communists' power foundations, thereby challenging their authority in the society and the government.²¹⁶ And while the political-risk analyses conducted by a specially-tasked committee²¹⁷ from Moscow had been searching for ways to stop the workers' movement, a definitive decision to invade Poland was never taken, neither in the final months of 1980, nor throughout 1981.

Conversely, from the outset of the work stoppages in early July, Washington's predominantly view considered a Soviet military intervention to crush *Solidarność* to be highly likely.²¹⁸ This resulted in the Carter administration's warnings to the Kremlin, highlighting the "disastrous consequences" that Moscow's armed intervention would have had for the European *détente*.²¹⁹ For Zbigniew Brzezinski, the US National Security Adviser, the Kremlin was merely giving Warsaw some time to find a domestic solution to their political crisis.²²⁰ For instance, even before Solidarity was legalized, the Polish military had begun top-secret preparations for the imposition

²¹⁴ Grzegorz Ekiert, *The State against Society. Political Crises and their Aftermath in East Central Europe* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996): 238.

²¹⁵ Anthony Kemp-Welch, *Poland under Communism. A Cold War History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008): 270, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511619779.011>

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ James Graham Wilson, *The Triumph of Improvisation. Gorbachev's Adaptability, Reagan's Engagement, and the End of the Cold War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014): 49. Including Andropov, Ustinov, and Gromyko.

²¹⁸ Ibid, 267.

²¹⁹ Timothy G. Ash, *The Polish Revolution: Solidarity*, 3rd ed. (London: Yale University Press, 1999): 100.

²²⁰ Anthony Kemp-Welch, *Poland under Communism. A Cold War History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008): 274, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511619779.011>

of martial law.²²¹ While Moscow pressured Warsaw to domestically solve the crisis by threatening to reduce its supplies of fuels and raw materials, Poland's significant economic dependence on the West – and the disastrous impact that a stoppage of the hitherto granted financial assistance could have had – was a critical factor indefinitely delaying Kania's decision to military intervene.

During a bilateral meeting of Polish and Soviet leaders in October 1980, Brezhnev underscored how the key exacerbating issue had been Poland's failure to eliminate the "the nation's enemies" who were instigating a "counter-revolution".²²² Although the Communist leadership's aim was to pressure their Polish counterparts by highlighting how perilous the situation was, Moscow was in fact divided on how to proceed. For instance, whilst Andropov had from the outset refrained from proposing military means, the Soviet Minister of Defense Ustinov opted in fact for the latter, highlighting how "the Northern Group was ready and in full military preparedness".²²³ Especially in early December, when NATO sources announced that approximately half a million Warsaw Pact troops were ready for manoeuvres at the East German and Czechoslovak borders, it seemed like the Soviet plan for military invasion was about to be implemented.²²⁴

During the Warsaw Pact summit of December 4-5, Kania strongly argued against Moscow's military intervention – highlighting its effect of creating greater social unrest and a nationwide uprising – and emphasizing that its costs would certainly outweigh any benefits it might have had.²²⁵ After being reassured by Kania

²²¹ Ryszard Kukliński, "Wojna z narodem widziana od środka", *Kultura*, April 1987, quoted in Ibid, 279

²²² Anthony Kemp-Welch, *Poland under Communism. A Cold War History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008): 282, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511619779.011>

²²³ Kramer, Special Working Paper, CPSU Politburo (October 29, 1980): 44-54, quoted in Anthony Kemp-Welch, *Poland under Communism. A Cold War History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008): 282, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511619779.011>

²²⁴ Timothy G. Ash, *The Polish Revolution: Solidarity*, 3rd ed. (London: Yale University Press, 1999): 106.

²²⁵ "Wejdą nie wejdą" (Warsaw, 1993), quoted in Anthony Kemp-Welch, *Poland under Communism. A Cold War History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008): 299, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511619779.011>

about the unquestionable authority of the Communist power, Brezhnev ambiguously agreed on not entering Poland: “alright, we will not go in. But if complications occur, we will go in”.²²⁶ The military intervention was thus not cancelled, but rather conditionally postponed. However, throughout 1981 the Soviet leadership increasingly acknowledged the limitations of such a direct intervention: Western sanctions would have not only resulted in the further deterioration of the USSR’s economy – with its military drained in Afghanistan –, but also in the rupture of the fragile *détente* so hardly achieved with the US.²²⁷

Although the invasion scare would persist throughout the first months of the new year, already on January 13, 1981, during a meeting of the Warsaw Pact Supreme Command it was stated that the Polish crisis had to be resolved by the Polish Communists themselves.²²⁸ Thus, the Party’s and the military’s more pragmatic figures – who argued for entrusting Jaruzelski with finding a domestic solution – seem to have ultimately prevailed over the more ideological members – advocating for the Brezhnev doctrine’s implementation.²²⁹ And yet, developments in the first months of 1981 strengthened the impression that an intervention was still possible, likely as part of the Soviet initial strategy to put pressure on the Polish regime to solve their crisis internally. For instance, minutes of a Politburo session in late January recorded Ustinov²³⁰ insisting on the “need to constantly exert pressure on the Polish leadership and continue checking on them,” particularly by bolstering maneuvers and making it

²²⁶ Stanisław Kania, *Zatrzymać konfrontację* (Warsaw, 1991): 91, quoted in in Anthony Kemp-Welch, *Poland under Communism. A Cold War History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008): 298, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511619779.011>

²²⁷ Vojtech Mastny, “The Soviet Non-Invasion of Poland in 1980/81 and the End of the Cold War”, Working Paper 23, Cold War International History Project (September 1998): 29, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/>

²²⁸ Vojtech Mastny, Malcom Byrne, ed. *A Cardboard Castle? An Inside History of the Warsaw Pact, 1955-1991* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2005): xlii.

²²⁹ Timothy G. Ash, *The Polish Revolution: Solidarity*, 3rd ed. (London: Yale University Press, 1999): 106-107.

²³⁰ Minister of Defence of the Soviet Union from 1976 until 1984.

clear that they were ready to act.²³¹ Furthermore, in February, a system of command, control, and communication was established at Legnica – a Soviet base in Poland since the end of World War II – and intelligence teams were sent to evaluate the attitude among the Polish military.²³² Certainly, the combined *Soyuz* and *Druzhba* exercises which started in March on East German and Polish territories reinforced the invasion scare. It would be following the Bydgoszcz Crisis and the end of the *Soyuz* maneuvers in late April that Moscow’s renunciation of a military option would become clear. From that moment, the Kremlin’s actions would focus on taking “all necessary measures to ensure that [their] Polish friends acted on their own”.²³³

2.3 August 1980 in Świdnik and the Formation of Solidarity’s Structures

In Świdnik as in most factories in the Lublin region, the atmosphere of fervent discussions and criticism that had emerged following the July strikes continued to prevail. This was mainly fueled by the fact that prices were rising faster than wages as well as by the persistent store shortages, particularly the insufficient supply of meat.²³⁴

Frustration over the working and pay conditions was demonstrated already in early August: on the 6th, nearly 600 workers stopped operating, demanding payment for July’s four days of strike as well as the provision of meat sales within the factory. After tensions were eased, three days later discontent re-emerged on pay-day, after new wage adjustments had been revealed.²³⁵ As reported by local authorities, on

²³¹ Minutes of CPSU politburo session, 22 January 1981, copy, NSA, quoted in Vojtech Mastny, “The Soviet Non-Invasion of Poland in 1980/81 and the End of the Cold War”, Working Paper 23, Cold War International History Project (September 1998): 18, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/>

²³² Vojtech Mastny, “The Soviet Non-Invasion of Poland in 1980/81 and the End of the Cold War”, Working Paper 23, *Cold War International History Project* (September 1998): 17, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/>

²³³ Minutes of CPSU politburo session, 2 April 1981, copy, NSA, quoted in Vojtech Mastny, “The Soviet Non-Invasion of Poland in 1980/81 and the End of the Cold War”, Working Paper 23, Cold War International History Project (September 1998): 18, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/>

²³⁴ Piotr R. Jankowski, *Świdnicki Lipiec* (Świdnik: Urząd Miasta Świdnik, 2011): 45, <https://bibliotekaswidnik.pl/strona-3431-publicacje-dotyczace-historii-miejsca-i.html>

²³⁵ Ibid.

August 11, instructions on how to organize strikes in workplaces appeared on the opposition's leaflets – left in the WSK workers' apartments' mailboxes – and in the *Robotnik*²³⁶ newspaper.²³⁷ Although “all workplaces were operating”, “an atmosphere of discussion” begun raising the security services' attention: “a growing number of statements expressing concerns over the events on the Coast, as well as increased activity of anti-socialist elements” dominated “meetings between the provincial leadership, the executive committees of workplace and university party organizations and local activists [...]”.²³⁸ On August 26, nearly 3,000 WSK employees stopped working in support of the strikers in Gdańsk: in a petition addressed to the PZPR's Provincial Committee, they called for the announcement of “the WSK workforce's solidarity with the Coast” as well the disclosure of the list of twenty-one demands on television and the central press.²³⁹ Then they resumed working, warning the authorities of a renewed “solidarity action with the Coast” if their demands had been ignored. Indeed, the lack of response prompted all the WSK's departments to resume the strike the next day.²⁴⁰ Similar trends were observed in other factories of the Lublin region:

²³⁶ The *Robotnik* (“Worker”) was an underground newspaper first published in 1894 by the then illegal Polish Socialist Party. The name “Robotnik” was then deliberately used by a group collaborating with the KOR, to name their biweekly magazine in September 1977, which would be published until 1981.

²³⁷ See appendix, document 4a and 4b. Ryszard Najda, Wydział Organizacyjny KC PZPR Sektor Informacji, Informacja o ukazaniu się ulotek w Świdniku woj. Lubelskie (August 11, 1980), Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza Komitet Wojewódzki w Lublinie Archiwum, Wydział Polityczno-Organizacyjny, Informacje bieżące o nastrojach i sytuacji społeczno-politycznej 1980, Sygn. 100/VII/31 t.19 (1075), telex n. 197, Archiwum Państwowe w Lublinie, accessed personally on March 25, 2025.

²³⁸ Andrzej Szpringer, Wydział Organizacyjny KC PZPR Sektor Informacji Partyjnej, Informacja o sytuacji społeczno-politycznej w województwie lubelskim w dniu 22 bm. W godzinach popołudniowych (August 22, 1980), Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza Komitet Wojewódzki w Lublinie Archiwum, Wydział Polityczno-Organizacyjny, Informacje bieżące o nastrojach i sytuacji społeczno-politycznej 1980, Sygn. 100/VII/31 t.19 (1075), telex n. 209, Archiwum Państwowe w Lublinie, accessed personally on March 25, 2025.

²³⁹ Document 5a, 5b and 5c. Andrzej Szpringer, Wydział Organizacyjny KC PZPR Sektor Informacji, Informacja o aktualnej sytuacji w działaniach politycznych w województwie lubelskim (August 26, 1980), Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza Komitet Wojewódzki w Lublinie Archiwum, Wydział Polityczno-Organizacyjny, Informacje bieżące o nastrojach i sytuacji społeczno-politycznej 1980, Sygn. 100/VII/31 t.19 (1075), telex n. 212-213, Archiwum Państwowe w Lublinie, accessed personally on March 25, 2025.

²⁴⁰ Piotr R. Jankowski, *Świdnicki Lipiec* (Świdnik: Urząd Miasta Świdnik, 2011): 47, https://bibliotekaswidnik.pl/strona-3431-publikacje_dotyczace_historii_miejsca_i.html

as leaflets by the Inter-Factory Strike Committee in Gdynia and Gdańsk promoted the workers' demands in Lublin, "individuals returning from vacations on the coast passed information about the [existing] strike situation there".²⁴¹

Only then did the WSK's director Jan Czogała and Andrzej Szpringer – a representative of the PZPR's Provincial Committee – accept to negotiate with the Strike Committee. The resulting agreement recognized, *inter-alia*, the Strike Committee as "the legitimate representative of the workforce for holding discussions with the factory direction and the authorities"; the Strike Committee's ability to ensure democratic elections for new trade union leaders at the WSK; as well as the authorities' commitment to inform the Committee about the twenty-one demands of the Coast.²⁴² Work was thus resumed that same day in the late afternoon.

It would be the Gdańsk Agreement signed at the end of August to mark a turning point in the country's history. Despite Świdnik's experience in self-organization and peaceful protests, the accords signed on August 31 at the Gdańsk shipyard constituted a further empowerment to the small industrial town – and to others across the country – to coordinate its workforce and strive for reforms.

However, strike committees still needed to be prepared for the task of creating the new union's structures. On September 5, a delegation from the WSK plant, together with others from the largest workplaces in the Lublin region²⁴³, went to Gdańsk for specific instructions: Antoni Grzegorzczak, Zygmunt Karwowski, Józef Kępski, Ryszard Kuć and Zbigniew Puczek met with the Gdańsk MKS' activists, including

²⁴¹ Andrzej Szpringer, Wydział Organizacyjny KC PZPR Sektor Informacji, Informacja o wypowiedziach i pytaniach podczas spotkań z aktywnymi w województwie lubelskim na temat treści IV plenum KC (August 26, 1980), Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza Komitet Wojewódzki w Lublinie Archiwum, Wydział Polityczno-Organizacyjny, Informacje bieżące o nastrojach i sytuacji społeczno-politycznej 1980, Sygn. 100/VII/31 t.19 (1075), teleks n. 214, Archiwum Państwowe w Lublinie, accessed personally on March 25, 2025.

²⁴² Piotr R. Jankowski, Świdnicki Lipiec (Świdnik: Urząd Miasta Świdnik, 2011): 47, <https://bibliotekaswidnik.pl/strona-3431-publicacje-dotyczace-historii-miejsca-i.html>

²⁴³ But also, the Heavy Truck Factory and the PKP Locomotive Depot in Lublin.

Lech Wałęsa and Anna Walentynowicz, and received materials and guidelines – albeit general – for establishing new structures in Świdnik.²⁴⁴

Upon their return, during a meeting held on September 8, delegates highlighted the instructions they had received from Wałęsa, including the fact that “two unions should exist – the current one and the new independent union – and they should cooperate with each other”; “to avoid disorder and chaos, the formation of independent trade unions should be agreed with the management”; “elections must be democratic and secret”; “full-time employees of the new unions will be paid from the funds of independent trade unions”, but “if initially there are no funds available in Świdnik, employees will receive support from Gdańsk”. The following day the WSK Strike Committee (KS) was turned into the “Founding (Plant) Committee (ZKZ) of the Independent Self-Governing Trade Unions” (NSZZ)²⁴⁵, consisting of 64 members and led by a presidium of seven, which included: Zofia Bartkiewicz (chairwoman), Z. Puczek (vice-chairman), Z. Karwowski (vice-chairman), A. Grzegorzczak, J. Kępski, R. Kuć and Roman Olcha.²⁴⁶ Once again, building on its pioneering role in July, the WSK was emerging as a leading center for Solidarity’s development.²⁴⁷ An extensive informational campaign was thus initiated, introducing the proposed rules for the new union and prompting an overwhelming majority of employees to become members.²⁴⁸

On September 10, under the town’s ZKZ inspiration, Świdnik hosted a meeting of representatives from 28 workplaces in the Lublin Voivodeship²⁴⁹, which led to the

²⁴⁴ Leszek Pietrzak, *Miasto Wolności. Historia Świdnika od Komunistów do Wolnej Polski* (Świdnik: Miejsko-Powiatowa Biblioteka Publiczna w Świdniku, 2020): 59,

<http://archiwum.bibliotekaswidnik.pl/index.php/czytaj/nasze-publicacje/861-miasto-wolnosci>

²⁴⁵ *Zakładowy Komitet Założycielski*, which can be translated as Founding Plant Committee or just Founding Committee.

²⁴⁶ Marcin Dąbrowski, Encyklopedia Solidarności, “Wytwórnia Sprzętu Komunikacyjnego PZL Świdnik,”

<https://encysol.pl/es/encyklopedia/>

²⁴⁷ Marcin Dąbrowski, *NSZZ Solidarność. Region Środkowo-Wschodni w latach 1980-1981* (Lublin: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2014): 135.

²⁴⁸ Leszek Pietrzak, *Miasto Wolności. Historia Świdnika od Komunistów do Wolnej Polski* (Świdnik: Miejsko-Powiatowa Biblioteka Publiczna w Świdniku, 2020): 59,

<http://archiwum.bibliotekaswidnik.pl/index.php/czytaj/nasze-publicacje/861-miasto-wolnosci>

²⁴⁹ For instance, aside from the WSK Świdnik, the Lublin Trucks’ Factory and PKP Hub, the Chełm Locomotive Depot, the “Agromet” Agricultural Machinery Factory in Lublin, the WZSR Mechanical Plants in Lubartów, the Lublin Pharmaceutical Plant “Polfa”, Polmozbyt Majdanek.

establishment of the Inter-factory Central-Eastern Founding Committee of Independent Self-Governing Trade Unions, with headquarters in Lublin.²⁵⁰

Świdnik's trade union organization had thus become a model influencing other workplaces. As founding meetings were organized, employees were introduced to the purposes and rules of the Inter-factory Central-East Founding Committee.²⁵¹ Particularly decisive in the establishment of the new union's structures in Lublin (and across Poland), would be the Gdańsk national congress of NSZZ founding committees' delegates on September 17. That day, representatives from over thirty centers²⁵² met to coordinate their regional activities and form a common nationwide union. The Independent Self-Governing Trade Union "Solidarity" (NSZZ) led by Lech Wałęsa was thus born.²⁵³ The adoption of a federated structure enabled the national trade union to grant local affiliates greater flexibility while (initially) preventing internal divisions. By then, despite not being officially registered, *Solidarność* counted nearly four million members, which underscored the speed and magnitude of the movement's development and aggravated the Soviet leadership's concerns about its wider implications.²⁵⁴

2.3.1 Świdnik as Active *Solidarność* center and its Information Network

By early October 1980, 80 percent of the WSK workforce had joined NSZZ *Solidarność*, thereby making Świdnik one of the most dynamic centers of Solidarity

²⁵⁰ The vice-chairman was Ryszard Kuć, elected to represent Świdnik's WSK. The Committee was also known as MKZ "S" of the Central-Eastern Region. MKZ "S", for *Międzyzakładowy Komitet Założycielski*. Marcin Dąbrowski, *Encyklopedia Solidarności*, "Wytwórnia Sprzętu Komunikacyjnego PZL Świdnik," <https://encysol.pl/es/encyklopedia/>.

²⁵¹ Piotr R. Jankowski, *Świdnicki Lipiec* (Świdnik: Urząd Miasta Świdnik, 2011): 50, https://bibliotekaswidnik.pl/strona-3431-publicacje_dotyczace_historii_miejsca_i.html

²⁵² Świdnik was represented by Ryszard Kuć.

²⁵³ Leszek Pietrzak, *Miasto Wolności. Historia Świdnika od Komunistów do Wolnej Polski* (Świdnik: Miejsko-Powiatowa Biblioteka Publiczna w Świdniku, 2020): 60, <http://archiwum.bibliotekaswidnik.pl/index.php/czytaj/nasze-publicacje/861-miasto-wolnosci>

²⁵⁴ Mieczysław B. Biskupski, *The History of Poland*, 2nd ed. (Santa Barbara, California: Greenwood): 176, EBSCOhost.

in the Lublin Voivodeship.²⁵⁵ When a nationwide four-hour strike was announced on October 3 to ensure the enforcement of the agreed-upon pay rises, the national mobilization's scale even exceeded that of August²⁵⁶ – in Świdnik nearly all WSK employees stopped working.²⁵⁷ Indeed, the government's initial underestimation of the workers' resolve and thus, the agreement's non-implementation, turned the new union's first collective action in their "most successful strike".²⁵⁸ Most importantly, its coordination and widespread participation, signaled the new trade union's role and increasing power.

Świdnik's *Solidarność* would prove remarkably active also in the last months of 1980. Particularly, the town's union structures would be among the first ones to create their own information base. At the beginning of the month, the first issue of the WSK's newspaper was published, initially named "Union Paper – Plant Bulletin of the Founding Committee of NSZZ *Solidarność*".²⁵⁹ Its aim was to ensure that both the town's workers and residents had access to credible information on the factory's life and community, thereby avoiding that the content was distorted or censored by the authorities.²⁶⁰ Later renamed "*Groń*"²⁶¹ the newspaper, whose print reached the 4,000 copies in March 1981, remained under Alfred Bondos' responsibility until martial law

²⁵⁵ Piotr R. Jankowski, *Świdnicki Lipiec* (Świdnik: Urząd Miasta Świdnik, 2011): 52, https://bibliotekaswidnik.pl/strona-3431-publicacje_dotyczace_historii_miejsca_i.html

²⁵⁶ Tomasz Kozłowski, "From Strikes to Solidarity: The Diffusion of Protests in Poland in the Summer of 1980," *East European Politics and Societies and Cultures* 35, no. 4 (November 2021): 1173-74, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0888325420953483>

²⁵⁷ Piotr R. Jankowski, *Świdnicki Lipiec* (Świdnik: Urząd Miasta Świdnik, 2011): 52, https://bibliotekaswidnik.pl/strona-3431-publicacje_dotyczace_historii_miejsca_i.html

²⁵⁸ Joanna Gwiazda, Andrzej Gwiazda and Remigiusz Okraska, Gwiazdozbiór w "Solidarności": Joanna i Andrzej Gwiazdowie w rozmowie z Remigiuszem Okraską (Łódź: Obywatel, 2009), quoted in Tomasz Kozłowski, "From Strikes to Solidarity: The Diffusion of Protests in Poland in the Summer of 1980," *East European Politics and Societies and Cultures* 35, no. 4 (November 2021): 1174, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0888325420953483>

²⁵⁹ Pismo Związkowe – Gazetka Zakładowa Zakładowego Komitetu Założycielskiego NSZZ "Solidarność".

²⁶⁰ Leszek Pietrzak, *Miasto Wolności. Historia Świdnika od Komunistów do Wolnej Polski* (Świdnik: Miejsko-Powiatowa Biblioteka Publiczna w Świdniku, 2020): 61, <http://archiwum.bibliotekaswidnik.pl/index.php/czytaj/nasze-publicacje/861-miasto-wolnosci>

²⁶¹ *Biuletyn Związkowy Solidarność Zakładowej Komisji Związkowej PZL-WSK Świdnik*. See appendix, figure 10.

was declared.²⁶² He was also tasked with broadcasting the union's programs over the WSK' radio²⁶³, preparing 15-min talks which were aired almost daily and became one of the main sources of information at the time. As recalled by Marian Król, who became involved in the WSK' radio in 1989-90, "the broadcasts were one of the few ways to shape public awareness, because censorship was very strong." Furthermore, "following the introduction of martial law, thanks to Bondos' work Solidarity could organize underground activities because the broadcasts had prepared us for such situations."²⁶⁴ That same month, local Solidarity strongly committed to organize the town's first democratic union elections, resulting in freely elected Departmental Union Organizations and Circles.²⁶⁵

From early December, the cancellation of the movie "Workers '80"²⁶⁶ became the focus of discussions among the town's workers. On December 9, the First Secretary of the PZPR Central Committee received a communication from the WSK's Solidarity expressing "its indignation" and highlighting "the serious violation of the Gdańsk Agreement" that this represented. Finally, they demanded "that the screening of the movie be reinstated on schedule and without censorship cuts".²⁶⁷ On December 16, to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the events on the Baltic Coast, the WSK's and other regional large factories' Solidarity sent representatives to participate at the Gdańsk inaugurating ceremony of the Shipyard Workers' Monument.²⁶⁸ Notably, on December 18, the First Statutory Election Conference for the union's authorities was

²⁶² Piotr R. Jankowski, *Świdnicki Lipiec* (Świdnik: Urząd Miasta Świdnik, 2011): 53-54, https://bibliotekaswidnik.pl/strona-3431-publicacje_dotyczace_historii_miejsca_i.html

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ Marian Król, interview by Viktoria Mróz, Świdnik, March 25, 2025.

²⁶⁵ Ibid. *Wydziałowe Organizacje Związkowe and Samodzielne Wydziałowe Kola Związkowe.*

²⁶⁶ *Robotnicy '80.*

²⁶⁷ Andrzej Szpringer, Wydział organizacyjny KC PZPR sektor informacji, Informacja o aktualnej sytuacji społeczno-politycznej w wojew. lubelskim (December 9, 1980), Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza Komitet Wojewódzki w Lublinie Archiwum, Wydział Polityczno-Organizacyjny, Materiały z zakładów pracy związane z pracą komisji Partyjno-Rządowej 1980, Sygn. 100/VII/31 t.21 A (1079), teleks n. 396, Archiwum Państwowe w Lublinie, accessed personally March 25, 2025.

²⁶⁸ Leszek Pietrzak, *Miasto Wolności. Historia Świdnika od Komunistów do Wolnej Polski* (Świdnik: Miejsko-Powiatowa Biblioteka Publiczna w Świdniku, 2020): 62, <http://archiwum.bibliotekaswidnik.pl/index.php/czytaj/nasze-publicacje/861-miasto-wolnosci>

held in the in the WSK's sports hall: with the participation of approximately 281 delegates representing nearly 8,000 unionist from the WSK, the plant's new Union Commission – which included Ms. Bartkiewicz, Alfred Bondos, Ryszard Kuć and Andrzej Sokołowski – saw as its new chairman Z. Puczek.²⁶⁹ Among the concerns raised during the conference figured occupational health and safety, alcoholism in the factory as well as youth education.²⁷⁰ While ending with a resolution criticizing the authorities' "waste of the workers' massive efforts in implementing production plans" and "their erroneous decisions in the economic and social spheres", the conference defined the course and character of Świdnik's Solidarity's future activities.²⁷¹ At the end, as for all important events in the town, Father Hryniewicz celebrated a Holy Mass especially dedicated to the newly elected Union Committee²⁷², once again signaling how faith was strongly entrenched in the residents' everyday life.

2.4 The Dawn of Martial Law

2.4.1 The Persistence of the "Polish Crisis" and Świdnik's Solidarity Activism

A distinctive relationship had thus developed between the PZPR and *Solidarność*. Despite the initial reluctance of the union's leaders to become involved in government decision-making, Solidarity's power and eagerness to address Poland's persistent crisis, required it to determine the degree of its engagement with the authorities.²⁷³

²⁶⁹ Piotr R. Jankowski, *Świdnicki Lipiec* (Świdnik: Urząd Miasta Świdnik, 2011): 60, https://bibliotekaswidnik.pl/strona-3431-publicacje_dotyczace_historii_miejsca_i.html

²⁷⁰ Wydział organizacyjny KC PZPR sektor informacji, Informacja o aktualnej sytuacji społeczno-politycznej w województwie lubelskim (December 19, 1980), Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza Komitet Wojewódzki w Lublinie Archiwum, Wydział Polityczno-Organizacyjny, Materiały z zakładów pracy związane z pracą komisji Partyjno-Rządowej 1980, Sygn. 100/VII/31 t.21 A (1079), teleks n. 411, Archiwum Państwowe w Lublinie, accessed personally March 25, 2025.

²⁷¹ Ibid.

²⁷² Leszek Pietrzak, *Miasto Wolności. Historia Świdnika od Komunizmu do Wolnej Polski* (Świdnik: Miejsko-Powiatowa Biblioteka Publiczna w Świdniku, 2020): 63, <http://archiwum.bibliotekaswidnik.pl/index.php/czytaj/nasze-publicacje/861-miasto-wolnosci>

²⁷³ Anita Prazmowska, *Poland: A Modern History* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010): 207, EBSCOhost.

Thus, while the union achieved its aims through selective demonstrations and threats of a general strike that could paralyze the country, the Party was forced to gradually address Solidarity's demands.²⁷⁴

The period from August 1980 until winter 1981 would therefore be marked by a power struggle between the two and emerging internal tensions within Solidarity, further aggravated by the persistent economic decline and shortages.²⁷⁵ Importantly, the Party's supposedly more conciliatory stance, in fact resulted in the creation of a special committee²⁷⁶ mandated with the organization of Solidarity's repression.²⁷⁷ With the Soviet army on manoeuvres in early December 1980, Poland was gradually becoming the epicenter of a profound international crisis.²⁷⁸ Particularly, the perceived risk of the Kremlin's military intervention prompted the PZPR to convince Soviet authorities that Solidarity would have been stopped by using domestic forces rather than Warsaw Pact units.²⁷⁹

The same developments that aggravated the already tumultuous beginning of 1981 also constituted the first of numerous rifts that would lead to the declaration of martial law at the end of that year. Indeed, the protracted struggle for the legal recognition of Rural Solidarity²⁸⁰ marked by the peasants' occupation-strikes in southeastern Poland²⁸¹ in early January, culminated in a major crisis in March. During a session of the Provincial National Council²⁸² attended by local authorities and Solidarity members in the town of Bydgoszcz, the latter were brutally beaten by militia and SB officers. Marking the first incident of violence against Solidarity, the

²⁷⁴ For instance, agreeing on Solidarity's right to issue a mass circulation newspaper, as well as its appearance on radio and television. Mieczysław B. Biskupski, *The History of Poland*, 2nd ed. (Santa Barbara, California: Greenwood): 176, EBSCOhost.

²⁷⁵ Anita Prazmowska, *Poland: A Modern History* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010): 213, EBSCOhost.

²⁷⁶ Among whose members was General Wojciech Jaruzelski.

²⁷⁷ Mieczysław B. Biskupski, *The History of Poland*, 2nd ed. (Santa Barbara, California: Greenwood): 176, EBSCOhost.

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

²⁷⁹ Ibid, 177.

²⁸⁰ *Solidarność Wiejska*, Rural Solidarity was the peasants' union (NSZZ RI).

²⁸¹ Mainly in the cities of Rzeszów, Nowy Sącz and Ustrzyki.

²⁸² Held to discuss the protests that peasants had started on March 16 against the delayed registration of NSZZ RI.

“Bydgoszcz Crisis” was considered as another provocation by the Communist regime, which culminated in a nationwide four-hour strike on March 27.²⁸³ While it demonstrated Solidarity’s capability of paralyzing the country, it also further escalated tensions with the authorities.

The mounting crisis would become even more visible throughout the summer months. While further protests against the government’s cut of meat rations destabilized the country, pressures within Solidarity to move beyond the mere trade union activity increasingly divided the movement. Particularly, Solidarity’s struggle for self-definition demonstrated the complex circumstances that had emerged after August 1980. First, *Solidarność* difficult role as a cushion between the increasingly radical demands of the society and the authorities; then, the preservation of the union as a mass movement which was however “self-limiting”; lastly, preventing the social frustration to escalate.²⁸⁴

This general tense atmosphere was also reflected in Solidarity’s regional structures and in small towns like Świdnik. Since January 1981, frictions had arisen around different issues, including the WSK’s office rooms; the question of free Saturdays; as well as the hitherto unfulfilled demand of pay rise. Already on January 5, members of the WSK’s Solidarity commission together with several workers, entered the plant’s premises used by the (Party’s) metalworkers’ trade union and threatened that if they didn’t leave the rooms to Solidarity, they would seize the premises by force.²⁸⁵ Their first such action proved to be successful when the direction accepted their request and allocated other rooms to the PZPR’s representatives. Hostilities with the communist authorities concerned as well their promise of “free Saturdays for all workers”, which had been stipulated by an agreement²⁸⁶ in early

²⁸³ Andrzej Paczkowski and Malcom Byrne, eds. *From Solidarity to Martial Law: The Polish Crisis of 1980-81. A Documentary History* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2007): 35-36, <https://doi-org.uaccess.univie.ac.at/10.1515/9786155211157>

²⁸⁴ Ibid, 14-15.

²⁸⁵ Piotr R. Jankowski, *Świdnicki Lipiec* (Świdnik: Urząd Miasta Świdnik, 2011): 61, https://bibliotekaswidnik.pl/strona-3431-publicacje_dotyczace_historii_miejsca_i.html

²⁸⁶ The Jastrzębie Agreement of September 3, 1980.

September. Not only were the government's solutions in breach of their commitments, but they also deliberately refrained from consulting Solidarity leaders. Thus, following the instructions of the National Coordinating Commission²⁸⁷ and Lublin's Inter-factory Founding Committee (MKZ), on January 9, WSK's Solidarity passed a resolution establishing all Saturdays in January as non-working days.²⁸⁸ Furthermore, the union was confident in its capacity to exercise the right to strike in case disciplinary actions had been taken by the factory's management.²⁸⁹ Remarkably, the WSK employees' request did not merely concern free Saturdays; rather, they insisted the government recognized all workers' "dignity and honor", while acknowledging their determination not to permit any further erosion of these values.²⁹⁰ As debates on the issue continued throughout the month and other factories across the region joined Świdnik, a flyer signed by Wałęsa and supporting free Saturdays began to circulate at the WSK.²⁹¹ This culminated, on Saturday, January 24, in a mass boycott against the Party's delayed implementation of the August Agreements, with workers from Świdnik – along with others from major factories in Poland – refusing to come to work.²⁹² Not less important was the workers' discontent over the PZPR's unmet commitment for wage increases. Despite the July 1980 agreement, which stipulated a 600 złoty pay rise beginning in January 1981, Warsaw indicated that the increase was contingent on available wage fund reserves – in short, no adjustment could be made.²⁹³ Despite the directions' declarations that "the matter would be resolved", at the end of

²⁸⁷ *Krajowa Komisja Porozumiewawcza*.

²⁸⁸ Leszek Pietrzak, *Miasto Wolności. Historia Świdnika od Komunistów do Wolnej Polski* (Świdnik: Miejsko-Powiatowa Biblioteka Publiczna w Świdniku, 2020): 65, <http://archiwum.bibliotekaswidnik.pl/index.php/czytaj/nasze-publicacje/861-miasto-wolnosci>

²⁸⁹ Piotr R. Jankowski, *Świdnicki Lipiec* (Świdnik: Urząd Miasta Świdnik, 2011): 62, https://bibliotekaswidnik.pl/strona-3431-publicacje_dotyczace_historii_miejsca_i.html

²⁹⁰ "Pismo Związkowe ZKZ 'Solidarność' PZL-WSK Świdnik", n.12, (1981): 2-3, quoted in Ibid.

²⁹¹ Piotr R. Jankowski, *Świdnicki Lipiec* (Świdnik: Urząd Miasta Świdnik, 2011): 63, https://bibliotekaswidnik.pl/strona-3431-publicacje_dotyczace_historii_miejsca_i.html

²⁹² Andrzej Paczkowski and Malcom Byrne, eds. *From Solidarity to Martial Law: The Polish Crisis of 1980-81. A Documentary History* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2007): xxxvi, <https://doi-org.uaccess.univie.ac.at/10.1515/9786155211157>

²⁹³ Piotr R. Jankowski, *Świdnicki Lipiec* (Świdnik: Urząd Miasta Świdnik, 2011): 62, https://bibliotekaswidnik.pl/strona-3431-publicacje_dotyczace_historii_miejsca_i.html

January the WSK's Solidarity commission directly appealed to the State Council. In an open letter, the commission articulated all expectations of Świdnik's union, accusing the Party of the lack of progress in the August agreements' implementation: key demands including free-Saturdays, access to radio and televisions, as well as changes to the laws on censorship and trade unions, had remained unimplemented.²⁹⁴ Ultimately, under Solidarity's national call, the union's WSK branch declared their readiness to strike on February 4, culminating five days later in a one-hour work stoppage.²⁹⁵

Throughout the month, the WSK unionist would further join campaigns to support "Rural Solidarity's" protests, for instance by hanging over the main gate a banner stating "*Long live Solidarity between City and Countryside – Solidarity of Workers and Farmers*".²⁹⁶ On February 17, the WSK's radio broadcast the first episode of a series produced by Solidarity, including interviews with Wałęsa, who stated that the union recognized the farmers and spoke about the MKZ's internal divisions – which he admitted to exist.²⁹⁷ Indeed, as highlighted by Solidarity's National Commission, the uncontrolled strikes erupting across the country were threatening to fragment the movement in different regional organizations and ultimately result in its destruction.²⁹⁸

²⁹⁴ Leszek Pietrzak, *Miasto Wolności. Historia Świdnika od Komunizmu do Wolnej Polski* (Świdnik: Miejsko-Powiatowa Biblioteka Publiczna w Świdniku, 2020): 65,

<http://archiwum.bibliotekaswidnik.pl/index.php/czytaj/nasze-publicacje/861-miasto-wolnosci>

²⁹⁵ Piotr R. Jankowski, *Świdnicki Lipiec* (Świdnik: Urząd Miasta Świdnik, 2011): 64, https://bibliotekaswidnik.pl/strona-3431-publicacje_dotyczace_historii_miejsca_i.html

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

²⁹⁷ APL, akta KW PZPR w Lublinie, Sygn. 1081, s.86, quoted in Piotr R. Jankowski, *Świdnicki Lipiec* (Świdnik: Urząd Miasta Świdnik, 2011): 66, https://bibliotekaswidnik.pl/strona-3431-publicacje_dotyczace_historii_miejsca_i.html

²⁹⁸ Andrzej Paczkowski and Malcom Byrne, eds. *From Solidarity to Martial Law: The Polish Crisis of 1980-81. A Documentary History* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2007): xxxvi, <https://doi-org.uaccess.univie.ac.at/10.1515/9786155211157>

2.4.2 The Impact of the Bydgoszcz Crisis and the Economic Decline

At the end of the XXVI CPSU Party Congress in early March, after Brezhnev's reference to "anarchist and anti-socialist elements who were pushing Poland towards destruction with the help of outside powers", conclusive statements remarked the necessity to protect the "Socialist community".²⁹⁹ Thus, although a Soviet military intervention had been secretly ruled out within the Party already in January 1981, the invocation of the Brezhnev doctrine in fact echoed Moscow's new strategy, whereby the threat of invasion was an instrument to gain leverage with the new union. Its effects were clearly visible in Świdnik, where a resolution was adopted by Solidarity,³⁰⁰ describing the CPSU's comments as "an insult to the working class" and highlighting that "any attempt to interfere in Poland's internal affairs [were] contrary to the basic principles of socialism and the right of every nation to self-determination".³⁰¹ "Events in Poland are an internal matter and should be resolved solely by the people of [the] country".³⁰² That month, as the Bydgoszcz events provoked national outrage, the WSK and all key regional workplaces, begun preparations for the March 23 strike under national Solidarity's directives.³⁰³ In the following days, guidelines were broadcast on how to respond if summoned by the MO, on how to testify and other key law enforcement procedures.³⁰⁴ Furthermore, posters and leaflets were spread stating for instance: "We demand punishment for those responsible for the Bydgoszcz

²⁹⁹ Marilyn Bechtel, David Laibman and Daniel Rosenberg, *Peace, Plan, and Progress. The 26th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union* (New York: NWR Publications Inc, 1981): 127-129.

³⁰⁰ And read by the Chairman Zbigniew Puczek over the WSK's loudspeakers.

³⁰¹ APL, akta KW PZPR w Lublinie, Sygn. 1081, s. 110, 114, quoted in Piotr R. Jankowski, *Świdnicki Lipiec* (Świdnik: Urząd Miasta Świdnik, 2011): 68-69, https://bibliotekaswidnik.pl/strona-3431-publicacje_dotyczace_historii_miejsca_i.html

³⁰² Ibid.

³⁰³ Leszek Pietrzak, *Miasto Wolności. Historia Świdnika od Komunizmu do Wolnej Polski* (Świdnik: Miejsko-Powiatowa Biblioteka Publiczna w Świdniku, 2020): 66, <http://archiwum.bibliotekaswidnik.pl/index.php/czytaj/nasze-publicacje/861-miasto-wolnosci>

³⁰⁴ Piotr R. Jankowski, *Świdnicki Lipiec* (Świdnik: Urząd Miasta Świdnik, 2011): 70, https://bibliotekaswidnik.pl/strona-3431-publicacje_dotyczace_historii_miejsca_i.html

provocation” or “Hands off the People’s Republic of Poland”.³⁰⁵ While no protests unfolded on March 23, national Solidarity declared a four-hour warning strike on March 27 and a general strike to be held on March 31 in case of the authorities’ inadequate response to the workers’ demands.³⁰⁶ The union expected the worst reactions by the Communist party, which is demonstrated by the fact that instructions were issued in case of a general strike, a state of emergency, or an external intervention, to all *Solidarność* structures in the country, including the WSK.³⁰⁷ Further evidence is provided by the helicopter flight made by the WSK’s Solidarity chairman³⁰⁸ on March 26, allegedly to assess the potential presence of military enforcement units in Lublin and the surrounding areas.³⁰⁹ Given the *Soyuz-81* maneuvers since mid-March, Świdnik’s Solidarity members could hardly be faulted for their suspects.

On March 27 critical events would unfold. First, as the nationwide warning strike unfolded from 8 am until noon, it marked the largest protest in the history of Communism, thereby demonstrating *Solidarność* strength.³¹⁰ As reported by the authorities, in Lublin the strike involved approximately 160,000 workers from over

³⁰⁵ Piotr R. Jankowski, *Świdnicki Lipiec* (Świdnik: Urząd Miasta Świdnik, 2011): 70, https://bibliotekaswidnik.pl/strona-3431-publicacje_dotyczace_historii_miejsca_i.html

³⁰⁶ Andrzej Paczkowski and Malcom Byrne, eds. *From Solidarity to Martial Law: The Polish Crisis of 1980-81. A Documentary History* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2007): xxxvii, <https://doi-org.uaccess.univie.ac.at/10.1515/9786155211157>

³⁰⁷ In the case of external intervention, Solidarity advised, inter-alia, a) to inform as many people as possible of the foreign invasion, using all available communication methods; b) to change road signs, remove street name plates, house numbers, and provide false information to the invaders; also that women and children should remain at home c) obstruct the operation of occupying forces by any means. Piotr R. Jankowski, *Świdnicki Lipiec* (Świdnik: Urząd Miasta Świdnik, 2011): 70, https://bibliotekaswidnik.pl/strona-3431-publicacje_dotyczace_historii_miejsca_i.html

³⁰⁸ Under director’s Jan Czogała authorization.

³⁰⁹ See appendix, document 3. Andrzej Springer, Wydział organizacyjny KC PZPR sektor informacji, Informacja o przebiegu strajku ostrzegawczego w województwie lubelskim w dniu 27 bm (March 27, 1981), Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza Komitet Wojewódzki w Lublinie Archiwum, Wydział Polityczno-Organizacyjny, Materiały z zakładów pracy związane z pracą komisji Partyjno-Rządowej 1980, Sygn. 100/VII/31 t.21 A (1079), teleks n. 148, Archiwum Państwowe w Lublinie, accessed personally on March 25, 2025.

³¹⁰ Andrzej Paczkowski and Malcom Byrne, eds. *From Solidarity to Martial Law: The Polish Crisis of 1980-81. A Documentary History* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2007): xxxviii, <https://doi-org.uaccess.univie.ac.at/10.1515/9786155211157>

200 workplaces across the region – including the almost entire WSK workforce –, as well as the city’s Catholic University (KUL) and other institutions. Notably, most Party members claimed to have joined the strike – albeit reluctantly – “because of the pressure that [had been] exerted on them and to avoid isolation from their coworkers”.³¹¹ Equally important was the alleged increasing criticism of not only the Party and the government, but also of Solidarity, whose effect many considered to be destructive for the country.³¹² Particularly, as highlighted by the local PZPR, among many Lublin residents – including Solidarity’s regular members – there was a growing belief that the MKZs and the National Coordination Commission (KKP) were engaging in an increasingly “open political struggle”, unrelated to the defense of workers’ interests.³¹³ Even within the academic community, “comments suggested that developments in Poland [were] no longer centered around escalating economic demands, but rather, that the conflict had shifted to a political level.”³¹⁴ As the first fractures within the Solidarity movement emerged, General Jaruzelski – who had been appointed prime minister in February – met with the KGB’s director and with Kulikov³¹⁵, the Warsaw Pact Commander-in-Chief, to discuss a plan for the

³¹¹ Andrzej Springer, Wydział organizacyjny KC PZPR sektor informacji, Informacja o przebiegu strajku ostrzegawczego w województwie lubelskim w dniu 27 bm. (March 27, 1981), Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza Komitet Wojewódzki w Lublinie Archiwum, Wydział Polityczno-Organizacyjny, Materiały z zakładów pracy związane z pracą komisji Partyjno-Rządowej 1980, Sygn. 100/VII/31 t. 21 A (1079), teleks n. 148, Archiwum Państwowe w Lublinie, accessed personally on March 25, 2025.

³¹² Andrzej Springer, Wydział organizacyjny KC PZPR sektor informacji, Informacja o przebiegu strajku ostrzegawczego w województwie lubelskim w dniu 27 bm. (March 27, 1981), Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza Komitet Wojewódzki w Lublinie Archiwum, Wydział Polityczno-Organizacyjny, Materiały z zakładów pracy związane z pracą komisji Partyjno-Rządowej 1980, Sygn. 100/VII/31 t. 21 A (1079), teleks n. 148, Archiwum Państwowe w Lublinie, accessed personally on March 25, 2025

³¹³ Ibid.

³¹⁴ Andrzej Springer, Wydział organizacyjny KC PZPR sektor informacji, Informacja o przebiegu strajku ostrzegawczego w województwie lubelskim w dniu 27 bm. (March 27, 1981), Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza Komitet Wojewódzki w Lublinie Archiwum, Wydział Polityczno-Organizacyjny, Materiały z zakładów pracy związane z pracą komisji Partyjno-Rządowej 1980, Sygn. 100/VII/31 t. 21 A (1079), teleks n. 149, Archiwum Państwowe w Lublinie, accessed personally on March 25, 2025.

³¹⁵ Marshal Viktor Kulikov was responsible for organizing military exercised by Soviet and Warsaw Pact troops around Poland’s borders as a threatening instrument to show Solidarity that Poland could not distance itself from Communist orthodoxy. Kulikov also helped organize the 1968 invasion of

introduction of martial law, which ultimately resulted in guidelines for its introduction.³¹⁶

Under the pressure of Solidarity's massive social mobilization, and after reaching for Cardinal Wyszyński's mediation, on March 30, the authorities agreed for concessions in the Warsaw Agreement.³¹⁷ Despite temporarily easing national tensions, the accord marked a rupture point for *Solidarność* and revealed the limits behind the movement's overwhelming appeal. Indeed, many union activists did not consider the agreement a success, stating that they had been preparing for general strike as "the climax of the revolution", when Solidarity could have reached a critical advantage on the government's position – which was instead constantly losing support.³¹⁸ Thus, Wałęsa's demobilization order – accused of having been issued behind their backs – dealt a serious blow to the union, and forced it into a period of introspection and diminished action.³¹⁹

Between April 25 and 26, Świdnik's "Avia" hall would be the center of another crucial event: the first sessions of the General Assembly of NSZZ Solidarity Delegates of the Central-Eastern Region.³²⁰ The convention hosted 544 delegates from the Central-Eastern region and was observed not only by authorities' representatives, but also by Western media, including the American TV stations ABC and NBC.³²¹ It was

Czechoslovakia. Martin Douglas, "Viktor Kulikov Dies at 91; Led Warsaw Pact Forces," *The New York Times*, June 3, 2013, accessed April 10, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/06/04/>

³¹⁶ Andrzej Paczkowski and Malcom Byrne, eds. *From Solidarity to Martial Law: The Polish Crisis of 1980-81. A Documentary History* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2007): xxxviii, <https://doi-org.uaccess.univie.ac.at/10.1515/9786155211157>

³¹⁷ Ibid. Whilst the communist would (inter-alia) bring the guilty to justice and explain the circumstances of the beating on television, Wałęsa cancelled the general strike planned for the next day.

³¹⁸ Tomasz Kozłowski, "March 1981: 'Solidarity' at the Height of its Power. 44th Anniversary of the Bydgoszcz Crisis," Polish history, March 27, 1981, accessed April 10, 2025, <https://polishhistory.pl/march-1981-solidarity-at-the-height-of-its-power/>

³¹⁹ Ibid.

³²⁰ *Walne Zebranie Delegatów (WZD) NSZZ Solidarność Regionu Środkowo-Wschodniego*. Leszek, Pietrzak, *Miasto Wolności. Historia Świdnika od Komunizmu do Wolnej Polski* (Świdnik: Miejsko-Powiatowa Biblioteka Publiczna w Świdniku, 2020): 66, <http://archiwum.bibliotekaswidnik.pl/index.php/czytaj/nasze-publicacje/861-miasto-wolnosci>

³²¹ Piotr R. Jankowski, *Świdnicki Lipiec* (Świdnik: Urząd Miasta Świdnik, 2011): 72, https://bibliotekaswidnik.pl/strona-3431-publicacje_dotyczace_historii_miejsca_i.html

the first meeting of this kind in the whole country – only later did others follow.³²² Thus, for a small town like Świdnik, organizing a meeting of this scope required substantial preliminary coordination and planning – which included inviting Lech Wałęsa. When Świdnik’s Solidarity delegates went to invite him, “he welcomed them with tea, coffee and other Western products. He was surrounded by media people and had access to international resources.”³²³ And yet, as explained by Marian Król, “when one of the delegates mentioned that ‘Świdnik came before Gdańsk’, Wałęsa stood up, opened the door and bluntly told them to leave.”³²⁴

When addressing the central authorities, the congress called for the release of political prisoners and the cessation of repressive measures against the opposition and union activists. Furthermore, by referencing the 1975 Helsinki Final Act, they advocated for freedom of speech as an “essential principle for the democratic functioning of society”.³²⁵ While appealing the Ministry of Education to create a new program for the young generation’s education, efforts were also made to unify all *Solidarność* structures across the Lublin area into one region.

The second round, held on May 16-17, focused on electing Solidarity’s regional leadership, thereby representing the first truly democratic elections in the Lublin Voivodeship.³²⁶ Jan Bartczak was elected head of the Regional Board, among whose representatives figured five activists from Świdnik: Henryk Gontarz, Ryszard Kuć, Stanisław Pietruszewski, Zbigniew Puczek, and Jan Sidorowicz.³²⁷

As *Soyuz-81* maneuvers ended in early April and plans for the implementation of martial law were underway, in the months that followed, the economic crisis

³²² Marian Król, interview by Viktoria Mróz, Świdnik, March 25, 2025.

³²³ Marian Król, interview by Viktoria Mróz, Świdnik, March 25, 2025.

³²⁴ Ibid.

³²⁵ I Walne Zebranie Delegatów NSZZ ‘Solidarność’ Regionu Środkowo-Wschodniego. Świdnik 25-27 IV-16-17 V 1981 r. Dokumenty, Lublin 1981, s. 3-14, quoted in Ibid, 73-74.

³²⁶ Małgorzata Bielecka-Hołda, “Pierwszy w Polsce regionalny zjazd Solidarności odbył się w Świdniku, Zdarzyło się to 40 lat temu,” *Wyborcza.pl*, May 30, 2021, accessed April 10, 2025, <https://lublin.wyborcza.pl/lublin/>

³²⁷ Leszek Pietrzak, *Miasto Wolności. Historia Świdnika od Komunisty do Wolnej Polski* (Świdnik: Miejsko-Powiatowa Biblioteka Publiczna w Świdniku, 2020): 69, <http://archiwum.bibliotekaswidnik.pl/index.php/czytaj/nasze-publicacje/861-miasto-wolnosci>

strongly deepened. With the supply of basic goods declining and store shelves steadily emptying, the government's announcement of a 20 percent cut in meat rations culminated in renewed protests throughout Poland. Świdnik's residents and the WSK were severely impacted – as was the whole country – and in August they declared “strike readiness” together with all regional workplaces. When price increases on bread and grain products were introduced on August 31, 1981 – ironically coinciding with the anniversary of the Gdańsk Agreements –, long queues began to form outside shops early in the morning.³²⁸ Even with rationing cards, these scenes became a daily reality for the residents of the small town. Particularly, people's everyday hardships were emotionally exacerbated when on May 13, 1981, news of the assassination attempt of Pope John Paul II shook all Poland.

On June 12, the KUL welcomed the arrival of Wałęsa, whose visit, despite primarily aimed at meeting with the Nobel Prize laureate Czesław Miłosz, was of symbolic importance for the region's Solidarity structures. In the afternoon, Wałęsa arrived in Świdnik, toured the WSK plant and held an evening meeting with the second-shift workers in Hall No. 1, whereby he answered questions about union issues as well as the country's political and economic situation.³²⁹ The visit, which was carefully monitored by the SB, concluded the next day after Wałęsa's attendance of a mass at the local church and a two-hour meeting with Father Hryniewicz.³³⁰

As the country's economic situation deteriorated, fragmented and isolated strikes against the government's policies continued to engulf Polish cities. Importantly, in the aftermath of the March crisis, factions within Solidarity's national and regional leaderships, as well as criticism by the more militant activists against Wałęsa, weakened the union. With political frustration and economic decline impacting nearly the entire population, the unity and resolve that had characterized the

³²⁸ Piotr R. Jankowski, *Świdnicki Lipiec* (Świdnik: Urząd Miasta Świdnik, 2011): 82, https://bibliotekaswidnik.pl/strona-3431-publicacje_dotyczace_historii_miejsca_i.html

³²⁹ See appendix, figure 1 and 2.

³³⁰ See appendix, figure 3. Leszek Pietrzak, *Miasto Wolności. Historia Świdnika od Komunizmu do Wolnej Polski* (Świdnik: Miejsko-Powiatowa Biblioteka Publiczna w Świdniku, 2020): 70, <http://archiwum.bibliotekaswidnik.pl/index.php/czytaj/nasze-publicacje/861-miasto-wolnosci>

March events faded into a distant memory. Particularly, with the union's activity increasingly acquiring political overtones, the regime began considering *Solidarność* "an anti-communist political party",³³¹ accusing it of violating the August Agreement and declaring the state's "readiness to take whatever action [was] necessary to defend socialism".³³² Thus, as the last months of the year witnessed the deployment of Polish military groups into the countryside³³³ and Poland's largest factories,³³⁴ the groundwork had been laid for the introduction of martial law.

³³¹ Anthony Kemp-Welch, *Poland under Communism. A Cold War History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008): 312, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511619779.011>

³³² Andrzej Paczkowski and Malcom Byrne, eds. *From Solidarity to Martial Law: The Polish Crisis of 1980-81. A Documentary History* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2007): xli, <https://doi-org.uaccess.univie.ac.at/10.1515/9786155211157>

³³³ Under the pretext of helping the rural administration to prepare for the winter.

³³⁴ Andrzej Paczkowski and Malcom Byrne, eds. *From Solidarity to Martial Law: The Polish Crisis of 1980-81. A Documentary History* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2007): xlii, <https://doi-org.uaccess.univie.ac.at/10.1515/9786155211157>

Chapter 3. The Declaration of Martial Law and its Aftermath

By examining the first half of the 1980s and starting with the consequences following the imposition of martial law, this chapter facilitates the analysis of the emerging fractures which ultimately eroded the Communist system. Despite the regime's success in repressing and thus weakening *Solidarność*, the union's underground structures enabled the development of a parallel system of expression and resistance for the society. This will be most prominently illustrated through the case study of Świdnik and its reaction to martial law, which can again be interpreted through the analytical concept of dilemma action – whereby non-violent initiatives ultimately restrained the authorities' use of violence. Another defect of the system was the influence of the Church, which had gradually become both a bridge with regime and a fortress for Solidarity activists to continue their activities throughout martial law. From representing an alternative to the official Marxist ideology to becoming a force for the society's resistance, the Church crucially impacted the process that led to the 1989 negotiations. Furthermore, the interdisciplinary approach will help illustrate how Poland's economic deterioration became another factor critically undermining the regime's structures and ultimately prompting it to compromise with the opposition. This chapter, in which the interplay of domestic and external dynamics will be distinctly observable, will not only enable the understanding of General Jaruzelski's controversial policies, but it will also demonstrate how Poland's Communist path differed from that of its neighbors.

3.1 Imposition and Initial Resistance

On Sunday, December 13, 1981, Poles awoke to the sound of the national anthem. Across the country, tanks rolled through the streets, army checkpoints were stationed at every intersection, and the proclamation of martial law was posted on every corner.

On television, General Jaruzelski's declaration of "state of war"³³⁵ was broadcast to the nation.³³⁶ Contrary to the common notion that martial law represented "the lesser evil" needed to avoid Soviet military intervention, Jaruzelski had in fact been persistently pleading for Moscow's armed backing. As demonstrated by documents, the General's concerns over the ability to sustain martial law³³⁷ nearly prompted him to postpone the whole operation, whose success was considered impossible without Soviet troops.³³⁸ Although it ultimately remained a fully internally coordinated operation, it was Jaruzelski – not the Kremlin – who asked for an external intervention, despite Moscow's repeated refusals to become directly involved. Aimed at eradicating the Solidarity movement and all sources of opposition, as well as at ensuring full Communist rule, the regime's offensive had already begun in the night between December 12 and 13. As key communication hubs were blocked, 70,000 soldiers and 30,000 police officers were deployed, 1,750 tanks and 1,400 armored vehicles were stationed to secure railway and road lines, and to control strategic facilities as well as critical workplaces.³³⁹ During that night, virtually all *Solidarność* leaders³⁴⁰ and individuals suspected of involvement in activities against the regime were arrested; Wałęsa was interned, while the movement's offices were seized and its documents confiscated.³⁴¹ Determined to destroy all forms of civil mobilization, authorities revoked the rights to protest, assemble, and move freely. Furthermore, to eliminate the "undisciplined" local PZPR structures, Party members were purged – including Gierek

³³⁵ Literally, Stan Wojenny.

³³⁶ Norman Davies, *Heart of Europe: The Past in Poland's Present*, New. Ed (Oxford: OUP Oxford, 2001): 20, EBSCOhost.

³³⁷ Particularly, fearing that turmoil might result and that Polish officials alone would be unable to tackle violent upheavals across the country.

³³⁸ Mark Kramer, "Jaruzelski, the Soviet Union, and the Imposition of Martial Law in Poland: New Light on the Mystery of December 1981," "Cold War International History Project Bulletin 11 (Winter 1998): 11, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/>

³³⁹ Including critical railway and road lines, but also strategic facilities and factories. Włodzimierz Borodziej, *Geschichte Polens im 20. Jahrhundert* (München: C.H. Beck, 2010): 368.

³⁴⁰ Approximately 3,000 of its activists were arrested, detained, and interned.

³⁴¹ Mieczysław B. Biskupski, *The History of Poland*, 2nd ed. (Santa Barbara, California: Greenwood): 179, EBSCOhost.

– and replaced with military officials.³⁴² A curfew was imposed and communications between Poland and the outside world were cut; the radio stopped broadcasting, the television was militarized, and the telephone network was shut down, while almost all newspapers as well as the whole school and university systems were suspended.³⁴³

The workers' initial reaction was to resist. While those who had escaped internment attempted to establish a new, clandestine Solidarity movement, strikes were organized and demonstrations were held on the streets.³⁴⁴ However, these and other spontaneous protests would be systematically crushed by ZOMO police units throughout the country.³⁴⁵ At two mines in Silesia³⁴⁶ – among the few remaining strongholds of resistance – the recurring underground sit-ins were ultimately encircled and forced to surrender by Christmas. At the “*Wujek*” Colliery, nine miners were killed in the course of their resistance.³⁴⁷ As power was transferred to the Military Council of National Salvation (WRON),³⁴⁸ the militarization of Polish life was completed. The Catholic Church had thus remained the only organization that the regime refrained from targeting.³⁴⁹

3.1.1 Świdnik's Four Days of Resistance

“People sensed that something was about to happen. But they were talking about a possible Soviet intervention. Even specific instructions had been sent in the case of

³⁴² Anthony Kemp-Welch, *Poland under Communism. A Cold War History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008): 328, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511619779.011>

³⁴³ Włodzimierz Borodziej, *Geschichte Polens im 20. Jahrhundert* (München: C.H. Beck, 2010): 368.

³⁴⁴ Anita Prazmowska, *Poland: A Modern History* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010): 219, EBSCOhost

³⁴⁵ Anthony Kemp-Welch, *Poland under Communism. A Cold War History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008): 328, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511619779.011>

³⁴⁶ The “*Wujek*” coal mine in Katowice, and the “*Piast*” coal mine in Bieruń.

³⁴⁷ Norman Davies, *Heart of Europe: The Past in Poland's Present*, New. Ed (Oxford: OUP Oxford, 2001): 20, EBSCOhost.

³⁴⁸ *Wojskowa Rada Ocalenia Narodowego*.

³⁴⁹ Mieczysław B. Biskupski, *The History of Poland*, 2nd ed. (Santa Barbara, California: Greenwood): 179, EBSCOhost.

external interference.”³⁵⁰ Furthermore, already in October local Party activists across different enterprises, including the WSK, had been arranging meetings between factory workers and officers from the Polish army.³⁵¹ Their aim was to get acquainted with the conditions in the factories and thus, what they might have faced in case of intervention. However, these initiatives further strengthened the population’s suspicion, as it was not common for military personnel to get involved in internal workplace matters. During a meeting at the WSK, when *Solidarność* members asked the visiting military officers what stance they would have taken in case of a state of emergency, their ambiguous reply only confirmed the union’s fears.³⁵² Even director Czogała later recalled a man from the special services asking him, on Saturday, December 12 afternoon, whether the guards had live ammunition. “The question seemed odd, but at the time I didn’t connect the dots”.³⁵³

In the Lublin region, on December 12, the first Solidarity activist, Stanisław Węglarz – vice-chairman of the movement’s Regional Board – was arrested at 11:00 pm.³⁵⁴ As his wife informed his colleagues, the board’s headquarters broadcast a warning message through the building’s megaphone.³⁵⁵ Nevertheless, shortly after, the building was surrounded by the militia, who arrested all the present people, including Waldemar Jakson, Świdnik’s editor of Solidarity’s “Information Bulletin”, who had attempted to escape and warn the union’s activists at home.³⁵⁶ Just as in Lublin and throughout the whole country, also in Świdnik was *Solidarność* decimated by arrests,

³⁵⁰ Marian Król, interview by Viktoria Mróz, Świdnik, March 25, 2025.

³⁵¹ Leszek Pietrzak, *Miasto Wolności. Historia Świdnika od Komunizmu do Wolnej Polski* (Świdnik: Miejsko-Powiatowa Biblioteka Publiczna w Świdniku, 2020): 72, <http://archiwum.bibliotekaswidnik.pl/index.php/czytaj/nasze-publicacje/861-miasto-wolnosci>

³⁵² Ibid.

³⁵³ Jan Czogała, „Stan wojenny – Jan Czogała – fragment relacji świadka historii,” interview by Tomasz Czajkowski, January 22, 2014, Ośrodek „Brama Grodzka - Teatr NN, accessed April 11, 2025, <https://teatrnn.pl/historiamowiona/fragmenty/stan-wojenny-19/>

³⁵⁴ Małgorzata Choma-Jusińska, “Stanisław Węglarz, Rok 1981,” Ośrodek „Brama Grodzka - Teatr NN, <https://teatrnn.pl/leksykon/artykuly/stanislaw-weglarz-1948-2005/>

³⁵⁵ Ibid.

³⁵⁶ Piotr R. Jankowski, *Świdnicki Lipiec* (Świdnik: Urząd Miasta Świdnik, 2011): 98, https://bibliotekaswidnik.pl/strona-3431-publicacje_dotyczace_historii_miejsca_i.html

which included Zbigniew Puczek – the head of the WSK Factory’s Council –, Zofia Bartkiewicz, A. Grzegorzcyk and Ryszard Kuć.³⁵⁷

The next day, between 3:00 and 4:00 am, the first workers began gathering at the WSK to prepare for an occupation strike. Counting initially a thousand people at the plant, by 8:00 am the rally included 80 percent of the factory’s workforce, among whom the WSK’s director Jan Czogała and the activists that had escaped internment.³⁵⁸ Simultaneously, a Strike Committee³⁵⁹ was established to take control of the factory. A security service was organized; some workers were coordinated to block the entrance gates, using for instance trucks and bulldozers³⁶⁰; others were tasked to monitor the area from the buildings’ roofs, and convey information about incoming military forces through walkie-talkies. However, as reported by Marian Król – who was also among the strikers – the Committee’s mistake had been to launch a “passive resistance” without explaining what it really meant: “we just held hands and gathered in groups to stay together”.³⁶¹ Świdnik’s residents were then called to join the actions, while women were exempted from the obligation to stay on the plant.³⁶² As the Strike Committee was informed about the militarization of the factory, activists from the Regional Board in Lublin designated Świdnik as the headquarters for the Regional Strike Committee.³⁶³ Following the landing of nine military helicopters at the airfield, the army, which attempted to enter the WSK’s premises, was halted by the

³⁵⁷ Leszek Pietrzak, *Miasto Wolności. Historia Świdnika od Komunistów do Wolnej Polski* (Świdnik: Miejsko-Powiatowa Biblioteka Publiczna w Świdniku, 2020): 78,

<http://archiwum.bibliotekaswidnik.pl/index.php/czytaj/nasze-publicacje/861-miasto-wolnosci>

³⁵⁸ Piotr R. Jankowski, *Świdnicki Lipiec* (Świdnik: Urząd Miasta Świdnik, 2011): 99,

<https://bibliotekaswidnik.pl/strona-3431-publicacje-dotyczace-historii-miejsc-i.html> Including Alfred Bondos and Andrzej Sokołowski. The first was the editor-in-chief of “Grot” magazine and was able to escape the police forces by jumping out of a second-floor balcony. The second, who was the deputy chairman of the Works Council for Organizational Matters, had managed to escape to the basement after being warned of the imminent arrest of a colleague.

³⁵⁹ Members included: Stanisław Pietruszewski (its chairman), Andrzej Sokołowski (the vice-chairman), Alfred Bondos, Józef Kępski and Aleksander Bachur.

³⁶⁰ See pictures in the appendix.

³⁶¹ Marian Król, interview by Viktoria Mróz, Świdnik, March 25, 2025.

³⁶² Ibid.

³⁶³ Leszek Pietrzak, *Miasto Wolności. Historia Świdnika od Komunistów do Wolnej Polski* (Świdnik: Miejsko-Powiatowa Biblioteka Publiczna w Świdniku, 2020): 80,

<http://archiwum.bibliotekaswidnik.pl/index.php/czytaj/nasze-publicacje/861-miasto-wolnosci>

striking workers' barricades. Surprisingly, the Strike Committee even arranged accommodations and warm beverages to the poorly equipped soldiers.³⁶⁴ That afternoon, under Alfred Bondos' guidance, an editorial team for the "Strike Bulletin" was formed³⁶⁵ and the WSK's internal radio system was activated to broadcast news, patriotic programming, and calls for passive resistance.³⁶⁶

While Świdnik was again emerging as the workers' stronghold, in the next days tensions escalated. After workers from other towns in the region had joined the WSK strikers, in the night between December 14 and 15, tanks arrived at the plant and staged an attack with the aim of creating panic among the strikers. As these armored vehicles approached the factory's gates, the alarm siren was activated and the strikers moved into their allocated defensive positions.³⁶⁷ "One tank stationed itself 50 meters from the gate, while another one fired three blank rounds and a number of machine-gun fire bursts' into the air".³⁶⁸ As tanks were withdrawn, by that evening Jan Czogała was dismissed from his position as the WSK's general director.³⁶⁹ Indeed, despite his role, from the outset Mr. Czogała had attempted to delay, as much as he could, the implementation of military operations at the WSK.³⁷⁰ Furthermore, when the rally begun he expressed support and stood with the employees, refusing to comply with the military's order to leave the plant.³⁷¹ The workers, especially under Mr. Sokołowski's idea, recognized the consequences that would have resulted from the

³⁶⁴ Marian Król, interview by Viktoria Mróz, Świdnik, March 25, 2025.

³⁶⁵ Which would publish twice daily until the plant's pacification.

³⁶⁶ Piotr R. Jankowski, *Świdnicki Lipiec* (Świdnik: Urząd Miasta Świdnik, 2011): 100, https://bibliotekaswidnik.pl/strona-3431-publicacje_dotyczace_historii_miejsca_i.html

³⁶⁷ Leszek Pietrzak, *Miasto Wolności. Historia Świdnika od Komunizmu do Wolnej Polski* (Świdnik: Miejsko-Powiatowa Biblioteka Publiczna w Świdniku, 2020): 81, <http://archiwum.bibliotekaswidnik.pl/index.php/czytaj/nasze-publicacje/861-miasto-wolnosci>

³⁶⁸ Piotr R. Jankowski, *Świdnicki Lipiec* (Świdnik: Urząd Miasta Świdnik, 2011): 100, https://bibliotekaswidnik.pl/strona-3431-publicacje_dotyczace_historii_miejsca_i.html

³⁶⁹ Urszula Radek, „Stan wojenny w WSK Świdnik,” Ośrodek „Brama Grodzka - Teatr NN, accessed April 11, 2025, <https://teatrnn.pl/leksykon/artykuly/>

³⁷⁰ Jan Czogała, „Stan wojenny – Jan Czogała – fragment relacji świadka historii,” interview by Tomasz Czajkowski, January 22, 2014, Ośrodek „Brama Grodzka - Teatr NN, accessed April 11, 2025, <https://teatrnn.pl/historiamowiona/fragmenty/stan-wojenny-19/>

³⁷¹ Ibid.

director's actions, and thus took him out of the office and placed him under what they called "plant arrest", which prevented Czogała from facing harsher consequences.³⁷²

First, the military "pacified" the town. As tanks arrived from Lublin with the whole army, people who rushed from their homes towards the WSK were halted with gas and beaten in the streets.³⁷³ Only afterwards did the military enter the factory's grounds. Particularly, despite the still existent narrative highlighting the presence of only ZOMO and SB units, at least a thousand soldiers of the Polish army were among them.³⁷⁴

After 1:00 am of December 16, a new and this time real assault on the plant was conducted. The WSK was again surrounded by tanks, armored vehicles, and over 500 soldiers.³⁷⁵ A number of ZOMO units were deployed with water cannons outside the building, while others broke into the plant throwing gas and smoke grenades at the workers.³⁷⁶ Despite the chaos, workers stood united, singing patriotic songs and resisting the army's assault. As emphasized by Marian Król, "tanks rolled in, the ground shook. It felt like being at the war front."³⁷⁷ "We had no idea how to defend ourselves against gas. It was terrifying cause you couldn't see anything; your eyes burned and panic set in." Although there had been individuals considering the use of forge tools or other equipment to resist, thanks to the wise leadership, rationality prevailed and the situation did not escalate into a violent crackdown – unlike at the Wujek Colliery, where workers had started throwing heavy tools against the military forces.³⁷⁸ When strikers partially recovered their vision, they began throwing gas

³⁷² Jan Czogała, „Stan wojenny – Jan Czogała – fragment relacji świadka historii,” interview by Tomasz Czajkowski, January 22, 2014, Ośrodek „Brama Grodzka - Teatr NN, accessed April 11, 2025, <https://teatrnn.pl/historiamowiona/fragmenty/stan-wojenny-19/>

³⁷³ Marian Król, interview by Viktoria Mróz, Świdnik, March 25, 2025.

³⁷⁴ Ibid.

³⁷⁵ Leszek Pietrzak, *Miasto Wolności. Historia Świdnika od Komunizmu do Wolnej Polski* (Świdnik: Miejsko-Powiatowa Biblioteka Publiczna w Świdniku, 2020): 81, <http://archiwum.bibliotekaswidnik.pl/index.php/czytaj/nasze-publicacje/861-miasto-wolnosci>

³⁷⁶ Piotr R. Jankowski, *Świdnicki Lipiec* (Świdnik: Urząd Miasta Świdnik, 2011): 100, <https://bibliotekaswidnik.pl/strona-3431-publicacje-dotyczace-historii-miejsca-i.html>

³⁷⁷ Marian Król, interview by Viktoria Mróz, Świdnik, March 25, 2025.

³⁷⁸ Ibid.

grenades back at the military, which was also forced to retreat. “For a few hours, it was like a tug-of-war – they pushed, we defended.”³⁷⁹ As highlighted by Marian Król, the main mistake was the lack of a clear command. “We acted based on the instructions previously sent to all *Solidarność* structures in the country, which included basic guidelines of what to do in the case of a state of emergency or an external intervention. If someone had clearly told us how to behave, maybe things would have turned out differently.”³⁸⁰ Even so, “we could have captured one of the ZOMO officers, because not all of them managed to escape. However, we didn’t want to take anyone’s weapon – why would we have needed it? What would have been the point of fighting them back with weapons?”³⁸¹ The entire access to the city had been blocked and the area surrounding the WSK had become “the bayonet alley”, whereby soldiers formed a line of bayonets which resulted in a barrier that no one could cross.³⁸²

Ultimately, the military forces breached the factory wall and stormed the premises. Close to bloodshed, tensions were eased after 4:00 am, when the “human chain”³⁸³ was disbanded and strikers were ordered to leave the factory. Despite the significance of the group’s unity, the workers’ line “only facilitated the military’s plans”.³⁸⁴ Had the strikers been more strategically dispersed from the outset, they might have been able to hinder the army’s advance to some extent, and potentially delay the rapid takeover.³⁸⁵

However, with bullets being fired by the ZOMO, the WSK’s resistance could have also resulted in a massacre. As recalled by Marian Król, the units were “taking snap shots from the gate without knowing the factory’s terrain, while [workers] were on the lower ground. That’s why the rounds went high and a tragedy was avoided. People don’t realize how close Świdnik was to a catastrophe.”³⁸⁶

³⁷⁹ Marian Król, interview by Viktoria Mróz, Świdnik, March 25, 2025.

³⁸⁰ Ibid.

³⁸¹ Ibid.

³⁸² Ibid.

³⁸³ Which included Marian Król.

³⁸⁴ Marian Król, interview by Viktoria Mróz, Świdnik, March 25, 2025.

³⁸⁵ Ibid.

³⁸⁶ Ibid.

On December 17, as the WSK was closed and the protests' leaders and activists were interned, most of the remaining workforce reacted to the situation by marching in group to the church. During the Holy Mass, which was especially held for the workers and was attended by several thousand people, the priest's sermon had a crucial impact on the people. By saying that "it's easy to climb the barricades, but harder to get down from them", workers were calmed and the general tension was relatively defused.³⁸⁷ "In that atmosphere it was unclear what would happen next – whether we would go to the police station, back to the WSK or continue resisting."³⁸⁸ As the factory was forcibly closed until early January 1982, in the following days repression continued in the form of further arrests, interrogations, detentions, and disciplinary dismissals.³⁸⁹ Despite the arrest of local Solidarity leaders including Zbigniew Puczek (chairman of the WSK Factory Committee), Zofia Bartkiewicz (deputy), and Ryszard Kuć, others like Alfred Bondos (the "*Grot*" union editor) and Andrzej Sokołowski managed to escape and work for underground Solidarity before being later interned.³⁹⁰

Despite its suppression, the December strike at Świdnik's WSK constituted one of the most strategically coordinated forms of resistance among those initially held in the country to withstand martial law.³⁹¹

³⁸⁷ Marian Król, interview by Viktoria Mróz, Świdnik, March 25, 2025.

³⁸⁸ Ibid.

³⁸⁹ Urszula Radek, „Stan wojenny w WSK Świdnik,” Ośrodek „Brama Grodzka - Teatr NN, accessed April 11, 2025, <https://teatrnn.pl/leksykon/artykuly/>

³⁹⁰ Leszek Pietrzak, *Miasto Wolności. Historia Świdnika od Komunizmu do Wolnej Polski* (Świdnik: Miejsko-Powiatowa Biblioteka Publiczna w Świdniku, 2020): 81, <http://archiwum.bibliotekaswidnik.pl/index.php/czytaj/nasze-publicacje/861-miasto-wolnosci>

³⁹¹ Ibid, 84.

3.2 The Society's Reaction: between Underground *Solidarność* and the Night Walks in Świdnik

Given December's harsh repressions and internments, in the following months underground publishing and street demonstrations would become the most important forms of resistance. Although the army and the police had confiscated most of the printing and duplicating equipment from Solidarity's offices across the country, the movements' members focused on finding other means to confront the authorities. These included radio broadcasts, small street demonstrations, boycotting the official media through illegal flyers, newspapers and books. Despite its significant weakening, *Solidarność* underground activity was instrumental in cultivating even a limited degree of the society's autonomy by preserving the movement's ideals and fostering a sense of hope among the public.³⁹²

In Świdnik, although the workers' initial resistance had resulted in mass arrests, the emergence of new forms of dissent reflected the residents' and *Solidarność* resolve to fight for their freedom. The town's Solidarity's efficient organization was demonstrated by the fact that plans for the establishment of covert activities had already been laid before the introduction of martial law. In particular, Ryszard Kuć had created a secret list of union activists who were to oversee, if necessary, the movement's underground operations, which culminated at the end of December in a new Factory Committee of Solidarity at WSK (Temporary Factory Committee of NSZZ Solidarity WSK).³⁹³ Their key tasks included the coordination of significant financial support to help the activists' as well as the dismissed workers' families. Furthermore, communication with other underground Solidarity units outside the Lublin region³⁹⁴ was rebuilt and a distribution network for the underground press and

³⁹² Bartłomiej Kamiński, *The Collapse of State Socialism. The Case of Poland* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991): 216.

³⁹³ Piotr R. Jankowski, *Świdnicki Lipiec* (Świdnik: Urząd Miasta Świdnik, 2011): 102, <https://bibliotekaswidnik.pl/strona-3431-publicacje-dotyczace-historii-miejsca-i.html>. *Tymczasowa Komisja Zakładowa NSZZ 'Solidarność' WSK*.

³⁹⁴ Świdnik's Solidarity had for instance contacts with Gdańsk, Warsaw, and Mielec.

union publications was organized. Thanks to the extensive collaboration of a vast number of activists, already in January 1982, the first covert issue of the *Grot*³⁹⁵ bulletin was published.³⁹⁶ Activists involved in the writing and printing process of the underground newspaper included Alfred Bondos, Mirosław Kaczan, and Andrzej Sokołowski, while its regular distribution was coordinated (*inter-alia*) by Marian Król and Adam Oleszek.³⁹⁷ An equally important role in the bulletin's distribution was played by "Solidarity of the Youth"³⁹⁸, the youth branch operating within underground Solidarity structures. Mainly composed by high school students engaged in *Solidarność* activities since martial law, the young union supported the *Grot*'s covert distribution, prepared patriotic presentations held in Świdnik's church, organized covert discussion meetings and published its own version of the bulletin "Solidarity of the Youth".³⁹⁹ Thus, as informal associations proliferated, a rapidly expanding independent publishing system directly confronted the state's information monopoly, thereby effectively hampering the regime's ideological penetration of society.⁴⁰⁰

One of the main consequences of Solidarity's underground activities was their impact on the population, who overwhelmingly opposed the reality of martial law. This became primarily evident in February, when Świdnik's residents spontaneously went on the streets during the broadcast of the regime's news program "*Dziennik Telewizyjny*".⁴⁰¹ The common frustration for the persistent harsh economic conditions, as well as the regime's repression and propaganda, led to Jan Kaźmierczak's idea of

³⁹⁵ Marcin Dąbrowski, "Grot (pismo "S" WSK PZL Świdnik)," Encyklopedia Solidarności, accessed April 2, 2025, <https://encysol.pl/es/encyklopedia/hasla-rzeczowe/13470,Grot-pismo-S-WSK-PZL-Swidnik.html>. It published union documents, commentary, poetry, satirical drawings and reprints.

³⁹⁶ Leszek Pietrzak, *Miasto Wolności. Historia Świdnika od Komunistów do Wolnej Polski* (Świdnik: Miejsko-Powiatowa Biblioteka Publiczna w Świdniku, 2020): 85, <http://archiwum.bibliotekaswidnik.pl/index.php/czytaj/nasze-publicacje/861-miasto-wolnosci>. See appendix, figure 10 and 11.

³⁹⁷ Ibid, 87.

³⁹⁸ *Solidarność Młodych*.

³⁹⁹ Leszek Pietrzak, *Miasto Wolności. Historia Świdnika od Komunistów do Wolnej Polski* (Świdnik: Miejsko-Powiatowa Biblioteka Publiczna w Świdniku, 2020): 87,

<http://archiwum.bibliotekaswidnik.pl/index.php/czytaj/nasze-publicacje/861-miasto-wolnosci>

⁴⁰⁰ Bartłomiej Kamiński, *The Collapse of State Socialism. The Case of Poland* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991): 216.

⁴⁰¹ Ibid, 88. Meaning "Television News".

Night Walks (*Spacer*).⁴⁰² Chairman of Solidarity's retirees' circle and part of its underground activities⁴⁰³, Kaźmierczak discussed with his colleagues a new form of protest, whereby Świdnik residents would take a stroll along the town's main street,⁴⁰⁴ instead of watching the state-run propaganda news. The idea spread quickly and, in the days following February 5, 1982 – when the first of the “Świdnik *Spacer*” took place – thousands of people, including entire families, joined the initiative.⁴⁰⁵ Daily walkabouts had thus become the only instrument for people to express their opposition against Communist propaganda. Almost simultaneously, another new form of everyday resistance emerged. The residents who could not participate in the walks, especially the ones living in the apartments along the main street, contributed to the symbolic dissent by placing their televisions in the windows, with screens facing outwards – so that everyone could see that they were refusing to watch the “regime's lies”.⁴⁰⁶ Some individuals took the idea a step further by pushing their televisions in baby strollers or wheelbarrows, which introduced a subtle, satirical element to the peaceful protest. Every day, during the half-hour evening news, Świdnik's streets would thus fill with residents who were chatting, strolling, and attempting to idly spend that moment. “People just walked their dogs, met each other, exchanged gossip”,⁴⁰⁷ but there were no signs to hold nor chants to shout. This even provided the opportunity for members of the underground Solidarity to meet and discuss.⁴⁰⁸

⁴⁰² “Solidarność w Świdniku 1982-1989,” *Zacząło się w Świdniku*. Świdnicki Lipiec, <https://swidnickilipiec.pl/solidarnosc-w-swidniku-1982-1989/>

⁴⁰³ From the first days of martial law, for instance by collecting contributions, distributing underground press, and participating in masses.

⁴⁰⁴ At the time, “*Ulica Sławińskiego*”, which is now “*Ulica Niepodległości*” (Independence Street).

⁴⁰⁵ Piotr R. Jankowski, *Świdnicki Lipiec* (Świdnik: Urząd Miasta Świdnik, 2011): 105, <https://bibliotekaswidnik.pl/strona-3431-publicacje-dotyczace-historii-miejsca-i.html>. See appendix, figure 15.

⁴⁰⁶ Aktualności SH, “42. Rocznicą Świdnickich Spacerów,” January 31, 2024, <https://mok.swidnik.pl/42-rocznica-swidnickich-spacerow-2/>

⁴⁰⁷ John Darnton, “As Spring Comes to Warsaw, Lathargy is in the Air; The Talk of Poland,” *The New York Times*, March 20, 1982, <https://www.nytimes.com/1982/03/20/world/as-spring-comes-to-warsaw-lathargy-is-in-the-air-the-talk-of-poland.html>

⁴⁰⁸ Damian Zakrewski, “Miasto niewdzięczne, miasto niezłomne,” Świdnik Wysokich Lotów, [An ungrateful city, an unyielding city. Świdnik, a city of high standards]. February 6, 2012, accessed February 2025, <https://www.swidnik.pl/miasto-niewdzieczne-miasto-niezlomne/>

While the authorities used loudspeakers to order protesters to return home and condemn the walks in schools, the news of this unprecedented phenomenon would reach other cities across Poland thanks to Radio Free Europe. The regime's response was thus to anticipate the curfew's start, from 10:00 pm to 7:00 pm. Streetlights were turned off, telephone lines as well as electricity and water supplies were disrupted, and a ban on private car movements was imposed.⁴⁰⁹ Determined to uphold this peaceful way of protest, Świdnik's residents, in turn, anticipated the mass walks to the earlier news broadcast at 5:00 pm.⁴¹⁰ As reported by Marian Król – who managed to join the walks after his first shift at the WSK – most people were not afraid of the consequences and “were kind of used to protesting”. Furthermore, since “larger crowds are hard to control, we knew we could somehow make it through”. After all, going for a walk was not unlawful under the communist regime, and the absence of lights would certainly not stop the residents' ingenious form of protest. Consequently, the Communists were faced with two unfavorable alternatives: arresting individuals for simply walking around, or permitting the propagation of this symbolic resistance. In other words, this condition – now referred to as “dilemma action” – compelled the local Party to decide whether to grant the people's demands, or to risk further destabilization and jeopardize the regime's legitimacy.⁴¹¹ Furthermore, it expanded the residents' opportunities for expression, while the increasing visibility of their actions – amplified by international media attention – shaped their perception of having achieved a modest victory, despite the constraints of martial law.

Ultimately, harsher reprisals were activated, with ZOMO units deployed alongside water cannons as means to intimidate, while numerous walks' participants

⁴⁰⁹ Leszek Pietrzak, *Miasto Wolności. Historia Świdnika od Komunizmu do Wolnej Polski* (Świdnik: Miejsko-Powiatowa Biblioteka Publiczna w Świdniku, 2020): 88,

<http://archiwum.bibliotekaswidnik.pl/index.php/czytaj/nasze-publicacje/861-miasto-wolnosci>

⁴¹⁰ Aktualności SH, “42. Rocznic Świdnickich Spacerów,” January 31, 2024,

<https://mok.swidnik.pl/42-rocznica-swidnickich-spacerow-2/>

⁴¹¹ James L. VanHise, “Dilemma Actions: The Power of Putting your Opponent in a Bind,” *The Commons. Social Change Library*, <https://commonslibrary.org/new-research-shows-the-power-of-putting-your-opponent-in-a-bind/>

were interned.⁴¹² As tensions in the town intensified and the possibility of brutal suppression became increasingly real, Father Hryniewicz⁴¹³ – which had become a highly respected figure – intervened to call for an end of the Night Walks. Świdnik’s residents were thus convinced to cease their *Spacery* on February 14, 1982. As the authorities’ repressive measures continued,⁴¹⁴ by that spring the idea of Night Walks had already spread to Lublin, Puławy, Białystok and other cities.⁴¹⁵ However, they never reached Świdnik’s success. In Lublin, a larger city with a higher population, attempts to organize such walks were unsuccessful. Conversely in Świdnik, a town so small that the WSK factory overshadowed it, a word-of-mouth network blossomed, thereby providing an efficient and effective channel of spreading information”.⁴¹⁶

Świdnik’s resistance to martial law also manifested in everyday clandestine acts of defiance, such as painting slogans on public walls during the night. These inscriptions – bearing messages like “Solidarity Fights” or the widely known “the Crow will not defeat the Eagle”⁴¹⁷ and “the Winter is yours; but the Spring will be ours”⁴¹⁸ – were deemed “anti-state” by the Party. Often placed in easily visible locations, such as along the road connecting the town to the WSK factory, these bold statements conferred a sense of prestige to their authors, who risked severe

⁴¹² Including, Ryszard Krzyżanek, Bronisław Sołek, Leszek Świdorski, Stanisław Wocior, and Tadeusz Zima.

⁴¹³ He in turn, was requested to do so by Solidarity’s chairman Kazimierz Suseł.

⁴¹⁴ Including internments, 48-hours detentions, and administrative penalties against the town’s residents and the WSK’s workers. Urszula Radek, “Stan wojenny w WSK Świdnik,” Ośrodek „Brama Grodzka - Teatr NN, <https://teatrnn.pl/leksykon/artykuly/stan-wojenny-w-wsk-swidnik/#21-stycznia-1982-roku>

⁴¹⁵ Including, Białystok, Bielsko-Biała, Elbląg, Sochaczew, and Garwolin. Piotr R. Jankowski, *Świdnicki Lipiec* (Świdnik: Urząd Miasta Świdnik, 2011): 105, <https://bibliotekaswidnik.pl/strona-3431-publikacje-dotyczace-historii-miejsca-i.html>

⁴¹⁶ Marian Król, interview by Viktoria Mróz, Świdnik, March 25, 2025

⁴¹⁷ *Orla Wrona Nie Pokona*. Crow in Polish is *Wrona*, which has been popularly used to refer to the WRON, the Military Council of National Salvation.

⁴¹⁸ *Zima wasza, Wiosna nasza*.

punishments.⁴¹⁹ Additionally, even small gestures like wearing simple clothes pins, acted as subtle yet impactful sign of dissent against the regime.⁴²⁰

Ultimately, Świdnik's creative forms of protest demonstrated that resistance to martial law was possible and solidified the community's sense of dignity. Although suppressed, the Night Walks were a form of demonstration that enabled the resident to show opposition against the government's policies. Most importantly, it was a way to fight for freedom through peace – a non-violent approach that had long defined the town and its people.

3.3 The Church's Power and its Two-Track Policy: A Bridge with the Regime and a Solidarity Fortress

While *Solidarność* was besieged by the military crackdown, the Catholic Church, as the only legally existing institution outside the state's direct control, adeptly refrained from siding with either party of the conflict.⁴²¹ Thus, whilst acting as a protector of independent social engagement and advocating for national concerns, it chose neither to explicitly oppose to those responsible for martial law nor to commit to the restoration of the Solidarity trade union.⁴²² Nevertheless, the Church condemned the state of war and reinforced its position as mediator between the people and the authorities, with several parishes engaging in the resistance efforts against the military regime.⁴²³ From the onset of martial law, the autonomous informational and organizational structure of the Church served as an essential umbrella for independent

⁴¹⁹ Leszek Pietrzak, *Miasto Wolności. Historia Świdnika od Komunizmu do Wolnej Polski* (Świdnik: Miejsko-Powiatowa Biblioteka Publiczna w Świdniku, 2020): 89,

<http://archiwum.bibliotekaswidnik.pl/index.php/czytaj/nasze-publicacje/861-miasto-wolnosci>

⁴²⁰ Ibid.

⁴²¹ Grzegorz Ekiert, *The State against Society. Political Crises and their Aftermath in East Central Europe* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996): 267.

⁴²² Bartłomiej Kamiński, *The Collapse of State Socialism. The Case of Poland* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991): 217.

⁴²³ Grzegorz Ekiert, *The State against Society. Political Crises and their Aftermath in East Central Europe* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996): 267.

activities, thereby crucially contributing to the survival of the opposition.⁴²⁴ Already on December 17, 1981, Archbishop Józef Glemp was authorized⁴²⁵ to establish the “Primate’s Committee for Assistance to the Prosecuted and their Families”⁴²⁶, whose mission was to provide legal, medical, and material support to individuals detained or dismissed under martial law as well as to their families.⁴²⁷ As similar committees were formed in thirty-six other cities and dioceses across the country, lawyers, physicians, academics, writers, and artists affiliated with Solidarity joined these charitable networks.⁴²⁸ Furthermore, as parallel informal structures were spontaneously created, dioceses became vital centers for information, monitoring repressions and offering humanitarian aid, including food and medical supplies to those in need. Simultaneously, they also acted as legal hubs facilitating assistance to the prosecuted and served as cultural and political centers providing refuge for many independent activities. Equally important was the Church’s role in distributing Western aid within the country and its commitment to ensuring that it would not be diverted to the government.⁴²⁹

In Świdnik, as in other cities across Poland, the deeply rooted Catholic faith of the local population constituted a source of strength since the beginning of the Communist regime. Particularly, the active resistance of the town, which boasted one of the strongest underground *Solidarność* structures, would not have been possible without the extraordinary social solidarity derived from the people’s profound bond

⁴²⁴ Bartłomiej Kamiński, *The Collapse of State Socialism. The Case of Poland* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991): 217.

⁴²⁵ After negotiations with the military.

⁴²⁶ Bartłomiej Noszczak, “Kościelne Komitety Pomocy Więzionym, Internowanym, Represjonowanym i ich Rodzinom,” *Encyklopedia Solidarności*, <https://encycsol.pl/encyklopedia/Koscielne-Komitety-Pomocy-Wiezionym-Internowanym-Represjonowanym-i-ich-Rodzinom.html>. The original name is Kościelne Komitety Pomocy Więzionym, Internowanym, Represjonowanym i Ich Rodzinom (Translated: The Church Committees for the Aid of Prisoners, Detainees, the Repressed, and Their Families).

⁴²⁷ Grzegorz Ekiert, *The State against Society. Political Crises and their Aftermath in East Central Europe* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996): 267.

⁴²⁸ Ibid.

⁴²⁹ Bartłomiej Kamiński, *The Collapse of State Socialism. The Case of Poland* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991): 217.

with Catholicism.⁴³⁰ This has been demonstrated by the residents' relation with the Church both before and throughout martial law. For instance, following the WSK mid-December strikes' suppression, workers attended Father Hryniewicz's mass in the search for guidance on the appropriate course of action. When some of them advocated for a boycott of the factory, the priest eased tensions and urged them to return to work.⁴³¹ Whilst the Church's moderating effect was further illustrated by the priest's crucial influence in stopping the Świdnik Night Walks and avoiding their escalation, the parish's premises had also become a point from which independent acts of resistance would be launched. For instance, Zygmunt Karwowski autonomously took up underground activities on behalf of the town's Solidarity Factory Committee, by distributing handmade leaflets signed by NSZZ outside the church.⁴³² Furthermore, Father Hryniewicz's commitments strengthened *Solidarność* underground efforts to support the families of dismissed or imprisoned activists' and workers. Not only did he distribute foreign aid and offered parish facilities to union members, but he also allocated for assistance nearly 650,000 złoty⁴³³ from the Church's funds. This was paralleled by Primate's Glemp contribution of between one and two million złoty specifically for Świdnik's residents. Similarly to other cities across Poland, aid had also been extended to the Włodawa prison, where Solidarity activists from Świdnik and other regions were detained.⁴³⁴

May 1982 would prove to be a particularly vibrant month both for the national and for Świdnik's resistant spirit. On the first day of the month, while members of Solidarity boycotted the May Day parade organized by the WRON authorities, a Holy

⁴³⁰ Leszek Pietrzak, *Miasto Wolności. Historia Świdnika od Komunizmu do Wolnej Polski* (Świdnik: Miejsko-Powiatowa Biblioteka Publiczna w Świdniku, 2020): 3-4,

<http://archiwum.bibliotekaswidnik.pl/index.php/czytaj/nasze-publicacje/861-miasto-wolnosci>

⁴³¹ Piotr R. Jankowski, *Świdnicki Lipiec* (Świdnik: Urząd Miasta Świdnik, 2011): 102, https://bibliotekaswidnik.pl/strona-3431-publicacje_dotyczace_historii_miejsca_i.html

⁴³² Ibid.

⁴³³ Which in 1982 meant nearly 81,250 dollars.

⁴³⁴ The Świdnik community was indeed later granted a medal as recognition for supporting imprisoned and interned people. Piotr R. Jankowski, *Świdnicki Lipiec* (Świdnik: Urząd Miasta Świdnik, 2011): 103, https://bibliotekaswidnik.pl/strona-3431-publicacje_dotyczace_historii_miejsca_i.html

Mass was held at the local church to pray for the workers, resulting in a procession which was dispersed by the security service.⁴³⁵ Then, on May 3, following a 6:00 pm Holy Mass to commemorate the anniversary of the Polish Constitution, residents spontaneously participated in a one-time protest walk related to repressions in Lublin⁴³⁶ and other cities across the country.⁴³⁷ Under the appeal of Solidarity's national Temporary Coordination Committee (TKK)⁴³⁸ and one of its leaders Zbigniew Bujak, a nationwide fifteen-minute strike was held on May 13 to protest against the continuation of martial law.⁴³⁹ In Świdnik, despite initial doubts, Kazimierz Suseł (the Regional Committee's⁴⁴⁰ chairman) was convinced by the underground activist Andrzej Sokołowski that the town should join the national action as well. With approximately 90 percent of the workforce (around 3,500 people) participating, the plant came to a halt at 12:00 pm whereby "silence filled the factory for more than fifteen minutes".⁴⁴¹ However no one anticipated how strongly the SB would respond. Mass dismissals were immediately carried out, with nearly three hundred employees losing their jobs, and many others being detained, interrogated, and interned.⁴⁴² As Sokołowski later recalled, he would "have the May 13 strike on his conscience".⁴⁴³

⁴³⁵ Urszula Radek, "Stan wojenny w WSK Świdnik," Ośrodek „Brama Grodzka - Teatr NN,” <https://teatrnn.pl/leksykon/artykuly/stan-wojenny-w-wsk-swidnik/#21-stycznia-1982-roku>

⁴³⁶ That day, when flowers were laid at the Monument of the May 3rd Constitution in one of Lublin's main squares, clashes erupted with the security forces. Furthermore, primarily school and university students attempted to start demonstrations in the city.

⁴³⁷ Where demonstrators protesting against the regime were brutally dispersed by the armed ZOMO units. Urszula Radek, "Stan wojenny w WSK Świdnik," Ośrodek „Brama Grodzka - Teatr NN,” <https://teatrnn.pl/leksykon/artykuly/stan-wojenny-w-wsk-swidnik/#21-stycznia-1982-roku>

⁴³⁸ *Tymczasowa Komisja Koordynacyjna*.

⁴³⁹ Piotr R. Jankowski, *Świdnicki Lipiec* (Świdnik: Urząd Miasta Świdnik, 2011): 106, https://bibliotekaswidnik.pl/strona-3431-publicacje_dotyczace_historii_miejsca_i.html

⁴⁴⁰ RKK.

⁴⁴¹ Andrzej Sokołowski, interview by Wioletta Wejman, Strajk 13 maja 1982 roku – Andrzej Sokołowski – fragment relacji świadka historii z 22 sierpnia 2005, August 22, 2005, in Archiwum Programu Historia Mówiona Ośrodka "Brama Grodzka - Teatr NN", <https://teatrnn.pl/historiamowiona/fragmenty/strajk-13-maja-1982-roku/>

⁴⁴² Urszula Radek, "Stan wojenny w WSK Świdnik," Ośrodek „Brama Grodzka - Teatr NN,” <https://teatrnn.pl/leksykon/artykuly/stan-wojenny-w-wsk-swidnik/#21-stycznia-1982-roku>

⁴⁴³ Andrzej Sokołowski, interview by Wioletta Wejman, Strajk 13 maja 1982 roku – Andrzej Sokołowski – fragment relacji świadka historii z 22 sierpnia 2005, August 22, 2005, in Archiwum Programu Historia Mówiona Ośrodka "Brama Grodzka - Teatr NN", <https://teatrnn.pl/historiamowiona/fragmenty/strajk-13-maja-1982-roku/>

Despite sharing Susel's concerns regarding the significant risk of reprisals, Sokołowski felt it had been imperative "not to leave Bujak alone": "regardless of the costs, and in light of Świdnik's increasing visibility in Radio Free Europe's coverage", inaction was not an option for the small town.⁴⁴⁴ After the mass dismissals, a call was issued by the WSK's Solidarity Commission addressing the entire *Solidarność* movement in Poland and requesting material assistance to the dismissed workers.⁴⁴⁵ This was followed by a significant surge in international aid to Świdnik, which had by then become widely renowned for its Night Walks.⁴⁴⁶

The Church's role in assisting the victims of martial law was thus crucial and extensive, with Archbishop Glemp and local priests visiting internment camps and celebrating masses in detention places. Furthermore, church grounds became key centers for cultural, social, and political activities, with artists organizing exhibitions and concerts to boycott official institutions.⁴⁴⁷ For instance, in the spring of 1983 Świdnik's Solidarity activists – including Alfred Bondos and Stanisław Pietruszewski – activated the town's Catholic Club (KK)⁴⁴⁸ as a branch of the Catholic Intelligentsia Club in Lublin. The club functioned as an umbrella covering different underground *Solidarność* initiatives, including meetings with renowned Polish artists boycotting the regime's television and theater.⁴⁴⁹ The Church in Świdnik also supported the coordination of summer camps and holidays, called "Holidays with God".⁴⁵⁰ The

⁴⁴⁴ Andrzej Sokołowski, interview by Wioletta Wejman, Strajk 13 maja 1982 roku – Andrzej Sokołowski – fragment relacji świadka historii z 22 sierpnia 2005, August 22, 2005, in Archiwum Programu Historia Mówiona Ośrodka "Brama Grodzka - Teatr NN", <https://teatrnn.pl/historiamowiona/fragmenty/strajk-13-maja-1982-roku/>

⁴⁴⁵ Piotr R. Jankowski, "Sprawozdanie – Raport z działalności niejawnej NSZZ Solidarność w Świdniku," Świdnik na Kartach Historii, last modified 2013, <https://www.historia.swidnik.net/text-3898>

⁴⁴⁶ Piotr R. Jankowski, *Świdnicki Lipiec* (Świdnik: Urząd Miasta Świdnik, 2011): 103, https://bibliotekaswidnik.pl/strona-3431-publicacje_dotyczace_historii_miejsca_i.html

⁴⁴⁷ Grzegorz Ekiert, *The State against Society. Political Crises and their Aftermath in East Central Europe* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996): 267.

⁴⁴⁸ *Klub Katolicki*.

⁴⁴⁹ Leszek Pietrzak, *Miasto Wolności. Historia Świdnika od Komunizmu do Wolnej Polski* (Świdnik: Miejsko-Powiatowa Biblioteka Publiczna w Świdniku, 2020): 93, <http://archiwum.bibliotekaswidnik.pl/index.php/czytaj/nasze-publicacje/861-miasto-wolnosci>

⁴⁵⁰ Wakacje z Bogiem.

initiative, especially addressing the children of repressed workers and union members, involved a considerable number of people, including women and the activist Alfred Bondos.⁴⁵¹ Despite being often sabotaged by the SB, Mr. Bondos' engagement was critical in organizing food supplies for the camps and colonies.⁴⁵² This initiative too would quickly spread in almost all Solidarity hubs across Poland.

As illustrated by Świdnik, whose parish had evolved into a true refuge for underground culture, by the end of martial law the Church had “moved into the vacuum left by Solidarity”.⁴⁵³

3.4 Everyday Resistance amid Economic Deterioration between 1982 and 1985

The two most defining aspects of everyday life during martial law in Świdnik were queues and coupons, which clearly symbolized the regime's failure to introduce successful economic reforms. As reported by Mr. Julian Sowiński – a WSK worker – , throughout the crisis people managed to survive thanks to family and friends who either lived in the countryside – and could thus provide them with food in exchange for goods – or had some other connections.⁴⁵⁴ Emblematic to describe the situation, was a saying circulating during that period: “Life is good in the city when you have in-laws in the countryside”.⁴⁵⁵ Or, as Mrs. Zofia Lisiecka described “I would sew clothes and in return I would get eggs, milk or could even borrow a horse. That's how

⁴⁵¹ Piotr R. Jankowski, *Świdnicki Lipiec* (Świdnik: Urząd Miasta Świdnik, 2011): 106, https://bibliotekaswidnik.pl/strona-3431-publicacje_dotyczace_historii_miejsca_i.html

⁴⁵² Leszek Pietrzak, *Miasto Wolności. Historia Świdnika od Komunizmu do Wolnej Polski* (Świdnik: Miejsko-Powiatowa Biblioteka Publiczna w Świdniku, 2020): 91, <http://archiwum.bibliotekaswidnik.pl/index.php/czytaj/nasze-publicacje/861-miasto-wolnosci>

⁴⁵³ James F. Brown, *Poland Since Martial Law* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 1988): 7, <https://www.rand.org/pubs/notes/N2822.html>

⁴⁵⁴ Julian Sowiński, telephone interview conducted thanks to Tadeusz Mróz by Viktoria Mróz (author), Świdnik, December 9, 2024..

⁴⁵⁵ Marian Król, interview by Viktoria Mróz, Świdnik, March 25, 2025.

it was.”⁴⁵⁶ As a result, since the imposition of martial law, the deteriorating economic situation further strengthened most Poles’ opposition towards the regime.

Although the regime had justified the state of war as an “umbrella measure” that would “shield Poland” while it underwent essential economic reforms,⁴⁵⁷ Jaruzelski’s decision had been primarily political. Throughout martial law, politics took precedence over economics, with policies fundamentally aiming at cancelling the August 1980 Agreements, at eradicating Solidarity and all independent organizations and thus, at forestalling the state’s and the PZPR’s disintegration.⁴⁵⁸ Despite the regime’s economic measures and its appeal to the USSR for further financial assistance, the population’s living standards in fact plummeted. Contrary to state propaganda, which held Solidarity responsible for the country’s economic stagnation, dismantling the trade union failed to yield any tangible improvements.⁴⁵⁹ Indeed, most of the economic issues were a consequence of the regime’s policies in the 1970s. Industrial productivity decreased – except coal production, whose exports to the West almost doubled –, with Poland’s GNP dropping of over fifteen percent, and a mounting foreign debt.⁴⁶⁰ Furthermore, although the food demand had been reduced by the dramatic price increases introduced in February 1982,⁴⁶¹ most Poles struggled to meet their basic needs, with real incomes falling by over 25 percent.⁴⁶² In other words, at the end of 1981 there was still too much money chasing too few goods. Thus, whilst meant to restore market balance, the surge of prices led to an estimated inflationary

⁴⁵⁶ She was a WSK worker. Zofia Lisiecka, interview by Tadeusz Mróz on behalf of Viktoria Mróz (author), Świdnik, November 27, 2024.

⁴⁵⁷ Timothy G. Ash, *The Polish Revolution: Solidarity*, 3rd ed. (London: Yale University Press, 1999): 315.

⁴⁵⁸ Grzegorz Ekiert, *The State against Society. Political Crises and their Aftermath in East Central Europe* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996): 293.

⁴⁵⁹ Norman Davies, *Heart of Europe: The Past in Poland’s Present*, New ed (Oxford: OUP Oxford, 2001): 22, EBSCOhost.

⁴⁶⁰ Despite a major reduction of Western imports, foreign debt increased from \$20.7 billion in 1979 to \$25.5 billion in 1981. Grzegorz Ekiert, *The State against Society. Political Crises and their Aftermath in East Central Europe* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996): 292-93.

⁴⁶¹ Włodzimierz Borodziej, *Geschichte Polens im 20. Jahrhundert* (München: C.H.Beck, 2010): 372. In particular, food and Energy prices were increased of 240 and 170 percent respectively.

⁴⁶² Norman Davies, *Heart of Europe: The Past in Poland’s Present*, New ed (Oxford: OUP Oxford, 2001): 23, EBSCOhost.

overhang of 500 billion złoty.⁴⁶³ As a result, the black economy virtually supplanted the official one, whereby queuing – although relatively reduced⁴⁶⁴ – remained part of most Poles’ everyday life.⁴⁶⁵ As recalled by Marian Król in Świdnik, “even if there were ration cards,⁴⁶⁶ you had to wait in endless lines before stores. You had to get up ideally at four in the morning and before holidays, some people would even stand all night just to buy anything. Because if you came later and you were for instance the fiftieth in line, there was almost nothing left.”⁴⁶⁷ Paradoxically, whilst abundant in natural resources, in the early 1980s Poland was virtually bankrupt and had descended into a level of poverty unprecedented in Europe”.⁴⁶⁸

Two equally important factors contributing to the economic collapse were Poland’s soaring debt with the West and the economic sanctions introduced by the USA against Poland and the Soviet Union after the imposition of martial law. Indeed, the substantial loans that Poland had taken in the previous decade from Western creditors, by the 1980s were exacerbating the fragile economy, already plagued by severe shortages.⁴⁶⁹ Furthermore, the suspension of financial privileges and the *de facto* economic aid which Poland had received until December 1981, clearly underscored that the country’s economic revival, and consequently its political future, rested on Western support.⁴⁷⁰ Nevertheless, the West too was confronted with a double-edged decision: on the one hand, denying further aid would have driven the Poles into even greater economic and political distress, potentially hastening the next wave of working-class unrest. Conversely, aiding the regime would have directly

⁴⁶³ Antoni Dudek, *Reglamentowana Rewolucja. Rozkład Dyktatury Komunistycznej w Polsce 1988-1990* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak Horyzont, 2014): 29.

⁴⁶⁴ Indeed, the diminishing purchasing power of the population had relatively reduced the lines in front of the stores.

⁴⁶⁵ Anita Prazmowska, *Poland: A Modern History* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010): 221, EBSCOhost

⁴⁶⁶ See appendix, figure 14.

⁴⁶⁷ Marian Król, interview by Viktoria Mróz, Świdnik, March 25, 2025.

⁴⁶⁸ Norman Davies, *Heart of Europe: The Past in Poland’s Present*, New ed (Oxford: OUP Oxford, 2001): 23, EBSCOhost

⁴⁶⁹ Gregory F. Domber, *Empowering Revolution. America, Poland, and the End of the Cold War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014): 16-17.

⁴⁷⁰ Timothy G. Ash, *The Polish Revolution: Solidarity*, 3rd ed. (London: Yale University Press, 1999): 344.

contributed to the process of “normalization” – a return to Party dominance and control over all sectors of society. Accordingly, even with the sanctions package introduced, humanitarian assistance continued – including Western⁴⁷¹ and Vatican support, with trade unions and charitable organizations sending food, clothes, medicines and sanitary products to Poland.⁴⁷² Simultaneously, the USSR and other Soviet bloc partners were unable to offset the impact of Western economic sanctions, as their own economies were struggling and were incapable of providing Poland with significant financial assistance.⁴⁷³

Although the need for economic overhaul was used as a public justification underlying the imposition of martial law, the regime’s first stage of reform failed to arrest the process of economic decay commenced in the previous decade. Despite its rhetoric, the fiscal policies of Jaruzelski’s regime proved incapable of effectively tackling the country’s deep-seated economic troubles and thus, of rebuilding public support. Particularly, the General’s aim of introducing market mechanisms in the state sector without excessively weakening party influence over economic decisions, ultimately failed, with financial processes remaining under central control.⁴⁷⁴ Importantly, the persistent severe economic crisis throughout the entire post-martial-law period, would constitute one of the factors destabilizing the Communist regime and ultimately leading to its demise.

Neither the dire economy nor martial law halted Świdnik’s underground activism. Despite the May mass dismissals, following the TKK’s formation at the national level, a covert Regional Coordination Commission (RKK) was established at the end of the month, to be headed by Andrzej Sokołowski. Aimed at improving the

⁴⁷¹ Crucial was also US aid, helping *Solidarność* with printing, communication equipment, thereby enabling underground oppositional activities and capacities. Grzegorz Ekiert, *The State against Society. Political Crises and their Aftermath in East Central Europe* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996): 290.

⁴⁷² Anita Prazmowska, *Poland: A Modern History* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010): 221, EBSCOhost.

⁴⁷³ Grzegorz Ekiert, *The State against Society. Political Crises and their Aftermath in East Central Europe* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996): 293-294.

⁴⁷⁴ United States Department of State, “Economic Reform in Poland: Status and Prospects,” September 1989, CIA-RDP90M01243R001000010003-7, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/>

coordination of all underground structures' activities across the Lublin Voivodeship, the Commission succeeded in uniting underground union cells from nearly 200 workplaces throughout the region.⁴⁷⁵ Furthermore, in October a meeting was organized in a village near Świdnik⁴⁷⁶ to hold secret elections for Solidarity's underground Factory Commissions at the WSK. Constituting the largest such gathering since the beginning of martial law, participants at the assembly only used their mandates' numbers instead of their names.⁴⁷⁷ Aside from formally electing the Commission's leadership⁴⁷⁸, its structure was also reorganized with the aim of adapting it to the existing situation, for instance by creating training, printing and finance departments.⁴⁷⁹

That same month, a poster campaign launched in Świdnik drew widespread regional attention due to its sharp critique of martial law. The action, which lasted until December 1983, included posters depicting a soldier trampling on the PRL's Constitution and others similarly ironic illustrations criticizing the regime. The small town became a focal point of nationwide interest also at the end of April, when the underground Radio *Solidarność* broadcast its first eight-minute program, calling for a boycott of the regime's May celebrations and encouraging the residents to "stand together" against the regime.⁴⁸⁰ The underground station, whose creators included Alfred Bondos, Andrzej Sokołowski and Henryk Gontarz, was unprecedented and raised the attention of Western stations such as Radio Free Europe.⁴⁸¹ Notably, the program was aired at different times and from diverse locations to avoid being caught

⁴⁷⁵ Leszek Pietrzak, *Miasto Wolności. Historia Świdnika od Komunistów do Wolnej Polski* (Świdnik: Miejsko-Powiatowa Biblioteka Publiczna w Świdniku, 2020): 89,

<http://archiwum.bibliotekaswidnik.pl/index.php/czytaj/nasze-publicacje/861-miasto-wolnosci>

⁴⁷⁶ Krępiec.

⁴⁷⁷ Leszek Pietrzak, *Miasto Wolności. Historia Świdnika od Komunistów do Wolnej Polski* (Świdnik: Miejsko-Powiatowa Biblioteka Publiczna w Świdniku, 2020): 91,

<http://archiwum.bibliotekaswidnik.pl/index.php/czytaj/nasze-publicacje/861-miasto-wolnosci>

⁴⁷⁸ With Kazimierz Susel at its head and Adam Oleszek as his deputy.

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid, 92.

⁴⁸⁰ Piotr R. Jankowski, *Świdnicki Lipiec* (Świdnik: Urząd Miasta Świdnik, 2011): 83,

https://bibliotekaswidnik.pl/strona-3431-publicacje_dotyczace_historii_miejsca_i.html

⁴⁸¹ Ibid.

by the SB, who were searching for the transmission source. Despite some of its organizers being interned in 1984, the radio ceased operating only in 1988. Another mobilization effort occurred in 1985, when Świdnik's activists organized pickets in front of liquor stores, aimed at supporting the Polish Episcopate's appeal urging people to abstain from alcohol.⁴⁸²

Hence, despite repressions and everyday economic hardships, Świdnik's residents and activists continued demonstrating their dissent against martial law through different forms of resistance and through the solid organization of underground *Solidarność*.

3.5 The Controversial Figure of Jaruzelski and the End of Martial Law

Over the course of one year, the military regime had decimated Solidarity and crushed the strikes called by the movement's underground leaders. The ZOMO's brutality, the thousands of arrests⁴⁸³ and the prospect of military discipline in the factories, had irreversibly weakened the trade union. Although Jaruzelski released Wałęsa from internment and suspended martial law in December 1982, by then, all free trade unions had been formally abolished, with *Solidarność* portrayed as a menace to Polish security.⁴⁸⁴ Indeed, despite the movement's remnants surviving through underground structures, the union was seriously weakened and would never re-gain its pre-martial law strength.

Yet, Jaruzelski's regime strongly differed from and was relatively more moderate than military coups observed globally, and the standard Soviet-style

⁴⁸² Leszek Pietrzak, *Miasto Wolności. Historia Świdnika od Komunizmu do Wolnej Polski* (Świdnik: Miejsko-Powiatowa Biblioteka Publiczna w Świdniku, 2020): 99,

<http://archiwum.bibliotekaswidnik.pl/index.php/czytaj/nasze-publicacje/861-miasto-wolnosci>

⁴⁸³ Norman Davies, *Heart of Europe: The Past in Poland's Present*, New ed (Oxford: OUP Oxford, 2001): 21, EBSCOhost. Not only of Solidarity members but also of innocent citizens. Furthermore, nearly 10,000 persons were detained in forty-nine internment camps.

⁴⁸⁴ Mieczysław B. Biskupski, *The History of Poland*, 2nd ed. (Santa Barbara, California: Greenwood): 182, EBSCOhost.

“normalization” processes. Particularly, repression was neither as extreme nor as sustained as in Kádár’s Hungary or in Husák’s Czechoslovakia; it did not resort to mass deportations⁴⁸⁵; and it did not lead to a direct Soviet intervention, which Moscow had ultimately rejected. This, together with the Party apparatus’ paralysis and its continued loss of members, prevented the Communists’ ultimate reassertion of full and sustained control over the country.⁴⁸⁶ Poland’s deviation from developments in neighboring Soviet satellites, is further demonstrated by Jaruzelski’s relatively milder approach, which would gradually be displayed especially after July 1983, when the state of war ended. Whilst aiming to move the country towards normalization, the General’s policy followed two contradictory trajectories, whereby strategic retreats were alternated with threats of renewed repression.

On the one hand, while harassment of Solidarity leaders continued, Jaruzelski progressively expanded his position as the unchallenged head of state and of the PZPR.⁴⁸⁷ Whilst no direct attack was conducted against the Church, the regime attempted to limit the Episcopate’s influence in public life and education.⁴⁸⁸ On the other hand, the militarization of the administration and of economy had been gradually reversed, and the WRON was dissolved with the end of martial law. At times, the regime adopted conciliatory gestures – mainly under international pressure – notably refraining from prosecuting Wałęsa and granting amnesty to convicted individuals, resulting in their release between 1983 and 1984.⁴⁸⁹ Furthermore, the regime had recognized the Church’s powerful role and had thus adopted an unusually liberal stance, granting it greater media access, allowing the construction of nearly 1,000 new churches and providing financial support – on the condition that Cardinal Glemp

⁴⁸⁵ Norman Davies, *Heart of Europe: The Past in Poland’s Present*, New ed (Oxford: OUP Oxford, 2001): 24, EBSCOhost.

⁴⁸⁶ Timothy G. Ash, *The Polish Revolution: Solidarity*, 3rd ed. (London: Yale University Press, 1999): 314.

⁴⁸⁷ Włodzimierz Borodziej, *Geschichte Polens im 20. Jahrhundert* (München: C.H.Beck, 2010): 371.

⁴⁸⁸ Anita Prazmowska, *Poland: A Modern History* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010): 221, EBSCOhost

⁴⁸⁹ Włodzimierz Borodziej, *Geschichte Polens im 20. Jahrhundert* (München: C.H.Beck, 2010): 371.

collaborated in the suppression of social radicalism.⁴⁹⁰ Most importantly, despite Jaruzelski's fear of mass demonstrations, he ultimately allowed the Pope to visit the country in June 1983: whilst faced with different conditions,⁴⁹¹ John Paul II's support for Solidarity and disapproval of state repression, boosted the Poles' national spirit – which would be further strengthened by the Nobel Peace Prize awarded to Wałęsa in October.⁴⁹²

It is therefore evident that Jaruzelski's measures were less severe than they could have been. Whilst possessing the instruments of effective repression and maintaining a strong hold on the pace of liberalization, the General ultimately refrained from sustained extreme measures. He could have ultimately dismantled the underground printing presses, rearrested the activists, and enforced death executions, but he did not. Not only was Jaruzelski aware that the traditional Soviet methods of repression were no longer viable, but he also recognized that the revival of Communism in the country was contingent upon some level of popular support.⁴⁹³ Furthermore, adopting more stringent measures would have required a “re-Stalinization” not only in Poland but also in the Soviet Union – a strategy that neither Warsaw nor Moscow were willing to pursue, especially in the second half of the 1980's.⁴⁹⁴

The General's attempt to increase the regime's legitimacy among the Polish people was severely undermined in October 1984, when the body of Father Popiełuszko was found in the reservoir of the Vistula River.⁴⁹⁵ A staunch patriot and vocal critic of the regime's abuse of human rights, the priest's crowded “Masses for

⁴⁹⁰ Mieczysław B. Biskupski, *The History of Poland*, 2nd ed. (Santa Barbara, California: Greenwood): 182, EBSCOhost. Głomp regarded many KOR and Solidarity activities as leftist secularists.

⁴⁹¹ For instance, he was prevented from meeting with Wałęsa and visiting the Gdańsk factory.

⁴⁹² Anita Prazmowska, *Poland: A Modern History* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010): 221, EBSCOhost

⁴⁹³ Norman Davies, *Heart of Europe: The Past in Poland's Present*, New ed (Oxford: OUP Oxford, 2001): 410, EBSCOhost.

⁴⁹⁴ Andrzej Paczkowski and Malcom Byrne, eds, *From Solidarity to Martial Law: The Polish Crisis of 1980-1981. A Documentary History* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2007): 40, <https://doi-org.uaccess.univie.ac.at/10.1515/9786155211157>

⁴⁹⁵ Near Włocławek. James F. Brown, *Poland Since Martial Law* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 1988): 8, <https://www.rand.org/pubs/notes/N2822.html>

the Homeland” and his identification with *Solidarność* political agenda⁴⁹⁶, made him beloved across Poland.⁴⁹⁷ However, not within the state apparatus. Brutally beaten by three SB officials, Popiełuszko’s murder was the culmination of tensions between the Church and the state’s repression forces. Indeed, it was among the security service apparatus that dissatisfaction for Jaruzelski’s recognition of the Episcopate’s power was the strongest. While demonstrating the military’s dissent against Jaruzelski’s approach, the assassination was primarily aimed to intimidate the Church and the opposition.⁴⁹⁸ However, the effect was the opposite. Not only did the incident solidify the Church’s moral and political authority, but it also raised the specter of popular disturbances, thereby prompting Jaruzelski to intervene. Concerned that the priest’s murder would jeopardize the government’s modest progress in widening its political base, the General ordered that the officials be brought to trial and began dismantling the security apparatus.⁴⁹⁹ Thus, as the regime’s agents were held accountable for the first time in a Communist system, Jaruzelski demonstrated his recognition of the public’s demands and started purging the Party from its most radical figures.⁵⁰⁰

When analyzing Jaruzelski’s controversial policies, it is paramount to consider the parallel and gradual fading of the Soviet factor. Since Brezhnev’s death in November 1982, the power transition crisis in the Soviet Union crucially altered the European geopolitical framework, thereby leaving the Polish regime with significantly more freedom for domestic political maneuvering than it would have had if the Soviet leader had remained in power.⁵⁰¹ Thus, the USSR’s prolonged struggle for succession

⁴⁹⁶ Thus, diverging from Primate Glemp’s policy of refraining from direct engagement in the conflict between the authorities and the opposition.

⁴⁹⁷ Norman Davies, *Heart of Europe: The Past in Poland’s Present*, New ed. (Oxford: OUP Oxford, 2001): 411, EBSCOhost.

⁴⁹⁸ James F. Brown, *Poland Since Martial Law* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 1988): 8, <https://www.rand.org/pubs/notes/N2822.html>

⁴⁹⁹ Bartłomiej Kamiński, *The Collapse of State Socialism. The Case of Poland* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991): 224.

⁵⁰⁰ Mieczysław B. Biskupski, *The History of Poland*, 2nd ed. (Santa Barbara, California: Greenwood): 183, EBSCOhost.

⁵⁰¹ Grzegorz Ekiert, *The State against Society. Political Crises and their Aftermath in East Central Europe* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996): 304.

and leadership, which coincided with the critical years of Solidarity's repression, ultimately afforded the PZPR's government with increased latitude in its policy decisions. This would be further amplified by Gorbachev's internal reforms, which effectively diverted Soviet attention from Poland's enduring problems.

With hindsight, the regime's failure to decisively suppress the opposition and fully re-establish its control over the society, was the result of different variables. The external ones included Poland's dependence on Western economic assistance and the pressure resulting from sanctions and from the Helsinki process, as well as Moscow's succession crisis and its declining control over its satellites. Among the internal factors figured the relatively weakened and divided PZPR,⁵⁰² the abandonment of Marxism-Leninism as legitimation for its policies and thus, the unfeasibility of the old Soviet Communist practices; the deteriorating economic crisis and thus, the failure to gain the public's support; the reliance on the Catholic Church to ensure stability; as well as the regime's contradiction in willing to deregulate and reform the economy without sufficiently liberalizing civil and political space.⁵⁰³ In other words, as suggest by Grzegorz Ekiert's analysis, just as *Solidarność* embodied a self-limiting revolution, the imposition of martial law ultimately resulted in a self-limiting counterrevolution.⁵⁰⁴

⁵⁰² Increasingly divided among hard-liners and liberals.

⁵⁰³ Grzegorz Ekiert, *The State against Society. Political Crises and their Aftermath in East Central Europe* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996): 312.

⁵⁰⁴ Ibid, 265.

Chapter 4. Poland's Transition to Democracy and its Inherited Fault Lines

This last chapter reflects the master thesis' objective of unveiling the fault lines which resulted in Poland's democratic setbacks, thereby attempting to contribute to the discussions on the quality of its democracy and the measures needed to avoid possible future reversals. Given the limitations of a master thesis, the analysis will focus on two periods, reflected in the respective sections. The first part will focus on the last years of the 1980s by examining the framework within which martial law was lifted and its impact on the society, illustrated by Solidarity's internal divisions and the events in Świdnik. Furthermore, by highlighting the regime's failure to implement effective economic reforms and thus, to increase its legitimacy among the society, this segment will facilitate the understanding of the dynamics leading to the increasingly strained atmosphere towards the end of the decade and their ultimate culmination in the Round Table Agreement. The second section, which is concentrated on the pivotal months between 1989 and 1990, will link the mechanisms behind the Communist-*Solidarność* compromise with their legacy on Poland's contemporary political landscape. The main argument is that although several fractures enabled the gradual collapse of Communism in Poland, they also became the foundation for the emergence of fault lines which eventually resulted in the country's democratic setbacks. These can also be evaluated within the case study of Świdnik, which illustrates how values linked to the resistance against Communism have remained strongly embedded in the country's southeastern regions. Their legacy has thus facilitated the appeal of more conservative parties in those areas. The adoption of interdisciplinary lenses not only renders this chapter a link between the case study and its impact on the national developments, but also between the processes that resulted in Poland's democratic transition and the country's political landscape.

Part 1: The Inherited Fault Lines – Before 1989

4.1 The Turning Point of the 1986 Amnesty and Solidarity's Fragmentation

To overcome the political deadlock that had developed by the mid-1980s without having to surrender their monopoly of power, throughout the second half of the decade the regime's "carrot and stick" policy would gradually result in a more moderate and accommodating stance towards *Solidarność*. The beginning of this initially slow transition, which would however still be limited by setbacks, was particularly apparent in the leniency towards political prisoners, which resulted in the announced amnesty of September 1986. For the first time since 1981, all convicted and imprisoned opposition members were released,⁵⁰⁵ thereby marking a crucial turning point in what had thus far constituted a period of stagnation.

1986 sparked hopes in Świdnik as well. In May, the town's residents assisted the funding and ceremonial consecration of the "Freedom Bell",⁵⁰⁶ an initiative arisen within Solidarity's underground Factory Committee in March 1983. From that spring, *Solidarność* had initiated a campaign to raise financial contributions and metal scrap for the bell's construction, which was to commemorate the 1980 uprisings and was to be placed in Świdnik's first church. In March 1986, a specific committee under the lead of Andrzej Sokołowski was established to coordinate the ceremony.⁵⁰⁷ Nearly 1,500 invitations were sent to Solidarity activists who had been designated as the bell's "Godfathers" and whose donations were planned to cover the total construction costs. People from across Poland as well as several Solidarity members, including the prominent Anna Walentynowicz, came to Świdnik to attend the ceremony, with

⁵⁰⁵ Włodzimierz Borodziej, *Geschichte Polens im 20. Jahrhundert* (München: C.H. Beck, 2010): 376.

⁵⁰⁶ *Dzwon Wolności*.

⁵⁰⁷ Piotr R. Jankowski, *Świdnicki Lipiec* (Świdnik: Urząd Miasta Świdnik, 2011): 111, https://bibliotekaswidnik.pl/strona-3431-publicacje_dotyczace_historii_miejsca_i.html

some even being hosted by local families.⁵⁰⁸ As highlighted by Marian Król, who was responsible for overseeing safety logistics and security during the event, “there were no mobile phones at the time, so news about the celebration mainly spread through Radio *Solidarność* and commemorative stamps⁵⁰⁹, thereby prompting a truly extensive number of people to participate at the ceremony.”⁵¹⁰ Even Lech Wałęsa and Zbigniew Bujak sent a telegram to praise the town's residents for their commitment.⁵¹¹ Nevertheless, the SB had from the outset actively attempted to limit the scope and impact of the event. With everything under state control, access to materials – such as the metals needed for the bell – was limited; and strong pressure was put on Father Hryniewicz and priests from the surrounding parishes. Furthermore, while a significant number of SB officers was stationed at the event, checks and roadblocks had been deployed to halt activists from attending the ceremony and thus, reduce the expected donations.⁵¹² Consequently, instead of the predicted 10,000 people, only 3,000 managed to attend the event.⁵¹³ Not only did this create financial difficulties for the parish, but it also limited the celebrations to a purely religious dimension, with Solidarity leaders being prevented from speaking.⁵¹⁴ At the same time, the fear of provocation had prompted activists to meticulously plan the event, for instance by installing a device to locate SB personnel and positioning a group of activists for each secret police officer.⁵¹⁵ And while repressions culminated in another wave of arrests and persecutions towards the end of the year, the ceremony had nevertheless resulted

⁵⁰⁸ Świdnik Wysokich Lotów, “Historia Dzwonu Wolności,” July 10, 2011, accessed April 28, 2025, <https://www.swidnik.pl/historia-dzwonu-wolnosci/>

⁵⁰⁹ See appendix, figure 17 and 18.

⁵¹⁰ Marian Król, interview by Viktoria Mróz, Świdnik, March 25, 2025.

⁵¹¹ Piotr R. Jankowski, “Sprawozdanie – Raport z działalności niejawnej NSZZ Solidarność w Świdniku,” Świdnik na Kartach Historii, last modified 2013, <https://www.historia.swidnik.net/text-3898>

⁵¹² Marcin Dąbrowski, “Dzwon Wolności w Świdniku”, Encyklopedia Solidarności, accessed February 2025, <https://encysol.pl/es/encyklopedia/>.

⁵¹³ Świdnik Wysokich Lotów, “Historia Dzwonu Wolności,” July 10, 2011, accessed April 28, 2025, <https://www.swidnik.pl/historia-dzwonu-wolnosci/>

⁵¹⁴ Marcin Dąbrowski, “Dzwon Wolności w Świdniku”, Encyklopedia Solidarności, accessed February 2025, <https://encysol.pl/es/encyklopedia/>

⁵¹⁵ Świdnik Wysokich Lotów, “Historia Dzwonu Wolności,” July 10, 2011, accessed April 28, 2025, <https://www.swidnik.pl/historia-dzwonu-wolnosci/>

in an extensive and successful demonstration, constituting one of the community's numerous forms of dissent. The "Freedom Bell" had become a symbol of the town's fight for independence.

Thus, the regime's "carrot and sticks" policy was clearly visible even across the local realities in Poland. At the turn of 1987, as interrogations and arrests intensified, personnel changes were implemented within the WSK's underground Solidarity Committee: with Marian Król at its head, the Committee's new members included Mirosław Kaczan, Piotr Karwowski and Urszula Radek.⁵¹⁶

From March 1987, Solidarity activists were further engaged in the preparations for Pope John Paul II's visit to Lublin and to collect silver scrap as a gift for him. Despite the SB preventive arrest of Alfred Bondos and Andrzej Sokołowski to hinder the union's plans,⁵¹⁷ *Solidarność* members and pilgrims from Świdnik managed to attend the Pope's mass in Lublin. There, thirteen banners proudly represented the small town. Some of them, particularly irritated the authorities, including: "Free Sokołowski and Bondos – Świdnik" or "Where there is Communism, there is misery – workers of Świdnik".⁵¹⁸ As recalled by participants, the Pope had once again given them "a sense of true freedom", which they had been dreaming of since living in the PRL.⁵¹⁹

Although met with suspicion, the limited July amnesty⁵²⁰ was followed in September by the unconditional release of all political prisoners, which was the opposition's only precondition for talks and which thus inaugurated a new stage in the post-1980 Polish history.⁵²¹ Of decisive importance was also the concurrent reversal

⁵¹⁶ Leszek Pietrzak, *Miasto Wolności. Historia Świdnika od Komunizmu do Wolnej Polski* (Świdnik: Miejsko-Powiatowa Biblioteka Publiczna w Świdniku, 2020): 102,

<http://archiwum.bibliotekaswidnik.pl/index.php/czytaj/nasze-publicacje/861-miasto-wolnosci>

⁵¹⁷ Ibid, 103.

⁵¹⁸ Piotr R. Jankowski, *Świdnicki Lipiec* (Świdnik: Urząd Miasta Świdnik, 2011): 112, https://bibliotekaswidnik.pl/strona-3431-publicacje_dotyczace_historii_miejsca_i.html

⁵¹⁹ Leszek Pietrzak, *Miasto Wolności. Historia Świdnika od Komunizmu do Wolnej Polski* (Świdnik: Miejsko-Powiatowa Biblioteka Publiczna w Świdniku, 2020): 103, <http://archiwum.bibliotekaswidnik.pl/index.php/czytaj/nasze-publicacje/861-miasto-wolnosci>103.

⁵²⁰ Jackson Diehl, "Poland Releases Solidarity Activist Bogdan Lis," *The Washington Post*, July 31, 1986, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1986/08/01/>

⁵²¹ Jackson Diehl, "Poland Declares Amnesty," *The Washington Post*, September 12, 1986, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1986/09/12/poland-declares-amnesty/>

of Moscow's policy towards its satellites, which made the restoration of martial law untenable. Recognizing the institutional framework of the old system as the primary constraint to economic recovery, the authorities were therefore gradually compelled to discuss financial reforms.⁵²² In other words, as economic problems exerted increasing pressure on political developments, the regime would progressively realize that internal political stability could only be achieved by finding a way to integrate the opposition into the political system.⁵²³ And yet, in 1987 for the PZPR's leadership this still entailed conducting a dialogue only with those accepting the status quo, in exchange for general declarations about "deepening national understanding".⁵²⁴

As demonstrated by the establishment of the Social Consultative Council in December 1986, the government had acknowledged the failure of all previous efforts to engage with society through existing institutions.⁵²⁵ Particularly, the inclusion of representatives from the "moderate" opposition – that is, several lay Catholic intellectuals and former Solidarity advisors –, signaled the regime's attempt to create a bridge with the society. Despite the Council's brief political impact, this new body – which was to advise the Council of State⁵²⁶ – reflected the government's willingness to negotiate and prompt the US to lift the remaining sanctions, while still maintaining control and further dividing the already disarrayed opposition.⁵²⁷ And yet, the formation of the Council and the full amnesty in fact demonstrated that the government had adopted a strategy of co-optation rather than confrontation towards the society.⁵²⁸

⁵²² David Ost, *Solidarity and the Politics of Anti-Politics. Opposition and Reform in Poland since 1968* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990): 160.

⁵²³ Bartłomiej Kamiński, *The Collapse of State Socialism. The Case of Poland* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991): 228.

⁵²⁴ Andrzej Friszke, *Oaza na Kopernika. Klub Inteligencji Katolickiej 1956-1989* (Warszawa: Wiąż, 1997): 256-267, quoted in Antoni Dudek, *Reglamentowana Rewolucja. Rozkład Dyktatury Komunistycznej w Polsce 1988-1990* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak Horyzont, 2014): 81.

⁵²⁵ Bartłomiej Kamiński, *The Collapse of State Socialism. The Case of Poland* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991): 226.

⁵²⁶ Poland's collective government executive.

⁵²⁷ "Poland: The New Consultative Council", 9 December 1986, NIO/EUR, CIA-RDP87R00529R000100080012-3, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/>

⁵²⁸ Bartłomiej Kamiński, *The Collapse of State Socialism. The Case of Poland* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991): 227.

In other words, members of the opposition or people considered as independent were supposed to be integrated into institutions controlled by the Communist party. As confirmed by a document sent to the Politburo's members, the Council's main objective was to present conclusions and proposals primarily related to further progress "the normalization of socio-political life" in the country and "deepening national understanding",⁵²⁹ thereby serving as a propaganda instrument ultimately aimed at dividing the opposition.

Most importantly, by then *Solidarność* had definitively ceased to be a mere trade union. Not only because of the extensive underground structure that had emerged during martial law, but also because its initial anti-political stance had become untenable. Its massive appeal among the population, its achievements against the regime – which had initially been unimaginable in a socialist country – and the expectations of reforms, had ultimately made it a political movement. And yet, following the end of martial law, the re-emerged movement was not the same, neither in its character nor in its strength, with three primary factors weakening its activity. First, the regime's repressive policies throughout martial law, which had made Solidarity illegal and had forced its remaining structures to re-organize underground. Second, while after the 1986 amnesty some Solidarity cells began gradually operating aboveground, the covert system continued to function until 1989. Given the lack of central instructions, each regional organization was allowed to decide whether to remain secret or to emerge publicly.⁵³⁰ This disorganization, together with the strongly decentralized system, resulted in widespread confusion on the movement's activities, actual leaders, and most prominent regional groups.⁵³¹ The third factor emerges as a consequence of the previous ones, with internal differences increasingly hindering *Solidarność* activity. As underscored by Marian Król, "Solidarity did not mean unity

⁵²⁹ *Notatka w sprawie Społecznej Rady Konsultacyjnej przy Radzie Państwa z 16 października 1986 r.*, quoted in Antoni Dudek, *Reglamentowana Rewolucja. Rozkład Dyktatury Komunistycznej w Polsce 1988-1990* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak Horyzont, 2014): 69.

⁵³⁰ David Ost, *Solidarity and the Politics of Anti-Politics. Opposition and Reform in Poland since 1968* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990): 162.

⁵³¹ *Ibid.*

anymore”. Until martial law, the fear of a Soviet intervention had served as a unifying element that helped the union overcome conflicts and hold together. “Everyone recognized that if the movement had been divided, the Soviets would have crushed it”.⁵³² When this common enemy dissolved, internal hostilities and divergent objectives became so extensive, that reconciliation under one united movement was no longer feasible.

In Świdnik, as in other towns across the country, activists submitted applications to local courts with the aim of legalizing new trade unions called “Solidarity”⁵³³. Not only did the government firmly oppose the lawful recognition of *Solidarność*, but also the union’s national leaders themselves did not support the regional legalization attempts.⁵³⁴ Indeed, most of Solidarity’s leadership considered the amnesty as a turning point which could have enabled a systemic political change in the country. Thus, rather than focusing on “meat, onions and shoes”, they decided to prioritize major political goals over daily labor issues.⁵³⁵ Accordingly, by late 1986, what had once been the *Solidarność* trade union, had become a fragmented group of political dissidents, loosely united under Wałęsa’s symbolic direction.⁵³⁶

As censorship was gradually eased and independent associations were legalized, the Party increasingly renounced its monopoly over the public sphere,⁵³⁷ thereby signaling the beginning of a new stage of the post-Solidarity era.

⁵³² Marian Król, interview by Viktoria Mróz, Świdnik, March 25, 2025.

⁵³³ Ibid.

⁵³⁴ Ibid.

⁵³⁵ Ibid.

⁵³⁶ David Ost, *Solidarity and the Politics of Anti-Politics. Opposition and Reform in Poland since 1968* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990): 163.

⁵³⁷ Ibid, 177. For instance, in 1987 the profoundly anti-communist underground journal *Res Publica* was legalized.

4.2 The Failure of Economic Reforms and Renewed Strikes: Towards the Round Table

At the turn of 1987, Jaruzelski revived plans for economic reforms, which would enter a second stage following the failure of the first one implemented throughout martial law. The General's renewed focus on the economic agenda was the result of different considerations, including the fear that the deteriorating living standards would eventually lead to unrest; the West's possible softening of its measures against Poland; and Gorbachev's *perestrojka*, which could have helped garner more support for reforms among the Party hardliners.⁵³⁸ Thus, in October, Deputy Premier Minister Zdzisław Sadowski presented the program for renewed financial reforms, aimed at reviving Poland's economy through a "combination of planning and self-regulatory market mechanisms", whereby price increases would suppress the demand and help bring the economy to an equilibrium.⁵³⁹ Furthermore, a referendum was called in November in which citizens were asked whether they supported "radical economic reform" and favored "deep democratization", thereby framing price increases as strictly necessary to an alleged improvement of the country's political situation. Particularly, the regime's decision to directly consult the public reflected its eagerness to obtain a mandate for difficult reforms and thus, avoid the unrest that could have followed.⁵⁴⁰ Despite Solidarity's call to ignore the referendum, which was considered a strategy of the government to gain public approval,⁵⁴¹ the program calling for drastic price increases obtained 67 percent of positive votes. However, according to Polish law the latter were to be valid only if representing more than 50 percent of all eligible

⁵³⁸ United States Department of State, "Economic Reform in Poland: Status and Prospects," September 1989, CIA-RDP90M01243R001000010003-7, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/>

⁵³⁹ It was believed that the price increase would lead to market balance, improved supply to shops and increased efficiency of state-owned enterprises. Bartłomiej Kamiński, *The Collapse of State Socialism. The Case of Poland* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991): 229-230.

⁵⁴⁰ Włodzimierz Borodziej, *Geschichte Polens im 20. Jahrhundert* (München: C.H.Beck, 2010): 377.

⁵⁴¹ Solidarity could neither support the referendum, because it would legitimize the regime, nor oppose it, because they did in fact believe in the necessity to implement reforms and democratization.

voters, thereby annulling the referendum's results.⁵⁴² Since the low turnout clearly represented the people's skepticism towards the price increases, the regime decided to proceed with less radical plans, whereby prices would be slowly increased over three years instead of rising them all at once.⁵⁴³ By doing so, the regime hoped to correct the distorted prices,⁵⁴⁴ enable companies to make profits and ultimately prompt them to produce more goods.

Just as pro-reform and anti-reform factions had split the Communist party, so Solidarity had become increasingly divided by the meaning of economic restructuring. Particularly, while workers demanded an immediate improvement in their living standards, the government's program implied the opposite, whereby belt-tightening measures were justified as temporary and necessary for long-term change.⁵⁴⁵ In contrast, Solidarity's leadership favored the Party's reformist approach and was therefore willing to accept initial radical policies as an essential condition to achieve political reforms.⁵⁴⁶ Importantly, experts within the union considered the reforms' success to be contingent on the parallel liberalization of the political environment, whereby dismantling the *nomenklatura* system and allowing independent social participation – for instance through the restoration of trade union pluralism – would have diminished social apathy, ultimately resulting in increased productivity and stronger social support for the reforms.⁵⁴⁷ An outcome that austerity measures alone would have certainly failed to generate.⁵⁴⁸ Simultaneously, as the regime was increasingly faced with the difficult decision to either “hold the system with tanks or

⁵⁴² Bartłomiej Kamiński, *The Collapse of State Socialism. The Case of Poland* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991): 231.

⁵⁴³ United States Department of State, “Economic Reform in Poland: Status and Prospects,” September 1989, CIA-RDP90M01243R001000010003-7, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/>

⁵⁴⁴ Meaning the artificially low prices, which didn't reflect the true cost of goods and services and discouraging companies to produce more.

⁵⁴⁵ David Ost, *Solidarity and the Politics of Anti-Politics. Opposition and Reform in Poland since 1968* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990): 171.

⁵⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁷ Bartłomiej Kamiński, *The Collapse of State Socialism. The Case of Poland* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991): 230.

⁵⁴⁸ Ibid.

share power and try to govern in a different way”,⁵⁴⁹ Jaruzelski continued his dual-sided approach that hindered any progress. On the one hand, he attempted to introduce changes that would improve the economy, stimulate social activity and enable Western financial assistance. On the other hand, the leading role of the PZPR and Poland’s nature as a Soviet satellite were to be strictly maintained.⁵⁵⁰

In the meantime, as inflation peaked over 25 percent and stores remained empty, popular mood deteriorated to levels below July 1980, with a survey revealing that only 13 percent of respondents positively assessed the country’s economic situation.⁵⁵¹ Nevertheless and despite forecasts warning the Politburo that an “explosion of social discontent seemed possible within a few months”, more optimistic considerations prevailed among the PZPR.⁵⁵² Notably, a report indicated that various factors served as “stabilizers” to the possibility of serious disruptions, including martial law, the Church’s role, as well as the opposition’s declining influence.⁵⁵³ Furthermore, the PZPR’s leadership was convinced that the opposition was too weak to use social discontent as a driver for organizing protests. These elements, together with the regime’s belief that delaying the reforms would only worsen the economic landscape, resulted in the announcement of the largest price increases since martial law, in two rounds in February and April 1988.⁵⁵⁴ While introducing a fixed monthly

⁵⁴⁹ Andrzej Paczkowski, Paweł Machcewicz, *Polska 1986-1989: koniec system. Materiały międzynarodowej konferencji, Miedzeszyn 21-23 października 1999*, t. 2 (Warszawa, Instytut Studiów Politycznych Polskiej Akademii Nauk, 2002): 53, quoted in Antoni Dudek, *Reglamentowana Rewolucja. Rozkład Dyktatury Komunistycznej w Polsce 1988-1990* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak Horyzont, 2014): 101.

⁵⁵⁰ Antoni Dudek, *Reglamentowana Rewolucja. Rozkład Dyktatury Komunistycznej w Polsce 1988-1990* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak Horyzont, 2014): 101.

⁵⁵¹ Andrzej Paczkowski, *Revolution and Counterrevolution in Poland, 1980-1989. Solidarity, Martial Law, and the End of Communism in Europe* (New York: University of Rochester Press, 2015): 289.

⁵⁵² Antoni Dudek, *Reglamentowana Rewolucja. Rozkład Dyktatury Komunistycznej w Polsce 1988-1990* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak Horyzont, 2014): 108.

⁵⁵³ Włodzimierz Borodziej, A. Garlicki, *Memoriał J. Urbana, S. Cioska, W. Pożogi dla Wojciecha Jaruzelskiego z 28 stycznia 1988 r. Okrągły Stół. Dokumenty i materiały*, t.1 (Warszawa, Kancelaria Prezydenta RP, 2004): 131-132, quoted in Antoni Dudek, *Reglamentowana Rewolucja. Rozkład Dyktatury Komunistycznej w Polsce 1988-1990* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak Horyzont, 2014): 109.

⁵⁵⁴ Antoni Dudek, *Reglamentowana Rewolucja. Rozkład Dyktatury Komunistycznej w Polsce 1988-1990* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak Horyzont, 2014): 117-118.

wage adjustment, food prices⁵⁵⁵ and gasoline augmented respectively by 40 and 60 percent.⁵⁵⁶ However, the enterprises' capability to transfer rising production costs to consumers, resulted in higher inflation and a degenerating wage-price spiral, thereby culminating in two waves of strikes – differing from those of July-August 1980.

In the first wave between April and May 1988, strikes erupted in different factories, including at the Stalowa Wola steelworks, in mass transportation centers in Bydgoszcz, as well as at Nowa Huta in Kraków and at the Gdańsk shipyard. While primarily directed against the effects of the economic reform, the strikes continued to demand the legalization of *Solidarność*. And yet, young workers and students, who represented the main participants of the protests,⁵⁵⁷ associated the movement's restoration with the establishment of the right to form new trade unions rather than with the effective restoration of Solidarity. The youth, who had not personally experienced the movement's 1980-81 achievements, was prompted to strike and to overcome passive resistance, motivated by their extreme frustration with the regime's economic policy.⁵⁵⁸ Eager to see concrete improvements in their lives, "Solidarity's children" saw the strikes as the only available instrument for progress. In contrast, part of the older establishment under Wałęsa's guise, taken by surprise, tried to defuse the protests and ultimately decided to participate with their own program.⁵⁵⁹ Thus, different priorities and experiences divided not only generations of workers, but also *Solidarność*, whose symbolic leader began supporting the idea of a broader political reform more than the workers' immediate interests.⁵⁶⁰ Although limited, the protests raised concerns within the regime, resulting in the signing, by interior minister Czesław Kiszczak, of a top secret decision "on the implementation of tasks by the

⁵⁵⁵ But also, cigarettes, alcohol, rent and transportation.

⁵⁵⁶ Bartłomiej Kamiński, *The Collapse of State Socialism. The Case of Poland* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991): 231.

⁵⁵⁷ Student rallies were organized in Kraków, Warsaw, Gdańsk.

⁵⁵⁸ David Ost, *Solidarity and the Politics of Anti-Politics. Opposition and Reform in Poland since 1968* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990): 182.

⁵⁵⁹ John Tagliabue, "A New Wave; Poland's Young Demand Change From an Unchanging System," *The New York Times*, May 8, 1988, accessed April 30, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/1988/05/08/>

⁵⁶⁰ Ibid.

Ministry of Internal Affairs (MSW)⁵⁶¹ in the event of a state of emergency and due to a threat to national security”. These included the immediate establishment of plans to intern persons suspected of not respecting the legal order, as well as to conduct warning talks.⁵⁶² Furthermore, the MSW’s Operational Bureau was ordered to organize “blockades of cities, districts, and strategic sites, while also tactically deploying MO units in cities deemed particularly dangerous”.⁵⁶³ Ultimately, different factors convinced the regime to refrain from re-introducing martial law, including the profound changes within the USSR, which would have not enabled the PZPR to justify harsher measures with the threat of Soviet invasion; the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan, which was “interpreted by the opposition [...] as limiting the danger of external intervention in Poland”; as well as the protests’ limited scope and quick suppression.⁵⁶⁴ These observations would be essential in laying the groundwork for the regime to ultimately begin a dialogue with representatives of the opposition.⁵⁶⁵

However, as talks were held in June between the authorities and the Church, the Party was still mostly convinced that dialogue could be conducted only on terms defined by it, which implied the impossibility to allow union pluralism.⁵⁶⁶ This was further demonstrated by Gorbachev’s visit to Poland in mid-July, when Jaruzelski reassured that there were “two frontiers beyond which [Poland could not] retreat, just as the Red Army could not withdraw beyond Moscow or the Volga.” The first frontier was that for Poland it was imperative not to allow for pluralism in the trade union movement. The second one, was the inadmissibility of the emergence of an opposition

⁵⁶¹ MSW, *Ministerstwo Spraw Wewnętrznych*.

⁵⁶² *Decyzja Ministra Spraw Wewnętrznych z 29 kwietnia 1988 r. wraz z harmonogramem działań. Zmierzch dyktatury. Polska lat 1986-1989 w świetle dokumentów*, t.1: *Lipiec 1986 – Maj 1989* (Warszawa, Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2009): 190-191, quoted in Antoni Dudek, *Reglamentowana Rewolucja. Rozkład Dyktatury Komunistycznej w Polsce 1988-1990* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak Horyzont, 2014): 109.

⁵⁶³ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁴ *Zwięzła ocena sytuacji w kraju – elementy prognozy z 24 czerwca 1988*, quoted in Antoni Dudek, *Reglamentowana Rewolucja. Rozkład Dyktatury Komunistycznej w Polsce 1988-1990* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak Horyzont, 2014): 123.

⁵⁶⁵ Antoni Dudek, *Reglamentowana Rewolucja. Rozkład Dyktatury Komunistycznej w Polsce 1988-1990* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak Horyzont, 2014): 123.

⁵⁶⁶ Ibid, 126.

party. In response, Gorbachev highlighted the “complete, mutual trust between the leadership of [the two countries’] parties and states” and declared that he hoped his visit would “contribute to strengthening the faith in one’s own strengths”.⁵⁶⁷ In other words, the Soviet leader was granting Jaruzelski and the PZPR complete control over Poland’s internal policy in exchange for restoring stability in the country.⁵⁶⁸ And while Jaruzelski was not yet ready to start talks with Wałęsa, a faint line of indirect contact between them emerged when in July the union’s leader sent a letter to General Kiszczak expressing his willingness to start talks.⁵⁶⁹

When a second, stronger wave of strikes broke out across the country from August 15, 1988, it stirred fears both within the Party – who feared a major escalation – and *Solidarność*, who was again not leading the renewed protests.⁵⁷⁰ While ZOMO units began intervening, and preparations for the militarization of selected plants commenced, at a session of the Party’s Bureau, the General – influenced by his advisors’ reports – discussed the option of starting a preliminary dialogue with Wałęsa. Particularly, at the beginning of the month, a memorandum was sent to Jaruzelski stating that “the PZPR was no longer able to maintain all power, also due to the Kremlin’s position”, thereby highlighting the necessity that “[power] had to be shared with the opposition.”⁵⁷¹ In their opinion, amid the loss of authority, a timely division of power would have ensured the PZPR’s dominant position.⁵⁷² Notably, when presenting this analysis, the team of Party advisors warned Jaruzelski that “the

⁵⁶⁷ Andrzej Paczkowski, “Wstępna informacja o wizycie Sekretarza Generalnego KC PZPR M.S. Gorbaczowa w Polsce 11-16 lipca 1988 r.” in *Tajne dokumenty Biura Politycznego i Sekretariatu KC. Ostatni rok władzy 1988-1989* (London: Aneks, 1994): 8, quoted in Antoni Dudek, *Reglamentowana Rewolucja. Rozkład Dyktatury Komunistycznej w Polsce 1988-1990* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak Horyzont, 2014): 137.

⁵⁶⁸ Antoni Dudek, *Reglamentowana Rewolucja. Rozkład Dyktatury Komunistycznej w Polsce 1988-1990* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak Horyzont, 2014): 136.

⁵⁶⁹ Ibid, 137.

⁵⁷⁰ Włodzimierz Borodziej, *Geschichte Polens im 20. Jahrhundert* (München: C.H. Beck, 2010): 378.

⁵⁷¹ Krzysztof Dubiński, “Memoriał z 10 sierpnia 1988 r.” in *Okrągły Stół*, t. 1 (Krajowa Agencja Promocyjna: Warsaw, 1999): 171-176, quoted in Antoni Dudek, *Reglamentowana Rewolucja. Rozkład Dyktatury Komunistycznej w Polsce 1988-1990* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak Horyzont, 2014): 138.

⁵⁷² Ibid.

alternative to [their] proposals [was] the use of force”, which risked depriving the General of his dominant position”.⁵⁷³

Determined not to introduce a state of emergency and eager to avoid an escalation, confidential contacts were initiated between prominent Solidarity activists, Party members⁵⁷⁴ and SB officers.⁵⁷⁵ On August 25, Wałęsa sent a statement⁵⁷⁶ proposing that the dialogue should focus *inter-alia* on trade union pluralism – particularly highlighting the necessity to legalize *Solidarność* – and on defining the direction of necessary economic reforms. The following day, General Kiszczak proposed on television that “Round Table Talks” be held between the government and representatives of “various social and labor circles”, excluding individuals “rejecting the legal and constitutional order of the Polish People’s Republic.”⁵⁷⁷

The PZPR’s internal crisis, the two waves of strikes, Gorbachev’s reforms and his call for political solutions of Poland’s growing crisis, compelled Jaruzelski to finally conclude months of careful consideration regarding the potential benefits and losses of opening a dialogue with the opposition. The path toward the Round Table Talks had been laid.

⁵⁷³ Antoni Dudek, *Reglamentowana Rewolucja. Rozkład Dyktatury Komunistycznej w Polsce 1988-1990* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak Horyzont, 2014): 139.

⁵⁷⁴ Although they did not all unanimously agree on negotiations with Solidarity and some party members still advocated for the use of force.

⁵⁷⁵ For instance, on August 24, contacts begun between Andrzej Stelmachowski (legal scholar and Catholic intellectual who played a crucial behind-the-scene role in supporting the Solidarity movement, for instance by advising the Inter-Enterprise Strike Committee during the Gdańsk Shipyard strikes) and Józef Czyrek, the minister of foreign affairs of the People’s Republic of Poland between August 1980 and July 1982 and later acting as a top advisor to Jaruzelski.

⁵⁷⁶ Written by Bronisław Geremek, Adam Michnik, Andrzej Stelmachowski and Tadeusz Mazowiecki.

⁵⁷⁷ Jerzy Lukowski and Hubert Zawadzki, *A Concise History of Poland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001): 278.

Part 2: The Inherited Fault Lines – Between 1989 and 1990

4.3 The First Dialogue between the Communists and Wałęsa

The preliminary contacts between Party leaders and Solidarity representatives culminated in a historical meeting between General Kiszczak⁵⁷⁸ – Jaruzelski’s right-hand man – and Wałęsa on August 31, eight years after the signing of the Gdańsk Agreements.⁵⁷⁹ The three-hour conversation, which took place in the MSW’s villa,⁵⁸⁰ was also attended by Stanisław Ciosek – one of the Party’s prominent members – and Bishop Jerzy Dąbrowski⁵⁸¹, whose presence demonstrated the persistent crucial role that the Church had played as mediator between the government and *Solidarność* – both before, when it was a trade union, and after when it had *de facto* acquired a political character.⁵⁸² While discussing the preconditions for opening the dialogue – chief among them was the cessation of strikes –, Kiszczak mentioned the place that a “constructive” opposition would have in the political system and referred to trade union pluralism only at the end, adding that “people of Solidarity, but without Solidarity” would be invited to the Round Table.⁵⁸³ On the one side, Kiszczak prioritized ending the strikes while aiming to restore the PZPR’s legitimacy within the

⁵⁷⁸ Choosing the interior minister as negotiator had been Jaruzelski’s deliberate decision, not only because Kiszczak controlled the security apparatus but also to give the opposition the impression that the regime’s top security officer was negotiating with them and not a politician.

⁵⁷⁹ Antoni Dudek, *Reglamentowana Rewolucja. Rozkład Dyktatury Komunistycznej w Polsce 1988-1990* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak Horyzont, 2014): 145.

⁵⁸⁰ Came to be known as the “Villa on Zawrat Street” (Warsaw).

⁵⁸¹ Substituting the Polish Episcopate’s representative.

⁵⁸² See appendix, figure 20 and video linked in the bibliography:

<https://youtu.be/mmkLgaM6dGw?si=cWpOrADsQQZYahvd>. Marek Beylin, “Między Kiszczakiem a Wałęsą siedzieli biskupi. Kościół “zapomniał”, że był współtwórcą Okrągłego Stołu,” [Bishops were sitting between Kiszczak and Wałęsa. The Church forgot that it was a co-creator of the Round Table] *Wyborcza.pl*, April 5, 2024, accessed April 30, 2025, <https://wyborcza.pl/alehistoria/>

⁵⁸³ Antoni Dudek, *Reglamentowana Rewolucja. Rozkład Dyktatury Komunistycznej w Polsce 1988-1990* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak Horyzont, 2014): 145.

society in the long term.⁵⁸⁴ Achieving this objective hinged on Solidarity's participation and support of the regime's reform agenda. On the other side, Wałęsa's immediate goal was to bring the Communists to the negotiating table and secure the movement's relegalization, while hoping to restore *Solidarność* as the powerful mass union it had been prior to the imposition of martial law. Most importantly, as the Party finally recognized the need for opposition representatives to participate in the political system, for both sides the way forward was the Round Table.

And yet, it took five months of intricate political maneuvering before talks could finally begin. Particularly, radical elements in both camps opposed any dialogue: while several workers accused Wałęsa of betrayal and of not having any mandate to speak on their behalf,⁵⁸⁵ Party radicals were concerned for their legitimacy. Indeed, not only did the issue of legalizing Solidarity conflict with the assertion that the pre-martial law political landscape would not be reinstated – a central tenet of Jaruzelski's regime –,⁵⁸⁶ but it also undermined the PZPR's power and privileges. Thus, as later assured by General Kiszczak, the meeting with Wałęsa was merely aimed “at dividing the opponent” and at “tying him with pragmatic and conciliatory Church circles”, further underscoring the impossibility to allow the union's legalization”.⁵⁸⁷ Particularly, the road to negotiations was further hampered following the meeting of September 15 and 16, attended initially by Kiszczak and Ciosek from the PZPR, Wałęsa and Andrzej Stelmachowski from Solidarity, and with the mediation of Father Alojzy Orszulik.⁵⁸⁸ From the second day, the number of participants – which included

⁵⁸⁴ Tomasz Kozłowski, “Rozmowy na Zawracie,” *Przystanek Historia*, June 4, 2020, accessed April 30, 2025, <https://przystanekhistoria.pl/pa2/tematy/lech-walesa/>

⁵⁸⁵ Anita Prazmowska, *Poland: A Modern History* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010): 224, EBSCOhost.

⁵⁸⁶ Antoni Dudek, *Reglamentowana Rewolucja. Rozkład Dyktatury Komunistycznej w Polsce 1988-1990* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak Horyzont, 2014): 145.

⁵⁸⁷ *Ibid*, 152.

⁵⁸⁸ Marek Beylin, “Między Kiszczakiem a Wałęsą siedzieli biskupi. Kościół “zapomniał”, że był współtwórcą Okrągłego Stołu,” [Bishops were sitting between Kiszczak and Wałęsa. The Church forgot that it was a co-creator of the Round Table] *Wyborcza.pl*, April 5, 2024, accessed April 30, 2025, <https://wyborcza.pl/alehistoria/>

on the one hand representatives of the PZPR's controlled ZSL, SD and OPZZ;⁵⁸⁹ on the other one, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, Bronisław Geremek and Lech Kaczyński from Solidarity – increased to the point that the meeting was relocated to another facility of the MSW, in the Magdalenka village near Warsaw.⁵⁹⁰ With Kiszczak and Ciosek taking an uncompromising stance on Solidarity's legalization, the attempted dialogue reached a firm impasse, with the parties being hardly able to agree on a final communiqué.⁵⁹¹ Already on the verge of breaking down, the talks ceased when in October, the newly elected Prime Minister Rakowski unexpectedly closed the Gdańsk shipyard.

Nevertheless, the new government's economic policies were initially positively received by the society.⁵⁹² Aimed at eradicating the planned economy, the introduced reforms sought to promote a rapid growth of private business and encourage foreign investment by appointing new ministers and enacting new legislation; they allowed peasants to sell their products to the buyers offering the best price, rather than to government-owned agencies at fixed prices; and they bolstered consumer goods supplies with hard currency imports amounting to \$60 million.⁵⁹³ Particularly the effect of the latter measures was visible on a day-to-day basis: while the lines in front of grocery stores disappeared, the abolition of food controls caused food prices to skyrocket, thereby resulting in an inflationary price-wage spiral and the

⁵⁸⁹ ZSL (*Zjednoczone Stronnictwo Ludowe*, United People's Party) and SD (*Stronnictwo Demokratyczne*, Democratic Party) were satellites parties of the PZPR; OPZZ (*Ogólnopolskie Porozumienie Związków Zawodowych*, All-Poland Alliance of Trade Unions) was the state-controlled trade union confederation.

⁵⁹⁰ Tomasz Kozłowski, "Rozmowy na Zawracie," *Przystanek Historia*, June 4, 2020, accessed April 30, 2025, <https://przystanekhistoria.pl/pa2/tematy/lech-walesa/>

⁵⁹¹ Ibid.

⁵⁹² Increasing from 33 percent in August to 72 percent of those surveyed expressing trust in the government in November. Although it began to again decrease in January 1989. Andrzej Paczkowski, *Revolution and Counterrevolution in Poland, 1980-1989. Solidarity, Martial Law, and the End of Communism in Europe* (New York: University of Rochester Press, 2015): 291.

⁵⁹³ United States Department of State, "Economic Reform in Poland: Status and Prospects," September 1989, CIA-RDP90M01243R001000010003-7, <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/>

złoty to be gradually substituted by the US dollar.⁵⁹⁴ Despite these immediate effects, the groundwork for the market economy had been laid.

Rakowski's government more confrontational approach towards Solidarity, whom it deemed irrelevant for economic recovery, culminated at the end of October in the liquidation of the Gdańsk shipyard,⁵⁹⁵ recognized as an unprofitable state-owned enterprise. This, together with the still-ongoing repressions – despite the end of the strikes two months before – and the dispute around the individuals that would represent the opposition in the future Round Table,⁵⁹⁶ further strengthened the impasse. Three factors would ultimately pressure both sides to re-start negotiations. First, the authorities' reports highlighting the significant role that the young generation was playing in opposition activities – despite being “still in high school throughout 1980 and 1981” –, as well the increasing radical and hostile character that they were taking against socialism.⁵⁹⁷ Second, a Party document from October which analyzed the consequences of Wałęsa's failure to achieve Solidarity's legalization, underscored that this would not only entail the end of his “role as leader and moral authority”, but also to “an uncontrolled social outburst inspired and led by the working-class youth”.⁵⁹⁸ In other words, as stated by Mazowiecki, if there had not been any Round Table, there would have been bloodshed.⁵⁹⁹ Thus, worried about the rising tensions, it would be once again the Church, represented by Archbishop Bronisław Dąbrowski and Father Orszulik, to bring about the resumption of talks.⁶⁰⁰ And while Kiszczak and Wałęsa's

⁵⁹⁴ Włodzimierz Borodziej, *Geschichte Polens im 20. Jahrhundert* (München: C.H.Beck, 2010): 379.

⁵⁹⁵ Bartłomiej Kamiński, *The Collapse of State Socialism. The Case of Poland* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991): 233-234.

⁵⁹⁶ The regime favored “moderate” members, more closely linked to the Church and strongly rejected more “extremist” members such as Jacek Kuroń and Adam Michnik, while Wałęsa did not want the authorities to choose the opposition's representatives.

⁵⁹⁷ Antoni Dudek, *Reglamentowana Rewolucja. Rozkład Dyktatury Komunistycznej w Polsce 1988-1990* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak Horyzont, 2014): 187.

⁵⁹⁸ Ibid, 188.

⁵⁹⁹ M. F. Rakowski, *Dzienniki polityczne 1987-1990*, quoted in Antoni Dudek, *Reglamentowana Rewolucja. Rozkład Dyktatury Komunistycznej w Polsce 1988-1990* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak Horyzont, 2014): 188.

⁶⁰⁰ Marek Beylin, “Między Kiszczakiem a Wałęsą siedzieli biskupi. Kościół “zapomniał”, że był współtwórcą Okrągłego Stołu,” [Bishops were sitting between Kiszczak and Wałęsa. The Church

meeting on November 18 and 19 did nothing to break the political deadlock, it would be a completely unexpected factor to pave the way for the two sides' final compromise.

Already in mid-November, Alfred Miodowicz, a Politburo member and chairman of the OPZZ official trade union federation, challenged Wałęsa to a televised debate with the aim of discrediting him and strengthening his own position. Fearing Wałęsa's victory, the PZPR leadership attempted to persuade Miodowicz to withdraw and was skeptical about broadcasting the debate, particularly because for the public it would have meant that the regime had recognized Wałęsa as leader of a real political force.⁶⁰¹ Nevertheless, Jaruzelski did not actively prevent the televised debate to be broadcast, and the encounter was transmitted live by TVP on November 30.⁶⁰² Despite General Jaruzelski's conviction about Miodowicz's strong intellectual abilities compared to Wałęsa, the debate was evidently won by the Solidarity leader. For instance, by stating that the PZPR was "moving forward [...] step by step, on foot, while the world [was] driving cars" he captured the viewers' attention on the impact of the Party's policies.⁶⁰³ Communicating with confidence and clarity, Wałęsa highlighted the need for genuine democratic reform that would allow all organizations and trade unions the right to exist. Furthermore, "to ensure that the empty round table [would] soon be filled with plenty", he repeatedly underscored the organization's readiness for cooperation with the authorities.⁶⁰⁴ Ultimately, as confirmed by 64 percent of the public surveyed and by the strengthened support for Solidarity's

forgot that it was a co-creator of the Round Table] *Wyborcza.pl*, April 5, 2024, accessed April 30, 2025, <https://wyborcza.pl/alehistoria/>

⁶⁰¹ Antoni Dudek, *Reglamentowana Rewolucja. Rozkład Dyktatury Komunistycznej w Polsce 1988-1990* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak Horyzont, 2014): 190.

⁶⁰² See link to the video in the bibliography. <https://youtu.be/Nmv9plQO5WU?si=djZX6y6lsrrg-M3k>

⁶⁰³ Lech Wałęsa and Alfred Miodowicz, "1988 – Debata Wałęsa – Miodowicz 1988.11.30", aired by Studio 4 TVP, published by VHS Archeo, 2023, Youtube, <https://youtu.be/Nmv9plQO5WU?si=a3u0OLaGfl34oVmu>

⁶⁰⁴ Lech Wałęsa and Alfred Miodowicz, "1988 – Debata Wałęsa – Miodowicz 1988.11.30", aired by Studio 4 TVP, published by VHS Archeo, 2023, Youtube, <https://youtu.be/Nmv9plQO5WU?si=a3u0OLaGfl34oVmu>

legalization – which had increased to 62 percent⁶⁰⁵ – Wałęsa won the debate.⁶⁰⁶ Most importantly, the apparatus recognized that “the unfortunate conversation” had violated “the previous status quo between the authorities and the opposition”. As stated by Rakowski in his journal: “there is no doubt that after the debate Wałęsa’s position in Poland will be much stronger. It will be hard to convince anyone why we still refuse to recognize ‘S’ [...]”.⁶⁰⁷ Miodowicz had thus prompted a new political reality in the country, whereby (as admitted by Jaruzelski) opposing Solidarity’s legalization and delaying negotiations could have resulted in renewed strikes and a wider destabilization.⁶⁰⁸

The gradual erosion of the country’s political system was further demonstrated during the turbulent 10th Plenum of the Central Committee at the turn of the new year. In January, Prime Minister Rakowski highlighted that the issue of Solidarity’s legalization was essentially regarding the direction that the country’s political system would take and thus, the Communist Party’s role in it.⁶⁰⁹ Strikingly demonstrating a U-turn in his stances, the Prime Minister had acknowledged the end of a phase in the evolution of socialism, its concept, ideas, as well as methods of governance: no higher authority could have assured that the PZPR would have retained its leading role in shaping Poland’s future development. “Look at the Catholic Church, it has also revised many dogmas. Is it losing believers because of this? Probably not. A few ardent fundamentalists and that’s it.”⁶¹⁰ In other words, not only were Rakowski’s affirmations opposing the hitherto sustained opposition against Solidarity’s legalization, but they were also clearly disrupting the PZPR’s ideologic cornerstones.

⁶⁰⁵ Support for restoring the union had never reached 50 percent.

⁶⁰⁶ Andrzej Paczkowski, *Revolution and Counterrevolution in Poland, 1980-1989. Solidarity, Martial Law, and the End of Communism in Europe* (New York: University of Rochester Press, 2015): 291.

⁶⁰⁷ Michał Szukała, “Debata Miodowicz-Wałęsa – ważny krok w stronę okrągłego stołu”, *Dzieje.pl*, November 30, 2018, accessed May 2, 2025, <https://dzieje.pl/aktualnosci/30-lat-temu-odbyla-sie-debata-miodowicz-walesa>

⁶⁰⁸ Andrzej Paczkowski, *Revolution and Counterrevolution in Poland, 1980-1989. Solidarity, Martial Law, and the End of Communism in Europe* (New York: University of Rochester Press, 2015): 291

⁶⁰⁹ Antoni Dudek, *Reglamentowana Rewolucja. Rozkład Dyktatury Komunistycznej w Polsce 1988-1990* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak Horyzont, 2014): 198.

⁶¹⁰ AAN, KC PZPR sygn. III/190, Stenogram drugiej części X Plenum KC PZPR, quoted in *Ibid.*

Confronted with the Party hardliners' criticism of the Round Table – which Miodowicz most sharply condemned –, Jaruzelski and his top advisors – including Rakowski, Kiszczak and Czyrek – decided to enact the well-calculated game of threatening to resign.⁶¹¹ Given the lack of serious contenders to power and of an action plan, the hardliners confirmed the Party leader and his associates' position, while giving up their resistance and thus, resulting in only 30 percent of the members abstaining or voting against the legalization of *Solidarność*.⁶¹² Thus, the resolution of the 10th Plenum, which consented the union's legalization, meant that the Party, with Jaruzelski at the forefront, had taken an irreversible step in the destruction of the country's political system.⁶¹³

Although *Solidarność* was still formally illegal, in the months following the 10th Plenum, overtly operating cells began proliferating across the country's factories, with ten to fifteen structures being established daily. Świdnik too, witnessed its units gradually emerge from underground and the establishment of a Civic Committee, which was to function as the local branch of the central Solidarity organization.⁶¹⁴ Indeed, already in December 1988, a meeting of Solidarity intellectuals and activists had announced the establishment of the Solidarity Citizens Committee (KO)⁶¹⁵, a political advisory board led by the movement's prominent social democratic members, including Geremek, Kuroń, Michnik, as well as Mazowiecki and Stelmachowski.⁶¹⁶ The movement, which at its core remained a trade union, could now count on a political arm, with fifteen commissions – covering areas which included not only political and

⁶¹¹ Andrzej Paczkowski, *Revolution and Counterrevolution in Poland, 1980-1989. Solidarity, Martial Law, and the End of Communism in Europe* (New York: University of Rochester Press, 2015): 292.

⁶¹² Ibid.

⁶¹³ Antoni Dudek, *Reglamentowana Rewolucja. Rozkład Dyktatury Komunistycznej w Polsce 1988-1990* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak Horyzont, 2014): 202.

⁶¹⁴ Leszek Pietrzak, *Miasto Wolności. Historia Świdnika od Komunizmu do Wolnej Polski* (Świdnik: Miejsko-Powiatowa Biblioteka Publiczna w Świdniku, 2020): 104-105,

<http://archiwum.bibliotekaswidnik.pl/index.php/czytaj/nasze-publicacje/861-miasto-wolnosci>

⁶¹⁵ *Komitet Obywatelski*.

⁶¹⁶ David Ost, *Solidarity and the Politics of Anti-Politics. Opposition and Reform in Poland since 1968* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990): 186.

economic reforms, but also agriculture, education and housing⁶¹⁷ – formed to prepare for the negotiations. As highlighted by the historian Antoni Dudek, the establishment of these committees was of critical importance, as they would lay the groundwork for the opposition’s political program and thus, its transition to power.⁶¹⁸ Interestingly, as assessed by the MSW, the KO’s composition observed “71 post-Solidarity and 37 post-KOR members, as well as 27 Catholic-Christian Democrats”. By the end of February, 623 so-called “NSZZ *Solidarność* founding or organizational committees” were operating throughout the country, with the Warsaw, Lublin and Legnica’s Voivodeships figuring among the opposition’s key strongholds.⁶¹⁹

Against the background of new spontaneous protests that had been propelled by the new wage-price race, the Round Table Talks began on February 6, 1989. They were primarily the consequence of the regime’s realization that a comprehensive economic reform could not be implemented without the population’s political support. In turn, political endorsement required at least a minimal opening of the political system.⁶²⁰ Only after two months of negotiations between the regime, Solidarity and the Church, did negotiations finally culminate in a groundbreaking Agreement.

4.4 The Communist – *Solidarność* Compromise and the First Semi-Free Elections

April 5, 1989, marked the end of the negotiations with the signature of the Round Table Agreement. According to the regime’s strategy, by deliberately loosening its control over some areas of social life and thus, by enabling the opposition’s limited

⁶¹⁷ David Ost, *Solidarity and the Politics of Anti-Politics. Opposition and Reform in Poland since 1968* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990): 186.

⁶¹⁸ Antoni Dudek, *Reglamentowana Rewolucja. Rozkład Dyktatury Komunistycznej w Polsce 1988-1990* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak Horyzont, 2014): 205.

⁶¹⁹ AIPN, sygn. 0296/232, t.2, *Załącznik do informacji dziennej MSW z 2 marca 1989 r.* s.12, quoted in Antoni Dudek, *Reglamentowana Rewolucja. Rozkład Dyktatury Komunistycznej w Polsce 1988-1990* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak Horyzont, 2014): 203.

⁶²⁰ Bartłomiej Kamiński, “Systemic Underpinnings of the Transition in Poland: The Shadow of the Round-table Agreement”, *Studies in Comparative Communism* 24, n. 2 (June 1991): 173-190, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/45367099>

participation in the government, the PZPR could have retained power at least until 1993, when completely free elections would be held.⁶²¹ With both the PZPR and Solidarity willing to avoid revolutionary turmoil, the accords were not meant to introduce radical changes but rather, to achieve a compromise between a single-party system and parliamentary democracy.⁶²² Thus, as collaboration became a common priority, the agreement represented the first social contract agreed by both sides on a national level, ushering fundamental changes to the country's constitutional framework. Most importantly, on April 17, despite having already become a broader political movement, Solidarity was re-legalized as a trade union.

Among the key points, was the decision to allow semi-free elections and form a new government. Particularly, the offices of both the President⁶²³ and the Senate were restored, with the President chosen jointly by the *Sejm* and the Senate, and the latter formed after free national elections.⁶²⁴ However, 65 percent of the seats in the *Sejm*⁶²⁵ were to be exclusively contested by the PZPR and its satellite parties, while the remaining 35 percent would be decided by a free electoral contest.⁶²⁶ Furthermore, in this bi-cameral legislature, the Senate could exercise its veto power over the *Sejm*, with the latter requiring a two-thirds majority to override the Senate's veto.⁶²⁷ Most importantly, for the Communists the new political system was designed to preserve their dominant position throughout the transitional period, until pure democratic elections would be held in 1993. However, the unexpected electoral results and the chain reactions following the collapse of the Communist system in the neighboring

⁶²¹ As agreed during the Round Table. Bartłomiej Kamiński, "Systemic Underpinnings of the Transition in Poland: The Shadow of the Round-table Agreement", *Studies in Comparative Communism* 24, n. 2 (June 1991): 173-190, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/45367099>

⁶²² Mieczysław B. Biskupski, James S. Pula, and Piotr Wróbel, *The Origins of Modern Polish Democracy* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press): 266, EBSCOhost

⁶²³ For these elections, Jaruzelski remained the only presidential candidate.

⁶²⁴ Jerzy Lukowski and Hubert Zawadzki, *A Concise History of Poland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001): 279.

⁶²⁵ The lower house of the Parliament.

⁶²⁶ Ibid.

⁶²⁷ Mieczysław B. Biskupski, *The History of Poland*, 2nd ed. (Santa Barbara, California: Greenwood): 185, EBSCOhost.

countries, completely altered the initial political landscape emerged in April, thereby rendering the original power-sharing compromise irrelevant.

Despite their only partial democratic character and the low turnout of 62 percent, the elections, held on June 4, were overwhelmingly won by *Solidarność* candidates. Winning all but one of the 100 seats in the Senate, and all the 161 contested seats in the *Sejm*, Solidarity's KO stunning victory signaled the first stage in the disintegration of the Communist system in the Eastern bloc.⁶²⁸ Simultaneously, they marked a devastating defeat for the Communist Party, whose national list – which gathered PZPR, ZSL and SD leaders – collapsed with 33 out of 35 candidates failing to achieve the necessary 50 percent vote to obtain the reserved seats in the *Sejm*.⁶²⁹ Strikingly, even individuals within the regime's structures had voted for Solidarity.⁶³⁰ As illustrated by figure 22 in the appendix, support for the national list differed across Poland, receiving the lowest number of votes in southeastern Poland and the highest in the western and northern parts of the country.⁶³¹ As a result, whilst remaining the country's leading force according to the constitution, the PZPR had become powerless to pursue its own initiatives in the Parliament.⁶³²

Although the authorities did not invalidate the results, a state of high alert was maintained until almost the end of June, not only because of the feared agitations, but also because the Communist defeat had undermined the political order established at the Round Table and set to remain in force until the next completely free elections.⁶³³ And yet, different factors deterred the General from introducing a state of emergency.

⁶²⁸ Włodzimierz Borodziej, *Geschichte Polens im 20. Jahrhundert* (München: C.H.Beck, 2010): 381.

⁶²⁹ Mieczysław B. Biskupski, James S. Pula, and Piotr Wróbel, *The Origins of Modern Polish Democracy* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press): 273, EBSCOhost.

⁶³⁰ Grzegorz Majchrzak, "Znane i nieznane kulisy wyborów czerwcowych", *Dzieje.pl*, June 2, 2019, accessed May 3, 2025, <https://dzieje.pl/aktualnosci/znane-i-nieznane-kulisy-wyborow-czerwcowych>

⁶³¹ Antoni Dudek, *Reglamentowana Rewolucja. Rozkład Dyktatury Komunistycznej w Polsce 1988-1990* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak Horyzont, 2014): 280.

⁶³² AIPN, sygn. MSW II 2438, Załącznik do informacji dziennej MSW z 9 czerwca 1989 r., quoted in Antoni Dudek, *Reglamentowana Rewolucja. Rozkład Dyktatury Komunistycznej w Polsce 1988-1990* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak Horyzont, 2014): 293.

⁶³³ Antoni Dudek, *Reglamentowana Rewolucja. Rozkład Dyktatury Komunistycznej w Polsce 1988-1990* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak Horyzont, 2014): 284.

First, unlike eight years earlier, the Kremlin neither pressured Jaruzelski nor it accepted potential interventions by force. Second, the number of PZPR's hardliners eager to defend the system at all costs, had decreased.⁶³⁴ Lastly, the opposition, whose radical members could have allegedly menaced the communist élite, was fragmented, weak and extensively controlled by the secret services. If the attempt to introduce a state of emergency had failed, it could have in fact resulted in a strengthened opposition and thus, a real revolution – especially given the persistent deteriorating economic conditions.⁶³⁵

The tense atmosphere within the regime was demonstrated for instance by General Kiszczak's accusation that "Solidarity's electoral campaign had been entirely confrontational, deviating from the spirit and the agreements of the Round Table".⁶³⁶ Fearing that the already precarious situation could take a turn similar to the concurrent events in Tiananmen Square, and pressured by the Party's strong humiliation at the elections,⁶³⁷ KO was eager to fully adhere to the accords and make new compromises. Furthermore, while KO's leadership ordered not to organize any demonstrations for its victory,⁶³⁸ it also agreed – with the Church's support – to change the electoral system enabling the filling of the 33 seats from the national list. Accordingly, to ensure that the pro-government parties received their allocated positions, a second round of voting was conducted on June 18, while presidential elections, held on July 19, were

⁶³⁴ Antoni Dudek, *Reglamentowana Rewolucja. Rozkład Dyktatury Komunistycznej w Polsce 1988-1990* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak Horyzont, 2014): 293.

⁶³⁵ *Elementy prognozy rozwoju sytuacji społeczno-politycznej po wyborach do Sejmu i Senatu z 22 czerwca 1989 r.*, quoted in Antoni Dudek, *Reglamentowana Rewolucja. Rozkład Dyktatury Komunistycznej w Polsce 1988-1990* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak Horyzont, 2014): 294.

⁶³⁶ Stenogram z trzeciego posiedzenia Komisji Porozumiewawczej w dniu 8 czerwca 1989 r., quoted in Antoni Dudek, *Reglamentowana Rewolucja. Rozkład Dyktatury Komunistycznej w Polsce 1988-1990* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak Horyzont, 2014): 290.

⁶³⁷ Not only because of the government's pressure, but also likely because of the influence of the US administration under President George H. W. Bush, which feared that the fragile Round Table Agreement might unravel. Grzegorz Majchrzak, "Znane i nieznane kulisy wyborów czerwcowych", *Dzieje.pl*, June 2, 2019, accessed May 3, 2025, <https://dzieje.pl/aktualnosci/znane-i-nieznane-kulisy-wyborow-czerwcowych>

⁶³⁸ For instance, also not to print any leaflets referring to the "death of communism".

to secure Jaruzelski's (titular) control over Poland.⁶³⁹ In fact, the General was elected with 270 votes, just one above the required minimum, thanks to the abstention of several Solidarity MPs.⁶⁴⁰ As he resigned from the Party secretaryship, Jaruzelski entrusted General Kiszczak with the task of forming a new government on August 2, immediately provoking Solidarity, who strongly opposed the idea of having two generals as the head of state and of the government.⁶⁴¹ The elections had also become a catalyst accelerating the final dissolution of the PZPR-ZSL-SD coalition, which had been unfolding since June and had been prompted by the PZPR's inability to cooperate with satellite parties which were becoming independent.⁶⁴² Within this context, two different prospects for a future Solidarity cabinet emerged among the opposition.⁶⁴³

The first, endorsed by Geremek, Kuroń and Michnik, was based on the idea that only by cooperating with the Communist party, which held the real power, were effective changes possible. Thus, in their view, an alliance between the OKP⁶⁴⁴ and the "reformist" wing of the PZPR was necessary, while ZSL and SD were to be relegated to the sidelines.⁶⁴⁵ By contrast, the second project, supported by the senators Jarosław and Lech Kaczyński⁶⁴⁶, envisioned that to influence the government and to achieve political power without losing the public's support, Solidarity needed to take

⁶³⁹ Antoni Dudek, *Reglamentowana Rewolucja. Rozkład Dyktatury Komunistycznej w Polsce 1988-1990* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak Horyzont, 2014): 288.

⁶⁴⁰ Andrzej Paczkowski, *Revolution and Counterrevolution in Poland, 1980-1989. Solidarity, Martial Law, and the End of Communism in Europe* (New York: University of Rochester Press, 2015): 298.

⁶⁴¹ Ibid.

⁶⁴² Antoni Dudek, *Reglamentowana Rewolucja. Rozkład Dyktatury Komunistycznej w Polsce 1988-1990* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak Horyzont, 2014): 333.

⁶⁴³ Ibid, 335.

⁶⁴⁴ *Obywatelski Klub Parlamentarny*, meaning Citizens' Parliamentary Club. It had been established in June 1989 by deputies and senators elected by the "Solidarity" Citizens' Committee list. Its chairman until November 1990 was Geremek. Although initially in opposition, from August 1989 it became the political base of Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki's government. Despite being linked to Solidarity, it remained organizationally independent from the trade union. It gradually fragmented along ideological lines as members began forming or joining new political parties transformed, thereby becoming a federation of different political circles. It ceased to exist with the end of the parliamentary term in October 1991. Encyklopedia PWN, "Obywatelski Klub Parlamentarny", <https://encyklopedia.pwn.pl/haslo/Obywatelski-Klub-Parlamentarny>

⁶⁴⁵ Antoni Dudek, *Reglamentowana Rewolucja. Rozkład Dyktatury Komunistycznej w Polsce 1988-1990* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak Horyzont, 2014): 336.

⁶⁴⁶ Who, since summer 1989, had been playing an increasingly important role at Wałęsa's side.

actions that the society would consider as challenging the PZPR's dominance, in particularly through the creation of the OKP-ZSL-SD coalition.⁶⁴⁷ Ultimately deciding to endorse the latter option, Wałęsa issued a statement on August 7, accusing the "PZPR's monopolistic rule as the main source of the state crisis", announcing that the only solution was to "establish a Council of Ministers based on a coalition of Solidarity, ZSL and SD".⁶⁴⁸

Following Kiszczak's resignation and Jaruzelski's acceptance of Wałęsa's proposal, the President managed to negotiate the Communist participation in the new coalition government, whereby seven portfolios were to be held by Solidarity, six by ZSL, three by SD, and five by PZPR.⁶⁴⁹ On August 24, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, one of the Round Table's main architects⁶⁵⁰, was entrusted by the *Sejm* as the new Prime Minister. The coalition's agreement had thus facilitated the establishment of the first government, in what was still formally Communist Eastern Europe, to be headed by a democratic and anti-Communist prime minister.⁶⁵¹

Although the regime's structural disintegration could not be reversed anymore, the Polish political system was still not democratic. First, given their plebiscitary nature and the tactics adopted by Solidarity, the June elections were not entirely democratic, with the new parliament described as "Contract *Sejm*".⁶⁵² In some cases, candidates for MPs and senators had been appointed from above, for instance with opposition activists from Warsaw imposing their nominees on local communities.⁶⁵³

⁶⁴⁷ Zob J. Skórzyński, *Ugoda i rewolucja*, quoted in Antoni Dudek, *Reglamentowana Rewolucja. Rozkład Dyktatury Komunistycznej w Polsce 1988-1990* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak Horyzont, 2014): 336.

⁶⁴⁸ Z. Domarańczyk, *100 dni*, quoted in Antoni Dudek, *Reglamentowana Rewolucja. Rozkład Dyktatury Komunistycznej w Polsce 1988-1990* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak Horyzont, 2014): 336.

⁶⁴⁹ Among which the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Internal Affairs would remain under the PZPR's control. Antoni Dudek, *Reglamentowana Rewolucja. Rozkład Dyktatury Komunistycznej w Polsce 1988-1990* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak Horyzont, 2014): 349.

⁶⁵⁰ A Catholic journalist and an opposition activist.

⁶⁵¹ Jakub Borowski, "L. Wałęsa: koalicja OKP-ZSL-SD była przełomem, dziś też potrzebna współpraca" [L. Wałęsa: the OKP-ZSL-SD coalition was a breakthrough, cooperation is needed also today], *Dzieje.pl*, August 16, 2019, accessed May 3, 2025, <https://dzieje.pl/aktualnosci/>

⁶⁵² *Sejm Kontraktowy*.

⁶⁵³ Grzegorz Majchrzak, "Znane i nieznane kulisy wyborów czerwcowych", *Dzieje.pl*, June 2, 2019, accessed May 3, 2025, <https://dzieje.pl/aktualnosci/znane-i-nieznane-kulisy-wyborow-czerwcowych>

Paradoxically, the undemocratically formed team under Wałęsa competed against PZPR's candidates selected through a more democratic process – and not as in the past, by the Party's Political Bureau.⁶⁵⁴ Second, part of the opposition did not participate and rejected the Round Table Agreement, while also considering the presidential compromise as treason, thereby hindering the transformation process.⁶⁵⁵ Lastly, not only Jaruzelski's election did not reflect public opinion, but also the low turnout at both rounds of the elections revealed the widespread skepticism among the population.⁶⁵⁶

Thus, while Mazowiecki's takeover and the coalition government implied that the PZPR's power had been effectively curtailed, the anti-Communist opposition did not have any detailed plan for the state's forthcoming structure. Particularly, the new government had inherited a country whose political system was attempting to transition and whose economy was on the verge of collapsing. Given the renewed social protests against rising costs, as well as wage appreciation and raging inflation, Mazowiecki prioritized "the restoration of economic balance" and the suppression of inflation as objectives with the "highest economic, political, and social importance" for new government. Specifically, this entailed "a return to market economy" and a "role of the state similar to that of economically developed countries".⁶⁵⁷ Most importantly, the fact that he did not mention privatization as a measure, reflected the Prime Minister's policy of avoiding conflicts with the PZPR. In his view, privatization would have driven the Party into uncompromising opposition, thereby ultimately endangering the new government and the country. "There is no opposition in the world that has an army, a security apparatus and remains an opposition".⁶⁵⁸ As remarked by

⁶⁵⁴ Grzegorz Majchrzak, "Znane I nieznane kulisy wyborów czerwcowych", *Dzieje.pl*, June 2, 2019, accessed May 3, 2025, <https://dzieje.pl/aktualnosci/znane-i-nieznane-kulisy-wyborow-czerwcowych>

⁶⁵⁵ Mieczysław B. Biskupski, James S. Pula, and Piotr Wróbel, *The Origins of Modern Polish Democracy* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press): 274 EBSCOhost.

⁶⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁷ PAP, "Wystąpienie Tadeusza Mazowieckiego w Sejmie 24 sierpnia 1989 r.", *Dzieje.pl*, October 28, 2013, accessed May 3, 2025, <https://dzieje.pl/aktualnosci/>

⁶⁵⁸ Z. Domarańczyk. *100 dni*, quoted in Antoni Dudek, *Reglamentowana Rewolucja. Rozkład Dyktatury Komunistycznej w Polsce 1988-1990* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak Horyzont, 2014): 352.

Mazowiecki during his inaugural address at the *Sejm*, although the new cabinet was not responsible for the legacy it had inherited, that legacy in fact affected the circumstances under which the government had to act.⁶⁵⁹ “We draw a thick line with the past. We will be responsible only for what we have done to get Poland out of its present state of collapse”.⁶⁶⁰ And while his reference to the “thick line” would be disputed and misinterpreted in the years to come, the road to Poland’s democratic transition was opened.

The June elections marked a turning point in the Polish People’s Republic history. Not only because of the scale of Solidarity’s victory, but also because they represented the culmination of the spontaneous dissolution process of Poland’s Communist system. Although the PZPR’s disintegration accelerated following the Round Table Talks, the process had been ignited already before, as prominently demonstrated in 1988, when the regime agreed to negotiations with Wałęsa. Then, in summer 1989, the elections delivered a permanent rupture in the political order that the Communists had built over forty years.⁶⁶¹

And while June 4, 1989, signaled a decisive step towards democratic transition in Poland, students and workers protesting at Tiananmen Square in Beijing were brutally repressed. The striking contrast between the two countries, both part of the Soviet system, was the result of a unique combination of factors that differentiated Communism in Poland from that in other countries, including Moscow’s accommodating attitude since Gorbachev’s rise to power. Already in autumn 1988, the PZPR had interpreted the Kremlin’s stance as giving them the green light to begin talks with the moderate part of the opposition. For instance, during an interview with *Le Monde*, a prominent member of the CPSU⁶⁶² had stated that he “personally saw no

⁶⁵⁹ PAP, “Wystąpienie Tadeusza Mazowieckiego w Sejmie 24 sierpnia 1989 r., *Dzieje.pl*, October 28, 2013, accessed May 3, 2025, <https://dzieje.pl/aktualnosci/>

⁶⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶⁶¹ Antoni Dudek, *Reglamentowana Rewolucja. Rozkład Dyktatury Komunistycznej w Polsce 1988-1990* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak Horyzont, 2014): 293.

⁶⁶² The deputy head of the Propaganda Department of the CPSU’s Central Committee, Mr. Shishkin.

obstacles to Solidarity returning to the scene”.⁶⁶³ On July 3, Gorbachev’s envoys announced that Poland was free to determine the shape of its own government, further confirming in the following months that the USSR did not intend to interfere in Poland’s internal affairs.⁶⁶⁴ In essence, for Moscow it was more important that Poland remained in the Warsaw Pact and that the government ensured internal stability, rather than risk broader destabilization to uphold the PZPR’s hegemonic position.⁶⁶⁵ Furthermore, as reassured by Mazowiecki and then underscored in a document written by Soviet authorities in September 1989⁶⁶⁶, given “the geopolitical location of Poland, the traditional ties between the two Slavic nations, [...] and the Polish economic dependency on [Soviet] raw materials and energy”, the new government would have maintained the Polish-Soviet relations.⁶⁶⁷ Thus, whilst in Beijing the CCP’s⁶⁶⁸ violent crackdown sealed the country’s fate as a one-party authoritarian state, that same day in Poland the PZPR acknowledged the electoral results, with Soviet troops remaining stationed in the following months as a guarantee of the country’s western borders and of its loyalty to the Warsaw Pact.

⁶⁶³ Mieczysław F. Rakowski, *Dzienniki polityczne 1987-1990*, quoted in Antoni Dudek, *Reglamentowana Rewolucja. Rozkład Dyktatury Komunistycznej w Polsce 1988-1990* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak Horyzont, 2014): 207.

⁶⁶⁴ Jerzy Lukowski and Hubert Zawadzki, *A Concise History of Poland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001): 279.

⁶⁶⁵ Antoni Dudek, *Reglamentowana Rewolucja. Rozkład Dyktatury Komunistycznej w Polsce 1988-1990* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak Horyzont, 2014): 353.

⁶⁶⁶ “On the situation in Poland, possible variants of its development and the prospects of Soviet-Polish relations” (*O sytuacji w Polsce, możliwych wariantach jej rozwoju i perspektywach stosunków radziecko-polskich*).

⁶⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 355.

⁶⁶⁸ Chinese Communist Party.

4.5 A Deficient Democratic Transition? The Legacy of the Round Table Agreement

Although the April 1989 accords ultimately constituted the genuine legal groundwork for Poland's transition to democracy, their immediate consequences resulted in the society's perception of a "betrayed revolution".⁶⁶⁹

Given their character as a "pacting" process, the Round Table Talks inevitably entailed both benefits and costs. Most importantly, they were the outcome of the joint recognition that a compromise was the only way to overcome the political stalemate. Indeed, neither the regime had sufficient power to govern – given its lack of legitimacy – nor did Solidarity had the strength or intention to forcibly dismantle the Communist power.⁶⁷⁰ In other words, neither of the sides considered the use of violence as a viable option. Accordingly, on the one hand, the April agreement enabled a peaceful and consensual transition from a non-democratic regime to a pluralistic system of governance.⁶⁷¹ On the other hand, the priority of maintaining stability by ensuring that the former elites were represented in the new political order, prevailed over the idea of punishing them for their past links with the Communist regime. As highlighted by Professor Aleks Szczerbiak, this "elite-level bargain offered mutual gains to both sides, particularly by integrating the former establishment into the foundations of the new democratic system."⁶⁷² Notably, the initial objective of the first elections was not to build a perfect democracy, but rather to restrict the authoritarianism of the previous regime by liberalizing the political landscape and thus, allowing the opposition's

⁶⁶⁹ Kevin McDermott and Matthew Stibbe, eds., *The 1989 Revolutions in Central and Eastern Europe. From Communism to Pluralism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013): 235.

⁶⁷⁰ Wojciech Sadurski, *Poland's Constitutional Breakdown* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019): 37, <https://doi-org.uaccess.univie.ac.at/10.1093/oso/9780198840503.001.0001>

⁶⁷¹ Aleks, Szczerbiak, "A Model for Democratic Transition and European Integration? Why Poland Matters," *Geopolitics, History, and International Relations* 8, no. 1 (2016): 222-223, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26806080>

⁶⁷² Ibid.

participation in the country's governance.⁶⁷³ Consequently, the absence of a clear rupture with the Communist past, together with the immediate harsh consequences following the Mazowiecki government's market reforms and its cohabitation with the Communists, strengthened the public's negative perception and dissatisfaction with Poland's negotiated transition.⁶⁷⁴ Although the compromise was the outcome of the specific context and pragmatic concerns at the beginning of 1989, the absence of an immediate and effective policy to deal with the Communist past and the growing anti-Communist resentment, laid the groundwork for eventual backlashes.⁶⁷⁵

The Mazowiecki administration lenient approach towards ensuring the Communists' accountability and its rejection towards any systematic lustration, were not only the outcome of his personal classical-liberal arguments, but they were also the pragmatic response to the existing severe economic crisis, whereby lustration and decommunization policies were considered to be potentially politically destabilizing.⁶⁷⁶ Particularly, as Poland transitioned from a "People's Republic" to the Third Polish Republic, Communists retained significant influence over the country by controlling the "power ministries" (mainly defense and internal affairs) and the presidency – held by Jaruzelski until December 1990.⁶⁷⁷ Equally important is the fact that some of Solidarity's leaders had started their political careers within the PZPR – including Kuroń and Michnik – and Mazowiecki initially serving in the Communist parliament as representative of the Catholic faction.⁶⁷⁸ Furthermore, by that time, almost a third of the Party's three million members had joined *Solidarność*, thereby

⁶⁷³ Wojciech Sadurski, *Poland's Constitutional Breakdown* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019): 37, <https://doi-org.uaccess.univie.ac.at/10.1093/oso/9780198840503.001.0001>

⁶⁷⁴ Kevin McDermott and Matthew Stibbe, eds., *The 1989 Revolutions in Central and Eastern Europe. From Communism to Pluralism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013): 235.

⁶⁷⁵ Aleks Szczerbiak, "Dealing with the Communist Past or the Politics of the Present? Lustration in Post-Communist Poland," *Europe-Asia Studies* 54, no. 4 (June 2002): 557, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/826424>

⁶⁷⁶ Aleks Szczerbiak, *Politicising the Communist Past. The Politics of Truth Revelation in Post-Communist Poland* (London: Routledge, 2018): 23.

⁶⁷⁷ Kevin McDermott and Matthew Stibbe, eds., *The 1989 Revolutions in Central and Eastern Europe. From Communism to Pluralism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013): 108.

⁶⁷⁸ Lavinia Stan, "Transition, justice and transitional justice in Poland", *Studia Politica: Romanian Political Science Review* 6, n. 2 (2006): 283, <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-56138-8>

rendering the divide between the Communists and the anti-Communists significantly fluid. Thus, to prevent the disclosure of Solidarity's affiliations and complex relations with the regime, a serious reckoning with the past was initially avoided or addressed through a merely legal-bureaucratic approach.⁶⁷⁹ These factors, together with Poland's initial isolation in its democratic attempts within the Soviet bloc, resulted in the continuation of the April compromise, despite its political parameters having dramatically changed after June and towards the end of 1989. In the administration's considerations, this was the best solution and the inevitable cost of peacefully transitioning from Communism, while also contributing to the new government's stabilization amid strong existing uncertainty.⁶⁸⁰

Nevertheless, following the PZPR's formal dissolution in January 1990 and the collapse of Communism in Central-Eastern Europe, which fundamentally altered the geopolitical context, Party members reconvened under the banner of "social democracy", thereby intensifying public concern over the issue of addressing the Communist past.⁶⁸¹ Indeed, the return to power of the post-Communist left in the mid-1990s further reinforced social discontent, already fueled by the increasing unemployment and the political instability resulting from the opposition's internal divisions.⁶⁸² Thus, as demands for a more radical approach in dealing with the Communist past began to intensify between 1990 and 1991, the questions of lustration and decommunization became focal and divisive points in the Polish political

⁶⁷⁹ Lavinia Stan, "Transition, justice and transitional justice in Poland", *Studia Politica: Romanian Political Science Review* 6, n. 2 (2006): 283, <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssolar-56138-8>

⁶⁸⁰ Aleks Szczerbiak, *Politicising the Communist Past. The Politics of Truth Revelation in Post-Communist Poland* (London: Routledge, 2018): 14. For Mazowiecki's cabinet, the spirit of the compromise meant that the new government could not attack those with whom they had negotiated. Thus, reprisal measures should be avoided and replaced by promoting societal reconciliation.

⁶⁸¹ Aleks Szczerbiak, *Politicising the Communist Past. The Politics of Truth Revelation in Post-Communist Poland* (London: Routledge, 2018): 14.

⁶⁸² Particularly, as Polish Social Democratic Union (PUS, *Polska Unia Socjaldemokratyczna*) and as Social Democracy of the Republic of Poland (SdRP, *Socjaldemokracja Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej*). They won the parliamentary and presidential elections in 1993 and 1995 respectively. Kevin McDermott and Matthew Stibbe, eds., *The 1989 Revolutions in Central and Eastern Europe. From Communism to Pluralism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013): 108.

debate.⁶⁸³ Importantly, while increasingly instrumentalized by the parties emerging on the right of the Solidarity movement, these issues became intertwined with broader concerns about democracy, including the imperative to tackle corruption and the society's right to access information about the authorities' background.⁶⁸⁴ While demands for lustration and file access began to be considered as instruments to achieve democratic renewal and improve the quality of democracy, their persistence simultaneously reflected the society's disquiet over the perceived incomplete democratic transition of Poland.⁶⁸⁵ Not until the end of the 1990s was a lustration process initiated – with the adoption of the first Lustration Act in 1997 and the creation of the Institute of National Remembrance (IPN)⁶⁸⁶ one year later – which culminated in the promulgation of more radical laws in 2006-7.⁶⁸⁷ Thus, while these measures of transitional justice were increasingly viewed as mechanisms to ensure and deepen democracy, whereby “citizens [had] the right to equally access information”,⁶⁸⁸ they also became instruments progressively leveraged by political parties to target opponents and manipulate public opinion.⁶⁸⁹ As the question of how to deal with the Communist past further divided the already fragmented *Solidarność*, different

⁶⁸³ Aleks Szczerbiak, “Dealing with the Communist Past or the Politics of the Present? Lustration in Post-Communist Poland,” *Europe-Asia Studies* 54, no. 4 (June 2002): 557, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/826424>

⁶⁸⁴ Aleks Szczerbiak, “A Model for Democratic Transition and European Integration? Why Poland Matters,” *Geopolitics, History, and International Relations* 8, n.1 (2016): 224, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26806080>

⁶⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁸⁶ *Instytut Pamięci Narodowej*, mandated to control and facilitate access to historical archives.

⁶⁸⁷ Magdalena Kaj and Megan Metzger, “Justice or Revenge? The Human Rights Implications of Lustration in Poland”, *Humanity in Action*, January 2008, https://humanityinaction.org/knowledge_detail/justice-or-revenge-the-human-rights-implications-of-lustration-in-poland/

⁶⁸⁸ Bronisław Wildstein, Cały ten antylustracyjny sgiełk, *Rzeczpospolita*, January 14, quoted in Aleks Szczerbiak, *Politicising the Communist Past. The Politics of Truth Revelation in Post-Communist Poland* (London: Routledge, 2018): 80,

⁶⁸⁹ Monika Nalepa, “Lustration as a trust-building mechanism? Transitional justice in Poland”, in *After Oppression. Transitional Justice in Latin America and Eastern Europe*, edited by Vesselin Popovski and Mónica Serrano (New York: United Nations University Press, 2012). <https://doi.org/10.18356/c84d1a38-en>

interpretations of the 1989 events alienated the public, and prompted the formation of right-wing parties, strengthened by their anti-Communist identity and arguments.⁶⁹⁰

Thus, whilst laying the groundwork for the end of Communism in Poland and constituting the only way to overcome the political impasse arisen at the end the 1980s, the Round Table Talks resulted in a compromise whose legacy would critically impact the Polish political landscape up to the present. The “pacting” nature of the Polish democratization and the absence of immediate robust policies to tackle the Communist past, made the country’s transition process deficient, thereby enabling right-wing parties to leverage the transition’s shortcomings. Although ultimately addressed through lustration and file access laws which completed the Poland’s democratic transformation, the initial gaps of the process had already laid the groundwork for the strengthening of more conservative narratives. Not only could they exploit the presence of post-Communist left-wing parties to emphasize “the corrupted character of the Polish democracy”, but also to accuse opponents of their alleged connections with former regime members.⁶⁹¹ Most importantly, they could build a discourse founded on “we, the people, versus them, the corrupt elite, the Communists” – which represented in fact a strongly blurred rather than a clear-cut divide – and implement nationalist policies which would gradually be radicalized and eventually lead to setbacks in Poland’s democratic consolidation.

⁶⁹⁰ Kevin McDermott and Matthew Stibbe, eds., *The 1989 Revolutions in Central and Eastern Europe. From Communism to Pluralism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013): 235.

⁶⁹¹ Ibid.

Conclusion

At times when Polish history is persistently instrumentalized by political actors aiming to reinforce their discourses and influence electoral outcomes, it has become crucial to understand Poland's past. Its unique right-spectrum political divide, as well as the recent disruptions to the country's democratic consolidation, make it essential to analyze how its socialist legacy has influenced Poland's post-Communist political system.

In this master thesis, the developments that resulted in the country's transition from a Soviet satellite to a democracy, were discussed through the lenses of Świdnik's story, built to be a model communist town but ultimately becoming a catalyst for the collapse of Poland's Socialist system. Notwithstanding the historians' and experts' tendency to overlook local dynamics when studying Poland's Communist era, this paper was based on the case study of Świdnik, a small town whose experience shed light to events unfolding across the country. Despite the significance and the national impact of the strikes at the Gdańsk Shipyard and given the legacy of the brutal repressions at the end of the 1970s, without Świdnik's and Lublin's experience, coastal workers would have not begun to protest in early August. Conceivably, strikes would have erupted later, but it is difficult to imagine how they would have developed and the extent of their success. This is particularly because of the new method that employees at the WSK had conceived and implemented to express their dissent against the regime's policies. Based on the premise that street protests had to be avoided and that the process of halting work had to remain peaceful, the approach of Świdnik's workers ensured that bloodshed was avoided and presented the Party apparatus with a dilemma. In deciding whether to accommodate some of their demands – which, in the regime's strategy would be later reversed – or risk causing a chain reaction with further work destabilization, the regime chose the first option. The WSK employees' successful agreement with the local authorities set a precedent for other regional plants and for Gdańsk, thereby demonstrating that it was possible to see their demands fulfilled without violent crackdowns. Ultimately, despite the spontaneous and

uncoordinated nature of Świdnik's workforce actions as well as the regime's provocations, the employees' unity and endurance resulted in the first contract between workers and the local PZPR.

Under the wave of the earlier strikes in the Lublin region and prompted by the persistent dissatisfaction with the socio-economic situation, employees at the Gdańsk Shipyard – then joined by other coastal plants – decided to halt working and to request economic, social and political improvements, most prominently the right to form free and independent trade unions. This, together with their stronger coordination and transformation in a broader, unified movement, differentiated them from Świdnik's protests and altered the course of that summer's events. Importantly, it set in motion the formation of strike committees across the country, whereby local factories would become part of a network of regionally coordinated committees, which would ultimately be integrated within a single trade union named *Solidarność*. Albeit initially distancing itself from political ambitions, the union's overwhelming support among the population and its repression following the introduction of martial law, fundamentally altered Solidarity's nature. Accordingly, although the underground structures that were formed after December 1981 facilitated the survival of Solidarity's spirit, by the end of the 1980s the union that re-emerged would significantly differ from its earlier form and would develop an increasingly political character.

As the Church assumed the dual-sided role of building a bridge between the regime and the population, while simultaneously constituting a fortress for *Solidarność*, the impact of martial law on the union and the society endured beyond its imposition. The deteriorating economic crisis, the emergence of a new generation of young Solidarity members – distant from the 1980 experiences –, together with the waning of the Soviet threat, impaired Solidarity's internal unity and solidified the movement's divisions. At the turn of 1988 and 1989, as different approaches to overcome the economic crisis and confront with the Communist leadership surfaced, a compromise which enabled the PZPR to retain control over the country's governance together with *Solidarność*, prevailed as the best way to manage an uncertain political transition. In other words, a peaceful transfer of power was ensured at the price of concessions to the Communist authorities. This forms the underlying thread of a

sequence of events which – beginning with the crucial influence of the Church on the society, continuing through the WSK’s protests and the emergence of *Solidarność* after the Gdańsk strikes, and including the regime’s reaction and the Soviet non-invasion – rendered Poland’s Socialist path a unique case within Eastern Europe. Just as Świdnik was constructed to be an ideal Communist town but paradoxically set in motion the system’s ultimate demise, so did Poland, formally a Soviet satellite, surprisingly become the first state within the Eastern bloc to ignite the collapse of the Communist regime.

These developments, whose legacy is embedded in contemporary Poland, laid the groundwork for the country’s post-Communist political landscape and democratic consolidation. While Świdnik’s fight for freedom and the region’s strong anti-Communist opposition help explain these areas’ tendency to favor more conservative parties, Solidarity’s internal disarray and criticism of the Round Table Agreement facilitated the emergence of a new long-lasting right-wing discourse. The absence of a clear break with the past and the economic hardships resulting from the measures of the early 1990s, strengthened the public’s negative perception of the quality of Polish democracy, thereby enabling the prevalence of more radical discourses based on the instrumentalization of history. Paradoxically, people who had fought together against the regime before 1989 became opponents promoting contradictory values and agendas, some of which ultimately led to policies contrasting with the very concept of democracy.

As illustrated by this research, Poland’s post-war Communist system was remarkable not only because of the several elements that differentiated it from its neighbors – most prominently by the Church’s existence and by being spared a Soviet invasion –, but also because the mechanisms that lead to the collapse of Communism in the country were part of an evolutionary process which had begun at the end of the 1970s and resulted in the peaceful transfer of power in 1989. As argued throughout the thesis, this process would have not been ignited without the emergence of four main interrelated elements: first, the presence of a strong Church and John Paul II’s election to the papacy; second, the regime’s economic policies and price increases, resulting in the society’s deteriorating living conditions; then the strikes erupted at the WSK in

Świdnik, which were a catalyst for protests across the Lublin region and which in turn, set a precedent demonstrating that change was possible; last, the emergence of *Solidarność*, a trade union which brought together workers from across the country and with different views, but united to oppose the Communist system.

This study has highlighted how developments that unfolded in Poland and internationally throughout the 1980s fundamentally altered the country's historical and geopolitical trajectory. In the end, it has demonstrated that today's Poland is the result of the legacy arising from the events of summer 1980, from Solidarity's activity and from the compromise that ignited the country's democratic transition. Poland's contemporary political landscape is deeply embedded not only in Solidarity's fight against the regime and the movement's internal contradictions, but also in the shortcomings that emerged after the formation of the first government headed by a non-communist prime minister.

When analyzing Poland's democratization process and assessing if events could have turned out differently, the Communist-*Solidarność* compromise is often described as a "betrayed revolution", whereby the agreements appear to be a liability and an embarrassment to the Polish society. Nevertheless, the benefit of hindsight makes it possible to understand that the very "pacting" nature of the power-transferral was the element that enabled the beginning of the country's early transition process and of the Communist system's end. Arguably, given the radical change of context since the April agreements, the question of dealing with the Communist past could have been specifically addressed by the cabinets governing in the early 1990s. This would have conceivably avoided the gaps represented by the delayed lustration programs and thus, their exploitation for political maneuvering. The repercussions of the new political system and socio-economic order emerging after the collapse of communism – such as increased inequalities and perceived injustice – failed to obtain the population's moral support. Thus, their resentment and sense of unfairness found expression in the increased support for antisystem parties, which ultimately resulted in the erosion of Poland's democratic pillars. Today, despite their historical fight for democracy, Świdnik and the Lublin Voivodeship figure among the bastions of such parties.

And while Poland's democracy has recently proven its resilience, unresolved historical legacies and deep societal divisions risk being instrumentalized anew, potentially paving the way for renewed undemocratic tendencies.

Sources

This thesis, which develops a historical analysis conducted through the lenses of political science, is based on different types of sources and would have not been possible without the invaluable contributions of firsthand testimonies from former WSK employees. Fundamental to my research was the interview which I personally conducted with Mr. Marian Król, a former WSK worker and Chairman of the Central-Eastern Region of the NSZZ *Solidarność*. His firsthand insights on the dynamics behind Świdnik's July as well as the WSK's workers stance towards the local Party structures, enriched my work with authenticity and with perspectives challenging conventional historical interpretations. Equally important were the accounts of Mr. Julian Sowiński – a former WSK worker – which I accessed through a telephone interview personally conducted, and Mrs. Zofia Lisiecka, whose testimony I obtained thanks to my uncle, Tadeusz Mróz's, who interviewed her on my behalf. Equally important was the kindness and support of the personnel working at the Lublin's State Archives in providing me with the access to historical materials that critically informed my study. Primary sources include internal PZPR and SB communication, reporting on developments in Świdnik, Lublin and on the national level; as well as articles from the WSK's *Grot* newspaper and the *Solidarność* factory bulletin. Among them figure also flyers created and distributed by underground activists, postcards and postage stamps circulating in the early 1980s. Through digital archives and websites, I could further access previously recorded interviews with former witnesses of the July 1980 strikes, as well as photographs accurately portraying the real context of the time. With this aim, videos capturing everyday life difficulties in the 1980s, such as shop shortages, or conveying the ambiance evolving around the 1989 talks, importantly contributed to my comprehension of the time's atmosphere.

Secondary sources include textbooks in English, Polish and German, which enabled me to acquire a more complete understanding of the developments unfolding throughout the 1980s. Academic journal articles and essays were equally important to evaluate the existent work of Polish and foreign academia on these issues.

Marian KRÓL has been connected to Świdnik and the WSK since 1976, when he became a grinder in the factory's department n. 340. He actively participated in the WSK strike in July 1980 and in the occupation strike after the imposition of martial law. After the factory's pacification, he engaged in building the underground *Solidarność* structures, within which he was very active. After martial law was introduced, he collected donations to fund the union's activities and to support the repressed workers and their families. He also contributed to the distribution and printing of the factory's underground publication *Grot*. Between 1982 and 1989 he was detained and interrogated several times by the security services. In 1987 he became leader of the factory's underground *Solidarność* Commission, which from 1988, began attempts to register itself at the local court with the aim of returning to legal activity. After the Round Table Talks and the restoration of Solidarity's lawfulness, Marian Król was elected chairman of the Inter-Factory Commission of NSZZ *Solidarność* at the WSK. In 1990, he was member of Lech Wałęsa's regional election staff in Lublin; between 1990 and 1992 he became vice-chairman of the Regional Board, while from 1992 he served as delegate to the National delegate Assembly as well as member of the National Committee. From 2022 until March 2025, he was Chairman of the Central-Eastern Region of the NSZZ *Solidarność*. He was decorated with the Gold Cross of Merit in 2001, with the Officer's Cross of the Order of Polonia Restituta in 2006, the Cross of Freedom and Solidarity as well as the Medal of the 100th Anniversary of Regaining Independence in 2018. In February 2025, he was awarded with the title of "Honorary Citizen of the town of Świdnik".

MAIS Dott. Viktoria Mróz Name
Candidate Title (e.g. MAIS Candidate)
Diplomatische Akademie Wien
Favoritenstraße 15a
1040 Vienna, Austria

CONSENT FORM

Title of thesis / project

Principle Investigator:

Your name Viktoria Mróz
Title Dott. / MAIS

Contact information:

Diplomatische Akademie Wien
Favoritenstraße 15a
1040 Vienna, Austria
Tel: +39 391 484 2060
Email: viktoriaamroz@yahoo.it

Purpose of study:

This research examines... [Add at least 4-5 sentences describing the purpose of your study and the analysis being undertaken.]

Study Procedures:

You have been approached for an interview because of your work with the [add position title and organisation; adding more personalisation where possible]. If you agree, the interview may last up to 60 minutes. If you consent to having the interview recorded, both the recording and the interviewer's notes will be kept private. However, you are under no obligation to allow the conversation to be recorded. If you have any questions about this study, please do not hesitate to contact the principal investigator prior to the interview or to ask at any time during the interview.

Confidentiality:

The principal investigator will respect your wishes regarding the confidentiality of this interview. Only the principal investigator will have access to the notes. At the same time, this study is intended to result in a Master's thesis and academic publication. You have several options regarding the confidentiality with which you wish your remarks to be treated. Please choose from the following by *circling* either A, B, c or d and your preferred options below:

- ☒ A. I consent to have my remarks attributed to me, and to have my name and workplace affiliation listed in the bibliography of the thesis or a publication resulting from this study.
- ☐ B. I consent to have my remarks attributed to me, provided that I am given the option of reviewing and, if necessary, editing these remarks before publication. I consent to have my name and workplace affiliation listed in the bibliography of the thesis or a publication resulting from this study.
- ☐ C. I consent to have my name and workplace affiliation listed in the bibliography of the thesis or a publication, but not to have my remarks attributed to me.
Please also select one:
- ☐ a. My remarks may be quoted anonymously in the text.
- ☐ b. My remarks may not be quoted (conversation on background).
- ☐ D. I do not wish my name to appear in the text or bibliography of the thesis or of any publication. My remarks should not be associated with any specific workplace or unit in a form that would make my individual identity deducible by the well-informed reader in any and all publications that result from this study.

Please also *circle* one of the following:

- ☒ A. I grant consent for the interview to be recorded.
- ☐ B. I do not grant consent for the interview to be recorded.

Consent:

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time. Your signature below indicates that you consent to participate in this study in the manner indicated above, and that you have received a copy of this form for your own records.

Signature

Król

Name

Marian

Date

25.03.2025

Dott. Viktoria Mróz

Name

MAIS Candidate

Title (e.g. MAIS Candidate)
Diplomatische Akademie Wien
Favoritenstraße 15a
1040 Vienna, Austria

CONSENT FORM Title of thesis / project

Principal Investigator:

Your name
Title

Dott. Viktoria Mróz, MAIS

Conducted on my behalf by M.A. Tadeusz Mróz

Contact information:

Diplomatische Akademie Wien
Favoritenstraße 15a
1040 Vienna, Austria

Tel:

+ 39 391 484 2060

Email:

viktoriaamroz@yahoo.it

Purpose of study:

This research examines... [Add at least 4-5 sentences describing the purpose of your study and the analysis being undertaken.]

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Signature

Julian Samiński

Name

JS

Date

09.12.2024

Dott. Viktoria Mróz
MAIS Candidate

Name
Title (e.g. MAIS Candidate)
Diplomatische Akademie Wien
Favoritenstraße 15a
1040 Vienna, Austria

CONSENT FORM Title of thesis / project

Principle Investigator:

Your name
Title

Dott. Viktoria Mróz
MAIS

Conducted on my behalf by M.A. Tadeusz Mróz

Contact information:

Diplomatische Akademie Wien
Favoritenstraße 15a
1040 Vienna, Austria

Tel: +39 391 484 2060
Email: viktoriamroz@yahoo.it

Purpose of study:

This research examines... [Add at least 4-5 sentences describing the purpose of your study and the analysis being undertaken.]

Study Procedures:

You have been approached for an interview because of your work with the [add position title and organisation; adding more personalisation where possible]. If you agree, the interview may last up to 60 minutes. If you consent to having the interview recorded, both the recording and the interviewer's notes will be kept private. However, you are under no obligation to allow the conversation to be recorded. If you have any questions about this study, please do not hesitate to contact the principal investigator prior to the interview or to ask at any time during the interview.

Confidentiality:

The principal investigator will respect your wishes regarding the confidentiality of this interview. Only the principal investigator will have access to the notes. At the same time, this study is intended to result in a Master's thesis and academic publication. You have several options regarding the confidentiality with which you wish your remarks to be treated. Please choose from the following by *circling* either A, B, c or d and your preferred options below:

- ☒ A. I consent to have my remarks attributed to me, and to have my name and workplace affiliation listed in the bibliography of the thesis or a publication resulting from this study.
- ☐ B. I consent to have my remarks attributed to me, provided that I am given the option of reviewing and, if necessary, editing these remarks before publication. I consent to have my name and workplace affiliation listed in the bibliography of the thesis or a publication resulting from this study.
- ☐ C. I consent to have my name and workplace affiliation listed in the bibliography of the thesis or a publication, but not to have my remarks attributed to me.
- Please also select one:
- ☐ a. My remarks may be quoted anonymously in the text.
- ☐ b. My remarks may not be quoted (conversation on background).
- ☐ D. I do not wish my name to appear in the text or bibliography of the thesis or of any publication. My remarks should not be associated with any specific workplace or unit in a form that would make my individual identity deducible by the well-informed reader in any and all publications that result from this study.

Please also *circle* one of the following:

- ☒ A. I grant consent for the interview to be recorded.
- ☐ B. I do not grant consent for the interview to be recorded.

Consent:

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time. Your signature below indicates that you consent to participate in this study in the manner indicated above, and that you have received a copy of this form for your own records.

Signature Disiecka Zofia Name [Signature] Date 27.11.2024

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Appendices

I. The Origins of Świdnik and the Transport Equipment Factory (WSK)

Although relatively recent and mainly starting during the Communist period, the history of Świdnik is dense of crucial events that influenced the Polish fight for a free and democratic country. Formally recognized in 1954, the town of Świdnik is one of the youngest in the Lublin region. Furthermore, its geographic position in the southeastern Voivodeship of Lublin, has made it part of the fundamental international road connecting Berlin, Warsaw, and Kyiv.⁶⁹² The approximate two hundred and the hundred kilometers that distance it from the Belarussian and the Ukrainian border respectively, as well as the ten-minute drive that separate it from Lublin (the largest city in Eastern Poland) has made its location historically and strategically important.

After coming under the Habsburg Empire during Poland's partitioning, in 1815 the town became part of the Congress of Poland controlled by the Russians, remaining under Austrian occupation until 1918, when the Second Polish Republic (1918-1939) was created. It was the pre-war establishment of an airfield and a school for civilian pilots that would lead to one of the most important events in the history of the town: the decision to locate in Świdnik a helicopter factory.⁶⁹³

Building the Transport Equipment Factory in this rural town indeed reflected the Communist government's deliberate choice to capitalize on the strategically favorable location. First, its proximity to Lublin – the region's capital – which was distant ten kilometers and with a pre-war aircraft tradition; second, its position along the railway line connecting Warsaw to Lublin, Chełm and Kovel (today Ukraine); third, the airfield's and the aviation school's presence, which had been used both by

⁶⁹² Piotr R. Jankowski, *Kartki z Historii Świdnika* (Świdnik: TEKST, 2009): 9, https://bibliotekaswidnik.pl/strona-3431-publicacje_dotyczace_historii_miejsca_i.html

⁶⁹³ Ibid, 77.

the Wehrmacht throughout WWII and by the Soviets during the Lublin government.⁶⁹⁴ The factory's establishment not only became a symbol of the reconstruction of Poland's aviation industry, but also represented one of the most significant large-scale investments under the six-year plan (1950-1955).⁶⁹⁵ With the aim of transforming the predominantly agricultural region into an industrialized center and overshadow the Second Republic's pre-war economic achievements with extensive regional investments, the WSK⁶⁹⁶ constructions began in 1951.⁶⁹⁷ However, the first workers began arriving in the village already in 1949. The site was thus prepared for constructions; new roads for wheel-based vehicles were built; connections to the main highway were established; and a railway-siding for the transportation of materials to the facility was developed. Importantly, temporary barracks were built to welcome "volunteer labor" and workers coming from the Lublin region, thereby laying the groundwork for the emergence of the first residential infrastructures.⁶⁹⁸ The increasingly growing population around the developing urban center would eventually result in the creation of a local community and thus, the establishment of a new (Communist) town: Świdnik.

II. The Political Context of the 1950s

The introduction of a new Constitution in July 1952 marked the official establishment of the Polish People's Republic (PRL) whereby the Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR) became the dominant political faction in a one-party state. Despite the

⁶⁹⁴ Leszek, Pietrzak, *Miasto Wolności. Historia Świdnika od Komunizmu do Wolnej Polski* (Świdnik: Miejsko-Powiatowa Biblioteka Publiczna w Świdniku, 2020): 5-6,

<http://archiwum.bibliotekaswidnik.pl/index.php/czytaj/nasze-publicacje/861-miasto-wolnosci>

⁶⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁹⁶ Initially designated as "Plant No. 5 in Świdnik".

⁶⁹⁷ Leszek, Pietrzak, *Miasto Wolności. Historia Świdnika od Komunizmu do Wolnej Polski* (Świdnik: Miejsko-Powiatowa Biblioteka Publiczna w Świdniku, 2020): 7,

<http://archiwum.bibliotekaswidnik.pl/index.php/czytaj/nasze-publicacje/861-miasto-wolnosci>

⁶⁹⁸ Ibid, 8

imposition of the Communist-controlled system of government and its penetration in every aspect of people's lives, the totalitarian features of Stalinism in Poland never reached the same extent as those in the neighboring Czechoslovakia and Hungary.

When Świdnik officially became a town in 1954, the Municipal National Council (MRN) was tasked with the control of all aspects of social, economic and cultural life of the town and became the PZPR's subordinate organ to implement decisions. Particularly, to oversee the ideological stance of the workforce and the residents, already in 1952 the PZPR established a Town and a Factory Committee, with the latter operating within the WSK. Particularly, their role and ideological objectives were then supplemented by the Party's branches, which included the Polish Socialist Youth Union (ZSMP), the Polish Soviet Friendship Society (TPPR), the Polish Women's League (LKP), and the Metalworkers' Trade Union (ZZM)⁶⁹⁹ – the latter operating within the factory.⁷⁰⁰ These substructures of the Communist party, together with the newspaper "The Voice of Świdnik"⁷⁰¹ – which the WSK began publishing in 1956 – enabled the authorities to control Świdnik's population and ensure their integration and participation in Soviet cultural life.⁷⁰²

⁶⁹⁹ But also, the Voluntary Reserve of the Citizens' Militia (ORMO) and the Union of Fighters for Freedom and Democracy (ZBOWiD).

⁷⁰⁰ Leszek Pietrzak, *Miasto Wolności. Historia Świdnika od Komunizmu do Wolnej Polski* (Świdnik: Miejsko-Powiatowa Biblioteka Publiczna w Świdniku, 2020), 8, <http://archiwum.bibliotekaswidnik.pl/index.php/czytaj/nasze-publicacje/861-miasto-wolnosci>

⁷⁰¹ In Polish, *Głos Świdnika*. This local newspaper was fundamental in the town's (communist) development. Initially, it functioned as the Factory Committee's and Factory Council's press organ. The newspaper still exists and is published weekly, figuring among the oldest ones in the Lublin Voivodeship. It was strictly limited to the PZPR's propaganda.

⁷⁰² "W Socjalistycznej Rzeczywistości", Świdnik na Kartach Historii, Poznaj Historie Lotniczego Miasta, accessed January 12, 2025, <https://www.historia.swidnik.net/text-982>

III. The Polish Church: the Foundations of its Power amid the Atheistic Communist System

Deeply permeated in Polish culture, Catholicism has historically exercised a fundamental role in Poland's society. From 1573, when religious tolerance became a distinguishing characteristic of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth,⁷⁰³ until recently, Poland figured among the world's most fervently Catholic countries, with 97.9 percent of Catholic adherents recorded in 2015.⁷⁰⁴ Throughout history, the Church has been an integral and virtually inseparable part of the nation's history, symbolizing strength and resistance against foreign invaders even in the absence of statehood. Hence, the Church's role went beyond that of a protector of the Catholic religion and became a national institution preserving the Polish nation⁷⁰⁵: "religion to the Poles became a surrogate of statehood when the state was lost".⁷⁰⁶ Accordingly, from the onset Catholicism represented one of the principal challenges for the country's PZPR.

Thus, the Communist repudiation of all belief systems and the resulting war on religion, were considerably constrained in Poland – a country that, especially after the Second World War, had become increasingly monoethnic and deeply rooted in Roman Catholicism.⁷⁰⁷ Whilst in theory religion was still permitted in the Constitution, in practice, to enforce atheism across the society, anti-religious propaganda was conducted, clergymen were persecuted, and secularization was promoted. Nevertheless, the periodical attacks on the Church, which peaked between 1953 and

⁷⁰³ William P. Avery, "Political Legitimacy and Crisis in Poland," *Political Science Quarterly* 103, no. 1 (Spring, 1988): 115, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2151143>

⁷⁰⁴ Ministry of National Education, Statistical Yearbook of the Republic of Poland (Warsaw: Central Statistical Office, 2015), https://stat.gov.pl/files/gfx/portalinformacyjny/pl/defaultaktualnosci/5515/2/9/1/rocznik_statystyczny_rp_2014.pdf

⁷⁰⁵ William P. Avery, "Political Legitimacy and Crisis in Poland," *Political Science Quarterly* 103, no. 1 (Spring, 1988): 116, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2151143>

⁷⁰⁶ Joseph R. Fiszman, "Poland: The Pursuit of Legitimacy", in Ivan Volgyes, ed., *Political Socialization in Eastern Europe* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1975), 137, quoted in William P. Avery, "Political Legitimacy and Crisis in Poland," *Political Science Quarterly* 103, no. 1 (Spring, 1988): 116, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2151143>

⁷⁰⁷ Andrzej Paczkowski, *Revolution and Counterrevolution in Poland, 1980-1989. Solidarity, Martial Law, and the End of Communism in Europe* (New York: University of Rochester Press, 2015): 4.

1955, only reinforced the people's strong emotional attachment to faith, further distancing them from the Communist values and norms.⁷⁰⁸ Strikingly, even Communist leaders like Władysław Gomułka and General Jaruzelski, who were opposing the Church, eventually engaged with it to find support and as means to avoid a Catholic revolt and the country's destabilization.⁷⁰⁹

Ironically, it was during Poland's Communist rule that the stereotypical association of "the Pole with the Catholic" further solidified, and the religious and national identities became intertwined. Particularly, given the state's control on key cultural institutions including education and mass media, nationalist sentiments were progressively expressed through religious life, which would ultimately remain outside the Party's oversight. Religious ceremonies often became public displays of the people's opposition to the imposed system, while Catholicism emerged as the protector of national culture. Church buildings turned into safe spaces for political and cultural activities, and priests became the defenders of national values.⁷¹⁰ Accordingly, while people in other Communist countries did not have access to the Church – which had been marginalized and subjugated to the regime –, Catholicism in Poland had become an ideological and cultural alternative to the official Marxist doctrine.⁷¹¹ Particularly from the second half of the twentieth century, not only did the Church have its own representatives in the Polish parliament, but it had also built a strong presence and network within universities and youth groups.⁷¹² Most importantly, its strength was based on the substantial number of believers spanning all ages and social strata, including members of the PZPR.

⁷⁰⁸ Joseph R. Fiszman, "Poland: The Pursuit of Legitimacy", in Ivan Volgyes, ed., *Political Socialization in Eastern Europe* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1975), 137, quoted in William P. Avery, "Political Legitimacy and Crisis in Poland," *Political Science Quarterly* 103, no. 1 (Spring, 1988): 177, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2151143>

⁷⁰⁹ Andrzej Paczkowski, *Revolution and Counterrevolution in Poland, 1980-1989. Solidarity, Martial Law, and the End of Communism in Europe* (New York: University of Rochester Press, 2015): 5.

⁷¹⁰ Michał Buchowski, "From Anti-communist to Post-communist Ethos: the Case of Poland," *Social Anthropology* 2, no. 2 (June 1994): 136, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-8676.1994.tb00274.x>

⁷¹¹ Andrzej Paczkowski, *Revolution and Counterrevolution in Poland, 1980-1989. Solidarity, Martial Law, and the End of Communism in Europe* (New York: University of Rochester Press, 2015): 5.

⁷¹² Ibid.

When considering the construction of Świdnik as a Communist town and thus, with an atheist society, the authorities strongly undervalued the force of the Poles' faith. The individuals who had moved to the town to work at the WSK, mostly came from rural areas, where religion was deeply ingrained in people's lives. Consequently, whilst the idea of building a Church strongly united Świdnik's growing population, the Party apparatus' fierce opposition to it resulted in the initial dismissal of the residents' petitions and of Father Hryniewicz's church construction efforts.⁷¹³ Thus, until the early 1970s, Świdnik's residents had to regularly travel to Lublin and other neighboring cities to meet their spiritual needs. Despite the risk of harsh reprisals, their active engagement and common purpose strengthened their sense of solidarity and laid the groundwork for future collective actions.

Only following December 1970, were they successful in their renewed efforts to build a Church. By then, not only was the majority of residents actively involved in the matter, but also the pragmatic and cautious Father Jan Hryniewicz had become the new administrator of the parish in the neighboring village of Kazimierzów⁷¹⁴. Particularly, it was because of the Father's charismatic personality and organizational skills that Lublin's bishop was prompted to assign Hryniewicz to the nearby parish, with the aim of managing the situation in Świdnik.⁷¹⁵ Indeed, his mission in Kazimierzów, which had been hampered by the constant confrontation with the authorities, had revealed his determination and prudence, while making him a leading and unifying figure for the local community.⁷¹⁶ Hence, this appointment positioned the new priest at the forefront of a crucial struggle for religious freedom and the right to

⁷¹³ Leszek Pietrzak, *Miasto Wolności. Historia Świdnika od Komunistów do Wolnej Polski* (Świdnik: Miejsko-Powiatowa Biblioteka Publiczna w Świdniku, 2020): 25,

<http://archiwum.bibliotekaswidnik.pl/index.php/czytaj/nasze-publicacje/861-miasto-wolnosci>

⁷¹⁴ A village distant approximately one hour drive from Świdnik, towards the Western side of the Lublin Voivodeship.

⁷¹⁵ Leszek Pietrzak, *Miasto Wolności. Historia Świdnika od Komunistów do Wolnej Polski* (Świdnik: Miejsko-Powiatowa Biblioteka Publiczna w Świdniku, 2020): 27,

<http://archiwum.bibliotekaswidnik.pl/index.php/czytaj/nasze-publicacje/861-miasto-wolnosci>

⁷¹⁶ Leszek Pietrzak, *Miasto Wolności. Historia Świdnika od Komunistów do Wolnej Polski* (Świdnik: Miejsko-Powiatowa Biblioteka Publiczna w Świdniku, 2020): 27,

<http://archiwum.bibliotekaswidnik.pl/index.php/czytaj/nasze-publicacje/861-miasto-wolnosci>

build a church. Initially, completing the project appeared almost unfeasible due to the local authorities' strong opposition and their fear that the construction of a church in Świdnik could ignite a "counter-revolution". It would be the external events unfolding on the Coast, to create more favorable conditions for Father Hryniewicz to achieve his goal. Taking advantage of the political shifts and the new atmosphere following the December protests, priest Hryniewicz initiated new efforts to build the church. Despite the SB's countermeasures⁷¹⁷, Świdnik's spiritual leader was able to collect signatures from representatives of 4600 families (out of the 5000 residents in Świdnik)⁷¹⁸ and in February 1971, submitted a petition to Prime Minister Piotr Jaroszewicz, informing him about the overwhelming number of residents that supported the construction of a church.⁷¹⁹

Importantly, under the relatively more liberal policy of the new First Secretary Edward Gierek, the apparatus began to consider the Church as a crucial pillar for social stability, thereby remarkably improving their relations.⁷²⁰ Under this momentum and following the appointment of a new bishop in Lublin which was more favorably viewed by the authorities, a permit for the construction of a church in Świdnik was issued in August 1975.⁷²¹

Świdnik's residents' battle for a church and their ultimate success was a fundamental part of their opposition against the regime and was deeply embedded in

⁷¹⁷ In January 1971, Major Ryszard Trąbka from the SB alerted his superiors: "the so-called pastoral visits are currently creating wide opportunities for agitation in favour of building a church in Świdnik" [my translation]. IPN Lublin, Miesięczne meldunki operacyjne KP MO w Lublinie 17 I 1970–I IV 1975, sygn. Lu-088/6, s. 7, 8v, quoted in Piotr R. Jankowski, *Świdnicki Lipiec* (Świdnik: Urząd Miasta Świdnik, 2011), https://bibliotekaswidnik.pl/strona-3431-publicacje_dotyczace_historii_miejsca_i.html

⁷¹⁸ Piotr R. Jankowski, *Kartki z Historii Świdnika* (Świdnik: TEKST, 2009): 162, https://bibliotekaswidnik.pl/strona-3431-publicacje_dotyczace_historii_miejsca_i.html

⁷¹⁹ Piotr R. Jankowski, *Kartki z Historii Świdnika* (Świdnik: TEKST, 2009): 162, https://bibliotekaswidnik.pl/strona-3431-publicacje_dotyczace_historii_miejsca_i.html

⁷²⁰ Jerzy Lukowski and Hubert Zawadzki, *A Concise History of Poland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001): 268.

⁷²¹ Piotr R. Jankowski, *Kartki z Historii Świdnika* (Świdnik: TEKST, 2009): 162, https://bibliotekaswidnik.pl/strona-3431-publicacje_dotyczace_historii_miejsca_i.html

the wider resistance that Polish people mounted against the Communist system in Poland.

Chronology

1951 January - Establishment of the WSK (*Wytwórnia Sprzętu Komunikacyjnego*, Transport Equipment Factory) in Świdnik.

1956 June - Start of the Poznań Uprising.

1968 March - Students' protests in Poland, also known as the "Student's March".

1970 December

- Protests sparked by a sudden price increase of food and basic products were brutally repressed, resulting in killed and wounded
- Edward Gierek becomes First Secretary of the PZPR, putting an end to the era of Gomułka.

1976 June - Protests erupted across Poland after the Party's announcement of price increases of basic food products. In Radom, demonstrators were brutally repressed, resulting in three deaths.

1978 October - Karol Wojtyła is elected Pope as John Paul II.

The Pivotal Events between 1980 and 1981

1980 July 8 until July 11 - Świdnik's July, *Świdnicki Lipiec*: Four days' strikes in Świdnik.

1980 July 11 - First social contract signed between workers and communist authorities in Świdnik.

1980 August 14 - Start of the Gdańsk Shipyard strike.

1980 August 16 - Anna Walentynowicz (and others') campaign to unite all protesting workplaces along Baltic Coast; establishment of the MKS.

1980 August 17 - Board with MKS' "Twenty-one demands" placed at the Gdańsk Shipyard's gate

1980 August 23 - Government forced to negotiate with the Gdańsk MKS – possibility of country paralysis.

1980 August 31 – Signing of the Gdańsk Agreement: official end of the Gdańsk Shipyard strike and, *inter-alia*, recognition of free independent trade unions and the right to strike.

1980 September 17

- Formal establishment of the Independent Self-Governing Trade Union Solidarity, *NSZZ Solidarność* – the first trade union under communist rule was thus legalized.
- Pope John Paul II sends a letter to Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński expressing his support for the striking workers.

1980 November 8 - First Secretary S. Kania asserts that although martial law should remain a last resort, the Politburo must seriously consider this option and be prepared to act if necessary.

1980 November 10 – The PRL's Supreme Court officially registers *NSZZ Solidarity*

1981 January 2: Start of the peasants' occupation-strike in three main cities in southeastern Poland (Rzeszów, Nowy Sącz, Ustrzyki), demanding to register the free peasant union.

1981 January 24 - Given the government's delays in fulfilling the Gdańsk Agreement, Solidarity encourages its members to take Saturday off. This leads to a widespread boycott across major industries nationwide (except for the mining and metallurgy sectors).

1981 February - Defense Minister Wojciech Jaruzelski is appointed Prime Minister. This is regarded as a success for conservative members of the Party, who were calling for harsher policies against the workers.

1981 March 4 - Prime Minister Jaruzelski and First Secretary Kania present their plans for martial law to the Soviet leadership at the Kremlin.

1981 March 19 - The Bydgoszcz Crisis culminates in the severe injuries of two Solidarity leaders and one of Rural Solidarity by Security Service (SB) officers.

1981 March 27

- Nationwide four-hour "warning strike" (from 8 am to 12 pm), marking the biggest strike in communist history. It demonstrates Solidarity's power to paralyze the entire country.
- Jaruzelski meets with senior Soviet officials to discuss a plan for introducing martial law.
- Kania and Jaruzelski sign documents establishing the basic framework for the introduction of martial law

1981 March 30 - Warsaw Agreement between the government and Solidarity. Results in the temporary alleviation of tensions but leads to deep fractures within the union – "the breaking point" of NSZZ Solidarity.

1981 July 24 - Government announces a 20 percent cut in meat rations for the next months. Protests break out across Poland, while the regime focuses on anti-Solidarity campaign.

1981 July 24-26 - Extraordinary meeting of Solidarity's National Commission in Gdańsk. There are strong calls by its members to broaden Solidarity's objectives from its "pure" trade union character to adopting real political and social autonomy, in order to save the movement from failing

1981 December 13 - General Jaruzelski declares the imposition of Martial law

1982 February 5-14 - Świdnik Night Walks

1984 October - Murder of Priest, Father Tadeusz Popiełuszko

1989 February until April - Round Table Talks in Warsaw between the communist government and Solidarity trade union.

1989 June 4 – First semi-free elections in Poland and within the Communist Bloc. Overwhelmingly won by *Solidarność* candidates.

1989 August 24 – Tadeusz Mazowiecki nominated as Poland's Prime Minister

Dramatis Personae

Świdnik

Jan BARTCZAK (1947-2018). Graduate of the KUL, he was a monk between 1974 and 1978. From September 1980, he was active within *Solidarność*, becoming co-initiator and member of the Temporary Founding Committee. From November 1980, he was chairman of the Factory Committee (KZ) and from February 1981, chairman of the Inter-Enterprise Founding Committee (MKZ). In April-May 1981 he became delegate of the first Regional Delegates' Meeting (WZD) of the Central-Eastern Region; and was elected chairman of the Regional Board of the Central-Eastern Region as well as member of the National Coordinating Commission (KKP). In September-October 1981, he became delegate to the first National Congress of Delegates (KZD). When martial law begun, he was interned and released in 1983, when he left for West Germany, where he lived in exile. [Source: footnote]⁷²²

Zofia D. BARTKIEWICZ (1932-2002). Was a worker at the WSK in Świdnik, who, despite being member of the PZPR, became one of the leaders of Świdnik's July. She addressed the protesters, rallying them to stand united and others to join the efforts. She then became vice-chair of the Standing Committee (Strike Committee). Despite attempts to bribe her, she played a pivotal role in the negotiations with the authorities. She is also one of the signatories of the historic July 11 agreement with the Communists. In September 1980, she joined the newly formed Solidarity movement and later became chairwoman of the Founding Committee of NSZZ at the WSK Świdnik. During martial law, she was interned. She remained a tireless advocate for the rights and well-being of her fellow workers.

⁷²² Marcin Dąbrowski, "Bartczak Jan", Encyklopedia Solidarności, <https://encysol.pl/es/encyklopedia/biogramy/15020,Bartczak-Jan.html>

Alfred BONDOS (1945-2020). Worked at the WSK in Świdnik from 1961 to 1981 and from 1995 to 1997. He was one of the co-founders of *Solidarność* at the WSK, a member of the first Factory Commission (KZ) of Solidarity there, and a delegate to the First Regional Congress in Świdnik and the First National Congress of NSZZ Solidarity in Gdańsk. He founded the union's newsletter "*Groń*" and led the union broadcast on the factory's internal radio. When martial law was declared, he escaped internment by jumping from the second-floor balcony of his apartment. He reached the factory and joined the Strike Committee at WSK Świdnik. After the military and ZOMO pacified the plant, he escaped and lived in hiding for over a year. The SB and regime attempted to discredit and intimidate Mr. Bondos to prompt him either to cease opposition activity or leave the country. Upon his emergence from hiding, he engaged with underground Solidarity. With his wife and others, he organized "Vacations with God" for children of repressed – a program which eventually spread across Poland and lasted for years. He co-founded the Solidarity Aid Committee in Świdnik and continued operating with underground commissions, playing an active role in opposing and attempting to dismantle the communist regime. He remained committed to this cause despite continuous searches of his house and interrogations. In 1990, during Poland's first free local elections, he became Świdnik's City Councilor and was re-elected in 1998, and 2002, maintaining this role until 2018. [Source: footnote]⁷²³

Jan CZOGAŁA (1938-). Director of the WSK in Świdnik from 1974 until 1981. During his leadership, the plant increased helicopter sales to other Eastern Bloc countries.⁷²⁴ After the agreement on July 11, he was among the authorities who accepted the strikers' demands. During Świdnik's July, Mr. Czogała played an important role in preventing the party authorities from resorting to violence. When martial law was announced, he sided with the protesting workers, refusing to comply

⁷²³ Piotr R. Jankowski, "Alfred Bondos", Świdnik na Kartach Historii, <https://www.historia.swidnik.net/osoba-873>

⁷²⁴ Urszula Radek, "Czogała Jan", Świdnik na Kartach historii, <https://www.historia.swidnik.net/>.

with the PZPR's orders. Although it never came to that point, he was threatened with having to face military trial.

Jan HRYNIEWICZ (1917-1999). When studying at the Faculty of Law and Socio-Economic Sciences of the Catholic University of Lublin (KUL), he decided to become a priest and began his studies at the Seminary in Lublin. He then served as a vicar in Janów Lubelski, Zaklików, Kazimierz Dolny, and Chełm. In February 1958, Father Hryniewicz was appointed pastor of the parish in Branew; in August 1970 pastor of the parish in Kazimierzówka, and in March 1982 pastor of the parish in Świdnik. He played a crucial role in building Świdnik's spiritual community and first physical church, whose constructions began in 1975. From autumn 1980, he was the chaplain of the Solidarity movement in Świdnik. During a strike under martial law on December 14, 1981, he celebrated a mass inside the WSK's hall. Under his direction, lists of families in need of material support were compiled in the church. Between 1981 and 1983, he organized charitable assistance at the parish, using church resources donated by Cardinal Glemp to Świdnik or coming from the West. In 1994, in recognition of his contributions, the municipal authorities of Świdnik awarded Father Hryniewicz with the first honorary title of "Distinguished Citizen of the City of Świdnik". [Source: footnote]⁷²⁵

Jan KAŻMIERCZAK (1916-1985). Was the initiator of the Świdnik walks. He was coach of the boxing team of the Świdnik "Avia" club, as well as chairman of the Pensioners' and Invalids' circle. Since September 1980 and despite retiring, he was an active member of NSZZ Solidarity. From the start of martial law, Mr. Kaźmierczak became involved in the underground opposition, for instance by collecting donations, distributing underground press, and participating in masses. He was arrested during a

⁷²⁵ Marcin Dąbrowski, "Hryniewicz Jan", Encyklopedia Solidarności, <https://encysol.pl/es/encyklopedia/>

demonstration marking the anniversary of Poland's regained independence in November 1982.

Marian KRÓL (1957-). WSK worker since 1976 who participated in Świdnik's July. From the moment when NSZZ *Solidarność* was established at the WSK, he became actively involved in the union's activities. After the declaration of martial law, he took part in the occupation strikes at WSK from December 13 to 16, 1981. Following the plant's pacification, he did not abandon his trade union activities. He contributed to the rebuilding of union structures and was actively involved in its underground operations. He collected dues to fund Solidarity's underground activities and to support persecuted individuals and their families. He also distributed illegal publications within the WSK premises. Furthermore, Mr. Król was connected to the Solidarity's underground printing operations, for instance by actively engaging in publishing the *Grot* bulletin, organizing locations for its printing, and distributing it along with other samizdat publications. He ran an extensive distribution network and was responsible for dissemination within WSK and Świdnik. He maintained contact with activists from the Central-Eastern Solidarity Region based in Lublin and the surrounding province. In January 1987, Mr. Król was elected chairman of the WSK's underground *Solidarność* Commission. He organized training sessions related to "Solidarity" activities and undertook strong efforts to resume the legal functioning of NSZZ Solidarity. Because of his engagement Mr. Król was surveilled and detained several times by the security services, who also targeted his family. After the Round Table Talks and the restoration of Solidarity's lawfulness, Marian Król was elected chairman of the Inter-Factory Commission of NSZZ *Solidarność* at the WSK. In 1990, he was member of Lech Wałęsa's regional election staff in Lublin; between 1990 and 1992 he became vice-chairman of the Regional Board, while from 1992 he served as delegate to the National delegate Assembly as well as member of the National Committee. From 2022 until March 2025, he was Chairman of the Central-Eastern Region of the NSZZ *Solidarność*. He was decorated with the Gold Cross of Merit in 2001, with the Commander's Cross of the Order of Polonia Restituta in 2006, the Cross of Freedom and Solidarity, as well as the Medal of the 100th Anniversary of Regaining

Independence in 2018. In February 2025, he was awarded with the title of “Honorary Citizen of the town of Świdnik”.⁷²⁶ [Source: see footnotes]⁷²⁷

Ryszard KUĆ (1941-). From 1965 to 1980, he served as chairman of the Branch Council of the Metalworkers’ Trade Union, later working as a designer at the WSK in Świdnik. During Świdnik’s July, he was a member of the Strike Committee (KS) and participated in the negotiations with the authorities. In September 1980, he was part of the KS delegation to the Inter-Enterprise Strike Committee (MKS) in Gdańsk. Mr. Kuć actively engaged as member of the Solidarity union. He was part of the Presidium of the Founding Committee at WSK (KZ, *Komitet Założycielski*), and later became vice-chairman of the KZ. From September 1980 to May 1981, he was a member of the Inter-Enterprise Founding Committee (MKZ) for the Central-Eastern Region. In March 1981, during the Bydgoszcz crisis, he served as vice-chairman of the Regional Strike Committee (RKS). During November-December 1981, he was part of the Solidarity delegation to a trade union seminar organized by the ILO in Geneva and Turin. In the night of December 12-13, 1981, Mr. Kuć was interned. He was released in October 1982 and emigrated to Canada.

Stanisław PIETRUSZEWSKI (1937-2010). Was one of the co-organizers of the strike at the WSK in Świdnik. Between 1960 and 1983, he worked at the WSK as locksmith, then mechanic and later as foreman. From September 1980, Mr. Pietruszewski was active in the Solidarity movement. From December 1980, he became member of the KZ, later obtaining the position of vice-chairman of Świdnik’s Coordination Committee. Between April and May 1981, he was delegate to the first

⁷²⁶ Solidarność Region Środkowo-Wschodni Lublin, „Przewodniczący Marian Król Zasłużony dla Miasta Świdnika”, Solidarność, February 10, 2025, <https://solidarnosclublin.pl/przewodniczacy-marian-krol-zasluzony-dla-miasta-swidnika/>

⁷²⁷ Instytut Pamięci Narodowej “Krzyż Wolności i Solidarności. Lista Osób Odznaczonych. Marian Franciszek Król”. Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, <https://odznaczeni-kwis.ipn.gov.pl/>.

Regional Delegates Assembly (WZD) of the Central-Eastern Region held in Świdnik. After the imposition of martial law, Mr. Pietruszewski was involved in organizing the WSK's resistance strikes. Initially, he was the head of the Strike Committee in the factory (KS) and a member of the RKS (Regional Strike Committee). He was arrested and imprisoned in Lublin until 1983, when his sentence was pardoned by an amnesty. In February 2025, he was awarded, together with Marian Król and Andrzej Sokołowski, the title of "Honorary Citizen of the City of Świdnik".

Zbigniew PUCZEK (1919-2002). From 1950, he worked as assistant deputy commander for ZMP (Union of Polish Youth) in Żagań (West Poland). From 1958 to 1983 he worked at the WSK in Świdnik, initially as a turner, later as a designer, section manager, and standardizer. He was a member of ORMO (1970-1976) and the PZPR (1953-1981). Nevertheless, he became one of the leaders of Świdnik's July, becoming a member of the Strike Committee and commander of the strike guard. In September 1980, he was part of the WSK's delegation to the Inter-Enterprise Strike Committee (MKZ) in Gdańsk. That month he also co-led the founding meeting and co-founded the Inter-Enterprise Central-Eastern Founding Committee of NSZZ, later the MKZ of the Central-Eastern Region of Solidarity. He became vice-chairman of the WSK's Founding Committee. In November 1981, Mr. Puczek was among the initiators of the WSK's NSZZ newsletter, later known as *Grot*. After martial law was declared, he was interned until 1982. From February 1983, he lived in the USA. [Source: footnotes]⁷²⁸

Andrzej SOKOŁOWSKI. (1941-). From 1959 to 1981, he was an employee at the WSK. In September 1980, he became member of the Solidarity trade union, serving as co-organizer and later as vice-chairman of the factory's Founding Committee. Following the imposition of martial law, he co-organized the strike and became a member of the Strike Committee. After Stanisław Pietruszewski stepped down

⁷²⁸ Marcin Dąbrowski, „Puczek Zbigniew”, Encyklopedia Solidarności, <https://encysol.pl/es/encyklopedia/>

following the strike's suppression by the ZOMO, Mr. Sokołowski became the Committee's chairman. He was then dismissed from work and started hiding, while remaining active in *Solidarność* underground operations. Since April 1982 until 1984 he co-organized and chaired the Regional Coordination Commission (RKK) of the Central-Eastern Region. While providing printing equipment, he also distributed and occasionally wrote for the *Grot*. In February 1984, he was arrested and released in June due to health reasons. Between 1984 and 1989, he was a member of the Temporary Regional Council of the Central-Eastern Region, while responsible for Radio *Solidarność*. In 1989-1990 he became chairman of the *Solidarność* Citizens' Committee in Świdnik. In 2000 and 2011 respectively, he was awarded the Gold Cross of Merit and the Commanders' Cross of the Order of Polonia Restituta. In 2024 he was awarded the Angelus Lubelski award and in February 2025 the title of "Honorary Citizen of the City of Świdnik". [Source: Footnotes]⁷²⁹

Poland

Edward BABIUCH (1927-2021). From February to August 1980, he was the PRL's Prime Minister. Typical member of the Party apparatus, devoid of any independent decision-making power and following the First Secretary's directives. As a close associate of Edward Gierek, thanks to whom he had been appointed Prime Minister, Babiuch was forced to resign from state and party positions in August 1980.

Leonid BREZHNEV (1906-1982). General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union from 1964 until his death in 1982. He developed the concept known as the Brezhnev Doctrine, asserting the right of Soviet intervention in cases where "the essential common interests of other socialist countries were threatened". The doctrine

⁷²⁹ Marcin Dąbrowski, "Sokołowski Andrzej", Encyklopedia Solidarności, <https://encysol.pl/es/encyklopedia/biogramy/18742,Sokolowski-Andrzej.html>

was for instance used to justify the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia. During his tenure, the USSR's attempted to promote *détente*, while it achieved parity with the U.S. in strategic nuclear weapons.

Zbigniew BRZEZIŃSKI (1928-2017). Born in Warsaw within a diplomatic family, he spent most of his childhood in the countries where his father was posted. When WWII broke out, the family was in Canada, where they decided to remain in exile. From 1977 to 1981, he served as National Security Advisor to U.S. President Jimmy Carter, exerting significant influence on American foreign policy. He believed that *détente* should be used as an opportunity to significantly weaken the USSR. Mr. Brzeziński advocated for U.S. support of anti-Soviet guerrillas in Afghanistan and of *Solidarność* in Poland. He is considered one of the most outstanding and effective National Security Advisors in recent U.S. history.

Józef CZYREK (1928-2013). A Polish economist, Communist activist and member of the government. He served as Minister of Foreign Affairs from August 1980 to July 1982. From 1981 to 1989 he was a member of the Political Bureau and Secretary of the PZPR's Central Committee. Mr. Czyrek was considered one of General Jaruzelski's closest associates. In 1988, he conducted talks with the opposition and the Church in preparation for the Round Table negotiations. Between 1989 and 1990, he served as Minister of State in the President's Office.

Bronisław DĄBROWSKI (1917-1997). In December 1961, at the request of Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński, he was appointed Auxiliary Bishop of Warsaw, later consecrated as bishop in 1962. From 1968 to 1993, he served as Secretary of the Polish Bishops' Conference. Bishop Dąbrowski was a vocal opponent of Communist repression, defending the Church's authority over seminaries and supporting the renewal of

religious life in Poland. He participated in the talks at Magdalenka and the Round Table negotiations. [Source: footnote]⁷³⁰

Jerzy DĄBROWSKI (1931-1991). In 1979, he was appointed to the Secretariat of the Primate of Poland, where he was responsible for pastoral care for the Polish diaspora and for maintaining contacts with foreign episcopal conferences. He served as the Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Gniezno from 1982 until 1991. He was a secret collaborator with the SB, providing it with materials from the sessions of the Polish Episcopate during the Second Vatican Council and getting paid in return.

Stanisław CIOSEK (1939-2022). He was a member of the Politburo of the PZPR's Central Committee, the First Secretary of the PZPR's Provincial Committee in Jelenia Góra, and member of the Sejm. In the late 1980s, he prepared several confidential reports critically assessing Poland's political situation and advocating for major socialist reforms. He participated in secret talks with the Church and opposition representatives. During the talks leading to the Round Table and throughout its proceedings, he was one of the most important figures. In November 1989 he was appointed Polish Ambassador to Moscow, a position he held until 1996. Upon returning to Poland, he served as foreign policy advisor to President Aleksander Kwaśniewski. [Source: footnote]⁷³¹

Bronisław GEREMEK (1932-2008). At the age of eight, together with his family, he was confined to the Warsaw Ghetto, from which he and his brother escaped in 1943. In 1950 he became a member of the PZPR, but left the party in protest against the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. Between 1956 and 1958, he undertook postgraduate studies at "École Pratique des Hautes Études" in Paris. From

⁷³⁰ KUL, „Życiorys abp. Bronisława Dąbrowskiego”, KUL, https://www.kul.pl/zyciorys-abp-bronislaw-dabrowskiego.art_11981.html

⁷³¹ Dzieje.pl, „Stanisław Ciosek”, Dzieje.pl, <https://dzieje.pl/postacie/stanislaw-ciosek>

1962 to 1965 he was a lecturer at the Sorbonne University in Paris, later becoming an associated professor at the Institute of History PAN. In August 1980, he joined the Expert Commission of the Inter-Enterprise Strike Committee in Gdańsk and then became advisor to the Founding Inter-Enterprise Committee of NSZZ Solidarity and the National Coordinating Commission. When martial law was introduced, he was interned and released under amnesty in 1983. Collaborating with underground structures, he was an advisor to the Temporary Coordinating Commission of NSZZ Solidarity and Lech Wałęsa. He was one of the co-organizers of the Civic Committee established in December 1988 at the Chairman of NSZZ Wałęsa. During the Round Table Talks, he co-chaired the team on political reforms. In October 1997, he was appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs in the government of Prime Minister Jerzy Buzek.

Edward GIEREK (1913-2001). Replaced Władysław Gomułka as the First Secretary of the PZPR (December 1970-September 1980). He implemented modernizing policies funded by substantial foreign loans, thereby dragging Poland into financial and economic decline. Temporarily, these measures resulted in better living and working conditions across Poland, with store shelves beginning to sell items like coffee, chocolate, sweets. To this day, he is associated with these policies through a popular saying in Poland: “*Chcesz cukierka, idź do Gierka*”, meaning “if you want a candy, go to Gierek” and thus connected to the fact that during his time, you could “get something”. He was responsible for initiating the production of the Fiat 126 in Poland and the erection of the *Warszawa Centralna* railway station.

Józef GLEMP (1929-2013). Since July 1981 he was the Archbishop of Gniezno and Warsaw, assuming the title of Primate of Poland following Wyszyński's death. He became Cardinal in 1983. During martial law, his calls for calm and the stop of fratricidal conflict, prompted the PZPR to accuse him of collaboration and describe him as the “red primate”. Glemp's stance was approved by John Paul II, who agreed that to save the Poles from bloodshed, tensions needed to be eased. In 1989, Primate

Glemp supported the Solidarity side during the Round Table Talks. In 2001, under Cardinal Glemp's leadership, the Polish Episcopate asked forgiveness for all the harm caused by Poles to Jews in Jedwabne and elsewhere. From 1964 to 1979, the SB tried to recruit Father Glemp as a secret collaborator. However, the priest refused, leading the Communists to block his appointment as Archbishop of Wrocław in 1975 and Poznań in 1977. [Source: see footnote]⁷³²

Władysław GOMUŁKA (1905-1982). Deputy prime minister in Poland's Provisional government (January-June 1945) and in the Provisional Government of National unity (1945-47). Polish communist politician, *de facto* leader of post-war Poland 1947-1948 and 1956-1970. He was initially popular for his reforms as promoter of a "Polish Road to Socialism" (*Polska Droga do Socjalizmu*). However, fearing destabilization, he opposed the implementation of further reforms. Mr. Gomułka was behind the anti-Zionist and antisemitic campaign of 1968. He also prompted increasing censorship and students' persecutions. In December 1970 he signed the Treaty of Moscow with West Germany, which recognized the Oder-Neisse lines as the border between Germany and Poland.

Mikhail GORBACHEV (1931-2022). General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union from March 1985 until August 1991 and thus, last leader of the USSR. Known for his policies of *glasnost* and *perestrojka*, Gorbachev's tenure witnessed an improvement of freedom of speech and press, as well attempts at decentralization of economic decision-making. On the international stage, he was known for developing warmer relations with the West. For instance, in 1987 he signed an agreement with U.S. President Reagan for their countries to destroy all existing

⁷³² Stanisław Karnacewicz, and Paweł Rozwód, Józef Glemp (1929-2013), *Dzieje.pl*, December 27, 2013, <https://dzieje.pl/postacie/jozef-glemp-1929-2013>

intermediate-range nuclear-tipped missiles. Under his tenure, Soviet troops were withdrawn from Afghanistan.

Wojciech JARUZELSKI (1923-2014). Was the first Secretary of the PZPR and the PRL's Prime Minister between 1981-1989. Since 1968 and until 1983, he was Minister of Defence. On December 13, 1983, he imposed martial law in Poland under the justification of the "Soviet threat of invasion". General Jaruzelski also served as President of Poland from 1989 to 1990. To this day, he remains a controversial figure due to his policies and relatively milder rule compared to that of other Soviet satellite countries. He never faced trial for communist-era crimes.

Stanisław KANIA (1927-2020). Succeeded Edward Gierek as First Secretary of the PZPR (between September 1980 and October 1981). Although not a reformer, he advocated less radical methods for dealing with the Solidarity union, favoring political rather than military solutions. Thus, he opposed Moscow's military intervention. Ultimately, Kania became the main obstacle for the Kremlin to "normalize" the situation in Poland. Coming under KGB surveillance and informed by the Soviets that Jaruzelski would be his successor, Kania resigned in October 1981. However, he remained part of the PZPR's Central Committee and served as a member of parliament until June 1989. [Source: see footnote]⁷³³

Jarosław KACZYŃSKI (1949-). Twin brother of Lech, both staunch anticommunists and student activists in the KOR and other opposition groups in the 1970s. In the 1980s, they brothers became active in *Solidarność*, with Jarosław heading the legal section of the union's activities in the Mazovia region. Because of this and his involvement in the underground distribution of publications, he was surveilled by the security services. In 1982, he co-founded the Helsinki Committee in Poland, and

⁷³³ Grzegorz Majchrzak, „Stanisław Kania”, *Dzieje.pl*, November 19, 2021, <https://dzieje.pl/wiadomosci/stanislaw-kania-zapomniany-sekretarz>

contributed to the 1983 human rights reports presented at the Madrid CSCE. In 1983, he became part of Solidarity's underground leadership as the head of its socio-political office. During the 1988 strikes, he advised together with his brother, strikers at the Gdańsk shipyard. He belonged to the Solidarity Citizens' Committee and in 1989 participated in the Round Table Talks. In December 1990, following Wałęsa's election as President, Jarosław was appointed head of the presidential office. In 1990 he and his brother founded Centre Agreement (PC), a Christian-democratic party headed by Jarosław until 1998. The party was succeeded by the Law and Justice party (PiS), founded by them in 2001. He served as Prime Minister from 2006 until 2007, while his brother was president of Poland. He is now the leader of PiS, a position he has been holding since 2003. [Sources: Encyclopaedia Britannica. See also footnotes]⁷³⁴.

Lech KACZYŃSKI (1949-2010). The twin brothers were born from an intellectual family, with their dad serving as soldier for the Home Army and their mum in the paramilitary scouting association during WWII. Both Lech and his brother were graduates of law and following the creation of *Solidarność*, Lech became a delegate of the Gdańsk Solidarity branch. Following the imposition of martial law, he was interned, and released after eleven months. Together with other lawyers from underground Solidarity, he drafted reports for union authorities on Polish law and prepared legal defense for opposition members interrogated by the security service. He participated in the Round Table Talks and after April 1989 became Wałęsa's closest associate within the union. Wałęsa used to say that if anything happened to him, Lech should have led Solidarity. In the June elections, he ran as a candidate of the Citizens' Committee and was elected senator. He was elected Minister of Justice in 2000, becoming known for his tough stance on law enforcement and firm public statements, sometimes even critical of government institutions. The resulting

⁷³⁴ Wanda Nowicka, „Jarosław Kaczyński – kim jest i jakie ma znaczenie w polityce?”, Wanda Nowicka.pl, April 22, 2025, <https://wandanowicka.pl/jaroslaw-kaczynski-kim-jest-i-jakie-ma-znaczenie-w-polityce>

popularity contributed to his and the PiS subsequent electoral success. Under his tenure as mayor from 2002, Warsaw witnessed an increased budget for education, safety, culture and social welfare. One of his major successes as mayor was initiating the construction of the Warsaw Uprising Museum, considered one of the most modern institutions in Poland. He won the presidential elections in October 2005, advocating for a Polish “Fourth Republic” which was to be cleansed from the past and rebuilt with a new constitution. In April 2010, he died in a plane crash near Smolensk, where he was supposed to participate in a ceremony marking the 70th anniversary of the Katyn massacre. [Source: see footnotes]⁷³⁵

Czesław KISZCZAK (1925-2015). During WWII he was deported by the Germans to Vienna for forced labor, where he made his first contacts with the Communists. In July 1981, as an army general, he became head of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and a close associate of Prime Minister General Jaruzelski. He took part in organizing martial law and was a member of the WRON. From 1986 to 1990 he was a member of the Politburo of the PZPR’s Central Committee. He participated in the Magdalenka talks and the Round Table negotiations in 1989. Designated as prime minister in July 1989, he failed to form a government based on a PZPR-ZSL-SD coalition. In Tadeusz Mazowiecki’s government, he served as Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Internal Affairs. In July 1990, he withdrew from political life. He was charged for his action as head of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in the 1980s and was accused of deliberately endangering lives, for instance by instructing police units to suppress striking miners at the “Wujek” coal mine. Ultimately, he was acquitted due to health reasons. In a trial against those responsible for December 1981, he claimed that martial law saved Poland from a multidimensional tragedy, thereby preventing the collapse of

⁷³⁵ Dzieje.pl, „Lech Kaczyński (1949-2019)”, Dzieje.pl, April 18, 2010, <https://dzieje.pl/postacie/lech-kaczynski>

the state and the economy, as well as civil war and foreign intervention. [Source: footnote]⁷³⁶

Aleksander KOPEĆ (1932-2015). From 1975 to August 1980, he served as Undersecretary at the Ministry of Machine Industry in the governments of Piotr Jaroszewicz and Edward Babiuch. He then became Deputy Prime Minister until February 1981. [Source: Wikipedia]

Jacek KUROŃ (1924-2004). Born in Lviv into an intelligentsia family who experienced both Soviet and German occupations. Their apartment was used for underground activities and hiding Jews. In 1949 he joined the Union of Polish Youth (ZMP), later becoming a member of the PZPR. In 1968 he helped organize a student rally at the University of Warsaw and was thus arrested until 1971. In June 1976, he supported striking workers and wrote an open letter to Enrico Berlinguer, leader of the Italian Communist Party, urging him to condemn the repression of Polish workers. The letter received wide attention in the West. In September 1976 Kuroń co-founded the KOR, turning his apartment in Warsaw into an information center to distribute news of opposition activities and government repression. He was arrested in August 1980 and released in September due to Solidarity's MKZ's demands. From that month, he became advisor to the Solidarity Founding Committee and afterwards to the National Coordinating Commission. In late 1981 he supported the idea of a national unity government with Solidarity, the Church, and the PZPR. In the night when martial law was imposed, he was interned, and released in 1984. After that, he advised Solidarity's underground structures and published in the underground press. In 1988 he joined the Citizens' Committee and in 1989 participated in the Round Table Talks as member of the political reform groups as well as in the secret Magdalenka meetings. In the June elections, he became member of the *Sejm* and served until 2001. Under Mazowiecki's

⁷³⁶ Łukasz Starzewski, "Czesław Kiszcak (1925-2015)", *Dzieje.pl*, June 2, 2009, <https://dzieje.pl/postacie/czeslaw-kiszczak-1925-2015>

cabinet, he was Minister of Labor and Social Policy. He was a staunch advocate of Polish-Ukrainian reconciliation and of minority rights. Mr. Kuroń received global recognition, which included the French Legion of Honor, Germany's Grand Cross of Merit, the Ukrainian Order of Prince Yaroslav the Wise, and Poland's Order of the White Eagle. [Source: footnote]⁷³⁷

Tadeusz MAZOWIECKI (1927-2013). The first non-Communist Prime Minister of the PRL and the first one of the Third Polish Republic, elected after the June 4, 1989, elections. Known for his “thick-line” speech and policy in dealing with the communist past, as well as for the implementation of the Balcerowicz plan, aimed at transitioning from a planned to a market-free economy. In the late 1940s, he became affiliated with the PAX Association, a pro-Communist Catholic organization, but later expelled for opposing its leader. In 1961, he became a deputy in the *Sejm* representing the *Znak* Circle, a parliamentary group of lay Catholics. In August 1980 he headed the board of experts who supported the workers protesting at the Gdańsk Shipyard and became chair of the expert committee of the MKZ, advising in the negotiations with the authorities. He then became editor-in-chief of *Tygodnik Solidarność* magazine (Solidarity Weekly). Following the introduction of martial law, he was interned and released in December 1982. After that, he continued working closely with Lech Wałęsa. In 1988, he joined talks in Magdalenka and then became part of the Civic Committee. He played an active role in the Round Table Talks and co-chaired the group on union pluralism. He became one of the most important architects of the final agreement. His selection as head of the new government has been considered a tactical move made by Wałęsa, who sought to counterbalance the rising influence of Geremek. When in December 1989, Geremek, Mazowiecki, and Wałęsa pledged unity at the “Solidarity Ethos” conference, the three figures captured in fact different factions arising behind them. [As illustrated by Piotr Wierzbicki's article “Family, Entourage,

⁷³⁷ Dzieje.pl, „Jacek Kuroń 1934-2004”, Dzieje.pl, May 27, 2009, <https://dzieje.pl/postacie/jacek-kuron>

Court”⁷³⁸ which highlighted a sentiment of “nostalgia for the old Solidarity spirit”]. In 1991, Mazowiecki was appointed as *UN Commission of Human Rights Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia*. However, two years later he stepped down in protest against what he considered as the international community’s insufficient response to atrocities committed during the Bosnian war. After a conflict with Wałęsa, the Citizens’ Parliamentary Club was divided into Centre Agreement, which supported Wałęsa and ROAD (the Citizens’ Movement for Democratic Action)⁷³⁹, under Mazowiecki. [Source: footnote]⁷⁴⁰

Adam MICHNIK (1946-). He was born in a Jewish and communist family. As a student, he was expelled from Warsaw’s university for participating in a rally in March 1968, before the beginning of “March crisis”. He was later sentenced to three years in prison for “anti-state activities”. From 1977 he was involved in the KOR. The secret police frequently detained him for 48 hours and beat him several times. He was arrested during the August 1980 strikes on the Coast, and released in September following the MKZ’s demands. At the end of 1980, he became a Solidarity advisor to the Mazovia region and the Workers’ Committee of Steelworks at the Lenin Steelworks. Following the imposition of martial law, he was interned and released in 1984. He then became involved in underground activities and served as an advisor to the Temporary Coordinating Committee of Solidarity. He later became one of Wałęsa’s closest advisors and joined the Citizens’ Committee in 1988. Initially, Generals Jaruzelski and Kiszczak opposed Michnik’s participation in the Round Table Talks but ultimately accepted it thanks to Wałęsa’s firm stance. There, he was part of the political reform team and joined the secret meetings at Magdalenka. Following the

⁷³⁸ Familia, Świta, Dwór. Łukasz Bertram, „Kulisy solidarnościowej wojny na górze”, *Polityka*, June 9, 2015, <https://www.polityka.pl/tygodnikpolityka/historia/1621709,1,kulisy-solidarnosciowej-wojny-na-gorze.read>

⁷³⁹ *Ruch Obywatelski Akcja Demokratyczna*.

⁷⁴⁰ Dzieje.pl, „Tadeusz Mazowiecki (1927-2013)”, Dzieje.pl, June 1, 2009, <https://dzieje.pl/postacie/tadeusz-mazowiecki>

April 1989 agreement, Michnik was tasked by Wałęsa with establishing a newspaper reflecting the voice of the Citizens' Committee ahead of the elections, leading to the creation of *Gazeta Wyborcza* (Election Newspaper). After the June election, he became member of the parliament. Since the PiS 2015 electoral victory, Michnik strongly criticized the government, accusing it of eroding democratic principles. [Source: footnote]⁷⁴¹

Alojzy ORSZULIK (1928-2019). Priest and Bishop. Since the early 1970s, he participated in talks with the government on relations between the state and the Church. During martial law, Father Orszulik, representing the Episcopate, maintained contact with Lech Wałęsa. As representative of the Church, he participated in key discussions preparing the Round Table Talks and played a critical role in the confidential negotiations between the PZPR and *Solidarność*. In September 1989, Pope John Paul II appointed him as auxiliary Bishop of the Diocese of Siedlice. From 1990 to 1993, as a delegate of the Holy See, he negotiated the concordat with the Polish government. [Source: footnotes]⁷⁴²

Jerzy POPIELUSZKO (1947-1984). Catholic priest and staunch opponent of the communist regime. Through his homilies and "Masses for the Homeland", he became symbol of the struggle for freedom, human dignity and truth. In 1984 he was kidnapped and murdered by SB agents.

Andrzej STELMACHOWSKI (1925-2009). From 1973, he was professor at the Warsaw University and joined the Catholic Intelligentsia Club (KIK). In June 1976 he supported repressed workers and during the August 1980 strikes, he was a KIK delegate tasked with aiding striking workers. He then became an advisor to the MKZ in Gdańsk and to the NSZZ of Individual Farmers as agricultural law expert. After the

⁷⁴¹ Dzieje.pl, „Adam Michnik”, Dzieje.pl, June 1, 2009, <https://dzieje.pl/postacie/adam-michnik>

⁷⁴² Dzieje.pl, „Alojzy Orszulik”, Dzieje.pl, June 1, 2009, <https://dzieje.pl/postacie/alozzy-orszulik>

imposition of martial law, he was repeatedly interrogated. Mr. Stelmachowski played an important role in preparing the Round Table Talks, for instance by holding confidential talks with Czyrek on a meeting between authorities and the opposition. He also participated in Wałęsa's meeting with General Kiszczak on September 15, 1988, and in the Magdalena meeting between the PRL, the opposition and the episcopate on September 16, 1988, and January 1989. During the Round Table Talks, he was a member of the economy and social policy team and following the June elections, he became a member of the Senate.

[Source: Footnote]⁷⁴³

Lech WAŁESA (1943 -). From 1967, electrician at the Lenin Shipyard in Gdańsk. Since December 1970, he participated in strikes, which together with his criticism of state-sanctioned trade unions, prompted the authorities to fire him in 1976. He was involved in the WZZ's and the KOR's activities. In August 1980, after strikes broke out at the shipyard, he joined WZZ activists and led the Strike Committee. He was among the main figures in the political negotiations leading to the Gdańsk Agreement between striking workers and the party apparatus, and became chairman of the MKZ, which developed the "twenty-one demands" to the PZPR. On August 31, 1980, Wałęsa signed the Gdańsk Agreements with Deputy Prime Minister Mieczysław Jagielski, which allowed the creation of independent trade unions. Although in September he opposed forming a single nationwide trade union, after Solidarity's formation, he became head of the National Coordinating Commission. Gradually, he would be considered the main opposition figure – both domestically and internationally – despite the union's broad membership and ideologies. Critics within the union accused him of being autocratic and ignoring union democracy. After martial law was imposed and Solidarity outlawed, he was arrested until November 1982, when he was released. In

⁷⁴³ Michał Szukała, „10 lat temu zmarł prof. Andrzej Stelmachowski – pierwszy marszałek Senatu III RP”, Dzieje.pl, <https://dzieje.pl/aktualnosci/10-lat-temu-zmarl-prof-andrzej-stelmachowski-pierwszy-marszalek-senatu-iii-rp>

October 1983, he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, which greatly strengthened his position, but which was accepted by his wife and son on Wałęsa's behalf. On August 31, 1988, Wałęsa secretly met with Interior Minister General Kiszczak, with Bishop Dąbrowski and the PZPR's Secretary Stanisław Ciosek, to start a dialogue on potential talks. After June 1989, despite Wałęsa's initial support to Mazowiecki's appointment as head of the new government, the latter significantly limited Wałęsa's influence. Thus, Wałęsa accused the new cabinet of slowly implementing Solidarity's program and of not having removed the old communist-era *nomenklatura*. Thus, between the end of 1989 and 1990, the so-called "war at the top" would arise. In December 1990, Wałęsa won the presidential elections. In June 1992, after the publication of the "Macierewicz List of Communist collaborators", Wałęsa was included and on June 4, issued a statement admitting his cooperation with the SB which was withdrawn minutes later.⁷⁴⁴ In 2000, he ceased active political involvement but supported Civic Platform while criticizing the Law and Justice party – lead by the Kaczyński brothers, paradoxically, previously members of Solidarity and close to Wałęsa. In 2016, documents were found in the house of General Kiszczak's widow, among which a handwritten collaboration commitment signed "Lech Wałęsa + Bolek" (Bolek was the codename given to him by the SB).⁷⁴⁵

Anna WALENTYNOWICZ (1929-2010). Also known as the "Mother of *Solidarność*". Since 1950, she worked at the ship fitting department of the Lenin Shipyard in Gdańsk. After 1966 she served as crane operator, ultimately becoming a model worker of Socialist Poland – achieving up to 300 percent of the work norm. She was awarded the Bronze, Silver, and Gold Cross of Merit, and her photos appeared in the press. Although initially a believer in the early PRL's slogans – equality, a country free from exploitation and violence – she gradually realized the stark contrast between the system's promises and the oppressive reality. Her active involvement in illegal

⁷⁴⁴ Dzieje.pl, „Lech Wałęsa”, Dzieje.pl, <https://dzieje.pl/postacie/lech-walesa>

⁷⁴⁵ Ibid.

trade unionism and particularly her participation in KOR and WZZ, caused her dismissal just five months before reaching retirement age. This became the immediate factor igniting the strike at the shipyard and on the Coast, later leading to the formation of NSZZ *Solidarność*. Ms. Walentynowicz was harassed, interned and imprisoned for trying to commemorate the miners murdered at the “Wujek” coal mine, with attempts made on her life. In 1989 she sided with the group (internal of Solidarity) emerged around Andrzej Gwiazda, which criticized Lech Wałęsa, the Round Table Agreement, and the post-Solidarity government. She died on April 10, 2010, in the crash of the Polish government plane near Smolensk – along with Polish President Lech Kaczyński, his wife and other prominent Polish leaders – while on their way to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the Katyn massacre of World War II. [Source: footnote]⁷⁴⁶.

Karol WOJTYŁA (1920-2005). Was Archbishop of Kraków before being elected Pope in 1978, as the first non-Italian pope since 16th century. He played a critical supportive role for the Polish population throughout the PZPR’s rule and particularly during martial law. Under him, the two most important constitutions of the contemporary Catholic Church were drafted: the Code of Canon Law in 1983 (which *inter alia*, began an effort to curb sexual abuse in the Catholic Church), and the Catechism of the Catholic Church in 1992 (which mainly clarified the Church’s position on homosexuality).

Stefan WYSZYŃSKI (1901-1981). Served as Bishop of Lublin from 1946 to 1948, when he was elevated to Archbishop of Gniezno and Warsaw, thereby becoming the Primate of Poland. In January 1953 he was named Cardinal but was unable to receive the red hat in person as the Communist authorities refused to issue him a passport. In February 1950, as the head of the Polish Church, Primate Wyszyński signed an

⁷⁴⁶ Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, “Anna Walentynowicz (1929-2010)”, Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, <https://ipn.gov.pl/pl/>

agreement with the PRL's authorities: in exchange for condemning the remaining partisan units and recognizing the new western border, he obtained permission for religious education in schools and for the continued operation of KUL. However, in September 1953 he was arrested and interned. The Primate regained freedom in October 1956 and became one of the initiators of the "Letter of Reconciliation" from Polish to German bishops, which provoked the regime's harsh reaction. He actively worked to ease tensions between the government and the growing opposition, later becoming a mediator in the negotiations between the PZPR leaders and the Solidarity movement between 1980 and 1981. His role is thus recognized as crucial for successfully guiding the Polish Church through the arduous period of Communist rule, as further expressed by Pope John Paul II. His funeral, in 1981 became a massive national demonstration. [Source: footnote]⁷⁴⁷.

⁷⁴⁷ KUL, "Zyciors Slugi Bozego Stefana Kardynala Wyszynskiego", KUL, https://www.kul.pl/art_11957.html

Glossary

ILO International Labour Organization

KIK *Klub Inteligencji Katolickiej* – Club of Catholic Intelligentsia

KKP *Krajowa Komisja Porozumiewawcza* – National Coordinating Commission

KOR *Komitet Obrony Robotników* – Workers’ Defense Committee, later became **KSS**

KOR *Komitet Samoobrony Społecznej KOR*, Committee for Social Self-Defense

KP *Komitet Postojowy*, Standing Committee – was the official name of the Strike Committee, *Komitet Strajkowy* (the latter was firmly refused by authorities)

KS *Komitet Strajkowy* – Strike Committee

KZ *Komitet Założycielski* – Founding Committee

KUL *Katolicki Uniwersytet Lubelski Jana Pawła II* – The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin

MKS *Międzyzakładowy Komitet Strajkowy* – Inter-Factory Strike Committee

MKZ *Międzyzakładowy Komitet Założycielski* – Inter-Factory Founding Committee

MO *Milicja Obywatelska* – Citizens’ Militia

MSW *Ministerstwo Spraw Wewnętrznych* – Ministry of Internal Affairs

NSZZ Solidarność *Niezależny Samorządny Związek Zawodowy “Solidarność”* – Independent Self-Governing Trade Union “Solidarity”

NSZZ RI Solidarność *Niezależny Samorządny Związek Zawodowy Rolników Indywidualnych “Solidarność”* – Independent Self-Governing Trade Union for Individual Farmers “Solidarity”

ORMO *Ochotnicza Rezerwa Milicji Obywatelskiej* – Volunteer Reserve of the Citizens’ Militia.

PAP *Polska Agencja Prasowa*, The Polish Press Agency

PiS *Prawo i Sprawiedliwość* – Law and Justice

PO *Platforma Obywatelska* – Civic Platform

PZL *Państwowe Zakłady Lotnicze* – State Aviation Works

PZPR *Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza* – Polish United Workers’ Party

RFE Radio Free Europe

RKK *Regionalna Komisja Koordynacyjna NSZZ Solidarność* – Regional Coordinating Commission

RKS *Regionalny Komitet Strajkowy* – Regional Strike Committee

RMP *Ruch Młodej Polski* – Young Poland Movement

ROPCiO *Ruch Obrony Praw Człowieka i Obywatela* – Movement for Defence of Human and Civic Rights

SB *Śłużba Bezpieczeństwa* – Security Service

SKS *Studenckie Komitety Solidarności* – Solidarity's Students' Committees.

TKK *Tymczasowa Komisja Koordynacyjna NSZZ Solidarność* – Temporary Coordinating Committee

TVP *Telewizja Polska* – Polish Television.

WSK *Wytwórnia Sprzętu Komunikacyjnego* – Transport Equipment Factory

WZD *Walne Zebranie Delegatów Regionu Środkowo-Wschodniego* – General Delegates Assembly of the Central-Eastern Region

WZZ *Wolne Związki Zawodowe* – Free Trade Unions

ZKZ *Zakładowy Komitet Założycielski* – Founding (Plant/Factory) Committee

ZMP *Związek Młodzieży Polskiej* – Union of Polish Youth

ZOMO *Zmotoryzowane Odwody Milicji Obywatelskiej* – Motorized Reserves of the Citizens' Militia

Documents

kc w-wa 5
teleks nr 123
lublin, dnia 2 czerwca 1980r. 5

wydział organizacyjny kc pzpr
sektor informacji

i n f o r m a c j a

o aktualnych komentarzach i opiniach w województwie lubelskim
na temat sytuacji rynkowej.

w ostatnich dniach obserwowane jest w różnych środowiskach społeczno-zawodowych zjawisko niezadowolenia na tle słabego zaopatrzenia sklepów w artykuły spożywcze, głównie w mięso i nabiał. nastąpiło wyraźne nasilenie pogłosek na temat spodziewanych podwyżek cen na: drob, mięso, mąkę, kasze, kawę, herbatę, spirytus, benzynę, samochody, skóry, telewizory kolorowe, energię elektryczną i gaz. negatywnie komentuje się szczególnie rozpowszechnianą pogłoskę o podwyżce cen na drobiazgi jako podstawowego obecnie artykułu danin mięsnych. w szerokim zakresie wyraża się opinię, że następuje wyraźny wzrost kosztów utrzymania.

notowane są przypadki wyrażania niezadowolenia szczególnie osób o niskich zarobkach, którzy krytykują publicznie władze za ciągły wzrost cen - ukryty i jawny oraz za dotkliwie braki w zaopatrzeniu. sytuacja taka wykorzystywana jest przez osoby zaangażowane w działalność opozycyjną.

za niepokojące zjawisko uznaje się wzrastającą liczbę przestępstw i wykroczeń w handlu, polegających głównie na ukrywaniu i odmowie sprzedaży poszukiwanych towarów oraz na dokonywaniu różnych oszustw na szkodę konsumenta.

wzrasta ostatnio według ustaleń mo. liczba osób trudniących się nielegalnie handlem na bazarach i targowiskach. wzrasta przestępczość w handlu agencyjnym. zauważa się grupę osób dysponujących większą ilością gotówki - wywierającą presję na rynek i niektóre osoby w placówkach handlowych, gdzie znajdują się atrakcyjne towary.

na tle sygnalizowanych problemów nie ma istotnych napięć, ale sygnalizujemy je jako zjawisko niepokojące.

kierownictwo polityczno-administracyjne województwa na bieżąco analizuje źródła i przyczyny tych napięć, pogłębianą jest praca polityczna aparatu i aktywność w poszczególnych środowiskach, podejmowane są niezbędne decyzje.-

kierownik wydz. organizacyjnego kw pzpr
/-/ andrzej szpringer

nadała - swirecz godz. 13.55
przyjęła - jakubczak

Document 1. Andrzej Szpringer, Wydział Organizacyjny KC PZPR Sektor Informacji, Informacja o Aktualnych Komentarzach i Opiniach w Województwie lubelskim na temat sytuacji rynkowej (June 2, 1980), Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza Komitet Wojewódzki w Lublinie Archiwum, Wydział Polityczno-Organizacyjny, Informacje bieżące o nastrojach i sytuacji społeczno-politycznej 1980, Sygn. 100/VII/31 t.19 (1075), teleks n. 123, Archiwum Państwowe w Lublinie. Picture taken by Viktoria Mróz, at the State Archive in Lublin, on March 24, 2025.

28

kc w-wa 4
teleks nr 145

lublin, dnia 8. lipca 1980r.

wydział organizacyjny kc pzpr
sektor informacji

i n f o r m a c j a

w dniu dzisiejszym w czasie przerwy śniadaniowej w wsk swidnik załoga wydziału mechanicznego postanowiła przerwać pracę protestując przeciwko wprowadzeniu wyższych cen w bufetach fabrycznych bez ekwiwalentu w płacach.

aktyw fabryczny przystąpił natychmiast do rozmów i wyjaśniania przyczyn postępu. robotnicy domagają się cofnięcia podwyższonych cen twierdząc, że dokonano tego w wsk mielec i w "ursusie".

nawoływanie do rozsądku i potrzeby podjęcia pracy w rozstrzygnięciu problemów w sposób zorganizowany w dyrekcji nie odnosiły skutków. postój rozszerzył się na inne wydziały i objął około 3 - 4 tys. pracujących.

w dalszym ciągu trwają rozmowy na wydziałach. część pracowników podejmuje pracę. w fabryce jest aktyw kw z sekretarzem ekonomicznym tow. garbcem.

o godzinie 13.30 odbędzie się spotkanie dyrekcji z przedstawicielami załóg.

szerszą informację przesłamy po godzinie 14.00.-

1 sekretarz kw pzpr

/ władysław k r u k /

nadała -swircz godz.12.55
przyjęła - ~~00000~~51: 2-wa 4
przepraszam cyfry ~~00000000~~
informacja bardzo pilna -prosimy o bezzwłoczne przekazanie
~~000000000000~~
1300 jakubczak

Document 2. Władysław Kruk, Wydział Organizacyjny KC PZPR Sektor Informacji, Informacja. (July 8, 1980), Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza Komitet Wojewódzki w Lublinie Archiwum, Wydział Polityczno-Organizacyjny, Informacje bieżące o nastrojach i sytuacji społeczno-politycznej 1980, Sygn. 100/VII/31 t.19 (1075), teleks n. 145, Archiwum Państwowe w Lublinie. Picture taken by Viktoria Mróz, at the State Archive in Lublin, on March 24, 2025.

kc w-wa 4
teleks nr 148

lublin, dnia 9 lipca 1980r.

32

wydział organizacyjny kc pzpr
sektor informacji

i n f o r m a c j a

o sytuacji popołudniowej w wsk swidnik w dniu 9 bm.

o godzinie 13.00 odbyło się spotkanie ministra przemysłu maszynowego i władz wojewodzkich z załogą wsk. dyrektor fabryki przedstawił postulaty załogi. następnie wojewoda lubelski poinformował o podjętych przez niego decyzjach:

- pozostawienie cen z przed 1 lipca w kioskach i bufetach zakładowych oraz spowodowanie poprawy asortymentu, jakości i ilości zaopatrzenia w kioskach i bufetach,
- zawieszenie w czynnościach prezesa gs za brak nadzoru nad jakością posiłków w kioskach i bufetach. w stosunku do innych osób winnych zaniedbań po zbadaniu wyciągnięte będą również wnioski personalne.

poinformował następnie działaniach, które wpłyną na poprawę zaopatrzenia miast swidnika w artykuły spożywcze, a ponadto zakładu w środki higieny osobistej. będą rozwiązywane sukcesywnie inne postulaty załogi. ustosunkował się też do postulatów dotyczących budownictwa mieszkaniowego i zaopatrzenia miasta w wodę. stwierdził, że rozwiązanie szeregu problemów zależy od wydajnej pracy załogi i zwrócił się z apelem o przystąpienie jej do pracy.

dyrektor wsk omówił problemy systemu płac podkreślając w szczególności tworzenie stałego mechanizmu płac powiązanego z wydajnością i jakością pracy. służyć temu będzie wprowadzenie piątych i czwartych tabel płac. zapowiedział wprowadzenie tego systemu od 1 sierpnia pod warunkiem uzyskania dobrych rezultatów pracy.

minister przemysłu maszynowego wyjaśnił zasady przejścia zakładu na iv i v tabelę płac. przedstawił ogólną sytuację społeczno-gospodarczą kraju, akcentując potrzebę poprawy, wydajności, jakości i efektywności pracy jako drogi podniesienia średnich płac i dochodów realnych. podkreślił, że w przedstawionych propozycjach nie chodzi o jednorazowy dodatek płacowy, lecz o skuteczny system, gwarantujący stały wzrost dochodów drogą wzrostu wydajności pracy. przypomniał decyzje podjęte w kwestii rozwoju wsk jako wyraz uznania dla dotychczasowego dorobku i zaapelował o podjęcie pracy przez załogę.

Document 3. Wydział Organizacyjny KC PZPR Sektor Informacji, Informacja o Sytuacji Popołudniowej w WSK Świdnik w dniu 9 bm. (July 9, 1980), Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza Komitet Wojewódzki w Lublinie Archiwum, Wydział Polityczno-Organizacyjny, Informacje bieżące o nastrojach i sytuacji społeczno-politycznej 1980, Sygn. 100/VII/31 t.19 (1075), teleks n. 148, Archiwum Państwowe w Lublinie. Picture taken by Viktoria Mróz, at the State Archive in Lublin, on March 24, 2025.

kc w-wa74
telex nr 197 lublin, dnia 11 sierpnia 1980r. 102

wydział organizacyjny kc pzpr
sektor informacji

informacja
o ukazaniu się ulotek w Świdniku woj. lubelskie.

do skrytek pocztowych w blokach zamieszkałych przez pracowników wytwórni sprzętu komunikacyjnego w Świdniku wrzucane są ulotki /dotychczas stwierdzono pojedyncze egzemplarze/.
treść ulotki cytujemy w całości:
''najbardziej skutecznym sposobem robotników jest strajk. przed decyzją o rozpoczęciu strajku trzeba jednak jasno zdać sobie sprawę z tego jakie zadania załoga przedstawi dyrekcji.
w dotychczasowych strajkach były to najczęściej postulaty ekonomiczne. podwyżka płac - wobec nieustannego wzrostu cen- była, jest i będzie najbardziej oczywistym i powszechnym zadaniem pracujących. ważne jest jednak by domagać się podwyżki stałej części poborów, a nie na przykład premii która za miesiąc czy dwa dyrekcja pod jakimkolwiek pretekstem będzie mogła odebrać.
należy domagać się podwyżki o określona kwotę np. 1000 zł, a nie podwyżki procentowej, gdyż wówczas korzystają najbardziej ci którzy i tak dużo zarabiają. zadac trzeba dodatku drożynianego wyrównującego wzrost cen. dodatek ten powinien być włączony do zasiłków rodzinnych. przy okazji postulatów płacowych warto poruszyć sprawę ogromnie skomplikowanego systemu płac. tak wiele jest rozmaitych tabel, grup zaszerzgowania, dodatków specjalnych, funduszy mistrzowskich itp, że trudno się zorientować ile i za co płaca.
pozwała to władzom gązukiwać pracujących. system płac powinien być jednolity, prosty i zrozumiały dla każdego. z analizy przebiegu dotychczasowych strajków wynika, że w postulatach na ogół pomijane są problemy warunków pracy, dojazdów i mieszkań. i chociaż są to sprawy często bardzo uciążliwe i nie tak trudne do załatwienia, ludzie sila przyzwyczajenia godzą się na codzienna mordęga i nawet nie zadają zmian. trzeba np. domagać się ułatwienia dojazdu - rozkład pkk i pks nie odpowiada godzinom rozpoczęcia i zakończenia pracy, stale są opóźnienia pociągów i autobusów. trzeba zadac poprawy stanu bhp i urządzeń socjalnych, stawiać dyrekcji terminy usunięcia takich - powszechnych przeciwzanieczyszczeń, jak zle zorganizowany transport wewnętrzny, brak klimatyzacji, brak zabezpieczenia antywibracyjnego i antyhałasowego, brak ubrań roboczych, zły stan urządzeń sanitarnych, brak szafek na ubrania, brak posiłków regeneracyjnych, tam gdzie przysługują one pracownikom. komitet strajkowy powinien również rozliczyć

Document 4a. Ryszard Najda, Wydział Organizacyjny KC PZPR Sektor Informacji, Informacja o ukazaniu się ulotek w Świdniku woj. Lubelskie (August 11, 1980), Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza Komitet Wojewódzki w Lublinie Archiwum, Wydział Polityczno-Organizacyjny, Informacje bieżące o nastrojach i sytuacji społeczno-politycznej 1980, Sygn. 100/VII/31 t.19 (1075), telex n. 197, Archiwum Państwowe w Lublinie, accessed personally on March 24, 2025. Picture taken by Viktoria Mróz, at the State Archive in Lublin, on March 24, 2025.

dyrekcja z wykorzystania zakładowego funduszu bhp. do postulatów
konieczne trzeba dołączyć zadanie, by dyrekcja zobowiązała się
na piśmie, że nikt nie będzie represjonowany za uczestnictwo
w rozmowach i za udział w strajku. 103

grupa ludzi, która zdecydowała się na działanie powinna spisać
postulaty i przejść z nimi po wszystkich stanowiskach pracy.
gdy załoga będzie zgodna, że trzeba wystąpić wobec dyrekcji,
każda brygada, gniazdo czy też dział wybiera swojego delegata
tak wybrana delegacja idzie do dyrekcji i tam przedstawia spisane
zadania oraz zadaje spotkania dyrekcji z całą załogą grozić strajkiem,
gdy kierownictwo odmawia jakichkolwiek ustępstw i rozmów lub
zwleka z odpowiedzią.
dalsze postępowanie zależy od postawy dyrekcji. najlepszym rozwią-
zaniem jest zgoda dyrekcji na rozmowy z załogą i decyzja spełnienia
zadań w takim zakresie jaki wynika z tych rozmów. wtedy odpadnie
konieczność strajku.

w przeciwnym wypadku delegacja przemianowuje się w komitet strajkowy
a załoga przerywa pracę. nie można jednak pozować pracy na tych
stanowiskach, gdzie spowodowałoby to ogromne straty jak np.
piecze hutnicze lub obciążało zbyt wielu mieszkańców jak np.
w elektrociepłowni. strajk trwa aż do spełnienia zadań. pracownicy
regularnie przychodzą do zakładu, lecz nie podejmują pracy.
cała załoga w tym czasie reprezentuje komitet strajkowy, musi
on dbać o porządek w zakładzie, nie dopuszczać do wybryków
kibickich i picia alkoholu.

w końcu władza będzie zmuszona rozmawiać ze strajkującymi.
zwykle strajkujący idą na pewne ustępstwa i zgadzają się ogra-
niczyć niektóre zadania. wtedy kończy się strajk. w wyniku pertrak-
tacji z komitetem strajkowym ustala się listę przyjętych przez
władzę postulatów i terminy ich realizacji. wszystko to musi być
spisane i przedstawione załodze.

władza tyle już razy oszukiwała społeczeństwo, że trzeba pilnować
by zrealizowała postulaty zgodnie ze swoimi obietnicami.
dalej po strajku komitet strajkowy przekształca się w stałą
komisję robotniczą, która dba by załoga otrzymała to co jej
przysiężono. w wypadku nie spełnienia zadań, albo jakichkolwiek
represji postrajkowych komisja występuje w imieniu załogi
z protestem wobec władz.

być może trzeba będzie się wtedy posłużyć groźbą następnego
strajku''.

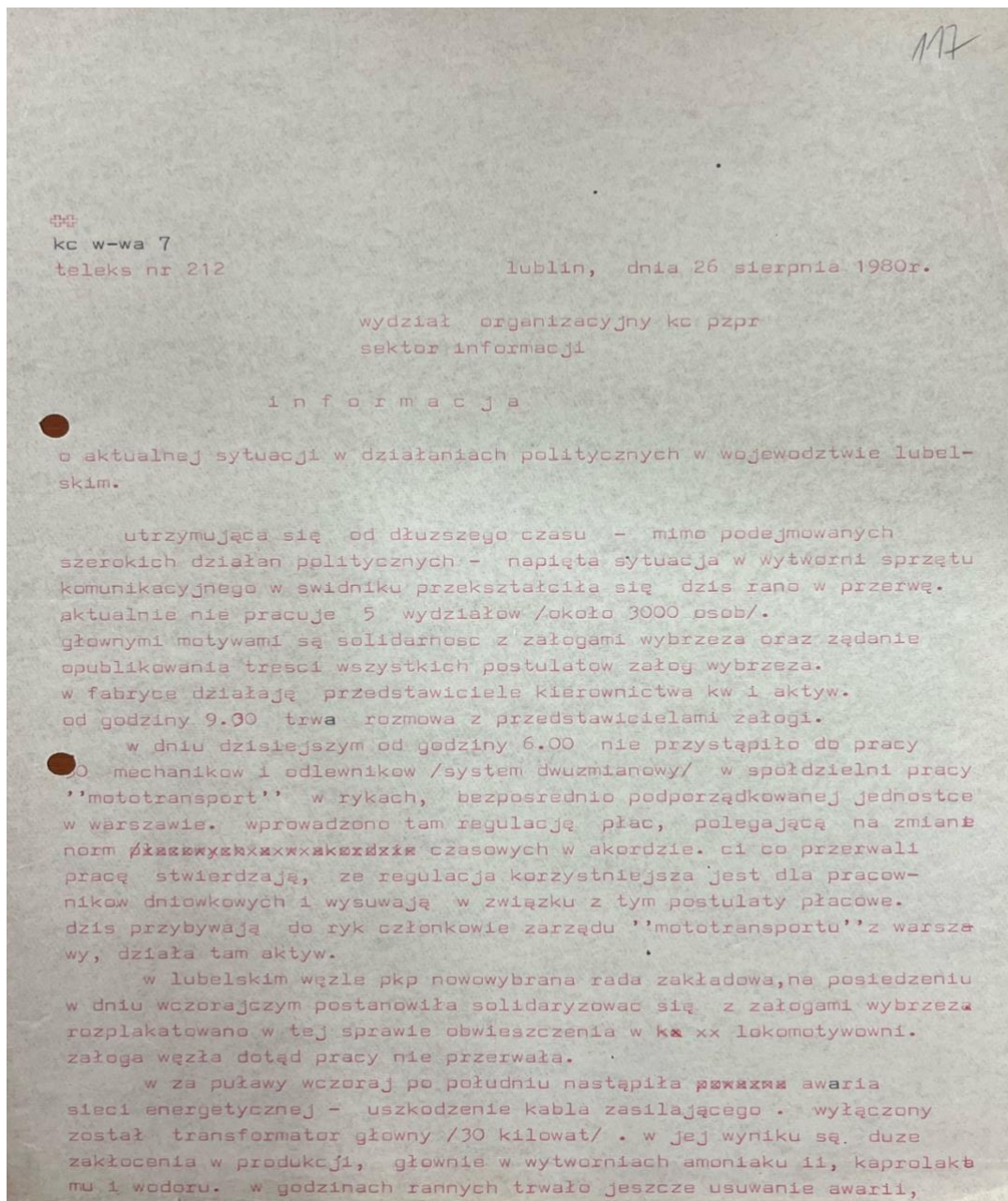
w związku z ukazaniem się w świdniku tych ulotek prowadzi
działania właściwe służby.

z-ca kierownika wydz.org. kw pzpr

=/-/ ryszard najda

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przyjęła -,613.54 tarkowska dz dzb

Document 4b. Ryszard Najda, Wydział Organizacyjny KC PZPR Sektor Informacji, Informacja o ukazaniu się ulotek w Świdniku woj. Lubelskie (August 11, 1980), Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza Komitet Wojewódzki w Lublinie Archiwum, Wydział Polityczno-Organizacyjny, Informacje bieżące o nastrojach i sytuacji społeczno-politycznej 1980, Sygn. 100/VII/31 t.19 (1075), telex n. 197, Archiwum Państwowe w Lublinie, accessed personally on March 25, 2025. Picture taken by Viktoria Mróz, at the State Archive in Lublin, on March 25, 2025.



Document 5a. Andrzej Szpringer, Wydział Organizacyjny KC PZPR Sektor Informacji, Informacja o aktualnej sytuacji w działaniach politycznych w województwie lubelskim (August 26, 1980), Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza Komitet Wojewódzki w Lublinie Archiwum, Wydział Polityczno-Organizacyjny, Informacje bieżące o nastrojach i sytuacji społeczno-politycznej 1980, Sygn. 100/VII/31 t.19 (1075), telex n. 212-213, Archiwum Państwowe w Lublinie, accessed personally on March 25, 2025. Picture taken by Viktoria Mróz, at the State Archive in Lublin, on March 25, 2025.

dokonywane są szacunki strat.
rozdyktowanie we wszystkich środowiskach na temat aktualnej, 178
sytuacji gospodarczej i politycznej w kraju oraz na treści IV plenum
KC nie ustaje.
wśród dyskutujących podkreśla się powszechnie, że zmiany personalne
w kierownictwie partii i rządu nie stanowią rozwiązania problemów
zasadniczych - zaopatrzenia w żywność i wzrastających kosztów
utrzymania. Jest zniecierpliwienie i oczekiwanie na konkretny pro-
gram zmian w tych sprawach oraz w systemach planowania i zarządzania.
twierdzi się, że w tych podstawowych dziedzinach IV plenum KC nie
dało społeczeństwu odpowiedzi.
w tym trudnym, złozonym klimacie politycznym prowadzone są
wszechstronne działania w województwie.
wczoraj odbyło się posiedzenie egzekutywy KW oraz spotkanie kierownictwa
KW z I sekretarzami komitetów partyjnych, aparatem KW i lektorami.
I sekretarz KW przedstawił przebieg plenum KC oraz wpływające
z obrad wnioski i kierunki działania.
w godzinach popołudniowych zorganizowano spotkania z aktywem
we wszystkich miastach i miasto-gminach województwa celem przedsta-
wienia treści IV plenum i najpilniejszych zadań w pracy politycznej.
aktyw ten począwszy od dziś obsługiwać będzie zebrania organizacji
partyjnych poświęcone tym problemom.
dyskusja podczas wczorajszych spotkań charakteryzowała się
głębką troską i zaniepokojeniem trwającymi strajkami. z powagą
wypowiadano się o obecnej sytuacji gospodarczej i politycznej kraju,
wskazując jednocześnie na brak jasnej koncepcji wyprowadzenia go
z trwającego kryzysu.
w wypowiedziach przejawia się dociekanie i wątpliwości, czy
i kiedy nastąpi poprawa sytuacji uwzględniając podjęte decyzje. na
tym tle zgłaszano wiele trudnych pytań.-

kierownik wydz. organizacyjnego KW PZPR
/-/ andrzej szpringer

nadała-swircz godz. 10.55
przyjęła - tarkowska dzbv

Document 5b. Andrzej Szpringer, Wydział Organizacyjny KC PZPR Sektor Informacji, Informacja o aktualnej sytuacji w działaniach politycznych w województwie lubelskim (August 26, 1980), Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza Komitet Wojewódzki w Lublinie Archiwum, Wydział Polityczno-Organizacyjny, Informacje bieżące o nastrojach i sytuacji społeczno-politycznej 1980, Sygn. 100/VII/31 t.19 (1075), teleks n. 212-213, Archiwum Państwowe w Lublinie, accessed personally on March 25, 2025. Picture taken by Viktoria Mróz, at the State Archive in Lublin, on March 25, 2025.

☐☐☐☐
KC w-wa 10
teleks nr 213

lublin, dnia 26 sierpnia 1980r.

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bardzo pilne

towarzysz zdzisław k u r o w s k i
kierownik wydziału organizacyjnego KC PZPR

podajemy pełny tekst komunikatu, wręczony przedstawicielom
kierownictwa KW przez załogę WSK Świdnik:

Świdnik, dnia 26.08.1980r.

k o m u n i k a t

przedstawicielei załogi WSK - Świdnik do KC PZPR

załoga WSK Świdnik ~~solidaryzując się~~ w dniu 26.08.1980r.
solidaryzując się ze strajkującym wybrzeżem przerwała pracę na
okres 2-ch godzin występując z następującym postulatem:

podać do publicznej wiadomości w dzienniku telewizyjnym
w dniu 26.08.80r. i w dniu 27.08.80r., przez prasę centralną
w całości postulaty załogi strajkujących z wybrzeża, z wyjaśnieniem
realizacji poszczególnych punktów postulatów oraz fakt, że załoga
WSK Świdnik solidaryzuje się z wybrzeżem.

w razie nieustosunkowania się do postulatu załogi WSK - Świdnik
w dniu 27.08.80r. o godz. 10.00 załoga przyłączy się повторно
do akcji solidarności z wybrzeżem.

przedstawiciele załogi: /23 podpisy/.

po wręczeniu komunikatu załoga WSK przystąpiła do pracy.

kierownik wydz. organizacyjnego KW PZPR
/-/ andrzej szpringer

nadała-swircz godz. 14.09
przyjęła - jakubczak

Document 5c. Andrzej Szpringer, Wydział Organizacyjny KC PZPR Sektor Informacji, Informacja o aktualnej sytuacji w działaniach politycznych w województwie lubelskim (August 26, 1980), Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza Komitet Wojewódzki w Lublinie Archiwum, Wydział Polityczno-Organizacyjny, Informacje bieżące o nastrojach i sytuacji społeczno-politycznej 1980, Sygn. 100/VII/31 t.19 (1075), teleks n. 212-213, Archiwum Państwowe w Lublinie, accessed personally on March 25, 2025. Picture taken by Viktoria Mróz, at the State Archive in Lublin, on March 25, 2025.

**WYTWÓRNIA SPRZĘTU KOMUNIKACYJNEGO
„PZL-ŚWIDNIK”**

TELEFON: LUBLIN 120-61 i 120-71 — TELEX: WSK-ŚWIDNIK 0643201
TELEGRAMY: SWIWUSKA ŚWIDNIK — STACJA: ŚWIDNIK-MIASTO —
KONTO BANKOWE: NBP III O/M LUBLIN 43030-00 — KOD POCZT. 21-045

**URZĄD WOJEWÓDZKI
w Lublinie**
WOJEWODA LUBELSKI
Tow. Mieczysław STĘPIEŃ

**DYREKTOR
NACZELNY**
tel. Lublin 128-28

**Z-ca DYREKTORA
d/s TECHNICZNY**
tel. Lublin 135-27

**Z-ca DYREKTORA
d/s EKSPORT-
HANDLOWYCH**
tel. Lublin 135-49

**GŁÓWNY
KONTROLER
JAKOŚCI**
tel. wewn. 315

**DZIAŁ
ZAOPATRZENIA**
tel. 132-43

Adnotacje polecające:
WASZ ZNAK: **NO/96/80** NASZE PISMO: **26.07.80**
z dnia **NO/96/80** DATA: **26.07.80**

Dotyczy: postulatów zgłoszonych przez Załogę Wytwórni
Sprzętu Komunikacyjnego „PZL - Świdnik”.

W nawiązaniu do wcześniejszych informacji i przedłożonych dokumentów dotyczących postulatów naszej Załogi zgłoszonych w dniach 8.07. — 11.07.1980 r. informujemy, że w wyniku usystematyzowania pod względem problemowym i kompetencyjnym 568 postulatów zgłoszonych przez Załogi 56 służb — przyjęto następujące kierunki ich rozpatrywania i wdrażania.

Podjęto już realizację wniosków bezpośrednio dotyczących i będących w kompetencji przedsiębiorstwa. W zakresie realizacji postulatów dotyczących wzrostu płac zwiększone zostaną od dnia 1.08.1980 r. średnie płace w ramach Zarządzenia MPM i posiadanych środków o 611,- zł. Informujemy jednocześnie, że Załoga zobowiązała Dyрекcję i Samorząd Robotniczy do przekazania Władzom Centralnym, poprzez Władze Wojewódzkie, postulatu by dodatkowo od 1.01.1981 roku zwiększyć płace pracowników WSK „PZL - Świdnik” średnio o 400,- zł.

Wnioski tematycznie kwalifikujące się do Władz zwierzchnich — resortowych i branżowych oraz Władz

MPM. 07 WSK-S 10.6107 Zam. 1554 z dn. 30.10.78 r. — 500 bl.

Document 7a. Document from the WSK, informing the local authorities that “as a result of organizing the 568 demands submitted by employees of 56 services [...]” several “directions [...] and resolutions [had] been adopted. Among the latter figured the implementation of requests that fell directly under the WSK’s competencies; as well as the increase of wages by 611 złoty. The document is also informing the Provincial Committee of the PZPR that the workforce obliged the WSK’s management to demand the authorities the additional increase of wages by an average of 400 złoty. Urząd Wojewódzki w Lublinie, Wojewoda Lubelski Tow. Mieczysław Stępień. Dotyczy postulatów zgłoszonych przez Załogę Wytwórni Sprzętu Komunikacyjnego “PZL-Świdnik”. No/96/80. July 26, 1980. Archiwum Państwowe w Lublinie, accessed personally on March 25, 2025. Picture taken by Viktoria Mróz, at the State Archive in Lublin, on March 25, 2025.

lokalnych, skierowano odpowiednio do Zjednoczenia Przemysłu Lotniczego i Silnikowego oraz Naczelnika Miasta Świdnika.

Postulowane do rozwiązania problemy o charakterze wymagającym decyzji Władz Wojewódzkich i Centralnych przedkładamy w załączeniu, z p r o ś b ą o rozpatrzenie i udzielenie odpowiedzi postulowanej przez Załogę przedsiębiorstwa.

W imieniu Samorządu
Robotniczego P-stwa

PRZEWODNICZĄCY

Tow. Mieczysław Koc

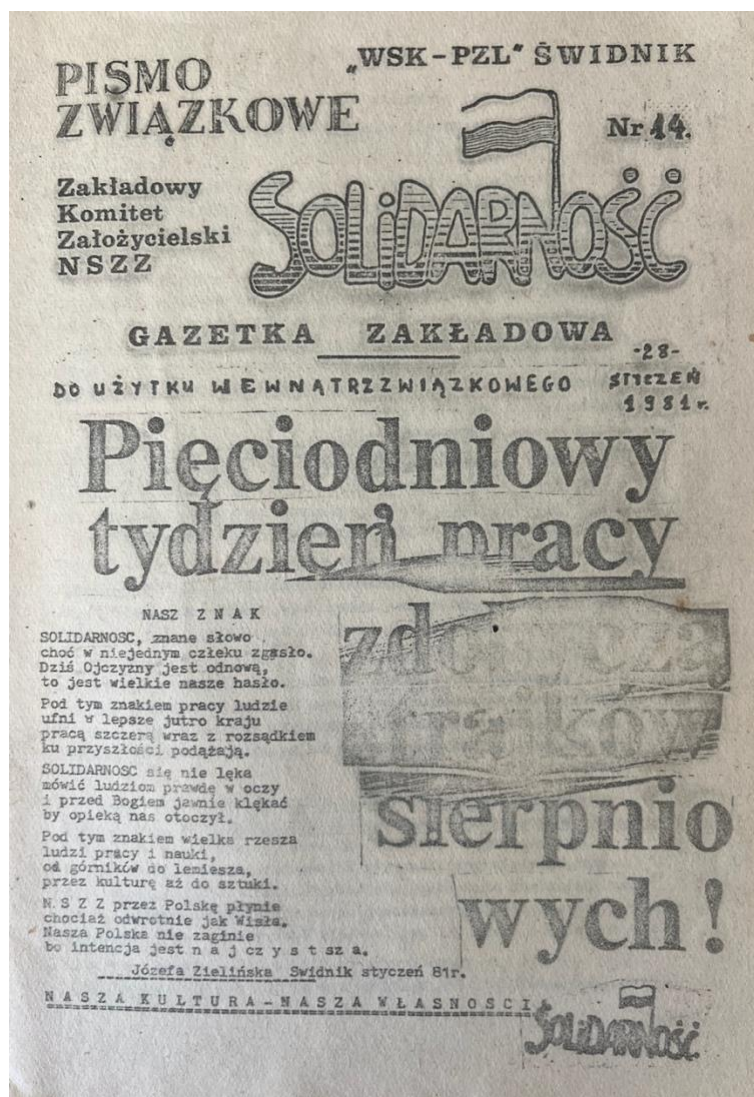
DYREKTOR NACZELNY P-STWA

mgr inż. Jan Czogała

Do wiadomości:

- Komitet Wojewódzki
Polskiej Zjednoczonej
Partii Robotniczej
I Sekretarz Tow. Władysław Kruk

Document 7b. Mieczysław Stępień. Dotyczy postulatów zgłoszonych przez Załogę Wytwórni Sprzętu Komunikacyjnego "PZL-Świdnik". No/96/80. July 26, 1980. Archiwum Państwowe w Lublinie, accessed personally on March 25, 2025. Picture taken by Viktoria Mróz, at the State Archive in Lublin, on March 25, 2025.



Document 8. Picture of Świdnik's Solidarity's factory newspaper. Issue 14, January 28, 1981. "Pięciodniowy tydzień pracy zdobyczą strajków sierpniowych" means that the "5-days working week is an achievement of August's strikes". Picture taken by Viktoria Mróz, March 26, 2026. Kindly permitted by Mr. Andrzej Misiurski, responsible for the website on Świdnik's history "Świdnik na kartach historii".

Uwaga!!! Uwaga!!!
Łączność ze Świdnikiem zablokowana
W nocy z 12/13 grudnia 81r.
Aresztowano Działaczy
Solidarności w Świdniku
Wszyscy pracownicy stawiają się od
zaraz do pracy w zakładach.
Nie dajmy zniszczyć Związku

Document 9. Message written by Alfreda Bondos, in December 1981. "Attention, attention. Communication with Świdnik was blocked during the night of December 12/13, 1981. Solidarity activists in Świdnik have been arrested. All employees should go to work immediately. We must not let the union be destroyed." Found in Pietrzak, Leszek. *Miasto Wolności. Historia Świdnika od Komunistów do Wolnej Polski*. Świdnik: Miejsko-Powiatowa Biblioteka Publiczna w Świdniku, 2020.

<http://archiwum.bibliotekaswidnik.pl/index.php/component/jdownloads/?task=download.send&id=853&catid=32&m=0&Itemid=101>

Charts and Figures



Figure 1. Loggia of the Blessings on the night of the election of Pope Saint John Paul II. Found in: Alessandro di Bussolo, "One October evening: Pope Saint John Paul II changed history", Vatican News, October 16, 2020, <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2020-10/pope-john-paul-ii-saint-election-1978-16-october-poland.html>



Figure 2. Przemawia Lech Wałęsa. Pierwszy z prawej Ryszard Kuć, stoi pierwszy z lewej Stanisław Pietruszewski, [Lech Wałęsa is speaking. The first on the right is Ryszard Kuć, then next to Wałęsa is Jan Bartczak, and the first on the left is Stanisław Pietruszewski]. Jan Bartczak was the head of Solidarity's Regional Board. The picture was taken in June 1981, when Wałęsa visited Świdnik. Found in Pietrzak Leszek. *Miasto Wolności. Historia Świdnika od Komunizmu do Wolnej Polski*. Świdnik: Miejsko-Powiatowa Biblioteka Publiczna w Świdniku, 2020.

<http://archiwum.bibliotekaswidnik.pl/index.php/component/jdownloads/?task=download.send&id=853&catid=32&m=0&Itemid=101>



Figure 3. Wizyta Lecha Wałęsy w WSK PZL Świdnik – 12 czerwca 1981 r. [Lech Wałęsa's visit to the WSK PZL Świdnik – June 12, 1981]. Picture donated by Jan Czogała. Found in "Świdnik na Kartach Historii", <https://www.historia.swidnik.net/fotografia-1572>. On the right is Lech Wałęsa while on the left is the WSK's director at the time, Jan Czogała.



Figure 4. Lech Wałęsa Kościół pw. NMP Matki Kościoła. [Lech Wałęsa – Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church”. Found in <https://www.historia.swidnik.net/fotografia-1014>. The second from the right, sit next to Wałęsa is Jan Bartzak. Right behind Bartzak, sit is Ryszard Kuć.



Figure 5. Msza św. odprowadziana przez ks. Hryniewicza na terenie WSK Świdnik [Father Jan Hryniewicz holding a Mass at the WSK Świdnik]. 1981. Photograph by Sławomir Smyk. Found in Ośrodek „Brama Grodzka - Teatr NN, <https://teatrnn.pl/leksykon/artykuly/stan-wojenny-w-wsk-swidnik/#21-stycznia-1982-roku>



Figure 6. „Rzucili” mydło, Sklep chemiczny, obok rybnego przy ul. Skłodowskiej, czerwiec 1981 roku. [They threw the soap. Chemical store next to the fish shop, on Skłodowska street, June 1981]. Photo by Jerzy Oleszczuk. Found in Piotr R. Jankowski. *Kartki z Historii Świdnika*. Świdnik: TEKST (2009): 187. https://bibliotekaswidnik.pl/strona-3431-publikacje_dotyczace_historii_miejsca_i.html



Figure 7. ZOMO pod WSK Świdnik [ZOMO in front of WSK Świdnik]. Photograph by Sławomir Smyk. Found in Ośrodek „Brama Grodzka - Teatr NN”, <https://teatrnn.pl/leksykon/artykuly/stan-wojenny-w-wsk-swidnik/#21-stycznia-1982-roku>



Figure 8. Barykada na terenie WSK Świdnik [Barricades at the WSK Świdnik]. Photograph by Sławomir Smyk. Found in Ośrodek „Brama Grodzka - Teatr NN”, <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/publication/12767/edition/12641>



Figure 9. Barykada na terenie WSK Świdnik [Barricades at the WSK Świdnik]. Photograph by Sławomir Smyk. Found in Ośrodek „Brama Grodzka - Teatr NN”, <https://biblioteka.teatrnn.pl/dlibra/doccontent?id=12642>

Figure 10. Issue n. 44-45 of the WSK's Bulletin "Grot", December 1, 1981. The title "Dla każdego coś konkretnego" means "Something concrete for everyone". Picture taken by Viktoria Mróz, at the regional office of Solidarność in Lublin, March 26, 2025.

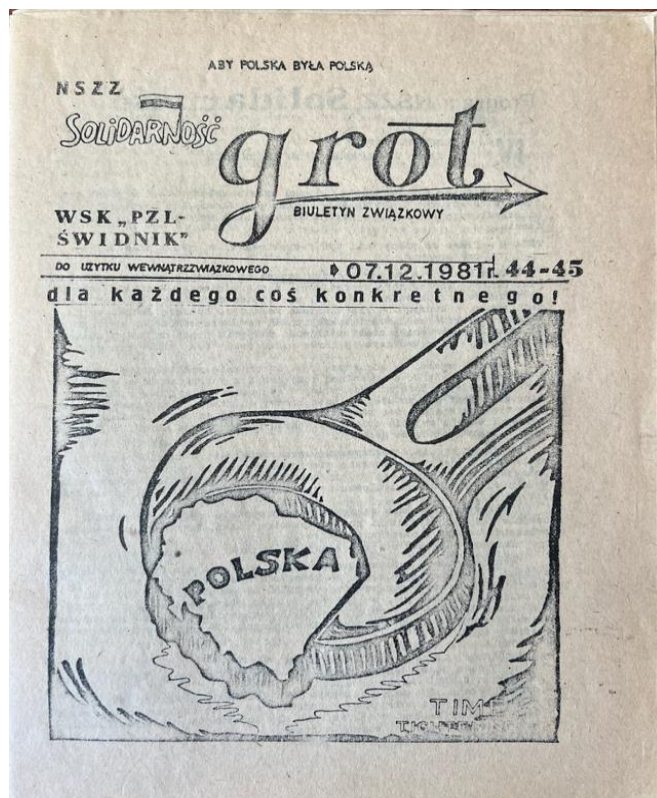
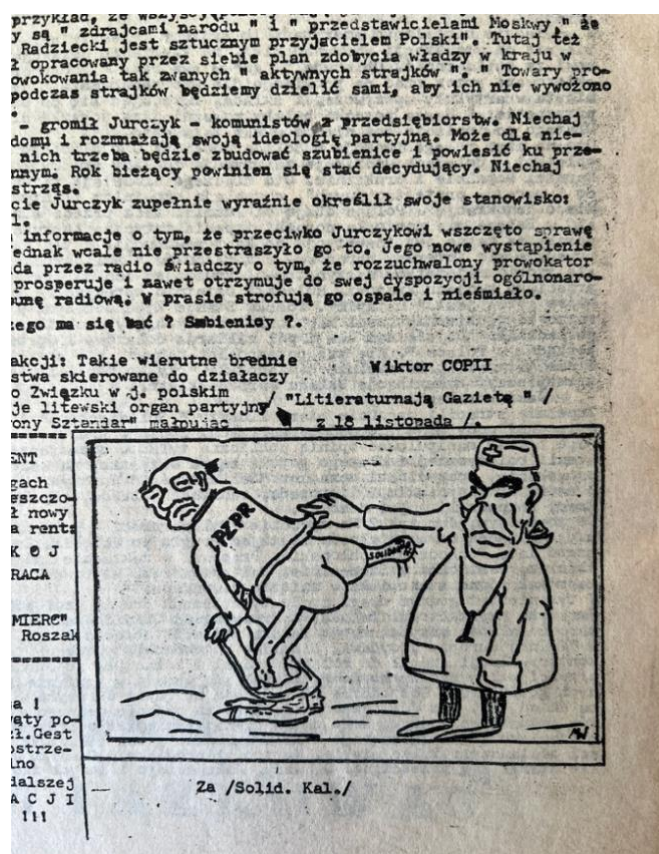


Figure 11. Satirical picture found on the same issue of the "Grot", page 38. Picture taken by Viktoria Mróz, at the regional office of Solidarność in Lublin, March 26, 2025.



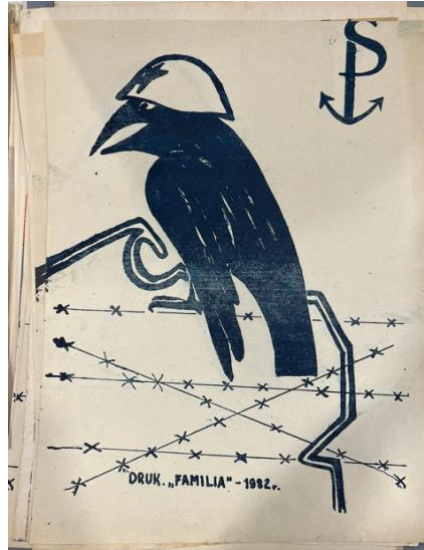


Figure 12. One of the cards with symbolic drawings and meanings circulating during martial law. The Crow symbolized the communist authorities. Picture taken by Viktoria Mróz. at the regional office of Solidarność in Lublin, March 26, 2025.



Figure 13. In the right corner. Satirical picture of Jaruzelski on the left page. On the right one "*Polska jest krajem więźniów politycznych*", means "Poland is a country of political prisoners". Picture taken by Viktoria Mróz, at the regional office of Solidarność in Lublin, March 26, 2025.



Figure 14. Ration cards. Picture taken by Viktoria Mróz, at the regional office of Solidarność in Lublin, March 25, 2025. The green one on the top-left was for meat and butter (*Mięso, Masło*); the white/purple one on the top-right ("*Smalec*") was for lard; the blue one on the bottom-left was for meat and butter (*Mięso, Masło*); the bottom-right one was for different products including flour, grain products, beef and veal (*Mąka, P. zboż., Woł. Ciel.*).



Figure 15. Jedyne zachowane zdjęcie mieszkańców podczas Świdnickich Spacerów, dzisiejszy plac Konstytucji 3 maja [The only remaining picture of residents participating at the Świdnik Nightwalks]. Found in Pietrzak, Leszek. *Miasto Wolności. Historia Świdnika od Komunizmu do Wolnej Polski*. Świdnik: Miejsko-Powiatowa Biblioteka Publiczna w Świdniku, 2020.
<http://archiwum.bibliotekaswidnik.pl/index.php/component/jdownloads/?task=download.send&id=853&catid=32&m=0&Itemid=101>

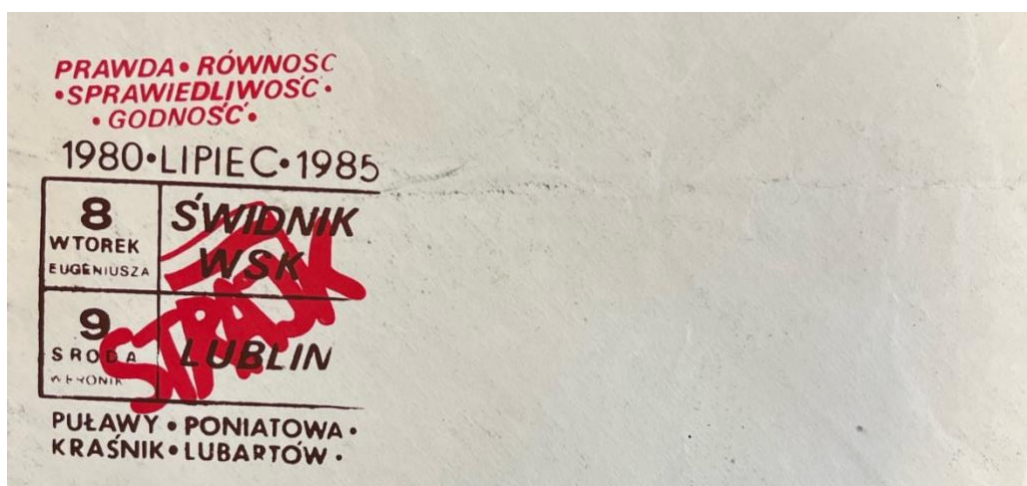


Figure 16. Letter Envelope commemorating the fifth anniversary of the Świdnik strikes and of those across the Lublin Voivodeship. Picture taken by Viktoria Mróz, at the regional office of Solidarność in Lublin, on March 25, 2025.

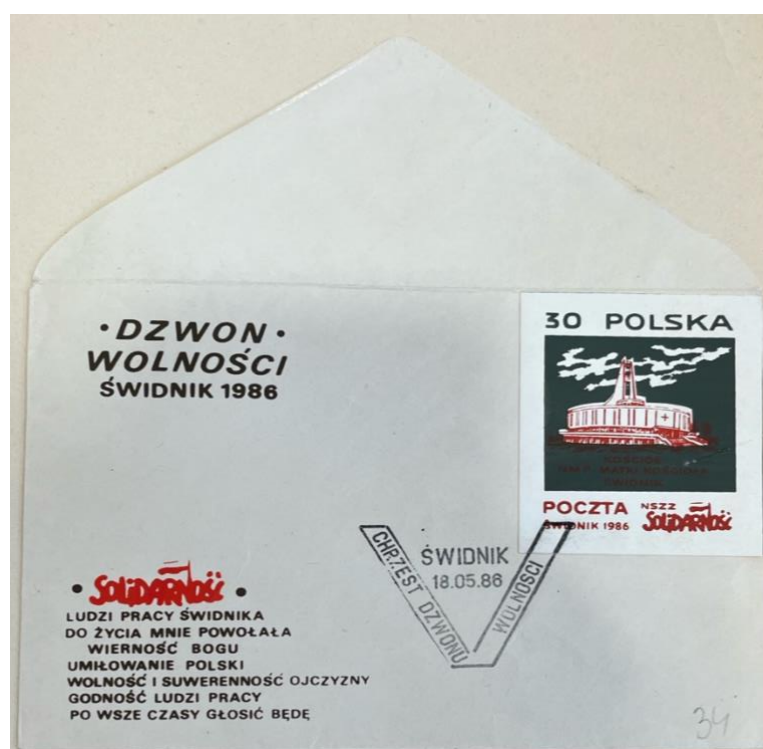


Figure 17. Letter Envelope commemorating the “Freedom Bell” (Dzwon Wolność). Picture taken by Viktoria Mróz, at the regional office of Solidarność in Lublin, on March 25, 2025.

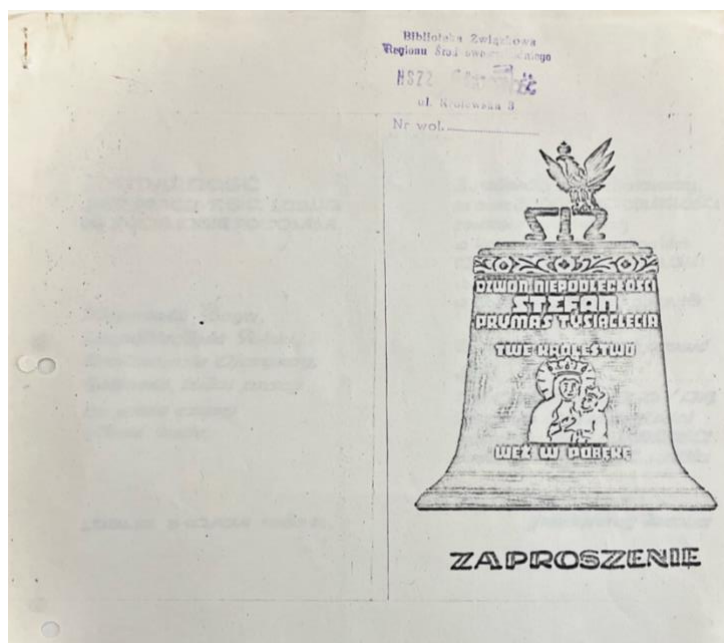


Figure 18. Invitation to the inauguration of the Freedom Bell. Picture taken by Viktoria Mróz, at the regional office of Solidarność in Lublin, March 25, 2025.



Figure 19. Msza św. z udziałem papieża Jana Pawła II, widoczne transparenty świdnickiej Solidarności [Holy mass celebrated by John Paul II, on the background is evident the banner of Świdnik's Solidarity]. Lublin, 1987. Found in Pietrzak, Leszek. *Miasto Wolności. Historia Świdnika od Komunizmu do Wolnej Polski*. Świdnik: Miejsko-Powiatowa Biblioteka Publiczna w Świdniku, 2020.
<http://archiwum.bibliotekaswidnik.pl/index.php/component/jdownloads/?task=download.send&id=853&catid=32&m=0&Itemid=101>



Figure 20. “Warszawa, 31 sierpnia 1988 r. Negocjacje poprzedzające obrady przy Okrągłym Stole w pałacyku Ministerstwa Spraw Wewnętrznych przy ul. Zawrat. Po lewej przy stole siedzą: gen. Kiszczak i Stanisław Ciosek (tyłem), a z prawej – Lech Wałęsa i zastępca sekretarza Episkopatu Polski biskup Jerzy Dąbrowski. Fot. Dar Czesława Kiszczaka. [Warsaw, August 31, 1988. Negotiations preceding the Round Table talks at the Ministry of Internal Affairs villa on Zawrat Street. On the left side of the the table sit: Gen. Kiszczak and Stanisław Ciosek (back to the camera), and on the right – Lech Wałęsa and the Deputy Secretary of the Polish Episcopate, Bishop Jerzy Dąbrowski. Photo courtesy of Czesław Kiszczak]. Found in <https://wyborcza.pl/alehistoria/>



Figure 21. “Rozmowy na Zawracie” [Talks at Zawrat Street], September 15, 1988. First on the right is Andrzej Stelmachowski, then second turned with the back is Czesław Kiszczak, also partially with the back is Father Alojzy Orszulik, then Wałęsa and Stanisław Ciosek. Picture from the IPN archives. Found in <https://przystanekhistoria.pl/pa2/tematy/lech-walesa> .

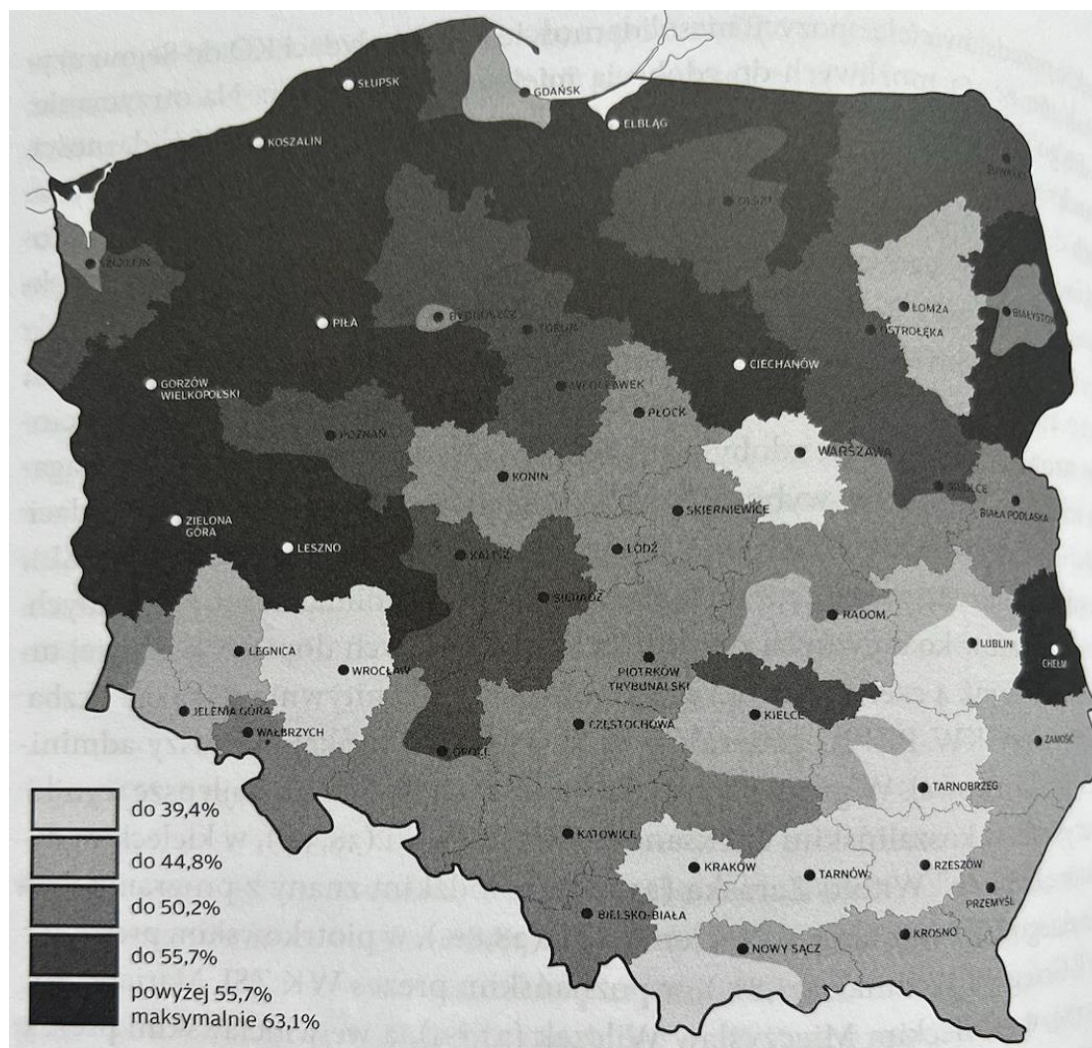


Figure 22. *Poparcie dla listy krajowej 4 czerwca 1989 r.* [Support to the national list on June 4, 1989]. Found in Lena Kolarska-Bobińska, Piotr Łukasiewicz, Zbigniew W. Rykowski, *Wyniki badań – wyniki wyborów 4 czerwca 1989* (Warsaw: Ośrodek Badań Społecznych), quoted in Antoni Dudek, *Reglamentowana Rewolucja. Rozkład Dyktatury Komunistycznej w Polsce 1988-1990* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak Horyzont, 2014): 282. The darkest colour signals a support for the national list above 55,7%, reaching a maximum of 63,1%; then the slightly lighter tone corresponds to a support up to 55,7%; then up to 50,2%, then up to 44,8% and finally the lightest tone up to 39,4%.

Support for the electoral committee of PiS in the parliamentary elections.

VOIVODESHIP	2001	2005	2007	2011	2015	2019
Dolnośląskie	7.84%	24.22%	27.86%	25.79%	32.68%	39.20%
Kujawsko-Pomorskie	7.19%	23.69%	25.48%	23.91%	31.88%	35.55%
Lubelskie	7.58%	23.32%	40.51%	38.80%	47.79%	57.44%
Lubuskie	5.66%	22.84%	22.47%	21.73%	28.27%	34.30%
Łódzkie	7.41%	23.09%	34.80%	32.25%	38.92%	46.30%
Małopolskie	12.63%	37.93%	42.95%	41.08%	50.05%	63.59%
Mazowieckie	15.01%	27.62%	36.90%	34.89%	42.21%	45.89%
Opolskie	5.33%	20.53%	22.87%	20.56%	27.77%	37.64%
Podkarpackie	8.57%	35.99%	46.31%	46.38%	54.81%	62.87%
Podlaskie	11.51%	28.46%	38.81%	36.99%	45.38%	52.04%
Pomorskie	12.52%	26.29%	26.81%	24.81%	30.41%	34.26%
Śląskie	9.58%	29.48%	31.44%	26.09%	34.81%	42.23%
Świętokrzyskie	6.73%	23.26%	39.07%	31.89%	42.81%	55.18%
Warmińsko-Mazurskie	7.18%	22.22%	24.20%	23.14%	30.99%	39.84%
Wielkopolskie	6.71%	24.80%	24.62%	22.52%	30.10%	37.68%
Zachodniopomorskie	6.56%	21.78%	22.81%	21.42%	28.83%	35.97%

Sources: Wybory 2005 website; Wybory 2007 website; Wybory 2011 website; Wybory do Sejmu RP 2015 website; Wybory Parlamentarne 2001 website; and SejmSenat2019 website.¹⁸

Figure 23. Support for PiS in the parliamentary elections from 2001 until 2019. Also, identical strongholds (see highlighted text) for PiS in Southeastern Poland in that period. Data from: Bartosz M. Rydliński, *Social Democracy Without the People? Case Study of the SLD* (Brussels: Foundation for European Progressive Studies and Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2023): 16, <https://feps-europe.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Social-democracy-without-the-people-1.pdf>

Attendance at Sunday Mass (*dominicanos*) in 2021 by parish.

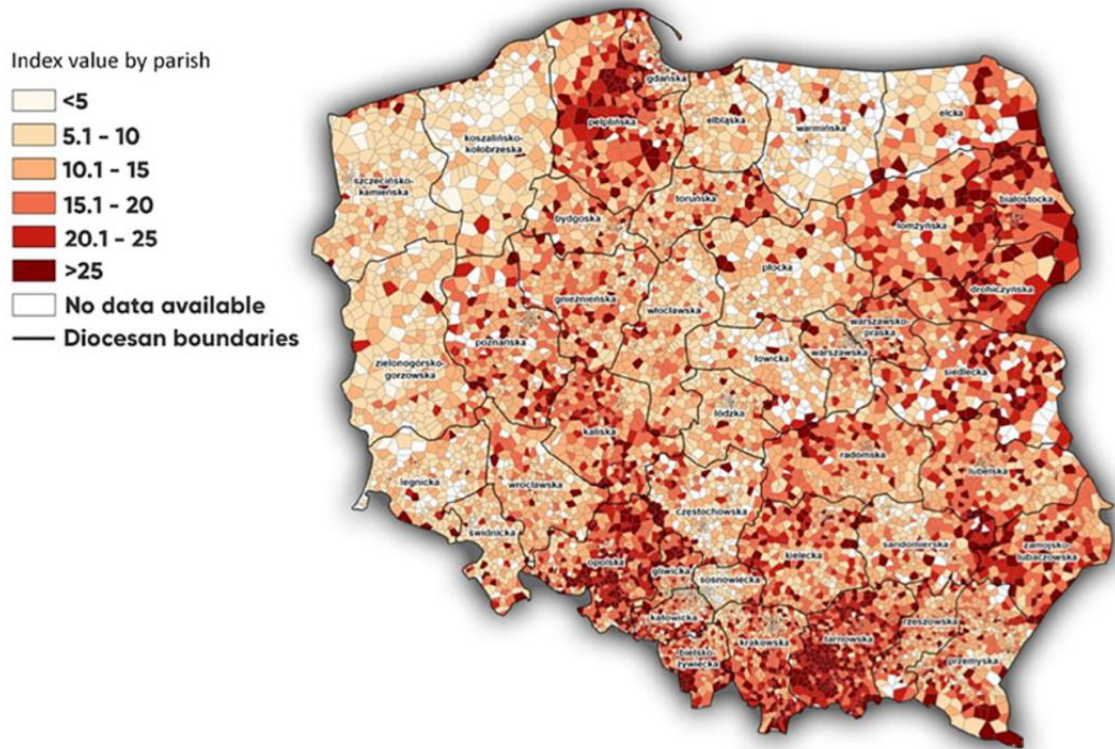


Figure 24. Attendance at Sunday Mass. Data from: Bartosz M. Rydliński, *Social Democracy Without the People? Case Study of the SLD* (Brussels: Foundation for European Progressive Studies and Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2023): 21, <https://feps-europe.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Social-democracy-without-the-people-1.pdf>

On my honour as a student of the Diplomatische Akademie Wien, I submit this work in good faith and pledge that I have neither given nor received unauthorized assistance on it

Viktoria Mróz

Dedica

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my family, without whose support I would not be here. Mama, Tata, you have always been an example for Aleksander and me, showing how love and determination can make you achieve anything you want in life. With your unwavering support and your reminders on “never giving up”, you showed us how obstacles are part of life and meant to be overcome while learning from them. I will never be able to truly express how grateful I am for having such loving parents, who made sure that we had the possibilities they did not have when leaving Poland. Thank you for giving us the best childhood we could have ever imagined and for teaching us to be open-minded, respectful and ready to learn. Grazie ad Aleksander, il mio piccolo fratello, un sognatore sempre pieno di energia e pronto a supportarmi anche a distanza. Vi voglio infinitamente bene. E grazie a Francesco, per il suo continuo supporto e positività durante il mio percorso all'estero. Sono estremamente grata per avervi avuto al mio fianco, per esserci sempre stato nonostante la distanza e per la tua pazienza nei momenti più difficili.

I am particularly grateful to Mr. Herbert Cordt, for generously granting me a tuition waiver. Without his support, I could have neither enrolled at the DA nor have achieved my academic ambitions. I am truly thankful for your invaluable life advice and your willingness to meet and engage with us students.

Sono inoltre particolarmente grata di aver incontrato un Professore come Thomas Row. Your way of teaching history while “connecting the dots” completely changed my approach to history. I am truly grateful for your engagement with students and support throughout the thesis journey – without it, the final thesis would certainly not have been the same. Your overflowing bookshelves didn't just inspire me but they also dangerously expanded my already too-long reading list.

I am profoundly thankful to my uncle, Wójek Tadzio, for the time he dedicated to support me throughout the thesis research. Thank you for your help and kindness. Dziękuję Wójek.

Last but certainly not least, I am truly grateful for my friends in Vienna, in Italy and in other parts of the world. Thank you for having remained by my side despite the distance and busy lives, as well as for accepting me with all my flaws.

Vita

Born in Rome and raised in Friuli Venezia Giulia, Viktoria Mróz is a Polish student who completed her bachelor's degree at the University of Trieste in 2022. Although proudly Polish and attached to her roots, Viktoria also feels undeniably Italian. Her passion for languages, cultures and travelling, led her to undertake different experiences, including being an Au-Pair in Switzerland and then in Austria. Striving to pursue a career in international affairs, enrolling at the Diplomatische Akademie (DA) Wien in October 2023 represented one of her biggest academic achievements. Equipped with the insights and lessons gained in Vienna, she is now ready to seize new opportunities and begin her professional journey.

