Mateusz Wyrwich

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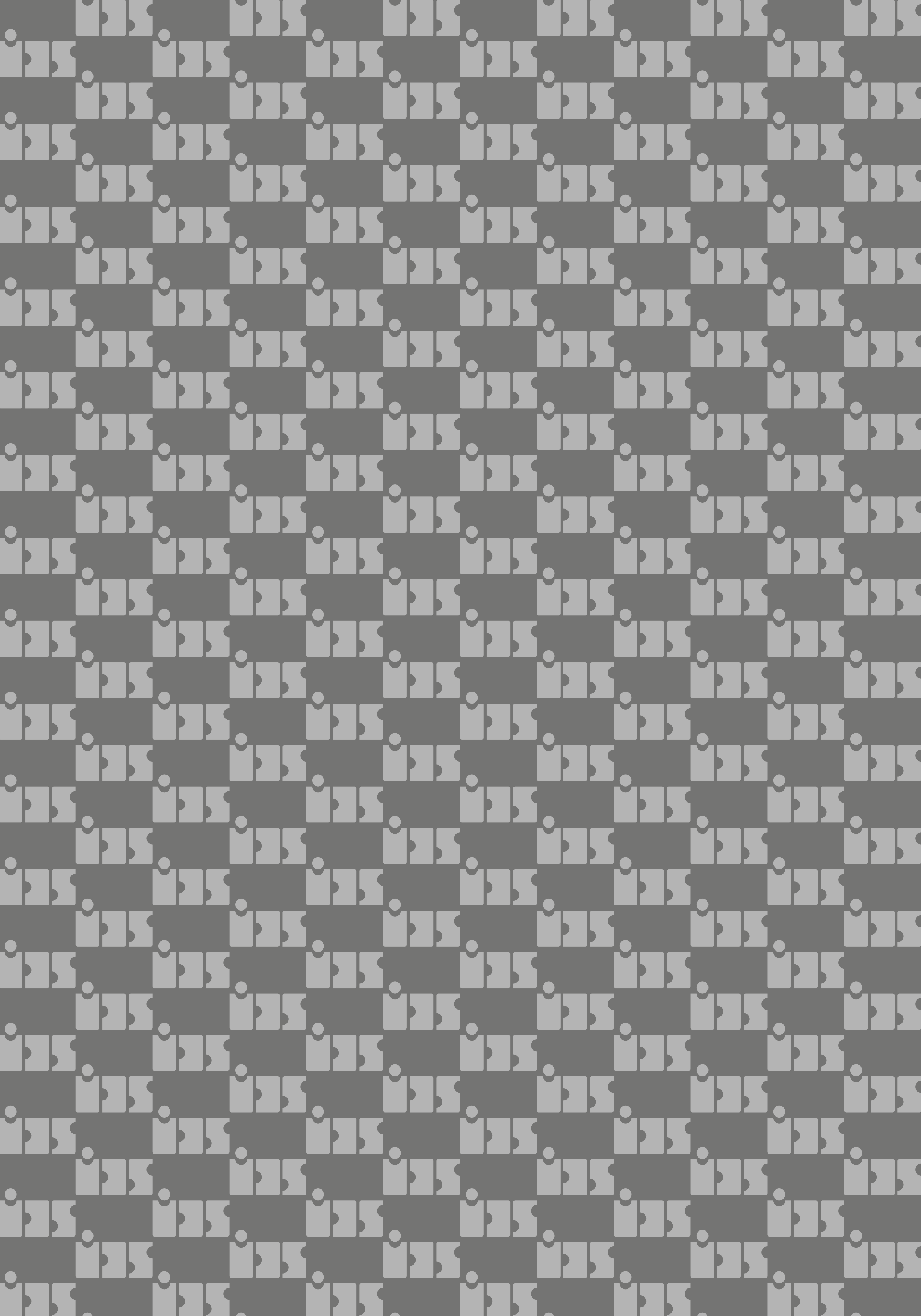

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Mateusz Wyrwich

Distributors of HISTORY

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NSZZ Solidarność
KOMISJA KRAJOWA

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introduction

The pages of this book tell the story of but a few dozen out of several million. A few dozen out of several hundred, and eventually – out of the tens of thousands of Solidarity members whose fight for a free Poland against the communists lasted until 1989. They all took part in what one of the characters presented here describes as the first bloodless uprising. This is only partially true, as the communists killed at least a hundred people during the martial law period. Some have monuments in their honour, while others live on only in the memories of their loved ones.

These stories about living witnesses of history are based on conversations with heroes who fought for our independence. They are also based on documents which now lie in archives, but were originally created by those who oppressed the men and women of Solidarity: the civilian and military henchmen of the communist regime – those who served the People's Republic of Poland (PRL), a puppet state under the yoke of Soviet imperialism.

In this book, we meet people who – and I need to stress this – are usually completely unknown, or are known only within their own communities. The passage of time has caused their contributions to fall into obscurity, only to be rediscovered on occasion by someone with a passion for local history. They would never describe themselves as heroes, and so they are forgotten, passing away in complete anonymity. On rare occasions, their deeds are discussed by their families. The time they spent working as part of the underground independence movement was time they could not spend with their loved ones. This sometimes led to families falling apart. Those who fought for Polish independence had to deal with hurtful questions from their relatives, spouses and parents – 'Why do you even bother?' At times, such questions could hurt a lot more than being beaten by a Security Service agent or being interned or imprisoned.

You could say that several of the characters presented here had successful careers in the early days of independent Poland. Serving as members of parliament or senators, usually for a single term, they would later become contributors to their communities, either as members of local governments or by establishing foundations supporting those workers who lost their jobs after the shock-therapy 'reform' introduced by Leszek Balcerowicz [Poland's Finance Minister at the time]. They continued to work for the benefit of Poland and her national and economic sovereignty. Several former underground activists became businessmen in the Third Republic era. However, they never forgot that

not everyone who fought for independence was able to make ends meet in the new reality. This is why they would often financially support those in need – proving that, for them, solidarity was a timeless idea.

Nearly every life story presented here could serve as a thriller film script. The accounts compiled in this book are a modern-day view of the sum of the underground independence movement, a review of the activities of the secret anti-communist resistance that existed from 1981 to 1989. It bears repeating that, in the Third Republic, the majority of these biographies have largely remained unknown and forgotten. It was not until the establishment of the Cross of Freedom and Solidarity in 2010 that they could emerge from the shadows of history.

Finding them was significantly easier thanks to the help of the heads of all regional branches of NSZZ 'Solidarity', for which I am grateful. It is thanks to them that hitherto unknown underground activists, whose contributions to Polish independence must not be ignored, could be discovered. This is good, as letting them languish in obscurity would mean yet another blank page in the history of Poland. I would also like to thank the editors in chief of *Tygodnik Solidarność*: Ewa Zarzycka, Krzysztof Świątek and Michał Ossowski. It is thanks to them that historical reports on the titular distributors of history could be published by *Tygodnik Solidarność* over the course of more than five years.

We often discuss the heroic deeds of various soldiers and participants in our national uprisings, including the Kościuszko, November and January Uprising, as well as the Warsaw Uprising of 1944. And justifiably so, as every armed uprising brought us one step closer towards independence, be it during the partition period, the German and Soviet occupation in World War II or in the years leading up to 1989. But those who fought using underground newspapers and books deserve the same treatment, regardless of whether they fought decades or centuries ago.

We know about our heroes of old because their stories have been passed down by our ancestors. To omit those thanks to whom Poland is now a free country would thus be a grave injustice.

Mateusz Wyrwich

Commitment

‘When I was on my way to the factory to strike, I wasn’t expecting much, but when I saw that the other workers were staying overnight, knowing full well what was going on in the country, and that they knew, at least to an extent, what they wanted, I decided to stay there with them. I saw that as my duty. Their resolve impressed me a lot. It was such a tremendous experience, I would never trade it for anything’ – that is how Tadeusz Chmielewski, an Elbląg native, describes his first years as an opposition activist.

He is a father of four daughters. Born in Gdańsk, he is a graduate of the local technical university. Despite his emotional ties to the city, he is unsure whether he feels closer to Gdańsk or Elbląg. Still full of energy despite being more than seventy years old, he still has grand plans for the future. He himself stresses that, although his political maturity was to a large degree influenced by the economic situation in the PRL, the decisive factors were his conversations with his mother and listening to Radio Free Europe together. He realised the sheer dishonesty of the communist propaganda when he was still in university, and when he first went to work, he began to notice the irrationalities in how the economy was managed and the missteps of the party officials that pushed Poland to the brink of collapse.

Chmielewski’s parents moved to Gdańsk from the Zamość area after World War II. His mother was a cleaner, while his father worked as a clerk at the Elbud electrical network equipment factory. Although Chmielewski has been interested in matters of public life since childhood, he never became politically involved – respecting the wishes of his mother, who believed that education should take priority and that politics was a dangerous thing. Tadeusz himself also wanted to graduate from university, so he studied hard, and was also an altar boy in primary school. After graduating, he worked off his scholarship debt, after which he moved to Elbląg, lured by the prospect of being granted a flat. This was a strong incentive, as he was a married man and had his first daughter, Aurelia, in 1975. Then came three more: Alexandra, Danuta and Grażyna. In 1980, he took over as the head

of the production set-up department. All signs were pointing to a stable career all the way to retirement.

Remember Every Hour

Before 1980, Chmielewski refrained from joining any of the existing political parties. In 1978, he and his wife Helena joined the Catholic Intelligentsia Club. Despite being fully aware of the tragedy that had taken place in Tricity in 1970, he refused to join the opposition. The events of 1976 also failed to convince him, and it was only when the strikes began in 1980 that Tadeusz Chmielewski finally decided to become politically involved. Although it has been about 40 years, he remembers nearly every hour of September 1980.

'Back then, there was the Gdańsk Construction Association, which oversaw construction businesses', recalls Chmielewski. 'On 15 August, I was ordered by the factory director to go to their meeting on the eighteenth. As I was leaving the factory on Friday after work, I met a few welders that I'd worked with in the past. They told me, "Tadeusz, it's begun in Gdańsk. You'll see what happens here on Monday". To which I said, "We'll see". They only muttered something and left. On my way home, I met a colleague who told me that the director was looking for me and wanted to forbid me from going to Gdańsk after all. So I thought, "Hah, you wish, I'm going alright". I left for the train station early in the morning on Monday. All public transport had been shut down by then. I got on the last train to Gdańsk. We met up at the association building at around eight o'clock. The windows were facing shipyard gate number two, so after several minutes, the person hosting the meeting said, "Listen, there's no point working in these conditions. You can all do what you want, head home or to the shipyard gate". So I went to the gate. The others did too. We prayed and sang together. The crowd was growing. I spent the whole day there. Wałęsa spoke a lot about honouring the victims of 1970. I remember him saying, "If we can't build a monument here, we'll stack stones". And I was ready to stack those stones. Later that evening, I got back to Elbląg thanks to the kindness of a few drivers, as no trains or busses were available by then. I went to work on Tuesday morning. I learnt that there was a rally in the mechanical workshop. The managers didn't attend the rally. Various people spoke, me included. I gave an account on what was going on in the shipyard. A group of workers formed a strike committee and offered to make me their leader. I refused. I felt that, since it was a workers' strike, it shouldn't be led by an engineer. Zbyszek Łabędzki was chosen instead, although he was a member of the PZPR [Polish United Worker's Party – the ruling party at the time]. Darek Brzozowski and I became deputy leaders. So that's how we established the strike committee. We were some 350 people in total. Almost the

entire staff joined us. We kept in touch with Gdańsk. As early as Tuesday, an MKS [Inter-company Strike Committee] was formed in Elbląg, with Ryszard Kalinowski at the helm. Some of ours went to Gdańsk as delegates. I was able to convince the committee not to make salaries our main issue. The largest of the factories at the time – Zamech – was visited by its former director, the minister of heavy industry and energy. The Zamech guys were negotiating pay rises with him. The MKS in Gdańsk and Elbląg recommended not engaging in separate talks with the authorities, instead focusing on fighting for free, independent and self-governing trade unions. Unfortunately, the Zamech people didn't listen. And that was the beginning of friction between Zamech and other companies in the region. It lasted all the way to when martial law was declared'.

Everyone Had Their Own ideas

When the Inter-company Founding Committee (MKZ) of the Elbląg Region of NSZZ 'Solidarity' was established, Tadeusz Chmielewski joined the Factory Founding Committee of the House Factory and the Department Founding Committee of the Elbląg Construction Combine (EKB). Although he was offered a position on the MKZ, he decided to stay at the factory.

Recalling his first days in the union, Tadeusz Chmielewski says, 'We had many decent and kind people in our ranks, people who thought like us, but who would argue about inconsequential stuff. Nobody wanted to give ground. Before that, there had been no freedom, so now everyone wanted to have a say. Everyone thought that their way of saving the economy and destroying communism was the best. We were learning democracy. We wanted to vote on everything, even minor stuff. So I spent entire days at the plant. Eight hours at work, and another eight for the union. I feel bad for my wife and kids, who I put on the back burner back then. The martial law period was no different either. My wife stayed at home with our daughters while I was out dealing with "important" things. She had it rough, but she toughed it out – I respect her a lot for that'.

The NSZZ 'Solidarity' Company Commission at EKB [Elbląg Construction Combine] was among the more active commissions in the city, eventually developing a regional programme proposal. According to Chmielewski, the programme was more wishful thinking than anything actually feasible, at least from today's perspective. Regardless, it was appealing enough to serve as the starting point for a proper regional programme. Chmielewski's contributions were recognised in the July General Meeting of Delegates (WZD). As a result, he was elected regional leader by delegates from more than 200 company commissions.

'I think that I was able to integrate the region within those couple of months before martial law, even despite all the tension and arguments, which were encouraged by the PRL secret service. Delegates from smaller and medium-sized plants thought that the Zamech people, who'd kept a low profile throughout August but now wanted to lead, should have no special privileges', Chmielewski recalls. 'For years, the prevailing opinion in town was that Zamech was the most important plant because it was the largest. So they wanted special treatment for themselves. And so there was friction, including attempts at shutting the general meeting down. If it hadn't been for the Church, the conflict would've lasted a long time and who knows how it could've ended'.

The Martial Law Period

When martial law was declared, Chmielewski was participating in a meeting of the NSZZ 'Solidarity' National Commission in Gdańsk. Today, he admits that he doubted that martial law would be imposed at all. To be safe, however, the treasurer and cashier of the Elbląg Regional Management had withdrawn more than 700,000 zlotys and taken it to the parson of the parish of St Nicholas, a protonotary apostolic. Unfortunately, the money eventually got into the hands of the head of the Elbląg Voivodeship, a military commissar, and the Solidarity underground never got to use it.

Tadeusz Chmielewski was apprehended together with several other activists during their stay at the Grand Hotel in Sopot and was taken to the ZOMO [Motorised Reserves of the Citizens' Militia – communist paramilitary police] headquarters on Kartuska Street in Gdańsk. From there, he was taken to Strzebielinek and imprisoned. Attempts were made to interrogate him, but he refused to talk to his captors. His internment lasted more than a year in total – until 23 December 1982.

Freedom Outside of Prison

Tadeusz returned home one day before Christmas Eve. He intended to rejoin the underground, but he soon discovered that all the room in the movement had been taken by those who had avoided being arrested. And although he was revered as a veteran, Chmielewski soon realised that, for many of his colleagues, he was problematic. He reached out to the leader of the underground, allegedly appointed by the head of… the Masovia Regional Management, Zbigniew Bujak.

'I tried to fix my relations with the interim head of the Regional Management, who went by Marcin. We met a couple of times. We talked. We tried to divvy up the workload

somehow', Chmielewski says. 'I attended several meetings of the highest-ranking leaders of Solidarity. Sadly, nothing came out of it. I attended every national and church celebration organised in the city. I carried wreaths, marching in the first row. The leader would tell me when the marches would happen. But after a while, he became upset with me, unjustifiably so, in my opinion. I think it was in the autumn of 1984 that we were marching towards the monument to the victims of December 1970. Just like every year, the ZOMO were there in full riot gear. We placed the wreath. We sang *God Thou Hast Poland*. Then, after the second stanza, someone shouted – I still don't know who it was – "As agreed, no more singing!" I didn't know there had been an agreement. With some secret service agents, perhaps? From that moment on, I decided I wouldn't be in the first row anymore, but at the back. There was more and more tension in the movement back then. This was exacerbated by the apprehensions, arrests and searches. People accused one another. Faced with that, not to diminish the role and importance of the underground movement built by Marcin, I began looking for ways to go independent'. An opportunity presented itself not long after.

After parting ways with Marcin, Elżbieta Duszak joined forces with her brother Mirosław and Leszek Koszytkowski and began publishing *Biuletyn Informacyjny Regionu Elbląskiego* [Elbląg Region News Bulletin], and later also *Pismo Społeczno-Polityczne 'Solidarność'* ['Solidarity' Sociopolitical Magazine]. Chmielewski eventually joined their group, helping secure its finances. Throughout the 80s, he also kept in touch with the Solidarity underground in Gdańsk. Together with Andrzej Wiśniewski, Michał Chrzanowski and Jerzy Kruk, he established the Charity Commission at the church of Corpus Christi in 1983, which offered help to victims of repressions and their families. Not long after that, he joined Father Hubert Lipiński, a guardian of the Order of Friars Minor Conventual, and several of his colleagues in establishing the Elbląg branch of the Diocese Committee for Supporting the Families of the Arrested and Interned at the church of Paul the Apostle in Olsztyn, a branch of the Primate Assistance Committee operating at the church of St Martin in Warsaw. Janusz Milanowski was appointed head of the committee. In 1986, Chmielewski also co-founded the Elbląg Working Class Ministry, which was headed by Janusz Zemke.

'Unofficially and keeping a low profile, we also distributed underground magazines, newspapers and books, large amounts of which were distributed by Bogusław Szybalski', Chmielewski recalls. 'The Working Class Ministry held a monthly Mass for the Homeland at the church of St Paul the Apostle, celebrated by Father Lipiński After the Mass, we would meet in a catechetics classroom to listen to lectures on topics such as history and economics. We had several dozen regular attendees. Later on, many of them ended up assuming important positions in the local government'.

This is how Tadeusz Chmielewski contributed to the fight against communism before the Round Table talks of 1989. He refused Bogdan Borusewicz and Jacek Merkel's offer to run in the Senate election. Instead, he helped establish the Elbląg Socio-Economic Association, as part of which he successfully ran in the city council election. For half of his term, Chmielewski also served as the deputy mayor of Elbląg, and later went on to start an insurance brokerage business with his wife, as well as working for many years as a clerk at the Social Insurance Institution. For a while, he was a member of the Freedom Union (Unia Wolności) party. Since 2005, he has been a member of the Elbląg Civil Committee, opposing political parties running in local-level elections and the financing of political parties with state budget funds. After retiring in 2013, he remained an active member of the Elbląg Association of the Victims of the Repressions and Crimes of 1980–1990, of which he is president.

'When did I realise that Poland could be free? Sometime in the mid-80s. I was talking to a friend on my way home, and he said to me, "You have four kids, you shouldn't bother with all this activism. Do you realise who we're opposing? The Soviet Union is a powerhouse. It won't fall within our lifetime". Then it kind of struck me, and I said, "The Roman Empire collapsed despite all its might". To which he said: "But it took 400 years for it to collapse". "But it did collapse in the end", I said with determination. But even during the Round Table talks, and after as well, I didn't realise that Poland could indeed be free and independent. Not even after the June 1989 elections. That's because I knew how the post-communists were securing their interests and privileges by capitalising on the results of the Round Table talks, which had been influenced by the Security Service. I knew that the housing cooperatives had been taken over by the post-communists. They also took control of all the media and banks. They paid peanuts to buy out thousands of hectares of former PGR [State Agricultural Enterprise] land. In a nutshell, they snuck into every strategically important institution. That's why I never really accepted that Poland was free and independent. But it was necessary to fight for it. I couldn't be indifferent towards Poland. It was my duty in the new reality after the Round Table talks. To me, as someone who was born in Gdańsk but chose to live in Elbląg, it was also about my commitment to the victims of the crimes perpetrated by the communists in Gdańsk, Gdynia, Szczecin and Elbląg in December 1970'.

In 1980, Tadeusz Chmielewski co-founded a Solidarity union in Elbląg's House Factory, rising to the position of Regional Manager in 1981. Currently, he chairs the Elbląg Association of the Victims of the Repressions and Crimes of 1980–1990. In 2008, he was awarded a Commander's Cross of the Order of Polonia Restituta, and in 2015, a Cross of Freedom and Solidarity.

Serving Poland and the Underground

Ryszard Wyżga is one of the most courageous and active members of Szczecin's Solidarity underground. He was interned. He was arrested. Relentlessly harassed by the Secret Service, he, his wife and their two sons eventually fled to Germany in late 1983. However, the two did not cease their activism. They continued to support Poland in her fight for independence all the way until 1989, and their activism did not end after Poland became free.

Ryszard was involved in a variety of activities. He helped organise the underground movement, printed publications and met with couriers from other cities. He travelled to Warsaw to meet with representatives of the secret, underground sections of the 'Solidarity' National Commission. He was also a co-founder, editor and printer of *Feniks* (Phoenix) – a magazine published by the West Pomeranian Inter-company Coordination Committee. In Szczecin, Ryszard Wyżga co-organised the printing of two of the largest magazines of the underground: *Tygodnik Mazowsze* (Masovia Weekly) and *Tygodnik Wojenny* (Wartime Weekly), whose Szczecin branch he established as early as 1982. Ryszard Wyżga's activism resulted in the local Security Service (SB) branch making his capture its main priority. He was given the codename 'Kombinat' (Combine), and later 'Działacz' (Activist). Initially, the efforts of the Security Service failed to produce any results – Wyżga avoided imprisonment twice by making spectacular escapes. However, after he escaped from the prosecutor's office, his co-conspirators began to suspect that he had been helped by the SB, and should thus be sidelined. One rumour had it that he was actually an informant. However, following the eventual declassification of the relevant SB documents, it was revealed that the rumour was circulated by an SB secret collaborator (*tajny współpracownik*, TW) known under the codename 'Kamil' – or Franciszek Skwierczyński (ref. no. AIPN Sz, 0024/296 296, vol. 4) – deputy head of the West Pomeranian branch of NSZZ 'Solidarity' in 1981, and an underground activist during the martial law period. Ryszard Wyżga was interned in late August 1982 and was later arrested.

The 1970 Experience

Wyżga's parents were working as labourers in Germany when they met. He was born after the war, in the town of Vienenburg, and his parents brought him back to Poland nearly two years later. Before his move to Germany, Ryszard lived in Szczecin. As an employee of the Szczecin Shipyard, he witnessed firsthand the strike of 1970 and its tragic consequences. He himself participated in the strike at the 'Wulkan' (Volcano) shipyard. That is how he became involved in politics, which shaped his entire life.

A machinist by trade, he graduated from a vocational secondary school. However, his keen interest in the humanities – particularly history, literature and political science – served him as his own kind of university. He self-taught himself knowledge normally unavailable to other vocational school graduates, and was an avid listener of the history lectures broadcast by Radio Free Europe. Several years prior to 1980, he got in touch with the Workers' Defence Committee (KOR), as well as the Free Trade Unions established in West Pomerania by the Witkowski brothers. As a result, when a strike was called in 1980, he was equipped with his striking experience from 1970 and 1971, as well as political and trade union knowledge. However, when the 1980 revolution began, he was not at the shipyard, from which he had been laid off, but at the General Construction Combine. During the 16 months of Solidarity's legal existence, he was part of the combine's Company Commission. He was also assigned to the Inter-Factory Workers' Commission (MKR), and attended the West Pomeranian General Meeting of Delegates. 'I was a veteran of 1970, so I knew that we needed to strengthen the union's organisation at the plant', says Wyżga. 'It was hard work. I visited construction combines in several regions across the country, spreading the idea of Solidarity. I talked about how we organised ourselves, about how we developed our charter'.

During the first few days of martial law, he participated in the strike at the Szczecin Shipyard, not the General Construction Combine. It was not long before his house was visited by the Citizens' Militia. He escaped through a window to elude them, so they had to contend themselves with leaving an appearance notice. From that moment on, he was constantly under threat. But despite that, Wyżga does not see the martial law period as traumatic, unlike his sons, who were in first grade at the time. 'They were bullied in school. When I got arrested, others would call them "the children of a criminal". Their teacher would even ask them, "Show me what you've got for breakfast. Oh… nothing? Well, thank your dad". When I was interrogated by the secret service, they would tell me, "Listen, you were born in Germany, so you're German. And since you're German, you're a fascist, and you can't live in a socialist country". They also pressured Dana, my wife, who worked as a nurse and was also an activist. Of course not to the extent that they pressured me, because she was taking care of the boys. But eventually she got sick as a result and ended

up hospitalised. After some time, we decided to leave the country to save our family. We got a one-way passport… Though we were somewhat consoled by the fact that the regional underground movement that we helped build, and the printing outlet, were staffed by people you could count on. Let me list a few: Jadwiga Boral, Joanna Kubiak, Zofia Wasilewska, Władysław Dysiński, Zdzisław Konury, Zbigniew Kowalewski, Edmund Wojcieszyk, and the most talented printing specialist in Szczecin at the time – Wiesław Szajko.

Forced Expatriation

As they were leaving for Germany in the final month of 1983, Danuta and Ryszard Wyżga promised themselves that they would not stop supporting the underground independence movement in Poland. And they kept their word. After settling in Aachen and finding employment matching their education – Ryszard was a machinist and Danuta was a nurse – they became involved in the activities of Arbeitsgruppe Solidarność Eschweiler – Aachen E.V.

'In Germany I met Mieczysław Zarzyczny, who was a delegate at the First National Convention of Solidarity Delegates, originally from the Piast mine', Ryszard reminisces. 'We got in touch with the head of the Arbeitsgruppe, Aleksander Zając, a very driven man. Their group was mostly involved in charity work back then. They transported medicine, food and clothes to Poland. We offered to expand this to include equipment for the underground. He agreed. He reached out to a few people, including Andrzej Wirga, who I think was the largest supplier for the underground at the time, and also to various Solidarity-affiliated groups in Germany. Eventually this expanded to other continents… the US, Canada, Argentina and Mexico. Our operation encompassed nearly the whole of Europe too, where we received a lot of help from a friend of Solidarity, Yoshiho Umeda from Japan, although by far our largest support relay station was Józef Lebenbaum in Sweden. The charity work also continued, of course'.

Members of the group visited trade union and political party headquarters, schools and universities. They gave their accounts of what was really happening in Poland, and collected donations to purchase essential equipment – printing machines, ink, paper and electronics. They also reached out to German local and state media outlets. As a result, Arbeitsgruppe Solidarność was able to promote its work across Germany. Rallies were also organised in front of the PRL embassy, including on the anniversary of Solidarity and after martial law had been declared in Poland. In the late 1980s, Danuta and Ryszard Wyżga also began supporting several orphanages in West Pomerania. This lasted until the 1990s. In the words of Ryszard Wyżga, who received a Knight's Cross of the Order of

Polonia Restituta from President Lech Kaczyński, freedom came sooner than they had expected. And although it might not be what they dreamt of in the 80s, he and his wife, although they live in Germany, still visit Poland every year.

'When I visited Poland for the first time in five years in 1989, the poppies were in bloom before the harvest season… It was an emotional welcome', Wyżga recalls. 'We were no longer involved in Poland's political life because we considered the foe vanquished. But to avoid our energy going to waste, we began helping Polish orphanages. Before 1989, I saw myself as a soldier serving Poland and the underground. I didn't pay attention to how things developed after 1989. I used to be satisfied with how the Round Table talks had gone, but I didn't know the details. Now, I see it all in a completely different light. I think that the communist thugs should have lost all the power. But they didn't. But I can see that Poland has changed tremendously. Some complain about PO (Civic Platform), others about PiS (Law and Justice), but Poland… it's free and is developing. It's becoming a richer country. And our life in Germany? My wife and I are retired. Our boys have long since left the nest. Just like our daughter, whom we adopted from a Polish orphanage. Various German schools and other European countries invite me to talk about our fight against communism, about Solidarity. Sometimes I feel like they're more interested in our story than people here in Poland'.

Undercover

Wit Karol Wojtowicz – a recipient of a silver and gold Medal for Merit to Culture – Gloria Artis – as well as many other art-related awards and accolades. The most notable of these are his Commander's Cross of the Order of Polonia Restituta and Cross of Freedom and Solidarity, which he received for his underground activism in the 1970s and 80s.

For Wit Karol Wojtowicz, an art historian and director of the Łańcut Castle Museum, the examples to be followed when it came to fighting for independence were his ancestors, who participated in the January Uprising, and most importantly his father and grandfathers. His father, Stanisław, was part of the underground section of the National Party. Arrested by the communists in 1946 and held in the prison on Montelupich Street in Kraków, he fell ill and died several years after being released from his captivity. Wojtowicz's maternal grandfather, Władysław Gdula, was a career soldier before the war, serving as a senior sergeant with the 10th Horse Rifle Regiment. He was awarded a Cross of Independence in 1939 and was held prisoner by the communists in Rzeszów Castle after the war ended.

'I don't really remember my father. I wasn't even two years old when he died. Thankfully, my grandfather, Władysław, stepped in', Wojtowicz reminisces. 'What's left of him are fragments of stories told by family members and memories. When he was receiving treatment in Zakopane, his father met Stanisław Nagy, a priest who later became a cardinal. They must've been good friends because Nagy officiated my parents' wedding. They also arrested my uncle, my father's cousin, Jan Wojtowicz, also a priest, for singing *God Save Poland* in church'.

A Walk in the Castle Park

Łańcut, Wojtowicz's home town, is the old seat of power of the noble Lubomirski and Potocki families, the last owners of the castle. Today, the painstakingly restored building has been administered for nearly 30 years by Wit Wojtowicz. Within the family, the castle was simply referred to as 'home'. It is here, at the seat of Countess Elżbieta Potocka, that Wojtowicz's great aunt, Klementyna Gdula, worked as a dresser. Tales of ancient ancestors of noble families from centuries past intermingled with stories from only decades ago. This was the world the future art historian and anti-communist activist was raised in.

'My most notable memory is my grandfather, who was like a father to me. Although he was a bit like a buddy as well. He told me many stories. We built shelters and shacks together', Wojtowicz reminisces. 'He also told me what life was like in Poland before the war. We would sometimes visit his sister, who'd worked for the Potockis in the past. She didn't say much, but the things she said were interesting. I also remember my grandmother, Julia, a former Home Army soldier, who would sing me songs that moved me. Later on, I learned they were from the September Uprising. Her father's brother, Michał Piórek, was a member of Lelewel's [Joachim Lelewel was a historian and politician who fought in the November Uprising] unit and fought at Panasówka. He lost an ear there and was shot in the leg, which gave him a limp. Every Easter, grandma's brothers shot his antique pistol, which they kept in a sack. I still vividly remember the 50s and 60s, when my grandfather would move a stool to the middle of the room, as far away from the windows as possible so that nobody could denounce him, and listen to Radio Free Europe. My family was decent, religious and very patriotic. I remember both of my grandfathers, one a supporter of Piłsudski, the other a national democrat, would get into heated debates with each other. Sometimes they even bickered at the table. On the other hand, my interest in art history was definitely due in part to my mum, who worked at a bank all her life. She took me to a lot of churches, palaces and castles, and nurtured in me an interest in art, from antiquity to the interwar period. And of course, my frequent walks in the castle park also had an impact.

A Small Group of Conspirators

Art history would come a little later, however. After graduating from secondary school, Wit Wojtowicz applied to the faculty of acting of the Kraków theatre school, while also dreaming about becoming a director. His dream, not of being a director, but an actor, could only come to fruition during his studies after joining the student-run Visual Arts Stage of the Catholic University of Lublin's University Theatre, headed by Leszek Mądzik.

He was studying art history at the time, but the freshman's main area of focus was not theatre.

'I ended up in the dorm on what is now Niecała Street. Back then it was Sławińskiego', he recalls. 'I met a few good guys there, like Bogdan Borusewicz – who later became a Solidarity activist and was a multiple-time senator and speaker of the Sejm in the Third Republic of Poland. We got on really quickly. He had history books published abroad, and I had some independent news from listening to RFE at home. So I mostly talked to him. Then I met Janusz Krupski, who died in Smoleńsk in 2010. He was the most incredible person. People like him don't exist anymore. I had great respect for him. He commanded respect. Thin, wearing an oversized beret, a reddish jacket and a tie, he stood out from the hippies and hippy sympathisers of the time. He had impressive knowledge. He could talk about many things in great detail, but he wasn't chatty. We would meet up as a small group. We read books that were banned by the censors, published by *Kultura* in Paris or expat organisations in London.

A Smuggled Copier

When Wit Wojtowicz arrived in Lublin for university, the city had for several years had its own underground community centred around the events of 1968, as well as being home to the founders of the *Ruch* (Movement) independence organisation – the brothers Andrzej and Benedykt Czuma. The organisation rejected the communist ideology, and its goal was to overthrow communism in Poland. One of its connections at the university was Łukasz Czuma [Editor's note: Andrzej and Benedykt's brother]. But the Catholic University of Lublin was not as radical as Ruch. From the early 70s, the university's community was made up of self-teaching circles which reached out to soldiers and underground independence activists. Their spirituality was greatly influenced by a Dominican priest, Father Ludwik Wiśniewski. On the other hand, their patriotism was nurtured by history professors, who had been fighting in the underground independence movement in the 40s and shortly after the war. They included such notable characters as Władysław Bartoszewski, a soldier of the Home Army, and the historian Zdzisław Szpakowski, a soldier of the National Armed Forces. Wojtowicz enjoyed their lectures while studying art history, as they allowed him to learn more about his grandfathers and father. Under their influence, when he was approached by Janusz Krupski and asked to smuggle a copier to Lublin, he immediately agreed. He was supposed to make contact with a student of the university, Piotr Jegliński, when his theatre troupe was on a visit to London. If there was anything Wojtowicz was worried about, it was the theatre. He knew that if he were caught, the troupe would be banned from touring internationally.

‘I’d heard of Piotr, but I didn’t know him. We met at the backstage of the theatre’, Wojtowicz recalls. ‘It was during a banquet in honour of our troupes. We had no fancy clothes, so our entire troupe wore costumes from the theatre’s dressing room. I found a white sailor’s uniform of a Royal Navy captain that fit me. Piotr later told me that he saw some guy in a uniform snooping around and being a nuisance, right before he was supposed to meet his Lublin contact. So I was snooping around, and he finally asked me, “Are you Wit?” We exchanged our code words and went to visit his friends near London. That’s where I saw the little copier. I was quickly trained on how to use it. It was made in France, so I called it the Blue-Hipped French Woman, because its sides were blue’.

Wojtowicz took the copier and, wearing rubber gloves so as not to leave any fingerprints, proceeded to disassemble it. He had to take the device apart and smuggle it across the border as a piece of theatre equipment. In its disassembled form, it was supposed to look like a stage prop or scenery element. But Wit had never used a copier before, so he began to unscrew and engrave a number on every component using a needle, so that he could reassemble it after reaching Lublin. When the copier was fully disassembled, Wojtowicz dirtied it up a little so it no longer looked sparkling new. He wrapped some parts in newspaper, and some in rags. Line was wrapped around the drum so it looked like a reel. He hid everything in various boxes containing the theatre troupe’s decorations and costumes, and… he crossed the border.

‘I was a little afraid my efforts would be in vain, because there was a thorough inspection at the German-Polish border. Our personal belongings were also searched. But fortunately we were able to reach Lublin on 10 May 1976. It was during Kullages, a huge student celebration. Lots of people were out partying. I couldn’t elbow my way through to Janusz Krupski. I only gave him a wink so he would know that everything was okay. But anyway, that first copier of ours was an invaluable purchase. I think that is what we used to print Orwell’s *Animal Farm*. It was printed by three people: Anna Samolińska, Magda Górska and Janusz Krupski. I would later turn everything we printed into microfilms, insert it into the hard covers of legally published books and send them to France as proof of our activism’.

Visits to the West

That same year, Wojtowicz once again risked crossing the border, this time to meet up with Piotr Jegliński and Jerzy Giedroyc, the legendary founder of the *Kultura* magazine, commentator and publisher. Their discussions were centred around the current situation in Poland and the future publishing plans of the Lublin students. Eventually, Wojtowicz began to regularly visit Germany. This was because Jegliński had organised a transit route

for printing machines, equipment and books via an international student dormitory in Dresden, East Germany. This was in addition to the printing underground being expanded by Wojtowicz, who was joined by Wojciech Butkiewicz and Paweł Nowacki in 1976. Matrices brought from Warsaw were used to print KOR's *Bulletin and Communiques*. A new copier was acquired in late 1976. It was much better than the Blue-Hipped French Woman. 'I named it Zuzia – Suzie – so that I could speak freely about it with other people around. The copier is currently stored in Dom Słów, the former headquarters of the Chamber of Printers. The copier on display in the European Solidarity Centre in Gdańsk, in what is referred to as Kuroń's room, is not Zuzia. I've asked them many times to correct the description, but they haven't. Yes, it is one of our copiers, but it's the third one we got'. In the spring of 1977, the printing of the Warsaw-based *Zapis* (Record) literary magazine began. It was Wojtowicz's idea that the publishing house should have a name. The name he proposed, and which was accepted by the others, was *Nieocenzurowana Oficyna Wydawnicza* – Uncensored Publishing House. Mirosław Chojecki later renamed it *Niezależna Oficyna Wydawnicza* – Independent Publishing House.

Several months later, Janusz Krupski and Bogdan Borusewicz began publishing an underground monthly called *Niezależne Pismo Młodych Katolików „Spotkania"* ('Meetings' Young Catholics' Independent Magazine), which was religious in nature, and published articles by commentators from outside Lublin as well. It also had an international editorial board, which was led by Piotr Jegliński in Paris. In addition to articles on history, it published philosophical debates, as well as texts on the role of the Catholic Church in Poland and the Polish raison d'etre, in addition to book and theatre play reviews. The first issue became available in December 1977, and by 1989, 36 issued had been published. Its partially public editorial board included the magazine's founder, Janusz Krupski, as well as Zdzisław Bradel, Janusz Bazydło, Jan Stepek and Stefan Szaciłowski. Many brave authors published their works there, including Władysław Bartoszewski, Stefan Kisielewski, Zdzisław Szpakowski and the priests Ignacy Tokarczuk, Józef Tischner and Stanisław Małkowski. The technical side of *Meetings* was handled by a team of several people initially managed by Wojtowicz. During the martial law period, another important member of the team was Jan Krzysztof Wasilewski.

'Previously, we'd been printing *Zapis*. It was exciting. We were no longer only writing and printing articles about communist repressions, but also uncensored Polish literature. We knew it was the first literary journal in the Eastern Bloc. That we were no longer writing about who'd been batoned, we were printing poetry. It was incredible'.

The opposition's publishing efforts did not go unnoticed by the communist secret services, both civilian and military. The Dresden channel for smuggling books and equipment was thus infiltrated by undercover Security Service and military counterintelligence agents and officers, which resulted in many crackdowns and arrests.

An unsuccessful attempt was also made to set the students up and accuse them of espionage. Wit Wojtowicz was one of those arrested and interrogated, but interrogations and inspections were the only consequences he suffered.

Many Great People

By the time Solidarity began to form, Wojtowicz had already been working at Łańcut Castle. He became a co-founder and head of the NSZZ 'Solidarity' Company Committee, as well as joining the municipal section of the union. In his view, the sixteen months of Solidarity's legal existence were a difficult trial that some passed, and some failed.

'I had an unprecedented opportunity to watch how people behaved during a momentous, historic event', Wojtowicz recalls. 'It's an experience that stays with you for the rest of your life. Just like the first few days under martial law. Actually, I'd noticed people leaving the sinking ship right before it was declared. You could say that, even then, many people instinctively tried to regroup. Some began to switch sides like rats. Honesty was burning out. Now you knew that some people weren't fully trustworthy. What used to be beautiful began to degrade. Trust. Friendships. A fog descends. It was a difficult time for me. Many of those who were openly active as trade union members turned out to be disappointments. When martial law was declared – they got scared. They either left the underground or joined WRON's [the Military Council of National Salvation – an extraconstitutional council, operating similarly to a military junta, that declared martial law] trade unions. They changed their minds, even though they'd been saying something completely different just a few days or weeks before. So I started to wonder: who are we doing this for? Who's part of our people? But later, I realised that we had to do it, that some people had to work and that some had to be in the cowardly crowd. I was frustrated, not for long, but still. I continued my work, of course. I printed and distributed. Łańcut had an underground cell that I loved working with. They were incredibly devoted to the cause throughout the seven years that followed. They included Stanisław Olech, Maria Muller, Anna and Witold Tybulczyk, Grażyna Kunysz, the Krzywonoses, as well as the priests Henryk Borcz and Jan Jakubowski from Sonina. Many of them I later met again on the Solidarity Citizens' Committee, and they also worked in other cities, like Kraków, Lublin and Warsaw. I knew that communism would have to end sooner or later. I was very impressed by the courage of those who took to the streets after 1989. Also by those who worked underground, spreading the ideology and raising awareness. And so, by doing various things, we won us an independent Poland. When they ask me if I realise that I helped Poland regain independence, I respond that I did what I'd been taught, what I'd been passed down by my grandfathers and my mum. What common decency commanded'.

Distributor of History

As a distributor of underground mail between 1981 and 1989, Sylwester Guzowski is the owner of one of the largest collections of stamps issued by the underground postal organisation, and has received many awards and medals for his contributions to the opposition movement. He is 81 this year [Editor's note: 2018].

For Guzowski – a Catholic and a member of the PZPR for three years, Solidarity came as a great surprise. Even though he was very happy to hear that a Pole had been elected pope, he never thought any changes would come out of it. Today, he calls those changes historic. He joined the union believing that the movement would crack down on the kleptocratic and dishonest practices of the government. The same hopes had made him join the PZPR three years earlier, when he worked at the Unitra-Eltra electronics manufacturing plant in Bydgoszcz. However, it quickly turned out that the questions he asked at party rallies were un-Marxist, and were even seen as provocative and evidence of ideological immaturity. Soon, he began to be reprimanded by the party.

'A friend kept pestering me to join, saying "Sylwek, join the party, it needs honest people". And so I became an honest, and as it turned out, naive, member of the party. There really was a lot of stealing and lies at the factory. I thought I'd be able to talk about those issues at party rallies, and combat them. But the reality was different. I'd always get what for, they'd admonish me, saying things like "Comrade, why do you have to be so blunt, can't you be more circumspect". I turned in my party ID on 14 December 1981, and I consider joining the PZPR to be one of the worst mistakes of my life', Guzowski recalls.

An Honest Man's Conscience

Guzowski's parents were moderately wealthy peasants before the war. In 1920, his father fought the Bolsheviks at Radzymin, and he was raised to be distrustful of communism due to the fact that his family was expropriated by the communist regime

after World War II. Originally from Sierpc, the tides of history saw the entire family move to the coastal town of Ustka, where its six members spent years living in a single 20-metre room. It was not until a little later that they were given a proper flat. During that time, Sylwester Guzowski attended a vocational secondary school in Słupsk, where he also trained in rowing, scoring his first wins in competitions. He was drafted by the military after graduation, and proved to be very successful at the 400-metre dash, competing as a member of his regiment's team. After finishing his service, he went back to rowing, for which he moved to Bydgoszcz, training at the local club. He only decided to give up on his athletic career when he started a family.

A Single Day

The Bydgoszcz branch of Solidarity was lagging behind. While the first strikes erupted as early as 18 August 1980, it was only a handful of factories, and it wasn't until 28 August that they were joined by other companies. That is also when the Inter-company Strike Committee was formed, but the staff members were distrustful of what was referred to as the Gdańsk revolt, as the workers were concerned it could end in a repeat of the December 1970 tragedy. At the time, Guzowski worked at Unitra-Eltra. The factory employed more than six thousand people, nearly all of whom joined the late August strike. The Free Trade Unions at Eltra were headed by a PZPR member, and Guzowski joined the Union Founding Committee, which later became NSZZ 'Solidarity'. 'Rank-and-file party members, but also some higher-ups, were the core of our union', says Guzowski. 'And despite what many people said, they hadn't been ordered to join by the party. Those were people who, like me, thought that something was rotten in the party and the state. They wanted to fix the country, to build socialism with a human face. The tools maintenance department rebelled first, followed by my main mechanical department. Our demands were the same as those of the Gdańsk Shipyard workers'.

Guzowski proudly shows off a now-faded pass signed in 1980 by Antoni Tokarczuk, a local member of the Inter-company Founding Committee. The following is written on the pass: 'Sylwester Guzowski, citizen and deputy head of the Unitra radio manufacturing plant's Factory Committee of the independent trade union of Unitra-Eltra, is a member of the Founding Committee'. 'The sixteen months before they declared martial law that I spent as part of Solidarity, it was like one long day to me. I really hoped that all our demands from August would be met. That didn't happen, but during that time, we realised that rising against the communists was possible', he adds.

The Lifting of Fear

On the night of 12/13 December 1981, Sylwester Guzowski had been enjoying a day off from being on duty granted to him by the Regional Government. The day before, he had been reassigned from Unitra to lead the watch at the Rolling Stock Maintenance Plant. The communists could strike back at any moment, and a growing concern was that the government would declare a state of emergency. Although martial law being declared did come as a surprise to him, rather than fear, Guzowski felt relief that the tension and uncertainty prevalent in the months leading up to December was finally over.

On 13 December, he met up with Stefan Pastuszewski, who told him to reach out to the Jesuit church of St Andrew Bobola in Bydgoszcz. He had been there in the past, attending speeches and meetings with historians, artists and Solidarity activists from across the country. Guzowski was known there, but his first visit during the martial law period was a new beginning for him. Now, he was making a conscious decision to join the anti-communist underground. He knew the risk he was taking. He knew that he was facing internment or imprisonment. He began distributing flyers criticising the declaration of martial law as early as 14 December. That day was a baptism by fire. Guzowski was going down Koszarowa street with several hundred flyers in his bag when he encountered an eight-man military and ZOMO patrol inspecting all passers-by. Keeping his cool, Guzowski walked straight past them. They did not stop him, even though the person behind him was ordered to open their bag.

'My knees were jelly, as the saying goes, but paradoxically enough, that encounter immunised me for the rest of the martial law period. As though all fear was lifted from me. While I did feel many things when I distributed newspapers, books and especially stamps, it was never fear. I knew I could be arrested, but I also knew that my wife, who was also distributing newspapers among teachers, could take care of our family', Guzowski says. He also adds that his wife has always been tremendously supportive.

Thousands of Stamps

Back when Solidarity was still a legal organisation and Guzowski was deputy head of the Solidarity Company Commission, he distributed newspapers and books, and on occasion also commemorative stamps issued by the underground Solidarity postal service. He never considered himself a stamp collector. During the first several weeks of martial law, many postcards and stamps were created in internment camps using very primitive methods: linoleum panels were ripped out of the floor to be remade into matrices. These were one of the first expressions of social resistance.

In his book *Sześć lat Podziemnej Poczty w Polsce (1982–1988)* (Six Years of the Underground Postal Service in Poland (1982–1988)), published by the Polish Museum in Rapperswil, Anatol Kobyliński writes that thousands of stamp series were issued during that six year period. According to Kobyliński, 'The stamps of the unofficial Underground Postal Service soon became sought-after collectibles, and not only in Poland, constituting, after a fashion, documentation of the historic events which were unfolding in Poland at the time. The tiny pictures adorning the postage stamps, in addition to being a source of income necessary to finance Solidarity's underground activities, served an important cognitive function, reminding the people of Poland of their national traditions and those events in the history of the country that were glossed over or had been falsified by official propaganda and mass media sources. Underground Postal Service stamps resurrected prominent Poles whose existence in our history the communist propaganda was trying to erase'.

Underground Solidarity stamps were issued by several dozen cells operating as part of underground magazines, as well as underground and regional publishing houses. The funds from their sales were used to purchase paper and ink and to fund printing and transport. Regional cells used their funds to finance flyer distribution and demonstrations and, last but definitely not least – to help victims of repressions and their families.

'I don't really know how many stamps I distributed. I'm sure it was between ten and twenty thousand, maybe more. I could distribute several hundred within a single week. I always left a set for myself, and so I ended up with a few thousand. Like a true philatelist', Guzowski says.

He recalls that the Jesuit church was a meeting spot for people from all over Poland. 'There was someone visiting every day, so I naturally came to possess a full range of stamps from nearly all underground publishers. I also have stamps printed in internment camps and prisons. They were made using the simplest of techniques, with matrices made out of linoleum flooring, rubber boot heels or pieces of doormats taken from prison cells. I also have unique stamp series of which only a dozen or so exist in Poland, like singles printed by primary and secondary school students, for example. All the money made from selling the stamps was given over to the Primate Committee in Bydgoszcz', Guzowski explains.

He has dozens of underground stamp albums, which he has displayed across Poland, particularly on the anniversaries of the Gdańsk Shipyard strike and during celebrations in Bydgoszcz, and Guzowski has also presented his collection at the Main Post Office in Bydgoszcz.

'When it comes to the fight against communism, I was driven by the hope that things could maybe get better, that the communist lies would end and that the Soviets, our sworn enemies, could finally be called enemies and not friends. I contributed believing that things would get better', Guzowski says. He also adds that his greatest dream was for his stamps

to become pieces of history describing what happened in Poland between 1981 and 1989. 'I'm a religious man, so I thank God that I could serve Poland, recording our history by collecting underground postage stamps', he says.

Codename 'Enthusiast'

The car was moving slowly. The dim lighting made it difficult to see the snow blanketing the streets. Wojciech Ciesielski, a prisoner, handcuffed and cold, knew the city like the back of his own hand. He knew that he was being taken to the Voivodeship Citizens' Militia Headquarters. And if not there, then to the old Prussian barracks of the Field Artillery Regiment in Iława, which the communists had repurposed to serve as a high-security prison. Suddenly, the car turned north, towards the Olsztyn train station.

'I realised we were headed towards the cemetery. Uh-uh… I thought to myself that they wanted to get rid of me. I felt paralysed for a moment. Now I know why people who are about to be executed don't even try to resist. They are paralysed by fear. But I quickly decided I wouldn't let them. I'd fight. Suddenly, we turned and reached the militia garages, and they had a machine gun set up in front of them. Some officer had a barking German shepherd on a leash. Not a great look, but they didn't shoot me. They led me into the barracks. Inside was Śnieżko, the prosecutor, also in handcuffs. I also saw some of my other friends from the Regional Management, so I realised things were serious. We were quickly presented with internment orders. They took our fingerprints, put us in old cars and we were taken to the prison in Iława. We were subjected to temporary arrest rules. We had nothing to eat. Didn't really have the conditions to wash up either. Snow fell into the cell. Someone had a sweater, so we rotated it throughout the night. Rats were crawling all over us. Slimy, with long tails… they woke me up a few times'.

During his time in prison, Wojciech Ciesielski became seriously ill. After an intervention by the prison doctor and several people from the outside, he was released on Christmas Eve in 1981. He was apprehended again only two months later.

Traditional Upbringing

Ciesielski's ancestors arrived in Poland from Moravia in the 17th century, with Helena and Marian Kadlec as the originators of the Polish branch of the family tree. Józef Ciesielski, Wojciech's grandfather, fought as a volunteer against the Bolsheviks in 1920, before becoming a career soldier. Between the two great wars, he was a teacher and headmaster at a primary school, as well as the Jan Kasprowicz Secondary School in Inowrocław. Wojciech Ciesielski was born six years after the end of World War II.

'There were two of us. Me and my sister, who was two years younger. Our parents were medical students, and later received work orders, so I was raised by my grandparents', recalls Ciesielski, awarded with an Officer's Cross of the Order of Polonia Restituta by President Lech Kaczyński. 'Our grandparents were socialites. They liked to talk about literature and art. They hosted parties for the local upper crust. I knew everything written by Mickiewicz, Słowacki and Krasiński, but what influenced me the most was the *Trilogy* [Henryk Sienkiewicz's *With Fire and Sword, The Deluge and Fire in the Steppe*]. The library was set up in such a way that the lower shelves had books for small children and the upper had books for older children. Our grandparents really wanted to make sure that we knew Polish culture and… our family. Those who still lived, as well as those who only survived in photo albums. I knew who was who in the yellow photos, and could answer without a shred of doubt when asked. I obviously also had to be able to play at least one instrument and speak one foreign language. My sister and I were protected by our grandparents. We met up with families who shared their views. Those were mostly right-wing views, aligned with the Church. We always celebrated the anniversary of the Constitution of 3 May and 11 November [Polish Independence Day]. We would sing patriotic songs. Such an upbringing was rare back then, but we were not sheltered. We spent time outside with the other kids. Our favourite pastime was looking for weapons in the forest. Grandma would always check what I was hiding under the bed. Once, I even brought a grenade, and my little sister could easily take apart and reassemble a pistol.

Brutal Communism, Upbeat Music

The idyll came to an end with the passing of his grandparents. Wojciech Ciesielski, in 10th grade at the time, had to move in with his parents in Olsztyn. The doctor's son quickly found friends who were dissatisfied with the world around them, but political activism was not on their minds. Instead, they were interested in Western big beat music, non-iron jabot shirts and listening to Radio Luxembourg. Wojciech studied history at the Olsztyn Pedagogical University,

Where he became an adjunct in the mid-70s. He got married and became a father. His students, now history professors themselves, recall the passion with which he introduced them to historical research. The signing of the Gdańsk Agreement in 1980 came as a surprise. He was on holiday at the time. Soon after his return, Ciesielski decided to establish a Solidarity union at his university together with several colleagues, even despite the fact that Olsztyn's Pedagogical University was considered among the most communist-aligned universities in Poland.

'After the agreement was signed in Gdańsk, I met up with Jan Kaczyński and one more colleague in the Old Town, and we decided to do something, to establish our own Solidarity at the university', Ciesielski recalls. 'Jan Kaczyński was a doctor of philology at the time and the head of the ZNP [Polish Teachers' Union]. So he relinquished the organisation of Solidarity at the university to me. And so, after weeks of gruelling work, the Founding Committee was established on 22 September, immediately followed by the opening of the academic year in Kortowo, the Agricultural Academy, and I went there to establish a Solidarity union too. The first meeting was half-clandestine. I met up with Professor Maria Nagięć, the daughter of the author of the first book on the Katyń Massacre, Stanisław Swianiewicz. Later I hosted a meeting which turned into the foundational meeting of Solidarity. Some of the attendees made a show of leaving the room because they got scared. Those who stayed founded Solidarity, and Professor Nagięć was elected the first head of our Company Commission'.

Wojciech Ciesielski is also seen as one of the founders of Olsztyn's NZS [Independent Students' Association]. Although he himself claims it to be an exaggeration, he did indeed meet with the academy's students on one occasion. 'I had my Solidarity pin on me, a historic one, from the Gdańsk Shipyard. I asked my students, "And what about you? Not doing anything? How about an independent students' association? Don't you care about what the university should be like?" Some time passed, and I was leaving a classroom one day when two students ran up to me. They invited me to the auditorium on the top floor of the building on Pieniężnego Street, because they were organising a meeting. And that's how the NZS was formed'.

The One Big Family Phenomenon

Ciesielski refers to the sixteen months of Solidarity's legal existence as the one big family phenomenon. He also wonders how it was possible for everyone, him included, to have so much energy. And how was everyone so friendly? 'True, the discussions were heated, we even argued, but whenever we visited other places in Poland, we were always greeted with open arms. I would go to Warsaw to bring back recorded radio

broadcasts. The Masovian regional section made union tapes containing updates on Solidarity's efforts. We broadcast them using the PA system. We had no access to a radio station yet, after all. The public radio only gave us a one-hour time slot. When teachers and doctors came out on strike in 1980, I got a call from Andrzej Wilk, then-head of the Health Commission, and I recorded everything he said and my wife transcribed it. And we broadcast it for the people to hear. I had nurses and doctors from the municipal hospital come over, Alek Rusiecki would also come, and printed the stuff off on my table. How did we have so much energy? I'm amazed myself. Someone would come at eleven in the evening, and we would discuss union matters with them. People would come from other counties who didn't know how to establish their own Solidarity company commissions. Others would bring us written declarations of support for company commissions or the Regional Management.'

'Prosecutor Śnieżko came to us one day. People were afraid of prosecutors. They said, "Don't accept them as members. They've been sent by the government". Back then, every institution was terrorised by the Security Service or secret collaborators. I organised a pedagogical school rally. I began visiting various villages and establishing unions there. We established a union university. The first lecture we gave was on Katyń. I hosted a lot of meetings at home. I had hundreds of telex printout copies. Those are incredible documents today. And this breakneck pace continued until martial law was declared. A few hours before that happened, I was approached by a female colleague of mine, who said, "Listen, something bad's going to happen. The voivodeship militia HQ is lit up like a Christmas tree". It was my wife's name day. I was home only for a moment, the guests were already leaving. I was arrested twenty minutes after midnight'.

They Probably Want to Waste Me

The summary of Wojciech Ciesielski's union activity, compiled by the Security Service based on information acquired as a result of surveillance and wiretapping his home between 1980 and 1989, consists of several hundred pages of typewritten text. His personal file, contained in a catalogue of individuals under surveillance which is now held by the Institute of National Remembrance, contains the following information:

> Wojciech Ciesielski, born 15 June 1956 in Inowrocław, son of Apoloniusz and Maria, assistant at the Institute of History of the Pedagogical University in Olsztyn (WSP), surveilled due to being actively involved in the university's NSZZ 'Solidarity' cell. Involved in the copying and distribution of illegal materials among students. Co-founder of the Independent Students' Association (NZS) at the Pedagogical University in Olsztyn, intervened at the Olsztyn Voivodeship

Citizens' Militia Headquarters on behalf of students apprehended for hanging up posters targeting the Secretary of the Olsztyn Voivodeship Commission of the PZPR, and participated in a meeting of the NZS Interim Founding Committee. Case worked by Dept. III of the Ministry of Interior Affairs in collaboration with the Voivodeship Citizen's Militia Headquarters in Olsztyn. Surveilled as part of operation 'Entuzjasta' (Enthusiast) due to being an activist of NSZZ 'Solidarity'. Actively involved in the emerging NSZZ 'Solidarity' union. Initiator and leader of the news cell of the Olsztyn Inter-company Founding Commission (MKZ), has been involved in distributing anti-communist literature published by KSS-KOR [Committee for Social Self-Defence – Workers' Defence Committee] and KPN [Confederation of Independent Poland]. Under martial law, he was interned twice for his activities. On November 9, 1984, Department III of the Voivodeship Office for Internal Affairs (WUSW) in Olsztyn transferred the case to the Regional Office for Internal Affairs in Olsztyn. Case closed due to no hostile activities being identified. Materials bearing reference number 12773/II were destroyed in 1989 based on disposal notice number 35/89, and microfilm number 12773/2 was destroyed in 1990 based on disposal notice number 37/90.

Subjected to operational surveillance. The category was changed due to information being collected using operational measures according to which the person in question is in contact with individuals involved in illegal activities. The case objective was to identify the contacts and determine the scope and nature of W. Ciesielski's activities. During the case, it was determined that W. Ciesielski collaborates with the Metropolitan Curia in Olsztyn to organise religious and cultural events. He uses video tapes to record events which convey a 'negative political message', and distributes these tapes among his trusted acquaintances, in addition to organising screenings of unauthorised films and being involved in organising speeches and lectures by research staff at the church. On 17/02/1987, the case was transferred to Dept. III of WUSW in Olsztyn, and then archived. The materials were archived under the 'Entuzjasta' surveillance operation. Materials bearing reference number 12773/II were destroyed in 1989.

Knight of the Order of Polonia Restituta

Today, Wojciech Ciesielski, a Knight of the Order of Polonia Restituta, has a very modest and tidy flat on the ground floor of a building near Olsztyn's Old Town. In it, he has great books and paintings of his friends. Also a small laptop – that is the extent of his wealth. The flat is a whopping… 14.5 square metres. When he talks about Solidarity, he does so with a great deal of care and passion. He never returned to academia. Some say that he was never offered the opportunity, to which he says, 'My students had already done their post-docs, so I didn't want to take up a spot'.

Wojciech Ciesielski also founded the 'Solidarity' Citizens' Committee in Olsztyn in 1988. After the collapse of the communist regime, he spent two years as a member of the NSZZ 'S' Regional Management, including as its spokesperson. For eight years after that (1991–1999), he was the head of the District Commission for Investigating Crimes Against the Polish People of the Olsztyn branch of the Institute of National Remembrance. The end of the 20th century saw him become unemployed, and the beginning of the 21st century – as a specialist at the Healthcare Department of the Warmia-Masuria Centre for Public Health. However, in 2005, he became unemployed again, and this state of affairs lasted until 2013, when he received a special pension of… 700 zlotys. 'I could have got more', he says. 'A friend of mine once said to me, "Join the Civic Platform, I'll get you a special pension. You'll get 3500". But I never really got around to doing that…'.

Third-Rank Girl

The 'Third Rank' Regional Executive Commission – a name used to refer to the commission operating in Bielsko-Biała and the Podbeskidzie region throughout the martial law period. One of Third Rank's activists was Teresa Sternal, now Teresa Szafrańska, who was 23 years old at the time. In 2017, she was awarded an Officer's Cross of the Order of Polonia Restituta, as well as a Cross of Freedom and Solidarity.

She herself says that she had never been interested in Polish history, and blushes when she admits that she only began to read voraciously, especially books on religion, when she was in her forties. Before that, she would only read whatever was required reading in school. She was not an intellectual. Literature was not one of her passions either. She much preferred to spend time with friends from her neighbourhood.

Freedom and Liberty

As she was born as the eleventh child, you would be forgiven for thinking that Szafrańska was raised in a large family. But that is only partially true. As the youngest child, she hardly ever saw her older siblings, who were already attending school in various other towns. According to Szafrańska herself, 'I was raised almost like an only child'. But her childhood was tainted with a certain type of adulthood. When she was five, her father fell ill. After suffering from an aneurysm, he had to be taught to speak again by the five-year-old girl, who also helped him walk and looked after him. It is during that period that she probably learnt how to be self-reliant. She herself adds that the mountains and forests of her home village, Nowe Rybie near Limanowa, gave her a sense of space and freedom. Whenever she was not studying or working, she played with her friends, preferring boyish activities to playing with dolls.

'My childhood was primarily defined by freedom, including freedom to express my thoughts', Szafrańska recalls. 'My sisters wanted to be the ones to raise me, but I rebelled against that and told them that was my parents' job. And my mum never yelled at me. She never forced me to do anything. Whenever I did something wrong, she would explain why. Our home was a space where I could be and where I was myself. It was a Christian household. We prayed every day. Went to church every Sunday. Our family really was a community. We never talked about history, about communism, but my mum sometimes mentioned her brother, who'd spent five years in a communist prison. But I never delved deeper into that. We never talked about patriotism or politics with my parents. Patriotism was instilled in me mostly by example. Even though we were never really indoctrinated in primary school, I was told many times that we had the Soviet Union and the Red Army to thank for this and that'.

That freedom was restricted when a 15-year-old Teresa went to the Textile Industry Technical School in Bielsko-Biała – where she was forbidden from keeping holy images on display on her nightstand in the dormitory. Despite that, the secondary school period proved to be a rather uneventful time in the young girl's life. She wanted to go to university, but she couldn't afford it, so she worked at the 'Krepol' Wool Industry Plant in Bielsko-Biała, incentivised by her rent being covered by her employer. But although she was a trained weaver and textile worker, she was assigned to the accounting department, and from 1978, her job was production valuation. She grew to like her new job, however, especially due to the fact that her co-workers proved to be very friendly people with an honest attitude towards their work.

There Was Evil Within the System

The tranquility of Teresa Szafrańska's everyday life and work was disrupted by Karol Wojtyła being elected pope. She herself calls it 'a flash of something'. Although she admits that she wasn't fully aware of the importance of that event, she did feel happiness inside. Szafrańska's friends all agreed that something important had finally happened in Poland. When the pope visited Poland a year later, she followed his entire visit, listening to the radio coverage and watching the visit on television. She also went to Kraków to take part in officially greeting the pope. Szafrańska attended the Mass in Błonia Park on 10 June, when John Paul II invoked the Holy Spirit, the same way as he had previously in Warsaw.

'I thought to myself, "Oh, how I would love for the Holy Spirit to descend. To renew us. And me too…". Even before that, when I was on my way there, students were gathering in the town square in Kraków, shouting freedom slogans at the Mickiewicz monument. I can't remember what they were shouting, but I remember being so happy. I joined them.

I read St Faustina's *Diary*. I realised that there was evil within the system. I noticed that evil from a religious perspective, in that the system violated the Ten Commandments. That's what spurred me to act. Not the external enslavement, but the internal enslavement'.

i Found Him Without Anyone's Help

Teresa Szafrańska no longer remembers how she began rallying the people at her company and encouraging them to join a new trade union that would soon become known as Solidarity. She did not run as a candidate for the union's company commission, believing that others would do a better job. Still, she was given an important task as well – running the factory's PA system. In addition to reading announcements, be it from the union's National or Regional Commission, she also relayed news about Solidarity's activities coming in from all across Poland, in addition to hosting programmes on history and patriotism. When asked about those sixteen months between 1980 and 1981, she immediately responds, 'It was a breath of fresh air for me. I associate those sixteen months with freedom'.

The young Solidarity activist, recently married, was very surprised when the communists declared martial law. Although she only came to the factory on Monday, she had already been informed about activists being arrested at other plants. Szafrańska was not afraid, but felt uneasy for some reason. She thought that what had happened was a grave injustice that should be combatted. Clandestine talks began at the factory as early as 14 December, and an underground union cell was established almost immediately after the imposition of martial law, with Szafrańska as one of its active members. Known as the 'Third Rank' Podbeskidzie Region NSZZ 'Solidarity' Regional Executive Commission, it operated until 1989. Szafrańska's superior at work, Head Accountant Józef Michłanowicz, who was also an underground activist, was the person who offered her the opportunity to join the secret movement. She accepted without hesitation. Responsible for booking all incoming and outgoing payments related to the underground's activities, she also gathered news about the situation under martial law from other plants, as well as information about the movement's activities and repressions. She used her typewriter to make copies and edit texts that would later be made into flyers or published by the commission's newspaper. Eventually, she joined the editorial board of the *Solidarność Podbeskidzia* [Solidarity of the Podbeskidzie Region] magazine.

'I knew that I could be arrested by the security service', Szafrańska says. 'I sometimes wondered what it would be like. But I never thought too much about it. I did what had to be done. It was always interesting stuff. Sometimes unexpected. There was this one time when I was told to go find someone because they hadn't come to pick up the magazines.

They gave me his last name and a rough description of the building in the Złote Łany neighbourhood where he could be residing… but there were more than a dozen such blocks there. But I found him… without asking anyone for help'.

Shaking Hands with the Prosecutor

Szafrańska was first apprehended for 48 hours on 1 October 1983. Nineteen days later, she was arrested and imprisoned, first in Bielsko-Biała, then in Cieszyn, spending nearly eight months in total behind bars.

'The worst thing you can do is give in to negative thoughts. I submitted myself to God, and it was a piece of cake', Szafrańska says. 'I can't remember what exactly they wanted to know. In any case, the prosecutor peppered me with questions. So I followed the recommendations listed in *Obywatel a służba bezpieczeństwa* [The Citizen and the Security Service]: I don't know, I don't recall. The prosecutor was maybe a couple of years older than me. He was very angry at me. He got furious when I refused to sign the arrest order. He was raging, running around the prosecutor's office building. He had me jailed for three months, and I thanked him for the conversation. I shook his hand, and he turned pale. I spent a month in custody in Bielsko-Biała. They forbade me from seeing my family for three months. They knew I was the region's accountant. Someone they arrested testified against me. That wasn't an informant, just a weak person. They threatened to lock me up for ten years. I was accused of being the "principal perpetrator". I didn't think about how long they would lock me up for – if it was going to be two years or more. What mattered was the Poland I was fighting for. Free. Even back then, I had no doubts what we were fighting for. Initially, I was locked up with a friend I'd met before. Eventually, I was joined by my husband's cousin. But only for 48 hours. Later in Cieszyn, they put me in a cell with prostitutes, a lesbian and thieves. But they treated me, a political prisoner, very well. They also liked me because I gave them my cigarette rations. The arrest really was a traumatic experience for me. I didn't talk to anyone about it for years. I didn't think there was any need to. But when the IPN [Institute of National Remembrance] reached out to me some time ago asking me to tell my story, all the emotions started to come back. That's when I realised why I'd never wanted to talk about my arrest and imprisonment. It turned out that, all the evil that had happened around me – I'd been in denial of it. In prison, I had an image of the Merciful Jesus with me, and it helped me a lot, as did praying for my oppressors. I think that's why I'm free from any feelings of hatred towards them. I also began to read a little. I read Sienkiewicz's *Quo Vadis*, which I loved, and I started reading the Bible. I began to really appreciate the Mass broadcasts on the radio. They wouldn't let

me attend the Mass in prison, but I could go to confession and take communion every two weeks. Confessing gave me a lot of strength'.

i Want to Give Testimony

Teresa Szafrańska was released from the Cieszyn prison in late May 1984. However, the Security Service decided to arrest her again only several days later. The prosecutor's office put out an arrest warrant, but thanks to the help of Andrzej Grajewski and several healthcare workers from Żywiec and Katowice, she was instead taken to hospital, where she remained free for two months, despite the prosecutor's insistence that she be transferred to a prison hospital. When she was released from prison, she lost her job at the Krepol factory, but with the help of Zenon Mierzwa, her local parish priest, she found work as a clerk at the Maksymilian Kolbe parish. It did not take long for Szafrańska to once again become involved in the underground movement, doing what she had been doing before her arrest. She met new people with whom she had a close working relationship, including Ola Tyrlik, Dariusz Mrzygłód, Andrzej Kabat and Mieczysław Machowiak. She also became involved in the working class ministry, and worked as a courier for Polish-Czechoslovakian Solidarity in the late 1980s. Shortly before the Round Table talks, Szafrańska joined a reactivated, borderline-legal Solidarity cell operating out of a flat belonging to Grażyna Staniszewska. In 1989, she worked as a secretary at the Podbeskidzie Regional Management, before joining the Bielsko-Biała department of the Ministry of Privatisation two years later. From there, she moved to the Social Insurance Institution, but ended up unemployed for several years leading up to her retirement. For many of those years, she was ineligible for welfare benefits.

'After the Round Table talks, I accepted everything that followed. The free Senate and partially free Sejm elections. I left the regional management because I didn't feel I was a good fit mentally for the new board. I later worked at a branch of the Ministry of Privatisation. But after some time, I realised that there was something wrong with some of the privatisations. There was nobody else who shared my view. Nobody I could raise it with. Later, when my husband passed away, I was lost for several years. And in that loneliness, the light suddenly appeared, and that's when everything began to change. Maybe not there and then, but I began to attend meetings with Carmelite priests. The spirituality of Saint Teresa of Jesus helped me a lot at first, and later Saint John of the Cross. They helped me get back on my feet. It turned out it all made sense. For a few years, I worked with the Carmelite Institute in Czerna, which prepares people who wish to take vows. I can safely say that those seven years of working in the underground brought me a lot closer to God. Today, in 2019, I feel a lot of satisfaction from seeing that Poland is

headed in the right direction. I'm really happy that I had a hand, however small, in Poland regaining independence. I think it was the right thing to do. Since 2016, I've been part of the Podbeskidzie Wspólna Pamięć remembrance association. At first I visited them more often, collecting information about Solidarity's activities in the region'.

I Only Found My Way in Solidarity

'I was scared at times, mostly for my children. I remember one of the agents, Płonka, threatening me that something could happen to them... It was horrible', recalls Urszula Radek, one of the brave women who made up the Solidarity cell at the WSK 'PZL-Świdnik' helicopter and airplane factory.

The July strike in Świdnik and the signing of an accord with the communist authorities marked the beginning of the events of August 1980, leading to further strikes across Poland and the establishment of Solidarity. And the people who were there at the time – they were the first fighters for independence after nearly half a century of communist domination and Soviet occupation.

At WSK 'PZL-Świdnik', it began with several people shutting down their machines, which eventually escalated into dozens of employees leaving their stations, drawing boards and desks. The solidarity between floor and office workers came as a real shock. Despite the years of being pitted against each other by the communists, the two communities joined forces. One of the brave women who dared stand in solidarity with the floor workers of the Świdnik factor was Urszula Radek, a technologist at the Head Technologist Department, nearly fifty years old at the time. A wife and mother of two sons. The older – a student at the Catholic University of Lublin at the time – would later help organise the NZS [Independent Students' Association] there. The younger – who was in his final year of primary school, would soon become a distributor of underground press.

Pangs of Conscience

Born five years before World War II in Rejowiec, Lublin Voivodeship, her two brothers were already adults when she joined the family. Her father was an expert on steam turbines, which earned him a job at the Ostrowiec metallurgical plant in 1938. For this reason, her parents moved to the Kielce-Sandomierz Highland. However, it was not long

before they and their sons joined the underground. The war raged on. Urszula attended underground classes. After the war, she went to a private secondary school in Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski, which was nationalised by the communists and turned into a technical school a year before her graduation, the purpose being to force women to enter the labour force instead of going to university. After passing her exams, she was assigned to work in Świdnik, which marked the beginning of her nearly 40-year career at WSK 'PZL-Świdnik'.

'I think I became so involved in the strike and later in Solidarity because I was feeling guilty that I hadn't been involved in any anti-communism activities in the 50s', Urszula says. 'By the time I graduated from secondary school, I was an adult. I got a job, I went to parties in Lublin with my friends. It was a carefree life. All while my peers were rotting in prison or dying fighting against the communists. I knew what the totalitarian regime was like. The unbound Stalinism of that time, the prisons and camps. You could see everyone around you was afraid. We would hear about the arrests from Radio Free Europe, which we listened to every day with my parents. My uncle got arrested, allegedly for sabotage…'.

Despite her apparent indifference to the fate of her people, she deliberately refused to join ZMP [The Union of Polish Youth, the Polish equivalent of the Soviet Komsomol], and later the PZPR, despite being offered membership multiple times. In the 60s, she collected signatures for a petition to approve the construction of the church of Mary, Mother of the Church in Świdnik, even though she risked drawing the attention of the Security Service by doing so. At the age of 22, Urszula Kijanko married Janusz Radek. Two years later, she gave birth to her son Andrzej, who is now deputy mayor of Świdnik. Her second son is an economist. 'I didn't really believe that Poland would regain independence during my lifetime', she says. 'I began to believe it when John Paul II said in Warsaw, "Let your spirit descend and renew the face of the earth. The face of this land!" It was indescribable, it was like I'd been born again. The next incredible event was our strike, the strikes of 1980 and the establishment of Solidarity. My life began anew. I realised I could help others. And that it strengthened and enriched me, brought me closer to God. When I joined the strike, I knew I could fight for other people. That was the most important thing. Solidarity made me into who I am today'.

During the July strike, Urszula Radek was voted by several thousand staff members to become part of a 20-person team that would negotiate with the directors of WSK Świdnik. When NSZZ 'Solidarity' was established, she joined her company's branch of the union. During the sixteen months of its legal existence, she chaired the SOS Solidarity Benefits Commission at WSK. She was seen as a very dynamic person who helped hundreds of people – helping them acquire shoes, clothes, books, food or a place to live. For many, she was also a person they could share their concerns with. To Szafrańska, those sixteen months were a lesson in solidarity, democracy and getting to know each other. 'To me, it

was like new people were being formed. I always smile when I think back on those times. True, independence was sometimes mentioned, but still in hushed tones'.

Seven Years Like a Single Day

The declaration of martial law put an end to all hopes and activism. The Świdnik plant went on strike, which was crushed by the military and ZOMO after three days. Dozens of people were arrested and put in internment camps. Urszula Radek joined the underground Solidarity cell in Świdnik very shortly after the event. She headed the underground Benefits Commission, which was still referred to as SOS Solidarity.

'Before Christmas, we organised help for the families of those who'd been put in camps and imprisoned', she recalls. 'We began collecting union dues. We gave money to the families of repression victims. We distributed care packages for families, textbooks and notebooks for children, and often also everything else they needed for school. With father Jan Chryniewicz, we organised "Holiday with God" trips for children. We also worked together with farmers' Solidarity cells. We were helped by Janusz Rożek, who has since passed away. We attended family functions, communions and name days of the families of those who'd been imprisoned or interned. We never abandoned the people, especially women, who were struggling to deal with their spouses being imprisoned. Some people also needed spiritual help. Researchers and workers began working together. They taught us history, self-governance and law. There were self-help, intellectual and spirituality groups – our underground university. We later established the Catholic Intelligentsia Club, and the lectures were moved there. It was convenient that my entire family – my husband and sons – they were part of the underground too. Those seven years leading up to 1989 felt like a single day'.

But those seven years were not without difficulties, as Urszula Radek's activism was quickly noticed by the Security Service. Officers visited her at home, and her flat was searched. The Radek family was apprehended, ordered to attend interrogations and surveilled. 'Yes, I was scared sometimes, especially for my children. I remember one of the agents, Płonka, threatening me, saying that something could happen to them… It was horrible', Radek recalls.

in Free Poland

Urszula Radek did not cease her activism when Poland regained independence. Together with Kazimierz Suseł and several other members of the underground, they

founded, now fully legally, the SOS Solidarity Support Committee, which works with nearly 30 people, as well as being helped by young volunteers. The committee, apart from providing food for people, funds poor children's school meals and organises holiday trips for them, while also doing the same for Polish children from Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine. Also, young people in need of assistance are given money for public transport tickets and textbooks. In addition to its everyday activism, the committee participates in various projects, such as helping flood and fire victims, for example. Since John Paul II instituted the World Day of the Sick seven years ago, the committee has also been organising an annual event that involves visiting hospital patients and giving them gifts.

In recognition of the committee's efforts, Urszula Radek was named Świdnik's Resident of the Year 1996 and given a 'To the Warm-Hearted' medal in 1999 by the Lublin curia, in addition to the Angelus Lubelski award and the title of Social Activist of the Year 2002. Her work has earned her a Golden Cross of Merit and a Cross of Freedom and Solidarity. 'I'm long in the tooth, I'm already 81 years old. My younger friends have either crossed over to the other side or are bedridden. People say, "She's 80 but she's still got the energy". Yes, I still have the energy. Although it's true, I've got my ailments… my eyes are really bad, I have diabetes and hypertension, but since 1990 I've been retired and have time for others! God and the people of Solidarity have shown me what solidarity between people should be like, so I'm not doing anything special. I'm simply trying to correctly decipher what God's written for me'.

Building a State

Tadeusz Kowalczyk is among the most prominent underground activists of the NSZZ 'Solidarity' of Individuals Farmers union, and was the leader of its Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship section in 1981. After the fall of communism, he was an MP and member of the Civic Parliamentary Club caucus. In one of his parliamentary speeches, he accused the Security Service of executing more than 100 people during the martial law period. This led to the establishment of the Extraordinary Sejm Commission for Investigating the Activities of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, led by another MP, Jan Rokita.

His house is modest. It is white and new. Still in need of some finishing touches. It is located in the village of Bieliny near Łysa Góra, less than 30 kilometres from Kielce. Tadeusz Kowalczyk – a farmer and intellectual with a degree in history, co-founder, activist and leader of the Solidarity of Individual Farmers of Świętokrzyskie Province, and a lively 85-year-old [Editor's note: in 2017], throws another log into the fireplace. He gets emotional when recalling the history of Bieliny and the region in general. Kowalczyk's tiny village, which winds slightly uphill, is the birth place of several prominent Poles, including Karol Boromeusz Teliga, a priest, theologian and head of the Jagiellonian University, who passed away in the late 19th century. Colonel Józef Teliga, his almost a century younger cousin, who died in 2007, was an officer of the Home Army and chief of intelligence of the Kielce cell of the WiN [Editor's note: the Association of Freedom and Independence] before joining NSZZ 'Solidarity' of Individual Farmers. Bieliny was also the home village of Prime Minister and President-in-exile Kazimierz Sabbat, who died in London in the summer of 1989. Before the war, nearly everyone in the village went to the local church of St Adalbert, even local radicals from the Polish Socialist Party, as not attending the Sunday Mass was considered a sign of moral corruption.

Coming of Age

Although he was born in September 1932, Kowalczyk's birth certificate states his birth took place in January of the following year. When the war broke out, he was in second grade, and was only able to continue his education by attending underground classes, graduating after the end of the German occupation. In the 40s, Kowalczyk went to the private St Stanislaus Kostka Secondary School in Kielce, which was managed by the Kielce Curia. He was a good student who believed that Poland would soon be free again. In March 1950, in an attempt to contribute to his country's liberation, he accepted a mission from Józef Teliga, a member of the underground at the time, and tried to slip past the western border to deliver a report on the communist regime in Poland. He was captured, and after being brutally tortured, the Szczecin court sentenced him to fourteen months in confinement, which he spent in tough prisons in Goleniów and Stargard.

'I wasn't part of any organisation. By 1950, the underground in Bieliny had already been fractured. Although previously there had been an informal group of a couple of guys. We were involved in self-education. We met up quite regularly, but it wasn't really political. Maybe to the extent that we educated ourselves on politics and didn't lose our spirit', Kowalczyk reminisces after several decades. Now retired, he is a former teacher and member of the 1st and 10th Sejm of the Third Republic of Poland. He is also a beekeeper, as well as the long-time head of the Świętokrzyskie Foundation for the Development of Farmers' Economic Organisations.

The months spent in confinement did not discourage him from politics, although his enthusiasm was noticeably curbed. Instead of being a participant, he spent the next three decades as a simple observer, considering a regime change to be impossible. Nevertheless, he was still convinced that he would live to see the fall of communism. As young man, he lived his life to its fullest. He practiced boxing, gliding, parachuting and swimming, and served for nearly two years in the Polish People's Army, which helped him gain life experience and expand his knowledge. He occupied various public positions, many related to beekeeping, which remains one of his passions to this day. As a member of local beekeepers' associations, he boldly defended their rights against attempts by the state to change them. At one point, he completed a teaching course and began working as a teacher in his home village of Bieliny, as well as studying history at the University of Łódź.

However, the crimes the communists perpetrated in 1970 and 1976 did not inspire him to become involved in any anti-communist organisations. And although Karol Wojtyła being elected pope did spark in him a hope that things would change, he did not expect anything specific to happen. Summarising the first three decades after the war, Tadeusz Kowalczyk has this to say: 'Everyone saw how thieving the communists were in the country,

including members of the ZSL [the United People's Party, a satellite party of the PZPR]. The cronyism and other forms of injustice, but nobody could make a stand against that in any way. And neither could I. Karol Wojtyła being elected pope was extremely important to me, but I never expected something as revolutionary at the time as Solidarity to become a thing. I knew communism would fall. I kept telling myself, great powers such as Rome and Egypt have fallen in the past. Also, there was this one time I deliberately went to work at a printing shop in Kielce to learn how to print. I kept in touch with Józef Teliga. To me, he was the personification of the struggle for Polish independence. I knew that many people rejected communism, including some militiamen, prosecutors and judges. They just got mired in their service and couldn't escape, but they didn't accept what they were doing. I was a member of the Kielce Catholic Intelligentsia Club. It may not have been much, but I learnt about social and religious matters in those various meetings. I knew that talking wasn't enough to win back Poland, but you could say that I was preparing myself for the fight against communism in a way'.

Solidarity and Building a State

It was not until 1980 and the mass strikes that Kowalczyk became involved in Solidarity. But when he wanted to establish a Solidarity commission at his school, only one other person was interested. The teachers were content with being part of a single organisation, that being the Polish Teachers' Union, which is why Kowalczyk also gave Individual Farmers' Solidarity a try. At first, he refrained from sitting in the front row at the meetings, however. It took months for him to become truly involved in the fight for a new Poland. But back then, he did not dream of independence.

'Solidarity wasn't as big among farmers as it was among workers. And there was definitely less… solidarity. It was atomised and special in its own way', Kowalczyk says. 'Farmers can only spare the time for activism during the winter. There's a lot less time in the other months. And we had to keep reshaping the mentality in the rural areas year-round. It wasn't easy because there were many people who wanted to be leaders in our region, but few wanted to do the grunt work. Also, there were as many problems in the country as there were in the cities. I think that, contrary to what it may have seemed, the countryside was even more dependent on the government. All the purchasing centres, requisitions, compulsory deliveries, machine allocation, it dominated rural life to a degree that's unimaginable today. All the permits for nearly everything you needed to get from the government. On the other hand, when the state had a surplus of artificial fertilisers, they didn't ask the farmers if they actually needed any. They calculated how much land a farmer had, pulled up to his property, and just spilled the stuff or unloaded the bags,

and most likely, it wasn't even what the farmer needed. And they left him with the bill. And also, the state paid three times less for grain than what the market price was. The list goes on and on. Most of the time, farmers were also forced to give bribes.

'It all had to be fixed. I began to reach out to people from all over Poland. I met many notable people, such as the very devoted Solidarity activist Janusz Winiarski, a journalist from Lublin, and Janusz Rożek from Lublin Voivodeship, who had been fighting against communism as part of the Movement for the Defence of Human and Civil Rights. A few years before Solidarity, he founded his own anti-communist organisation, the Peasants' Self-Defence Committee of Lublin Voivodeship. I'd also go to Warsaw a lot, where I met the Romaszewskis. Members of Farmers' Solidarity came to me with new problems every day. Resolving them took months. PZPR and ZSL members and officials refused to share their power, which some said was theirs forever. This also caused families to split. Many members of the ZSL, the puppet farmers' party of the PZPR that has since been renamed PSL [Editor's note: the Polish People's Party], were from rural areas. This led to conflicts. The government also staged many provocations, including at the local level. The communists were very much opposed to us establishing Individual Farmers' Solidarity. The court refused to register the union multiple times, and they made it impossible for us to function. Only after several months of struggle and Primate Stefan Wyszyński's talks with the communists, and also thanks to the tremendous support of NSZZ "Solidarity", could the farmers' union be officially registered in May 1981'.

The struggle that raged across the country also took the form of rural Solidarity members becoming targets of attacks. In the country, activists were threatened at village meetings, which often led to strikes. The communists sabotaged deliveries of goods to village shops, just like they did in cities, all the while claiming that the resulting shortages were a result of Solidarity strikes in urban areas. However, barely anyone fell for such provocations anymore. It was thanks to the good relations between both branches of Solidarity that the people were fully aware of the truth.

'At the time, I was an active member of the Beekeepers' Union', Kowalczyk recalls. 'We had people of different professions. Some held various, even high-ranking positions in the PZPR and ZSL. There were militiamen, firefighters, lawyers and others. In short, they were privileged people. Many of them said that power should at least partially be given back to the people. During the sixteen months when Solidarity was legal, some of them were more loyal to us than their superiors. But most of them ended up loyal to the government, as we saw under martial law'.

The Martial Law Period

Two weeks before martial law was declared, Kowalczyk was elected head of the Individual Farmers' Solidarity of Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship. He began organising the union, reaching out to other regional branches, as well as the main organisation. He felt that the communists would soon declare a state of emergency or something similar. It was a topic in Solidarity circles, but also among beekeepers, whom he'd known the longest. That is why he began forming a distribution network, obtaining paper for printing underground newspapers, as well as typewriters and printing machines. What the 'state' would be like, he could not imagine. Although he was getting pointers from experienced anti-communist activists from the post-war period, Kowalczyk knew that the new underground would not be the same.

'After I was elected, I visited our bishop, Stanisław Szymecki. He offered to help us however he could. Marian Jaworski, the head of workers' Solidarity, soon gave us a large room with a telephone… all paid for by him', Kowalski recalls. 'I was mostly focused on fleshing out the organisation. I knew that was the most important thing. Without a stable organisation, we couldn't operate effectively. I believed that, if we had a robust organisation, we would always have something to fall back on if they declared martial law. And I wasn't wrong'.

A Hundred Flats in a Year

On 13 December, Kowalczyk was at his granddaughter's name day party in Kielce, and only learnt about martial law being declared the next morning. That night, his home in Bieliny was visited by two Security Service agents looking for the leader of the union. His wife responded that he'd gone to Warsaw. They did not mention an arrest warrant. 'When he comes back, tell him to report to the station', they said without much conviction and left. The head of the Regional Management decided to go underground. He never went to the station, which is why the Security Service issued an arrest warrant.

Tadeusz Kowalczyk's initial experiences as an underground activist made him realise how much work still had to be done in the farmers' movement. The union had to be restructured, but initially very few people were willing to become involved in underground activities – printing, distribution and delivery, and so it took several weeks for the rural underground to get off the ground. Kowalczyk also had no problems organising a place to hide, always being able to find one in other villages in the area, at times resorting to using WWII-era shelters.

'The worst part was getting past military and militia checkpoints', he says. 'There were checkpoints on every road, and it was really difficult to leave the village and go to Kielce or other towns. I had to walk around them, going deep into the fields and forests. I would also change clothes. I had two wigs. I would carry groceries to throw them off. A loaf of bread, some sugar, flour, blood sausage. I would sometimes hitchhike to travel. I once got picked up by a military vehicle. I looked at the dashboard and saw a wanted poster with Józef Teliga and me on it. But they didn't recognise me.

I could have a place promised, but the wife of the host could get scared at the last minute that they would be arrested. Such surprises did happen, but not often. I once got myself into a trap. It turned out the block was surrounded by militiamen. I just didn't notice them. True, there were a few civilians standing around and smoking cigarettes, but I didn't notice anything out of the ordinary. I walk into the flat, and the owner's all pale. It turned out the entire block was surrounded because someone had killed their neighbour. They were looking for the murderer, who was hiding in the area. And the militiamen would drop by my hosts to get some warm tea. Just one of the things that happened to me. I think I moved flats more than a hundred times in a year. I made it a rule never to stay at the same place for more than two days, for safety reasons'.

Robust Underground

In mid-1982, the rural underground was booming, with hideouts being equipped with typewriters and copiers. An underground magazine was published, titled *Solidarność Rolników Indywidualnych* – Individual Farmers' Solidarity, and from Warsaw came a steady stream of dozens of underground newspapers. Kowalczyk reached out to the rural activist Wanda Pomianowska, a poet and professor of Polish studies at the University of Warsaw, and a very active Farmers' Solidarity member who lived in the nearby village of Radkowice. Many of his contacts were established through a pair of very active lawyers from Kielce, Jerzy Stępień and Wojciech Arczyński, and he also met many underground members through Zofia and Zbigniew Romaszewski. The story of Tadeusz Kowalczyk is related to a number of local underground activists: Teliga, Bujnowski, Rembosz, Kozłowski, Partyka, Pawlik, Kędra, Łata, Grzybowski, Łabęcki, Zofia Józefowicz and Cecylia Ziomek, to name a few of the people who were active in the area under martial law.

Upon his mother's insistence, Kowalczyk came out of hiding in 1983, but not before he had received assurance from the communists that he would not be arrested, which was possible thanks to the support of Halina Skibniewska, deputy speaker of the Sejm of the PRL. The negotiations in his case were led by Wanda Pomianowska. And so, Kowalczyk reported to the Voivodeship Militia Headquarters in early January. When asked where

he had been hiding, he responded, 'In the barn on my farm'. When the interrogating officer expressed his doubts and asked if the smell was not too much to bear, Kowalczyk responded, 'Didn't smell so bad to a farmer'. That was the end of the interrogation. However, the communists were only waiting for another opportunity to arrest him, and it did not take long for such an opportunity to present itself – in December of the same year. This time, the arrest came not as a consequence of an investigation by the Security Service, but the carelessness of underground couriers and Kowalczyk himself.

'After I revealed myself, I took a few days off before going back to doing what I'd been doing. I held organisational meetings, but also transported newspapers and books. I had a three-step system. Whenever underground materials were delivered to point A, they'd be picked up by a distributor. They would keep their share and drop the rest off at point B. Point B would keep its share and deliver the rest to point C. And that was it. But that time, a distributor got quite a lot of newspapers from point A and was supposed to go to point B not long after. But nobody showed up at the predetermined spot. He later explained that he panicked and brought the stuff to me that night. It was my fault that I didn't move it all out of the house. I spent the whole day at the Voivodeship Beekeepers' Convention in Kielce, and had another convention the day after. My secretary suddenly came up to me and said that some men really wanted to see me. She looked nervous. I realised they were agents. I told the secretary, "Please, stay with me for a second, I need to come up with something". And I had several dozen copier matrices in my bag. I was sitting next to another beekeeper, a militia lieutenant who'd always complained that I didn't trust him. So I give him the bag and said, "Zbyszek, take my bag, I may not be able to come and pick it up for a few months or years, let my wife know". He told my wife a few days after that'.

'I came out to meet them. It turned out that they were indeed agents. They had a warrant and immediately took me to Bieliny to search my house. I told them I didn't have my keys, so they broke a window and entered. They found the newspapers. And so I got arrested. During the interrogation, I testified that I'd bought the newspapers from a guy who'd been taking them to recycling. As you may know, in our wonderful system, you could get a voucher for new socks if you recycled paper. The agent was kind of hurt that I was mocking his intellect, but he didn't really bully me. They took me to prison. I was released under amnesty in July 1983'.

After being released from prison, Tadeusz Kowalczyk, now marked as a former political prisoner, got in touch with many rural activists from across Poland, including Henryk Bąk, Piotr Baumgart, Artur Balazs, Jan Kozłowski, Józef Ślisz and Gabriel Janowski, as well as the priests Bogusław Bijak and Czesław Sadłowski. Together, they were involved in country-wide protests against the communists, and formed an organisation representing farmers from all over the country. After seven years of underground activism, they joined the nascent official farmer's movement. Most of them ran in the 1989 Sejm elections as

members of the Solidarity Citizens' Committee, chaired by the leader of NSZZ 'Solidarity', Lech Wałęsa. They were elected as MPs and senators, and Tadeusz Kowalczyk was one of them.

Against Farmers' Solidarity

'We were suddenly visited by people from other counties and villages. They all had various important issues. I was asked to intervene a lot, because the communists were throwing members of Farmers' Associations, the ZSL and other government branches at us. They blocked everything we did in the field – sabotaging coal rations, machine distribution and so on. Other times, they refused to collect the produce they'd previously agreed to collect. In short: a complete boycott of our union. But we also had people on our side who wanted to occupy everything all the time. I talked them out of it, and many were upset with me because of that. Some even said that Kowalczyk was a communist supporter. But I thought that, if you could solve an issue at the negotiating table, then we should try that first, and that strikes and blockades should be the last resort'.

From Complaining to Acting

Four years of hanging posters from power lines, seven years of printing and distributing newspapers and fliers, coupled with working as a courier for the head of the Konin Regional Solidarity Management. That would be the concise description of Tadeusz Szadkowski's contributions to the Konin underground.

Konin – a royal town on the banks of two rivers, and the capital city of the Konin Brown Coal Basin. In the 70s, most of the local workers were employed by two brown coal mines, three power stations, the 'Konin' Aluminium Plant and the Open-Pit Mining Equipment Factory. In the PRL period, neither Konin nor the rest of its voivodeship experienced any anti-communist outbursts. No major strikes broke out in the summer of 1980 either. We now know that, although workers in many plants did attempt to form independent trade unions, they always met with resistance from the local authorities and party members. This is why the Konin Inter-company Founding Commission of NSZZ 'Solidarity' could only be established on 10 October 1980, followed by the formation of Independent Farmers' Solidarity.

Not To Be Trifled With

Tadeusz Szadkowski was in the middle of this socio-political landscape. A former altar boy, he finished vocational school, were he trained to work as an electrician. In 1980, he was 30 years old. He had completed his military service, and had a wife and two children. He remembered well all the tales of his grandparents, who fought for Polish independence. Preeminent among them was Franciszek Szadkowski – a participant in the January Uprising who fought at Ignacewo. When he was 16, he was exiled to Siberia, from which he came back… on foot. Franciszek lived long enough to see Poland independent again, but under communist rule, as he died when he was 103 years old.

Tadeusz Szadkowski recalls that his grandpa was talked about a lot at home. 'He was our family's symbol of the struggle against the Russian occupiers. My "camaraderie" towards the occupiers at the time – the communists – was influenced by how they'd treated my maternal grandfather, Bolesław Cybart. He was a well-known and liked owner of a meat processing plant in the village of Łężyn, which today is part of Konin. In 1946, or maybe it was a year later, the communists nationalised his business, and he died a few months later because of the stress. He wasn't even 60', Szadkowski explains.

While the stories of his grandfathers filled him with pride, they also served as a warning that the occupiers were not to be trifled with. But his family's history did not inspire Szadkowski to become politically involved in any way. He lived his life normally, without complaining about the system or the housing crisis. After he left the army, he got married and worked in a salt mine in East Germany for a time. When he came back, his relationship with his family broke down, and he moved into a workers' hotel in Konin. His daily life now revolved around work, fishing and spending time with friends.

'When Solidarity came, I was surprised by its appearance, just like everyone else. Many people didn't know what to do, sign up or not? The party was working overtime trying to dissuade people from joining the new union. Some were threatened, some were promised rewards. I worked in the foundry, where I was elected deputy head of the Solidarity Factory and Department Commission. I represented quite a few people, as the department had like 200 workers. The union at the "Konin" Aluminium Plant was mostly focused on welfare-related issues. Patriotic and political demands were secondary. The factory commission was not some grand movement. We distributed union press, local newspapers and those issued by our factory's Solidarity. On the other hand, local PZPR members and Security Service agents were very active during those sixteen months. They tried to turn us against each other and cause Solidarity to fall apart', he recalls.

The First Banner

For Tadeusz Szadkowski, martial law being declared was as surprising as the establishment of Solidarity. His factory went on strike, which perplexed both the Security Service and the party. The strike ended on 14 December 1981 after a series of talks between the management and floor staff representatives. The directors and party officials assured the workers that, if they agreed to return to work, there would be no negative consequences. That was a lie. Historian Przemysław Zwiernik lists two strike organisers who were arrested – Zbigniew Ładosz and Jerzy Jarzyński – who were sentenced to one and a half years in prison. 'In addition to that, in February 1982, 316 workers were punished by having their bonuses for 1981 withheld'.

Szadkowski began fighting against the communist regime immediately after martial law was declared. An avid angler, he decided to make use of his spin fishing skills, though this time not to catch fish, but to reach power lines to hang Solidarity banners provided by the union's underground cell. To do this, he enlisted the help of his father-in-law Waldemar Piotrowski, Andrzej Skrzypczak, Zbigniew Szafrański and several others.

'I'd take a special lead weight and cast it, similar to using a catapult. Andrzej designed special clasps for me so the flags wouldn't fall off. I made the clasps during the night shift at the foundry. We first did some testing to make sure that the flags would stay a few dozen metres above ground. We would go to the village of Budki because it had a power line running through a forest. We had to evade militia and army patrols and checkpoints at exit roads', Szadkowski recalls.

He hung his first banner on state road 92 between Konin and Warsaw on 20 December. 'It was the size of a small carpet, white with a red Solidarity logo, written in solidaryca, the Solidarity font. That was our first historical banner', he adds. In the early martial law period, they would hang new banners every week, choosing different locations across the town that offered good visibility. This lasted for six months. After that, they would only hang new banners to mark various occasions, including anniversaries of strikes and the establishment of Solidarity, as well as on national holidays. Their main targets were the main exit roads to Bydgoszcz, Gdańsk, Szczecin and Warsaw – wherever there were power lines. Szadkowski's group also hung pro-Solidarity banners along local roads, lifting the spirits of their community.

'The local Security Service people were furious. They rushed from place to place, sirens blazing. I sometimes watched where we'd been working from a safe distance. I'd watch as the agents struggled to remove our banners. They had to disconnect the cables, set up a large ladder and get climbing. There was this one time the wind moved our banner, making it look like it was running away from them. It was hanging on a loop, so it could move like a dozen or more metres. It was so funny. Many other people stopped and watched them from a distance as well. Whenever they removed a banner, we hung a new one after a few days. They probably wanted to know how we did it, but we were never caught', Szadkowski adds.

The Security Service began suspecting who the perpetrators could be, resulting in a wave of arrest a few weeks later. Szadkowski was also apprehended and interrogated. The situation was becoming more and more dangerous. At one point, Szadkowski's interrogator, Jan Dworak, began waving his pistol in front of his face. But when the Security Service began accusing him of things he had no part in, it became obvious that the agents had no idea that the banners were Szadkowski's doing. In addition to hanging banners, he was also involved in printing flyers and occasionally also the local *Azyl Wojenny* (Wartime Asylum) and *Koniński Biuletyn Informacyjny* (Konin News Bulletin)

magazines, in addition to several other publications. In the mid-80s, he also began printing the Robotnik (lit. Worker) magazine, and was the contact between the head of the Regional Management, Andrzej Stachowiak, and a courier for the Poznań underground. Szadkowski and Stachowiak became close friends in the 80s, during which they lived in the same workers' hotel.

'I was Stachowiak's personal contact with the National Commission in Gdańsk. Only he and I knew about this. And with regard to Poznań, a girl would regularly come down here whose name I didn't even know, and she didn't know mine. We would meet several hundred metres from the train station. I would give her a small tube or envelope, which she usually put in her sleeve or, in the summer, in a cloth bag, and we would part ways. It was over in a matter of minutes. Stachowiak was well connected when it came to other regions, and sometimes used me as his contact when communicating with other cities', Szadkowski recalls. This state of affairs lasted until 1987.

Controlled Publishing

According to Przemysław Zwiernik's entry in *Encyklopedia Solidarności (Solidarity Encyclopaedia), Robotnik* was a magazine published from April 1984 to January 1988 and was under the complete control of the Security Service, which was behind the very idea of the magazine. Its purpose was to overtake the distribution network and means of printing and identify the underground members involved, their sources of funding and materials and the central underground authorities of Solidarity. Another aim was to inject Waldemar Piotrowski, codename Bronek, Zygmunt or Bogumił, into the editorial board and management of Konin's Solidarity. In 1986, this extremely dangerous and resourceful secret collaborators also infiltrated the underground Interim Regional Council of NSZZ 'Solidarity', and it was not until his flight to West Germany in 1988 that he revealed his allegiance to the Secret Service. In September that year, the 'Solidarity' Regional Coordination Commission in Konin published a statement in the *Solidarni – Konin* magazine in which it condemned Piotrowski's actions. Piotrowski died in a car accident in Germany in October 1988. The exact cause of the accident remains undetermined.

'That *Robotnik* was controlled by the Security Service became known only in late 1988. I thought it was all just rumours spread by the agents. After all, Waldemar was my father in law. I couldn't believe it', Szadkowski says. 'We were both in it from the start. I don't think he ever asked me any questions. He knew we'd set up a printing operation at my parents' house for a while. True, the girls at the workers' hotel did warn us once that there were agents on the way. Waldemar was there with us, printing. We hid the equipment in the other buildings. They couldn't find anything. Maybe it was to take him out of the suspect

pool? I dunno… Could he really report on his own family? No, I still can't believe it. Or, to put it in different terms… it's very difficult for me to believe. I know that, or at least that's what he told me, he was tortured during an interrogation once. They threatened to kill him or one of his family members. Maybe that's when they broke him and he agreed to collaborate. He once told me that he was afraid the Security Service would kill him. When he died in Germany, we were certain that it was the Security Service's doing', Szadkowski says.

Szadkowski himself continued his underground activism until 1989. He is now retired, but remains a member of NSZZ 'Solidarity', and meets up with his friends from the Company Commission regularly. The Regional Management appreciates his help. He has not kept in touch with his friends from the underground.

She Would Not Be Bought

A graduate of the AGH University in Kraków, owner of many patents related to glass manufacturing, glassworker Solidarity activist and delegate at the First National Convention of NSZZ 'Solidarity' Delegates. During the martial law period, she was one of the most active female press distributors in Kraków. During the seven years of her underground activism, Małgorzata Feill-Urbańczyk distributed tens if not hundreds of thousands of stamps, envelopes and postcards of the underground postal service, in addition to newspapers, books, songbooks and posters.

Born to an intelligentsia family in Maków Podhalański two years after the end of World War II, she was one of the three daughters of Joanna and Józef Feill. She still feels connected to her home village, even though she has lived in Kraków for the past half a century. Her paternal family migrated to Poland from Austria in the 17th century, and its subsequent generations chose to assimilate into Polish society. After World War II, Feill-Urbańczyk's parents were not involved in any underground activities. Her father was a lawyer, head of the Borough Court in Maków Podhalański, and was arrested by the Security Service in the early 50s for refusing to give in to its demands when sentencing a former Home Army soldier. He was disbarred as a result, and when the disbarment was revoked, he was banned from sentencing, which forced him to become a defence lawyer.

'After he was released, father became withdrawn. He never spoke to anyone about what happened. He'd probably seen some things, as the saying goes. I can't remember how long he was locked up', says Małgorzata Feill-Urbańczyk. 'We were poor because father couldn't find any work for some time. He eventually got a job as a cashier in a small wood industry cooperative. Our grandmother supported us, because mum wasn't working either.

Małgorzata Feill, both as a secondary school student in Sucha Beskidzka and as a student at the AGH University, was not involved in any political activism. The student

protests of 1968 did nothing to influence her choices either, and neither did the strikes of 1970, although by then she had realised that she was living in an occupied country. Still, she did not think that liberation was possible, and in her view, not even Karol Wojtyła being elected pope could change that.

Not About Her 'Bottom Line'

The July strikes that shook Świdnik and Lublin and the August strikes that swept across the Coast and other parts of the country inspired her, just like they did hundreds of thousands of other people, to become involved in a trade union. She joined one immediately, helping establish a Solidarity union at the Institute of Glass and Ceramics, where she'd been working from 1970. Not long after, she was promoted to the head of the Factory Commission. 'I was head of production back then. The management tried to convince me to leave Solidarity. They wanted to buy me with a lot of money, a raise and a promotion. But I told them that I wasn't concerned about, to put it in colloquial terms, 'my bottom line', because I was doing fine, I was concerned about other people and Poland', she says.

Urbańczyk was an active member of the union during the sixteen months of Solidarity's legal existence. As a member of the National Glass Industry Commission for OHS, she revolutionised how work was organised in glass manufacturing plants. Thanks to her and the commission's efforts, more than a dozen directors who neglected worker safety standards were dismissed. 'We were all absolutely thrilled because we knew that we had to change Poland. We went hard at it. True, at the back of our minds, we had those thoughts that our activism could end the same way as in 1970. But Solidarity was such a large movement that I never really thought I was in any danger', Feill-Urbańczyk recalls.

Underground Stamp Distribution

She was still asleep when martial law was declared. Only her sister's loud knocking woke her up. Her family all thought that Małgorzata had been apprehended, but she was only visiting her family village of Maków for a few hours. Almost immediately, she decided to head to a predetermined meeting spot 'in case things start to happen'. To her, staying in Maków would have been cowardice. From that moment on, her time was clearly split in two. She would spend eight hours at work. The rest of her time, including Sundays, was spent on underground activism. 'I don't remember exactly how my activism began. If it was distribution or painting posters that had "Solidarity" and anti-communist slogans

on them, like *Wrona skona* [lit. *The crow will die* – a reference to WRON – the communist Military Council of National Salvation]. I think it was painting after all', Małgorzata muses. 'I made stencils for "Solidarity" and other anti-communist slogans that were later painted on t-shirts. When the press and flyers began, I distributed them together with a couple of friends from my neighbourhood and parish. I think the newspapers came first, then the books. And later, the whole underground postal system – stamps, envelopes and post cards. It happened in Kraków, the region and across the country'.

The Wandering Eagle

In 1982, she decided to combine distribution with demonstrations – on 3 May, 11 November and the anniversary of the events of December 1970. She painted banners for those occasions, some of which are still in her possession. The most recognisable of her works is a 1982 banner adorned with a white eagle. The eagle is 'alive'. 'I made it myself. It's sewn on. I got the idea from my friend at the time, and later my husband, Franciszek Urbańczyk. Actually, he was the one who came up with it. We wanted to make a giant banner for really big marches, and our eagle survived the entire martial law period. We brought it with us whenever we marched in homage to the First Cadre Company [the precursor to the Polish Armed Forces], for example. It is with us every year during the workers' pilgrimage to Częstochowa, during the anniversary celebrations of the Warsaw Uprising in Powązki Cemetery, and it was there during the Masses for the Homeland celebrated by Father Jancarz in Kraków's Mistrzejowice, and in Warsaw's church of St Stanislaus Kostka. It witnessed the fight for the crosses in Włoszczowa [A 1984 protest of secondary school students against the removal of crucifixes from school classrooms], the rotating hunger strike in Bieżanów and the pilgrimages of John Paul II in the 80s. The banner survived to see Poland independent. The Security Service wanted to capture it on more than one occasion, but we never let them come close. It has come a long way, as it's travelled all across Poland. I took a lot of photos at those events, and the eagle is in them, including those from the final pilgrimages of John Paul II and the Katyń Rally. It was even included in a school textbook in independent Poland. It's in a secondary school civics textbook from 2000'.

Małgorzata Feill admits that their activism was a bit reckless. Had she been arrested with those photos on her, they would have served as evidence against other people as well. Even attending a march was grounds for arrest, and consequently being unable to distribute underground magazines. 'But we were just so spontaneous in our actions that we never realised that the Security Service could arrest us', she explains. 'Like in Włoszczowa, when the school children were defending the crosses, we went there purely

on a whim with my future husband and several others. Just to defend the cross. The cross has always been sacrosanct to me. So our trip there was almost as natural as breathing. People came from all over Poland, mostly young people, but not just them. In situations like that, you meet new people really quickly. We still keep in touch with friends from those times. It's a miracle we didn't stumble upon any secret collaborator. Or when in 1985, on the first Palm Sunday after the death of Father Popiełuszko [Jerzy Popiełuszko, a Catholic priest assassinated by the Security Service for his anti-communist activism], my friends came up with the idea to get more people and go visit his home town. We made a huge palm the length of the entire coach. The driver had nothing against storing it inside, and we travelled with it across almost the entire country. Nobody stopped because of the palm. In short, we did such spontaneous things once in a while. And thank God that we only had a few missteps. Even though our group was a couple dozen people!'.

Małgorzata Feill's activism brought Poland closer and closer to freedom with each passing year. However, after 1989, the anti-communist underground was no more. 'Sadly, our big hopes for a completely free Poland, for a reckoning with its communist past, were dashed by Tadeusz Mazowiecki [The first prime minister of the Third Republic of Poland]. Also because of "Bolek", otherwise known as Lech Wałęsa ["Bolek" was Lech Wałęsa's secret collaborator codename assigned by the Security Service], Michnik [Adam Michnik, one of the leaders of KOR, now editor-in-chief of the *Gazeta Wyborcza* daily newspaper] and all his cronies. They started to parley with the communists. They divided Poland among themselves. Many of them privatised things for themselves. It's a shame that this lasted for almost a quarter of a century. But I hope that we will soon begin retaking our freedom. Our odds are good. I hope PiS [Law and Justice, the ruling party at the time of publishing] isn't scared of the liberal-leftist yammering'.

I Did My Part

The person who set Marek Kamiński, a member of the Przemyśl branch of Solidarity, on his political path was his aunt, Stefania Czaplińska – a Home Army veteran who remained an active member of the underground even after the war, including in the 1980s.

Even though Marek's father was an avowed communist, this did not prevent him from raising his son and two daughters in accordance with different principles than those which were officially promoted late into the 80s. His career also suffered when he had his children baptised in his local church, which resulted in Kamiński being transferred from the PZPR Voivodeship Committee in Rzeszów to a trade division in Przemyśl. When Solidarity was formed, he did not believe it could succeed, but nevertheless kept track of its progress.

Kamiński himself says that – although his aunt would give him history books – his ideological awareness was like that of a primary school student. 'I wasn't a boy scout, but I was an altar boy. I would sign up before Christmas, because that's when they would give us packages', he admits, adding that the real reason why he became an altar boy was because he had trouble with Latin in school. Besides, as a young boy, he preferred playing football to sitting in class. As he himself says, 'I was talented, but lazy'.

After graduating from primary school, he dabbled in various professions, before finding the printing industry, where he soon became a valued employee. Eventually, he was promoted to master operator, and that is when his life became his own. It was not until Solidarity came that he took a crash course on political and patriotic awareness, although the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 had also contributed to his political awakening. Just like many other people in Przemyśl, he watched as the Soviet forces marched through his city on their way to provide 'brotherly help'.

'I was sixteen at the time. I was sitting on the bridge near the Holy Trinity church, watching tanks being transported all day on platforms by the Soviets. And I was thinking to myself, why would friends attack a friendly country? They should be sending humanitarian aid, not tanks', Kamiński recalls. 'That's when it began to dawn on me. I knew

in a way that Soviet friendship was worth as much as those tanks. I never listened to Radio Free Europe, but I heard through the grapevine about the March protests, and that people were shot at two years later in Pomerania and on the Coast. But I didn't really care because I was completely uninterested in politics. Besides, when I got my job, I was convinced that talking about politics was pointless when there was only one party. They wanted me to join the PZPR. A friend encouraged me, promising that I'd be given a flat. I don't know where I got it from, but I used to say that I wouldn't join the red spiders. So he gave up after a while'.

Polish Honour

Kamiński's interest in politics was sparked by the worker protests that broke out in Radom and several other cities in 1976. He was 24 years old, and was financially stable by that time. The next stage of his political maturation came when Karol Wojtyła was elected pope, followed by his visit to Poland. 'I viewed that as a great honour for the Polish people. And for me as well', he recalls. 'Maybe it was unjustified, but I felt special. Special, but initially I didn't really view that as political, but purely religious. On the other hand, I believed that the pope had the strength needed to look after us, the little people. Irrespective of global politics, of Reagan or the Russkies. I knew that a Polish pope would be our advocate, that we wouldn't be so anonymous anymore. That's when I started to listen to Radio Free Europe. Perhaps I wasn't aware of it at the time, but there was a glimmer of understanding within me that I could self-determine, that the world could be different'.

Kamiński worked at a local division of a printing industry cooperative. It was there that Andrzej Tarczyński gave him his first underground magazines. First came *Robotnik*, followed by other newspapers, as well as brochures, which he distributed himself. He became an avid listener of RFE's political programmes. 'My conversations with Andrzej really sent me down the path of politics. That is when my brain began to expand', Kamiński recalls. 'I began noticing the social inequality around me. The terribly low wages that many people earned. The poverty. The shortages. The appalling disrespect towards workers. That's why, at the next general meeting of my cooperative, I agreed to join the board and tried to help people with social issues, which gradually helped me gain their trust'.

Real Alliance

The strikes, first in Świdnik and Lublin and followed by the Coast and Pomerania, also served to awaken the Przemyśl working class. During the July protests, Krzyszkof Mruk,

construction site manager at Przemyśl's Kazanów housing development, hoisted a white-and-red flag with 'Lublin' written on it, for which he was promptly laid off. In late August, the workers of the Municipal Transport Company went on strike. This was met with countermeasures on the part of the Security Service, but also forced the PZPR to engage in talks with the strikers and the workers of PKS [State Motor Transport] in Przemyśl and Jarosław. In August and September, strikes began erupting in more and more factories across the city and voivodeship, with a total of 40 companies being affected.

When NSZZ 'Solidarity' was officially registered, its company commissions began springing up en masse, including at Kamiński's 'Labour' Invalid Cooperative. In early October 1980, the company commissions formed the NSZZ 'Solidarity' Founding Committee of the South-East Region. Marek Kamiński eventually joined the regional management, as well as being co-responsible for its printed materials.

'People would come up to me and say, "Marek, form a union". Another friend of mine asked me, "Marek, wanna form a union?" So I responded, "Why not, but we need six people for the factory commission"'. Kamiński recalls. 'He had three people, and I had three, so that wasn't a problem. We went to the president of our cooperative and told him we wanted to form a Solidarity trade union. That was in October. And the president said, "Join one of the existing unions:. To which we responded firmly, "No, we're forming a Solidarity union!" And form it we did. It exceeded my expectations, because more than 80% of the people joined the union, including some PZPR members. Our Company Commission head was Andrzej Tarczyński, and I was the deputy head. But Andrzej resigned after two months, so I became the head, as well as a delegate for the General Convention of Delegates. I was out of my depth at first. I'd never dealt with financial and social issues before. Now I had to review the factory's finances, and its social programme. Thankfully the social stuff was handled by the social department. In any case, I had to deal with things I knew nothing about, and take another crash course on quick thinking. I thought I'd lose my sanity, but the people who were specialists in the field at the cooperative helped us a lot. The financial department, but also others as well. That's when solidarity emerged – with both a capital and a lowercase "s"'.

Solidarity With a Capital and a Lowercase 's'

Meanwhile, factory commissions began receiving union magazines from other regions, including the farthest reaches of Poland. Uncensored books also began to appear, dealing with such subjects as history, economics and literature, presenting knowledge which had hitherto been banned. Solidarity activists reached out to people. The people began learning about the country and its problems. For the first time, an alliance was

formed between workers and farmers, something that the communists had been touting, but had never actually existed. Now, members of Solidarity from urban areas would meet with their friends from rural branches of the union. The Soviet occupation of Poland and the need for its liberation was becoming a frequent topic of discussion. This became a concern for the Soviet-appointed members of the PZPR, ZSL and SD [*Stronnictwo Demokratyczne* – Democratic Movement, another satellite party of the PZPR]. Solidarity activists were beaten and killed, and the communist government launched a campaign aimed at quelling social unrest, all while staging many provocations, the most notable of which took place in Bydgoszcz.

'Everyone was excited by what was going on. Some began dreaming about a free Poland. Even though the communists halted supply shipments, blaming it on Solidarity, the workers were full of optimism', Kamiński says. 'I travelled around the region, explaining to people how to build strong organisations, how to defend against the communist government. And the people were receptive. But then the Bydgoszcz Affair came – some of our members were beaten, so some union members called a general strike, but the national management of Solidarity was against it. We were also ready for a general strike. It was a massive mobilisation. The strike being called off robbed us of the joy. People were saying things like, "They, the management of Solidarity, can't protect us if push comes to shove. The high-ranking members are in cahoots with the government". That was the perception. From then on, we had less trust in the management of Solidarity. Some 20% of our region's members left the union. We lost the joy that came with building a new Poland, a new hope. It became more difficult to convince new people to join. The euphoria just wasn't there anymore. It was like a splinter that you couldn't get out. I'd bring and distribute various bulletins from the Regional Management, but fewer people wanted to read them. People became distrustful. We couldn't recover after the Bydgoszcz debacle. That's when many people stopped thinking about freedom. Me included. I was still active, of course, maybe even more so than before, trying to convince people that Bydgoszcz was a temporary setback, but I no longer had the spark of creativity within me. The spark of building a new Poland. It only came back when they declared martial law'.

At the Stone Bridge

On and after 13 December, several factories in Przemyśl and the region came out on strike, but the militia and army pacified and broke up any demonstrations. Realising their futility, the Solidarity Company Commission decided to call off all strikes. The leaders of the few demonstrations that did take place were arrested. For Marek Kamiński, martial law being declared came as a complete surprise. Even when one of his neighbours came

over to tell him about tanks on the streets, his first thought was that the old woman must have misheard something. Only when he saw armed soldiers patrolling the streets of Przemyśl did he realise that she had been telling the truth. He left a note for his wife, who was out of town, and headed to the Regional Management Office. The rooms had been ransacked, and the equipment had been smashed or stolen by the Security Service. On Monday, 14 December, after reaching an agreement with the Company Commission, he called a strike at his cooperative. The Solidarity money box was emptied, and one of the workers, Stefania Borowska, made white-and-red armbands for the striking workers. Borowska was disciplinarily discharged as a result, while Kamiński was accused of a petty crime – stealing the money box – for which he was quickly summoned before a court. The judge, Jerzy Galanty, did not find him guilty and cleared him of the charge, however, drawing the ire of the communists.

'I went straight to the factory, but the doorman said, "Marek, get out of here, there are agents everywhere". So I went to the Regional Office. I walk in. Everything's in a shambles. The agents smashed the machines and equipment and left. Some people from the Regional Management, those who hadn't been interned, came as well. Including both Ryszards, Głowacki and Bukowski, and Staszek Żółkiewicz. We took whatever was left to the Franciscan church, including the Solidarity banner. We met up in the boiler room of a housing cooperative. There was ten of us, I can't remember all the names, but we had Wojciech Kłyż, deputy head of the Regional Management, Marek Pudliński, Ryszard Bukowski, Zygmunt Majgier, Stanisław Żółkiewicz, Krzysztof Prokop and Stanisław Trybalski. And we decided to form an underground NSZZ 'Solidarity' Regional Management. We sent out a communique in early January to announce its formation. We divvied up the tasks and got to work. I handled the propaganda and underground printing. We then went to Bishop Antoni Tokarczuk. We told him about our decisions. He was very welcoming, and he kept looking out for us. He immediately appointed a representative, the amazing Father Krzywiński, saying, "Treat him like he's me". And true enough, Father Stanisław turned out to be excellent. Our terrific advisor and confidant'.

A major event in the history of Przemyśl and the region was a demonstration organised on the first anniversary of the declaration of martial law, organised by the Interim Coordination Commission of NSZZ 'Solidarity'. The demonstration, known as the Demonstration at the Stone Bridge, became a symbol of Przemyśl's struggle against the communists for many years. The event was covered by underground newspapers in Poland and abroad. ZOMO units brutally dispersed the several thousand-strong crowd, drawing no distinction between the protesters and people leaving the nearby cinema and commuters. Several dozen people were arrested, and more than 40 were given fines by the magistrate court.

I Would've Been Useless Without Them

Thanks to the support of the Przemyśl church and its Franciscan priests, the local anti-communist underground was thriving. The Working Class Ministry was established, informally at first, before becoming official. Its members include two lawyers. The underground activists reached out to the interned and imprisoned members of the region's Solidarity union, offering spiritual and financial support for their families. A regional magazine was established, originally titled *Nie* (No) before changing its name to *Busola* (Compass), with Marek Kamiński as one of its editors. These efforts were all coordinated by the Secret Regional Executive Commission. The ministry also offered education. A library of uncensored books was maintained, which also contained films banned by the censorship office. Contact was made with Father Edward Frankowski, the founder of the rapidly developing Centre for Christian Culture in Stalowa Wola, which later became the Social Ministry College. Kamiński established relations with several other regional managements across the country for the purpose of underground press distribution, as well as for organising hiding places for those members of the underground who were pursued by Security Service and military intelligence agents.

'I need to mention several people who helped me almost every day', stresses Kamiński. 'First of all, my wonderful wife, who fell ill during the martial law period. And Auntie Czaplińska, who could get us anything we needed – paper, a flat, she was a courier. It would be impossible to list everything she did for us. The Andrzejczyks, the teachers – they hosted our meetings in their flat. The people from the prayer groups. The Kiczan sisters. Doctor Stabiszewski, a Ukrainian – his help was invaluable. I'd go to him whenever I had a problem. If I needed to shelter someone at the hospital, he was happy to help. A fantastic person. He found us flats where we could hold meetings. We'd have been nothing without people like that. I'd have been useless without them'.

The People Are Recovering

Marek Kamiński was arrested while he was operating a printer in September 1985. He spent thee months in jail in Jarosław and Przemyśl, before being released conditionally thanks to the support of his employer. Still, he continued his underground activism and remained a member of his clandestine Solidarity cell. In January 1989, the Secret Regional Executive Commission of NSZZ 'Solidarity' decided to leave the underground and reveal itself. The local voivode was informed about the fact, and union members commenced official activities. At the time, the commission was made up of Stanisław Baran, Zbigniew

Bortnik, Ryszard Buksa, Zygmunt Majgier, Edward Opaliński, Stanisław Trybalski and its head, Marek Kamiński.

‘I never expected to live long enough to see Poland free’, Kamiński says. ‘I thought that communism was too powerful. But it turned out it was all just appearances. The grand parades organised in Moscow to celebrate the October Revolution were supposed to scare the satellite states into submission. But it was a paper tiger. It only took a few years for Reagan to beat them, thanks to the arms race. The Soviets couldn’t handle it, even though they siphoned a lot of wealth from their own people and the countries they were occupying. A lot of money went into that paper tiger. Perestroika was their salvation. And so the bubble burst. It’s obvious that we made significant contributions to the fall of communism. When they sat down to talk with the communists at the Round Table, I was all for it. I believed that a bloodless transfer of power was the most important thing. And then? Then the people were betrayed by those we had chosen. You could say that it was a symbolic repeat of Bydgoszcz. But it lasted many years. It’s only now, in 2015, that the people are starting to recover’.

In 1989, Marek Kamiński was elected deputy head of the South-Western Regional Management of NSZZ ‘Solidarity’, a position he held until 1991. He was also a member of the National Commission, and for several years served as a councillor of the Podkarpackie Voivodeship Sejmik, running as a member of the Solidarity Electoral Action party. He is currently retired.

One out of Ten Million

Jakub Chmielewski never stood out from other members of Solidarity, but he was consistent in his efforts to bring about an independent Poland. It is thanks to people like him, those who constantly risked their safety, that we won our freedom.

Both of Chmielewski's parents were Home Army soldiers who fought in the Piotrków area. Even though he was born two years after it ended, the war left its mark on young Jakub. When he was several years old, he tried to disarm an unexploded shell, an event that left him short two fingers. His parents, who had been raised Catholic and raised their son in the same faith, had a little farm. The mother took care of their four children, while the father also made money on the side as a government clerk. The moment the family came into possession of a radio receiver, they began listening to Polish-language programmes broadcast by Western stations. To the young boy, the radio was his personal university, complemented by his parents' tales of pre-war, independent Poland. They all believed that the Soviet occupation would soon be a memory.

In the 1960s, Jakub Chmielewski graduated from a mechanical vocational school and found work at the enormous Masovia Refinery and Petrochemical Plant in Płock, commonly referred to as the Płock Petrochemical. The corporation hired more people than the population of some counties. The young man began working in his trained profession as an automation specialist. After being transferred to Gdańsk in 1971, his conversations with eyewitnesses taught him the truth of the communist crimes on the Polish Coast. Chmielewski took part in his first strike in Płock in 1976. He was already married then. He had a daughter. His son was born before August 1980.

Codename 'Kuba'

The atmosphere at the Płock Petrochemical plant was becoming heated as early as July 1980, with people being inspired by the demands of factories from Świdnik and

Lublin. The Security Service agents operating in the city and assigned to the company were working to 'secure' the plant from 'hostile elements'. Chmielewski was at the time a respected member of the CRZZ (Central Council of Trade Unions), the only trade union accepted by the communist regime. Soon, however, he became a co-founder of Solidarity.

'We went on strike in early August, but it was half-hearted, it kept fizzling out and restarting', he says. 'In mid-August, some of my CRZZ friends and I decided to convene a meeting of the Company Petrochemical Project Office regarding the Lublin strikes. Together with my friends from what we called the small automation department, we began encouraging people to list their demands. But we were in over our heads because every department, and there were a lot of them, had its own. As the situation on the Coast unfolded, the tensions in the factory increased. We sent a few colleagues to learn what the demands were in Gdańsk. The boys came back with a list of 21 demands. So we decided to convene a founding meeting and secede from the CRZZ. We spent a night writing a makeshift charter. And we were immediately confronted by the Security Service, which we called combine security. Around that time, a guy from the telecommunications company came over to install a phone in our house. We'd been asking for that for years. So we had no doubts that the Security Service was eavesdropping on us at home too'.

And indeed they did. Chmielewski was given the codename 'Kuba' (Jake), and according to Security Service documents, he was 'subjected to operational surveillance as a member of NSZZ 'Solidarity' and organiser of protest and strikes on factory premises'. 'Several days before martial law was declared, I was staying at the Solec hotel in Warsaw with a few colleagues from Płock. I met with Wałęsa. I told him in secret that nothing would stop them from declaring a state of emergency', Chmielewski recalls. 'The General Meeting of Delegates was about to start at the time. I told him about that and urged him to call a regional management election. Some said I was spreading panic, others called me a provocateur. All because I said that we'd either become a strike committee and remain on the premises, or we'd have to let them arrest us'.

Several hours later, the members of the Płock branch of Solidarity were arrested and taken to an internment camp in Mielęcin. Chmielewski was among those interned, Almost immediately, Chmielewski was offered a deal by the Security Service. They threatened to harm his wife and children, but 'Kuba' rejected their offer. Together with dozens of other activists, he remained in internment in Mielęcin and Kwidzyn until the end of November. He was only given leave for several days, during which SB officers tried to force him to collaborate. When he refused, he was told that he would 'rot in prison'. 'Kuba' was well aware of what the communist agents were capable of based on his recent experiences under martial law, as well as being forced by the prison guards and ZOMO to run a gauntlet after an inmate protest against being denied visitation rights. Some 80 people were savagely

beaten in Kwidzyn, and nearly half of those continue struggle with the injuries to this day. Chmielewski himself was left with several dozen bruises which took several weeks to heal.

After being released, he spent months looking for work. He was also once again put under Security Service surveillance due to being 'suspected of continuing his hostile political activism'. This time, he was given the codename *Strzelec* – Shooter. According to Chmielewski's Security Service file, 'the surveillance involved correspondence inspection, phone tapping and regular status reports'. Eventually, he began working for the episcopal aid committee based in the parish of St Joseph the Worker. He also joined the underground, distributing newspapers and working as part of an underground cell of Solidarity, in addition to being an official member of the Catholic Intelligentsia Club. For this, Chmielewski was once again subjected to harassment, inspections and interrogations. The Security Service kept trying to convince him to collaborate.

'I couldn't give in. I knew that I had my parents' will to execute, which was to fight for a free Poland', Chmielewski says. 'Yes, there were times when I felt down, it was rough. Under martial law, I had doubts, I was anxious, fearful. It was a battle between free and communist Poland. There were moments when I was worried about my family, especially my children. I sometimes felt my life was in danger, but fear has a way of turning people into heroes, so I didn't give up'.

A Duty Fulfilled

To many activists, working in the underground became routine. It felt mundane and no longer heroic. 'In 1988, the Płock regional branch of Solidarity began the process of its legalisation. Three of my friends, Zenon Tomczyk, Józef Algrzym and Sylwester, whose last name I can't remember, sent a letter to the management that said that Solidarity was commencing legal operations', Chmielewski recalls. 'A few others and I believed the people who'd been chosen at the last General Meeting of Delegates in 1981 should automatically be considered Solidarity's legal representatives. But that didn't happen. Two new regional managements were formed. They were hostile towards us. We'd worked for charity institutions, so they called us thieves and Security Service collaborators. So we kept a low profile. The two founding committees began fighting. It took them a while to reach an agreement'.

Chmielewski joined the local government as a councillor, soon becoming the deputy head of the legislative body of Płock – serving as his voivodeship's marshal. Although he did not contest the arrangements made at the Round Table, the proposals of Tadeusz Mazowiecki's government were a major disappointment. He wanted to resign in protest, but was dissuaded by his friends from Solidarity.

Chmielewski graduated from Warsaw University during his term, and made an attempt at a parliamentary career, although he did not receive enough votes. Chmielewski then returned to his home company, whose name was now Orlen. He retired six years later, though not entirely, as he still works in his trained profession at a private record company. 'I feel that I have fulfilled my duty to my parents, I have executed their will. I considered it my duty to my children and grandchildren. I think that, as far as my mission is concerned, my wife and children deserve a lot of praise. I wanted Poland to be truly free, to be completely free from Soviet influence. And I am content, because despite all its problems, Poland, especially now, is headed in the right direction. Of course a lot of this is thanks to human effort, and I bow before our people. Because the politicians haven't always performed as well as they should have. I am impressed by our society's resourcefulness, hard work and patience in the face of great austerity. With God's help – we will win. Although many may not like that fact that we're growing in significance in Europe'.

What's a Sit-in?

‘When the strike was called at the ‘Stalowa Wola’ Metalworks in 1980, I didn’t know what a sit-in was’, says Wiesław Wojtas, one of the most prominent underground Solidarity activists in Stalowa Wola.

‘Back in primary school, I once said that in 1939, Poland had been invaded by Germany and the Soviet Union. I’d known that from my parents, particularly my father’s conversations with his friends. So my mum was called to school, and she said, “But that’s true”, to which the teacher said that was not part of the curriculum’, Wojtas recalls.

Leaderless

He was thirteen when the communists committed the massacres on the Coast and in Pomerania. When strikes broke out in Radom and Ursus, he was nineteen. But as he himself says, ‘I was oblivious to the significance of the strikes of 1976. My life was like, home – work, work – home. I did rebel, true, but in secret’.

The strike at the ‘Stalowa Wola’ Metalworks began in July 1980. The Tools Department went on strike on 17 July, followed by the Mechanical and Smelting Departments. This lasted for a week, with only minor interruptions. Several other factories in Stalowa Wola and the rest of the region also went on strike, their demands revolving primarily around pay. When the workers received their raises, the strikes ceased for nearly a month. Even though the Gdańsk Shipyard called a strike in August, nobody at the Stalowa Wola plant joined in. Only the publishers of the underground magazine *Spotkania* (Meetings), including Janusz Bazydło and Janusz Krupski, declared a hunger strike at the church of the Virgin Mary, Queen of Poland.

‘I was still working at the mechanical department back then. We went on a short strike in July, and also in late August’, Wojtas recalls. ‘Jerzy Garejczuk, the manager, came to us and asked why we were sitting in front of the factory and not working. He started yelling at us. I was sitting fifth from the manager. He came up to each of us with an angry

expression, and with a tone that brooked no argument, he asked us, "You going back to work?" One colleague said yes. The others gave the same answer. I was the first to say "No". And everyone after me also said no, imagine that. I broke the fear barrier. But the strike was short. It lasted for one day. Only the first and second shifts went on strike. We were leaderless. Not every department joined in. The guys just dispersed. The next day, I went to the factory clinic, where I met the foreman, Józef Iskra. He says to me, "Wiesiek, they want to fire you. They've already let four people go". I went to the plant and, true enough, four people had been let go. They wanted to fire me too, but I dragged it all out for two weeks, and by that time the Gdańsk Shipyard had gone on strike'.

From Election to Election

After the signing of the Gdańsk Agreement, the workers of the 'Stalowa Wola' plant began to organise. Workers' committees were established, protected by a nascent independent and self-governing trade union, though it was not yet called Solidarity. Wiesław Wojtas quickly became involved in the organisation efforts.

'My refusal to work in July earned me the respect of the workers', Wojtas recalls. 'People would come up to me, saying that we had to form a trade union. So I told them we would. I called a department meeting and we voted on a new Department Commission. We then reached out to the other departments. I chose four people, and the people from my department said, 'You should also be on it'. So they elected me as well. I was 23 at the time, so I felt kind of dumb competing against older people. We were three departments in total. We formed a joint union and elected Wiesław Główka as our leader. But later, he got promoted to the Company Commission, so we called another election. There were five candidates. Someone representing the workers stood up and said, "I'd pick that one over there", and pointed at me, because he didn't even know my name. And so fifteen hundred people voted for me. When we began forming Solidarity in late October or early November, another election was called. There were 13 candidates running for head of the Department Commission. The communists had their own candidate, who later turned out to be an informant. But I got 970 votes. And he got… twenty. And so I became the head of Solidarity at the Z-2 plant. The union had 1100 members'.

For Wiesław Wojtas, the sixteen months of Solidarity's legal existence were a course on management, negotiating and social psychology all in one. The first order of business for the union was to curb the corruption at the plant. It had been discovered that it was common practice to exploit the plant's workers and force them to work on the management's private projects, including house construction, gardening and car repairs. 'I became involved in it, but I was a grinder, not an office clerk. I didn't know how to write

an official letter', Wojtas says. 'Zenon Wróblewski, who was a master craftsman, taught me how to do it. Those sixteen months were all about hard work. I had to learn everything. Today, I would call it raising my patriotic awareness. But I wouldn't have called it that back then. I didn't realise I was building a country, leading it to freedom, maybe even independence. No, not yet. It was an evolutionary process for me. I had to slowly mature to that level'.

Lots of Underground Work

To Wojtas, the declaration of martial law came as a surprise. When two polite, if slightly nervous militiamen visited him at night and wanted to take him to the station, he did not resist much. Although the militiamen insisted that his interrogation would be short and he would soon be able to go home, they also advised him to dress warmly. It was only at the militia station that Wojtas realised that the situation was serious, as he not only saw two of his colleagues from the Factory Commission, but also the region's head. More than 70 people from Stalowa Wola were interned that night, as well as nearly 200 from the rest of the region. Everyone was put in handcuffs and transported to a camp in Załęże. It was there that Wojtas learnt about martial law being imposed.

'I survived my internment quite intact, without any mental baggage. I didn't get into trouble. I wasn't afraid. I didn't get into any trouble with the other inmates or guards. True, the situation was difficult. It was my first time in prison. My pregnant wife was all alone. I was afraid something bad would happen to her. Besides, I just wanted to know about my baby, was it a boy or a girl? I was in a cell with Tadeusz Kensy, a lawyer from Rzeszów. He was a great companion. He taught me a lot. I owe him a great deal, I can't stress this enough. He would say to me, "You cannot give in. If you do, they'll destroy you! If you resist, you will be the one in charge, not them". I kept telling myself that, and it helped me through the worst of it. The same goes for the words of Bishop Tokarczuk and Father Frankowski. I looked up to them. It's actually thanks to them that our Solidarity survived the entire martial law period. They were very helpful. Not only did they do their own ministry, education and charity work, but they also actively spread the word of God and acted in accordance with it. They were our rock'.

After being released in April 1982, Wojtas resumed his activism at the factory and at regional level – but he was now in the underground. He worked together with his brothers, Tadeusz and Jerzy. The latter, who had also been interned, became involved in the publishing of the News Bulletin of the NSZZ 'Solidarity' Interim Company Commission of the Stalowa Wola Metalworks Industrial Combine, as well as being responsible for printing flyers and other underground publications. His wife gave birth to a baby girl.

'At first, they tried to fire me from the plant, but the director, Bolesław Sujecki, was a decent man, and I think he was the one who protected me', Wojtas recalls. 'After I was released, I worked on expanding our underground cell. We already had members doing work and paying their dues. We had 300 people from our department alone. I was responsible for the Stalowa Wola printing workshop. Many people worked at Father Frankowski's ministry and in other organisations. Stalowa Wola was unique in that respect. But the Security Service wouldn't leave us alone. From time to time, they'd have us arrested for 48 hours, on Saturday and Sunday, just to spite us. I was also often called to the manager or director's office, and there would be agents sitting inside, trying to get me to talk. I would sit down, they would talk at me and I'd stonewall them. My wife was very brave. They bullied her psychologically, but she didn't give in. We had several children, and it took quite a bit of effort to look after them when I was barely home. It often went like this: at night I printed, came home at six, took a shower, shaved, had breakfast and went to work. Then I'd attend a meeting or go to get more paper. In short – lots of underground work. It all lasted for seven years'.

As a result of the wave of repressions that began in October 1982, Wojtas was forcibly conscripted and assigned to a penal unit stationed in Czerwony Bór. Still, his connections enabled him to continue his underground activism at the plant. An important part of the daily schedule was the programmes broadcast by the underground *Radio Solidarność* station, which was run by other union members.

'As years went by, the underground work became routine. We distributed underground newspapers, collected dues and sold books and postage stamps. There were times when we'd print, cut out and package forty thousand flyers in a single night. But more and more people quit as the years went by. They dropped out', Wojtas says. 'One day, I decided that we had to do something spectacular to stir the people. I think it was in 1985 or the year after that when I came up with the idea to hang a huge banner at the gate that said, "Solidarity endures". At the entrance to the plant. So that thousands of people could see it. Those who were leaving after their morning shift and those who were going in for their afternoon shift. I did it with Wiesław Turasz. It was a success. The effect was that the banner became a topic of conversation among people for several months. That's what we wanted'.

Although the Stalowa Wola underground was gradually becoming stagnant in its activism, it was not about to give up. Despite all the harassment, arrests and threats, the organisation expanded to encompass the entire city and region. Many members of the underground joined the plant's workers' self-government and the Workers' Council. In the summer of 1987, the workers established their own NSZZ 'Solidarity' Founding Committee, with Wiesław Wojtas as its chair. The committee went public, filing a registration request at

the Tarnobrzeg court. Predictably, the court rejected the request, and the Security Service launched a mass repression campaign against the Solidarity underground.

‘I thought our struggle would last around ten years. I was elected to be on the Workers’ Council. Many of our people from Solidarity also got in. They could gain experience. Now we could learn about how the plant was managed, which became useful when Poland eventually regained freedom. As part of the council, we could fight for our guys. I was ready to do it for a long time. No rush. By way of evolution. It wasn’t like I suddenly became politically mature. I was slowly maturing politically. I was learning about the people and the country, and as the years went by I realised that what I was doing was essential to the country. I finally realised that I was doing it all so the country could be free. The country is free today. You can speak freely at the restaurant table, or wherever you want. Without looking over your shoulder to check if there aren’t any agents around. And nobody will arrest you for what you say or think. You are free’.

After 1989, Wiesław Wojtas became an entrepreneur.

Consequences of the Round Table Arrangements

When she was in primary school and throughout most of secondary school, Barbara Hejcz was completely uninterested in politics. A possible reason was that both she and her one year younger sister were sheltered from it by their parents, who themselves had suffered much at the hands of the German and Soviet occupiers.

As early as September 1939, near Sopoćkinie (modern day Sapotskin, Belarus), the Soviets killed Hejcz's great-uncle, General Józef Olszyna-Wilczyński, commander of the 3rd Corps District with its headquarters in Grodno, who began his career as a member of the 1st Brigade. Her other grandfather also fought against the Soviets in 1920, and later also against the Germans. In 1944, Hejcz's father, a guerrilla fighter, was captured and forcibly conscripted by the Red Army, and spent the rest of the war fighting the Germans alongside the Russian forces. His younger brother was fortunate to be too young to be conscripted, but was sent to a labour camp in Kaluga several months later. Although the family cultivated patriotic traditions and followed the motto 'God, Honour, Motherland', the wartime lives of the grandfathers and parents were never discussed. It was only in university that Barbara Hejcz began to learn more about the patriotism of her family.

She Was Fourteen...

The Hejcz family arrived in Gdańsk from Wilno (modern-day Vilnius) in the mid-1940s. Barbara's father was an automotive technician by trade, and her mother was a radiographer. Due to her family's involvement in the Polish-Soviet War, the communist regime forbade her from going to university. Still, Hejcz's parents used their meagre savings to give their daughters an education in the humanities. The

family read literature, went to the cinema and theatre and attended music concerts. Despite the poverty caused by the communist system, the children never went hungry. They went on holiday and travelled around Poland with their parents, exploring the country's landscapes, and also visited other people's democracies. When she was still a teenager, Barbara Hejcz also went on formative trips and was a member of a young people's religious movement organised by the Pallotines, in addition to being a member of the Young Catholic Intelligentsia movement.

She was fourteen when the communists massacred the workers on the Polish Coast. Barbara's parents told her about the workers' discontent and protests, but not much besides. Only in the 80s did she learn that her grandfather and father had been interrogated by the Security Service. But that was it. Meanwhile, at school, she was taught Marxist ideology and military songs with such lyrics as 'The party, conqueror of Fascism, the party, our guide'. Her secondary school, referred to as Topolówka among the residents of Gdańsk, was akin to a military training camp in the early 1980s. The headmaster followed the mainstream. He ordered that his students either join the scouts or ZMS [the Union of Socialist Youth]. It was only later that it turned out that his true beliefs were different.

'It wasn't before I graduated from secondary school that I began to learn about the history of my country. And that was only because I'd met friends who were politically involved, older students from the Gdańsk University of Technology. They were already working with the Free Trade Unions of the Coast (WZZ) at the time', Hejcz recalls.

They Left Us at the Cemetery Gate

Two years before the events of August, she met several students from the Gdańsk Student Solidarity Committee who were also working with the Free Trade Unions of the Coast. Among them were Antoni Mężydło, Andrzej Stefaniak and Stanisław Śmigiel. By the time she enrolled at the Faculty of Education of the University of Gdańsk, she had already met the leading members of the Free Trade Unions: Borusewicz, Pienkowska and Walentynowicz. That is when she was taught Poland's true history. When Karol Wojtyła was elected pope, she began hoping for Poland's revival. In May 1978, she visited St Mary's Basilica, joining other people in prayer for the release of Błażej Wyszkowski, an athlete and activist who had been tortured and sentenced to prison by the communist regime. Hejcz helped distribute underground newspapers and books, including the student magazines *Bratniak* (Brotherly Help), *Indeks* (Student's Logbook) and *Robotnik Wybrzeża* (Worker of the Coast).

As a first-year student of education, before the events of August, she participated in the commemoration of the December 1970 massacre, although she never made it to the shipyard. As student representatives, Barbara Hejcz and Anna Gadziałowska intended to lay a wreath with a ribbon at gate number two. They knew that, similar to the previous year, the gate would be guarded by militiamen and Security Service agents. For this reason, they decided to use a taxi to transport the wreath to the student dormitories, which were off-limits to the Security Service, while someone else would transport the ribbon. Unfortunately, it would later turn out that one of the students was a secret collaborator. After collecting the wreath and driving several hundred metres, the taxi was stopped by the militia, and two Security Service agents got in. The two women were taken to a militia station in Gdańsk's Oliwa district and interrogated. The agents wanted to know where the ribbon was, as well as who was working with who. They wanted names. Hejcz and Gadziałowska were eventually placed in custody for several hours, before being forced into a militia car that took them to the local cemetery.

'It was a horrible experience. Like a horror movie', Hejcz recalls. 'They drove down side streets, almost pitch-black, without telling us where we were going. We reached Łostowicki Cemetery, and they led us uphill along some dark paths, looking for some grave. I was scared. Everybody knew that they routinely killed opposition activists. People went missing in mysterious circumstances. Nobody knew when or how. They could have shot and buried us at the cemetery and laid the wreath on our grave. But it was all for show. Eventually, they found the grave of that shipyard worker they'd killed in 1970. They said to us, 'Lay the wreath here, not at the shipyard. Why didn't you bring it here, where he is buried?' And so they gave us a talking to at the grave of the victim of 1970. As we were heading back, they said, "We know who you are, who is overseeing your group", and a few other things, but I was too stressed out to remember any of it. They threatened us, saying that if we continued to get involved in laying wreaths, "You can say goodbye to the university. You'll be kicked out". They were also very polite all the time. They kept calling us "miss". But not polite enough to give us a ride back to the city centre. They left us at the cemetery gate and drove away'.

Soviet Medal

From that moment on, Barbara Hejcz was on the Security Service's watchlist. The surveillance intensified when she began hosting meetings between the Free Trade Unions and such opposition activists as Jacek Kuroń and Jan Lityński at her flat. Those meetings were attended by leading Free Trade Unions activists from Gdańsk, including Anna Walentynowicz, Alina Pienkowska, Bogdan Borusewicz, Andrzej Gwiazda, Bogdan Lis,

Lech Wałęsa, as well as Błażej and Krzysztof Wyszkowski. In Security Service documents, she is referred to as a 'KSS KOR Activist'. The agents also interrogated her father, threatening to have him laid off if they 'continue to host such anti-socialist and anti-Polish elements'.

'Dad never really talked much, and when he came back from the interrogation, he only told me not to "get involved in such things, because you'll get in trouble". But I continued to do my thing, and father never said anything', Hejcz recalls. 'The Security Service people told him that bad people were visiting our house. Father knew that you couldn't argue with them, but one of them made him so angry that he said to him, "Do you know who I am? I served in the Red Army, I have medals". I think that must have stumped them, because they weren't sure if it was worth arguing with a Red Army soldier. So they left father alone. They never called him again'.

This Strike Will Change Things

Despite her opposition activism, the year 1980 and the August strikes took Barbara Hejcz by surprise. Thanks to her previous contacts with the opposition, the workers of the Gdańsk Shipyard treated her as one of their own. She was impressed by the scale of the strike, but did not realise that it was only the first stage in the fight for freedom.

'At first I didn't expect the strike to change anything', she admits. 'I'll never forget the moment I saw Jagielski [Mieczysław Jagielski, a communist politician], pale as a ghost, with a government delegation. They didn't know what was happening. He kept calling Warsaw for instructions. The longer the strike continued, the more hopeful we became that change was possible, that we could be free. During the strike, we did various things around the shipyard. We issued passes and made food. A lot of delegations came from all over Poland. They all needed a place to stay. I was working like crazy. I remember those advisors from Warsaw who loved to split hairs. I was most impressed by Andrzej Gwiazda. He was the most to-the-point'.

The end of the strikes and the signing of the accord with the communist also led to the formation of a new student organisation independent from the regime – the Independent Students' Association (NZS), with Barbara Hejcz as a co-founder of its Gdańsk University branch. Throughout the following sixteen months of freedom, she was an active member of the NZS [Independent Students' Association] and the student council, as well as collaborating with Solidarity in various matters.

'It was a time when you could say anything and enjoy complete freedom of speech', Hejcz says in summary of those sixteen months. 'Every project had to be fought for, but those battles made us grow. The government's answer was always "no". And they kept staging various provocations, goading us to call a general strike or bringing us to the cusp

of it. Like the Bydgoszcz provocation. There were constant scuffles. Solidarity activists were arrested for hanging posters or distributing flyers. I dealt with everyday student matters. I was also on the student council. So I had a lot to do. And I was also working on my master's thesis. On the one hand, we were doing good work at the university, we managed to force them to change a lot of things. But new strikes also kept breaking out, like at the Firefighting Academy and in Radom.

To Siberia?

Shortly before midnight, she was taken out of her reverie by someone knocking at the door. Two men in uniform and three wearing civilian clothes were standing in front of her house, their facial expressions indicating that they did not have good intentions. They asked her for her last name. After checking her documents, they said, 'Get dressed, please, you are under arrest'. To this, Barbara Hejcz asked, 'What happened?', to which they said, 'War'. She never received any official document regarding her internment. The men took her to the militia station in Pruszcz Gdański, where she also saw members of the Solidarity Regional Management and the National Commission. The agents rounded up several dozen people and transported them on lorries, without telling them where they were going. The convoy was headed towards Piaśnica Forest. It was a cruel joke on the part of the oppressors, as nearly every inhabitant of Tricity knew that Piaśnica Forest was a place of many executions by the Germans during the war.

'It was a horrible thought', Hejcz reminisces. 'I remember seeing a few trees, that we were driving through a forest. The car stopped in the forest. Our lorry was surrounded by soldiers armed with rifles. I was wondering if it was even possible to dig graves in frozen ground. I felt powerless. You could lose your cool and try to run, or submit. You could become cowed, like me. It was like I wasn't really aware of what could happen to me. Even though, from a rational point of view, I knew what was happening. My psychological reaction stemmed from my historical knowledge of what had happened in that forest during the war. And what had happened in the forests of Katyń. I think it was a deliberate attempt by the communists to instil that fear in us. When I got off the lorry, I glanced around me and saw the Strzebielinek prison facility in the distance. That put me at ease somewhat. After a while, I was taken to the jail on Kurkowa Street, then to the prison in Fordon, and soon after to Gołdap. Then the car finally stopped at a sign that said "Border area". I'm sure they wanted to frighten us by making us believe that we were being taken to Siberia'.

Liars, I Thought to Myself

Hejcz does not consider her stay in Gołdap to be a traumatic experience. The conditions were good, and she was interned with her own people – other Solidarity members. Still, the camp was a place of isolation, and so was a source of frustration and despondence. Hejcz was released in May 1982. She immediately resumed her underground activism and was soon arrested again. This time, she was taken to the much tougher facility on Kurkowa Street. She spent nearly a year in a cell with ruthless criminals who could become violent towards her at any moment. In addition, she was expelled from university during her imprisonment, and it was not until after the fall of communism that she could finish her degree. During the interrogations, the agents tried to convince her that her friends collaborated with the Security Service. This was partially true, as Barbara Hejcz would finally learn the identity of the informants in the 90s. One of the most prolific of all collaborators, codename 'Oskar', remains unidentified to this day, however. According to historians working for the Institute of National Remembrance (IPN), nearly 90% of all documents created by the Gdańsk Security Service and military intelligence division were destroyed.

After Hejcz was released from prison, she mostly focused on press distribution, in addition to spending several years as a contact between Bogdan Borusewicz and other underground activists. She was apprehended and her house was searched multiple times. During one of the interrogations, a Security Service agent tried to convince her that being a member of the underground was not worth the trouble, as her friends were already negotiating with the government. They claimed that Wałęsa had already made a deal with them.

'And I thought to myself, "Liars, how can they say such things"', Hejcz reminisces. 'But sadly, it eventually turned out to be true. They said that preparations for the Round Table talks were in full swing, and that I should collaborate. But my interrogation took a slightly different turn. They found magazines published by Fighting Solidarity in my flat during one of their inspections. And according to them, Fighting Solidarity was a terrorist organisation. "That's something people spend years in prison for", they said, "because this is terrorism, legally speaking, and even the international community doesn't want to have anything to do with terrorists". They thought they could scare me. When the Round Table talks began, I was actually happy. But I quickly realised that it was all a sham. That the NZS was not officially registered. That society was being manipulated when they had us vote again in the parliamentary elections. And that the privatisation was a scam, that the country's wealth was sold off for peanuts. And that there was no lustration. I think those times can be summed up with a story: Anna Walentynowicz had her own dedicated Security Service agent, his name was Zbigniew Kiewłen. He also arrested me a couple of

times. After 1989, I worked at the Shipbuilding School Complex. I was attending a teachers' meeting when I saw Kiewłen sitting next to me. He was a homeroom teacher from 1992 to 1995. I thought that must have been a mistake. But the headmaster said, "He's our new teacher". I was stumped. I told Anna Walentynowicz about it. She went to the headmaster to protest, but he said that Kiewłen was a good teacher and we could not fire him. Other teachers started to make fun of me, saying, "Look, history is coming". And my colleagues from the Solidarity Factory Commission called me vindictive, because everyone should get a second chance. So that was the result of the Round Table arrangements'.

In the Third Republic of Poland, Barbara Hejcz worked various jobs. At the beginning of the 21st century, she earned a master's degree from her former faculty at Gdańsk University. Today, she is a representative of the voivode of Pomerania for veteran community integration and coordination.

Extremely Dangerous

Józef Konkel was denounced by more than 40 agents. His daughter survived two kidnapping attempts. He was interned and arrested multiple times. But despite all this, he continued his activism, including under martial law. When he was finally able to access his Security Service file, he learnt that the communist regime considered him to be extremely dangerous to the system.

Born one year before the outbreak of World War II, he only has vague memories of it. Blurry images of running away from the Germans rounding people up, emotions associated with conversations, rather than their subject matter. But there was one event that seared itself into his memory – when his father was arrested by the Sępólno Krajeńskie Security Service in 1946 for working with the Home Army.

Childhood

'I remember mum bringing dad's bloody shirts back from the Security Office. He must have been badly tortured. But he never mentioned it', Konkel reminisces. 'And I also remember one more thing: the image of a 20-something guy, a wanted soldier of the former Home Army underground, my mum's sister's fiancé, who was shot by the KBW [Internal Security Corps] like a dozen metres from our house. Right in front of me, my mum and aunt'.

Fearing the Security Service, Józef's family fled from Sępólno Krajeńskie to Kartuzy, where his father, a watchmaker and goldsmith, opened a workshop, before moving to Rzeszów a short time later, in 1948. Soon after, Józef learnt that the brother of his mum, a police officer, had been killed by the NKVD [the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs of the USSR] in Ostashkov. 'I didn't go around telling everyone in the neighbourhood or at school about it, of course, but it was not a well-kept secret in our extended family', says Józef Konkel after all those years.

Early during his education, Konkel mostly looked up to his parents, grandfather and the aforementioned maternal uncle, who had been a police officer before the war. Another hero who fought for a free Poland was his mum's brother in law, Tadeusz Janik, a professional cyclist who was set to compete at the 1920 Antwerp Olympics. Unfortunately, the Polish team ended up not going due to the outbreak of the Polish-Soviet War, in which Janik also fought. Family members mentioned him often, especially since he was a talented sculptor and had an interesting personality.

Another person Józef looked up to was one of his primarily school teachers, last name Stankowski. They called him 'one of Anders's soldiers' [Władysław Anders, a Polish general who formed a Polish army that fought on various fronts throughout World War II]. It was thanks to him, among other people, that the young boy realised that a free Poland had to be fought for. 'But it was only after 1956 that I realised what communist Poland was really like', Konkel admits.

Adulthood

After graduating from primary school in 1952, Konkel began his apprenticeship at his father's workshop. He passed his journeyman's exams, and later also his master's exams in watchmaking, welding and machining, followed by his secondary school examinations. The government gave a display of its 'trust' in him by conscripting Konkel to the elite Red Berets unit in Bielsko-Biała.

'They went hard on the indoctrination, but I didn't really believe any of it', Konkel says. 'The daily lectures on Marxism were supposed to be formative. They really stressed how the Soviet Union was our friend. But half of the guys knew what the truth was anyway. None of us liked the Russkies, with some exceptions. We knew that the Soviet Union was a big fat lie, and that Poland was poor because of the Soviets, who'd been stealing from us all the time'.

In 1961, a year after leaving the army, Konkel got married. His first daughter was born three years later. Although freedom was a thought the newlywed has in his head, it was always in the background. He worked at his fathers 'capitalist' workshop, but eventually decided to work 'for the state', as the saying went among craftsmen at the time.

On the Workers' Side

'I found work at a power company. But I didn't last long', Konker recalls. 'They kicked me out because I thought our thirteenth salaries had been split unfairly. I then worked at the

Transbud construction business, but I didn't stay there for long either. In 1974, I worked as a master at the Land Development Company. I organised a strike there, even though I never said, "Go on strike". A few of the foremen came up to me and asked, "Master, what's going on, how is this fair?" Their pay was based on their performance, and management wanted to cut their rates. So I nudged them so that they would go on strike. I reported the strike to management. The director came over. The secretary of the PZPR Company Committee too. They told me to sit with them. But I didn't, because I said I was on the workers' side. So they fired me. I couldn't find any work for a while, but eventually I found an ad for a welder. Some time later, I got a job as a master at the Instal Industrial Installation Company'.

The oppressiveness of the communist regime forced Konkel to prioritise his family. Prices were on the rise, but factories refused to give pay raises. However, workers only displayed their discontent by complaining amongst themselves more or less openly. 'In 1970, a few departments of WKS Rzeszów [a local metallurgical plant] came out on strike', Konkel reminisces. 'But it was more of a quiet strike. The same goes for 1976. At Instal, we held meetings between the workers and management, but there were no major strikes'.

Sunny August

Józef Konkel was vacationing with his family when Gdańsk went on strike. He himself claims that there had been no signs that the worker protest would reach such proportions. However, since the late 70s, Rzeszów factories had been getting access to such underground magazines as KOR's *Robotnik* (Worker) and *Wolny Związkowiec* (Free Union Member), published in Gdańsk by the Free Trade Unions. Starting in 1978, workers at large factories in Rzeszów and Mielec were also secretly visited by Free Trade Unions emissaries from Gdańsk, Katowice and Warsaw.

'When we were on our way back from holiday in late August, we heard about the strikes while waiting at the train station in Gdynia', Konkel reminisces. 'That there had been some discontent. I learnt more about what was going on on the Coast from the BBC and RFE. We came back home, but Rzeszów was quiet. I went to the factory – also quiet. And it became especially unpleasant when Śląsk and Kraków came out on strike too, because train cars headed from those cities making a stop in Rzeszów had 'Rzeszovians are d*cks, not Poles. Signed: Kraków and Silesia' painted on their sides in huge white letters. That hurt a lot. A horrible feeling. Right… but none of us at the factory would make a move. After I came back, I went to the factory and saw some flyers on the ground. I asked the people, "Guys, why are you working?" Silence. So, together with a group of colleagues, we began urging the people working at Instal and other factories across Poland. Nothing. We called on WSK

Rzeszów, Zelmer Rzeszów and the Machine Factory in Leżajsk. Nothing again. I worked at the department of steel structures at the time. One of the foremen came up to me and asked, "So, what are we doing?" So I responded, "Think about it. I won't tell you what to do. I think you know what you need to do. I'm all for it, but it's up to you how you go about it". Those were the first things I said. And the work stopped'.

it Started with Gloves

'Our main demands were quite humble', Konkel admits. 'We didn't have enough protective gloves, and the ones we used had holes in them. Our jackets also had holes, as did the roads in front of the factory – the potholes were so big that you couldn't drive a battery truck over them. I think we also demanded that party and militia-only grocery shops should be abolished', he says. 'When we made a list, someone said, "We need to send a delegation to management and present them!" So I said, "I'll go with you". And so I became a co-organiser of the strike at Instal. A few of us went to the managers. I'm not going to lie, we were scared. We entered the office holding the list. They asked us, "What's going on?" So I responded, "We would like to speak to the management". They ran over immediately. They were really scared. At the time, we were the largest manufacturer of Polkomat liquid oxygen and nitrogen tanks, something heating plants can't do without. So we were also faced with a dilemma – can you leave people without heating? If we go on strike, if production stops, people will freeze, little children will freeze. So we were reasonable in our approach', Konkel adds. 'The people were divided. Some stopped, while others worked. But nobody argued. But back to our demands, we quickly got our gloves. New jackets too, and it was like the holes in the factory roads filled themselves', he reminisces.

Rzeszów Solidarity

After the signing of the August Accord and the establishment of Solidarity, workers, including former PZPR members and activists, began joining the union en masse. This was also the case at Instal, as well as other factories in Rzeszów and nearby towns. An NSZZ 'Solidarity' Regional Management was established in the city, and company commissions were formed in factories. The people of Poland began demanding that fundamental worker rights be respected.

'The union at Instal was very strong because we had more than five thousand members, out of six thousand employees. It suddenly turned out that people had a lot

of grievances', Konkel says. 'Especially regarding trips. Many workers went abroad for construction projects. But it was always the same people, usually party members. There were no defined criteria about who could go and who could not. We believed that we needed a fairer system. Company flats were also distributed unequally. Some people had to wait for more than ten years'.

'Eventually I was elected deputy chair of the Solidarity Factory Commission. I also joined the Regional Management and was a delegate at the General Meeting of Delegates. The people were fighting to bite off as much freedom for themselves as possible', Konkel summarises. 'And the government was unwilling to budge. An important event in the region was the Ustrzyki-Rzeszów strike against the refusal to register farmers' Solidarity. I was tasked with supplying food to those who were striking inside the Voivodeship Trade Union Council building. We had nearly 400 people striking for six weeks. We got a lot of help from farmers, both local and from other regions. They supplied us with meat. Workers from Instal gave us their regenerative soup rations'.

The strike ended on 18 February with the signing of an accord between the farmers and the communist authorities. 'During those sixteen months, both my wife and I worked hard', Konkel says. 'It was our attempt at breaking through the communist lies. To me, my actions were a step towards democracy. I thought to myself that maybe we could achieve something, but I never expected us to win back independence. To me, it was an important moment when we called on the countries of Central-Eastern Europe during the first Solidarity convention in Gdańsk. We convened a rally at the factory and passed a resolution calling on all workers in other countries to begin working towards democracy. When they interrogated me after martial law was declared, they accused me of wanting to break up alliances'.

Red Cloak

Józef Konkel was not surprised when martial law was declared. He had suspected that the communists would not be willing to share their power. In Rzeszów, similar to other cities, the arrests of Solidarity members began a few hours before twelve am. The Security Service came for him shortly before midnight, but he was not home. They came back several times, and Konkel was finally arrested by the Citizens' Militia and the Security Service in the morning.

'A couple weeks before they declared martial law, we began standing guard at night inside the Regional Management building to prevent them from staging a provocation or planting weapons or explosives. No measures were too vile for the communists', Konkel

reminisces. 'A few days before martial law, Anna Korzuch, Bortnik, Matuszczak, Loegler and a few others came over and we made what we called a map of the city, in four copies. We marked all petrol stations, militia and military checkpoints, hospitals and other important places in the city. We wanted not to feel powerless if something similar to what had happened in Gdańsk in 1970 was to take place. After all, there'd been talk of a general strike. Earlier, we stashed two tanker lorries' worth of petrol at the factory so we could refuel our cars and deliver news to people. When they interrogated me, they accused me of wanting to set fire to the city by throwing petrol bombs. They thought I wanted to overthrow the government using force. So when the agents came for me, the map had to be either hidden or destroyed. I managed to burn it in the heater. One of four copies still exists, and is stored in the IPN archives. The Security Service somehow got their hands on it'.

After his arrest, Józef Konkel was imprisoned in Załęże, similar to several hundred other Solidarity activists from the Rzeszów area. He was interrogated multiple times, as well as being accused of enticement to strike. The agents also tried to accuse him of trying to topple the government using violence. They tried to force him sign an oath of loyalty to the communist government. He refused. Konkel was released in late February for health-related reasons – much earlier than many other prisoners.

True Solidarity

'Three days after they released me, one of my friends from the underground came over, I think it was Michał Stręk or Zbigniew Sieczkoś. We talked for a bit, and he asked me how I was doing. I told him that I wasn't feeling great, but I hoped to be back on my feet in a few days', Konkel reminisces. 'He visited me again after a while, asking me to join the underground Regional Executive Commission (RKW). And so, in April 1982, I joined the clandestine RKW. It took a while before I went back to work at the factory because I got a long sick leave from our doctors. My friends at Instal gave us some money that the underground had collected for our family. Also, when I was in prison, Solidarity and the Church had been taking care of us. Of those who'd been interned and our families. So the solidarity was there'.

After joining the RWK, Konkel became involved in the underground, of which he remained a member until 1989, in addition to heading the Secret Solidarity Company Commission at Instal until 1988. He also established an underground printing operation and an entire underground press, book and stamp distribution network, which spanned construction sites overseen by Instal in Poland and abroad in East Germany, the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia. His activism did not escape the notice of the Security Service,

however. He was apprehended for 48 hours and interrogated multiple times, and his surveillance lasted until September 1989, six months after the partially free parliamentary elections.

'Rest' Thanks to the Security Service

'There were times when I was hardly ever home. I had my regular day job, and I did underground work until late in the evening, sometimes at night as well. There were times when our two daughters only saw their father once a week. Thank God and my wife Ewa, who was also part of the underground under martial law, that our daughters did not forget who we were', Konkel laughs. 'The RKW was made up of trustworthy people. It included Michał Stręk, Stanisław Łakomy, Zbigniew Sieczkoś, Janusz Loegler, Marian Krztoń, Jarosław A. Szczepański, and Marek Wójcik. We published our bulletin, *Informacje Wojenne* (Wartime News) and the MKR [Inter-company Workers' Commission] news bulletin *Solidarność Trwa* (Solidarity Endures). We got along great with factories from other voivodeships, including Warsaw, Wrocław and Kraków. We had a good relationship with the Church, particularly our bishop, Ignacy Tokarczuk, as well as the Bernardines, whose monastery was the headquarters of the Diocese Charity and Social Complex, which replaced the Committee for Assisting the Interned, Arrested, Imprisoned and Unemployed established in the early martial law period. Us Instal people made copier rollers and screen printing frames, which you could disassemble to make them easier to hide. A friend from Ropczyce brought us large amounts of cloth for screen printing, so we could share it with others sometimes. Some of my colleagues at Instal also built flyer launchers that shot flyers up to fifteen metres into the air. The posters and flyers were distributed around the factory and the city. We ran a printing operation at our factory. We printed *Solidarność Rzeszowska* (Rzeszów Solidarity), but also *Tygodnik Mazowsze* (Masovia Weekly) and *Tygodnik Wojenny* (Wartime Weekly) using reversal films delivered by couriers. Our cell organised marches and anti-communist demonstrations. In other words – there was stuff to do every day. All week, including Sunday. We only tried to get some rest it when it was a bank holiday. But… that would be an overstatement. The Security Service made sure we did. Whenever it was a communist public holiday, I was arrested for 48 hours. Whenever it was one of our holidays too. One year, they locked me up on May 1. I came back home for like an hour or two, and they locked me up again. This time because it was May 3'.

is Poland Free Yet?

This state of affairs lasted until 1989. Konkel initially embraced the Round Table talks, but quickly became critical, especially when he noticed the close ties some of the Solidarity activists had to the communist regime. The disappointment was offset somewhat by the near-total victory in the Senate elections and the total victory in the Sejm elections, of course within the 35% limit agreed upon at the Round Table. Still, it was a bitter pill to swallow when Solidarity agreed to a redo based on a specially prepared 'national list' of candidates, as only two communists had been elected as members of parliament in the first round of voting.

Despite being somewhat disillusioned by Solidarity, Konkel joined the Citizens' Committee in 1989, and helped form the Centre Agreement party. Later on, he focused on union and local government work, as well as heading the Regional Commission for Lustration and the Ujawnić Prawdę (lit. Reveal the Truth) organisation in Rzeszów. Konkel is currently an active member of the Association of Victims of Martial Law Repressions of Podkarpackie Voivodeship.

'When I was starting out as an opposition activist, I never expected that Poland could change so radically, that we could regain some semblance of independence', he says. 'I believed that the strikes that were becoming more and more common in the late 80s were mostly due to economic and not political reasons. I'm not entirely joking when I say that I was too busy to notice that freedom was actually coming. True, I became part of that new, crazy world, but I was increasingly dissatisfied with how fraudulent the privatisation was. With the fact that the communists were taking it all for themselves, and that the underground activists who'd been fighting for justice couldn't do anything to stop them. That we neglected election security for all those years. And then it turned out that there were nearly 5 million invalid votes in the 2014 local government elections. That was suspicious to say the least. It's evidence that the elections were rigged. There's no way that our society is so oblivious that suddenly, in 2014, people forgot how to cast a valid vote! Some may call me mentally ill, but as far as I'm concerned, Poland only became free on 25 October 2015'.

Dignity Restored

The martial law period ruined Sławoj Kigina's health. He suffers from a heart condition and diabetes, but has absolutely no regrets about his contributions to building Solidarity and his underground activism. But let's go back to the beginning.

Nothing ever pointed to Kigina becoming involved in politics. Throughout nearly the entirety of primary school, he was raised by his grandparents in the village of Januszkowice in the Podkarpackie Voivodeship. His main sources of knowledge about the world were the books he had to read for school and whatever he could find at the library. He did well in his village school, where the majority of boys spent less time studying in favour of working on their parents' farms. Kigina's grandfather instilled in the boy a sense of lawfulness and justice.

Shortly before graduating from primary school, he moved to the Lower Silesian town of Ziębice to live with his parents and three sisters, whom he barely knew. His mother was a housewife, and his father, the breadwinner of the family, had little interest in politics. He was not fond of the People's Republic of Poland, but neither was he fond of the Second Republic period, during which the family lived a poor life. He never really told his children about the time when Poland was free, that he listened to a Polish radio station broadcasting from London.

When a fourteen-year-old Sławoj Kigina was in the first grade of vocational school, his main concern was to learn a trade and go to work. His only hobbies were football and boxing, which he was obsessed with for nearly two years. He still remembers his training sessions at Sparta Ziębice, the club that trained the famous Olympic athletes Tadeusz Walasek and Marian Kasprzyk.

As a trained electrician, Kigina was soon contacted by the People's Army of Poland, which conscripted him in 1970 into a communications unit stationed in the West Pomeranian village of Dziwnów. For two years, he attended political classes which were supposed to teach him about the superiority of socialism over capitalism. Most importantly, however, he honed his skill at operating radio equipment, and it was while

illegally listening to radio Free Europe that he learnt of what had happened in Tricity and Szczecin in December 1970.

'Our unit was rapidly deployed to Wejherowo for a short while, so we were near Tricity', Kigina recalls. 'As usual, we were supposed to be on the lookout for NATO naval vessels and aircraft. We set up the radio station without our superiors knowing, and some of us began listening to RFE. That's when we learnt about what was going on in Gdańsk and Szczecin, that people had been killed and injured. We got straight-up afraid that they'd send us to pacify the demonstrations. To this day, I have no idea what I'd have done… We had our commander, our orders and… we'd have had to execute them'.

A Very important Six Months

The unintended effects of Kigina's education enabled him to more boldly step into his adult life as a worker. After being discharged in 1972, he found employment at the Dolmel factory in Wrocław, where – as he himself says – he encountered the big-city working class, which was made up of politically conscious workers, including those from the Pafawag locomotive factory.

'People were talking a lot about the socio-political situation. They discussed RFE news. Everyone spoke quite freely. I realised that you could publicly criticise the PZPR', he recalls. 'Those short conversations during breakfast gave me courage. They left an impression on me. I commuted from Ziębice to Wrocław every day. That was almost 40 minutes of education. People also commented on various political events on the train. Turns out you could do that. So I learnt a lot over those six months of commuting. Most importantly, I mustered up the courage to speak the truth. Back in Ziębice, I told my friends about what I'd heard. Their jaws would drop and their eyes would pop out, because people in small towns didn't have the courage to discuss politics. That's when I began to realise that Poland wasn't the best place to live. But I lived to survive, without getting into any trouble. I knew that nothing good was coming. Especially when I was in the army, I noticed that it wasn't a system that was fighting for peace, contrary to what the media was saying at the time, but to forcibly maintain the hegemony of Soviet tanks'.

That same year, Sławoj Kigina moved to Kołobrzeg. He got married and was recruited by a construction combine, and moved into its Young Workers' House. He joined other builders of real socialism, people who always started their day with a nip of vodka to make their work more bearable. The combine was like a huge mediaeval farm, with several slave drivers yelling at people with no care for the conditions they had to work in. Two years later, the couple had a daughter, and Sławoj Kigina was given a 30-metre flat by his company. Soon after, he enrolled at a technical secondary school. His humdrum life was

disrupted by the events of October 1978, which is when millions of Poles first heard the Latin words 'Habemus papam'.

'Karol Wojtyła's election did leave an impression on me, but nothing major. It took time for me to really appreciate John Paul II', Kigina says. 'But the invocation of the Holy Spirit in Zwycięstwa Square in Warsaw really made me believe that things could change in Poland. When the pope said those words, he put a panel in my head, like a USB drive, to use modern computer terminology, that enabled me to think about a different, free Poland. I eventually matured enough to appreciate the pope and his contribution to Polish and international politics. But when he was elected, I didn't see that as a political event. I expected that it could have an effect on the Polish church, but I never imagined that it could have such an impact on overthrowing communism. In any case, when he passed away, I cried like a boy who'd lost his father'.

it's Unforgettable

Although Sławoj Kigina had been learning about sociopolitical issues from underground publications brought from Gdańsk by his father-in-law, who worked at a freight forwarding company, since 1979, he never expected mass strikes to break out. This is why what happened in Świdnica, Lublin and Gdańsk came as a surprise to him. He did not expect the communists to negotiate with the striking workers, but when a communist delegation was sent to negotiate at the Gdańsk Shipyard, the workers of Kołobrzeg were elated – even despite being threatened by local Polish People's Army counterintelligence and Security Service officers, as well as by the Soviet GRU [Editor's note: Glavnoye Razvedyvatel'noye Upravleniye, the Main Intelligence Directorate], which was stationed in the neighbouring town of Bagicz and nearby Białogard.

'When the Gdańsk Accord was signed, people at the factory were excited, euphoric, even. Their hope and confidence had been restored. They were happy, but weren't really sure what they should do with that happiness', Kigina reminisces. 'Our combine employed 1500 people, including 300 specialists. The people who began forming the Free Trade Unions, as it wasn't Solidarity yet at that point, were people who were looked up to and popular among the workers, including Wojciech Krzewina, the late Wiesław Rożen, Dariusz Jurek, Julian Kubiak and Henryk Sawicki, who became the first head of the Strike Committee. The workers trusted me, so I was elected deputy head of the Strike Committee, and later the Solidarity Company Commission, even though formally I was its secretary. Our delegation went to Gdańsk and Szczecin. From there, they brought document templates necessary to register our Solidarity. They also brought magazines that helped us navigate our new situation'.

The workers of Kołobrzeg began to join Solidarity en masse. The measuring stick was the local District Court, where 80% of all staff joined the union, although in several factories that number was 100%. Especially active were the workers of the Polska Żegluga Bałtycka, Elwa and Transbud companies, health resorts, the Przedsiębiorstwo Turystyczne travel company, as well as teachers and doctors. Another strong organisation was also formed – Individual Farmers' Solidarity. In mid-September, worker representatives held a meeting, still somewhat in secret, at a hotel belonging to Polska Żegluga Bałtycka. Several hours of talks later, the Inter-company Founding Committee (MKZ) was established. This marked the beginning of sixteen months of restoring the people's dignity, as well as attempting to repair the economy, which had been badly mismanaged by the communists from the moment they seized power.

'People in town, and at our combine too, knowing what Solidarity intended to do, joined us on a massive scale', Kigina reminisces. 'They were all hoping that Poland could change, that they would get a raise, that they would be given a flat sooner. We solved a lot of problems. But most importantly, we promised everyone a 1000-złoty raise. A friend of mine and I were on the board of the Solidarity National Construction Commission, and after some arduous negotiations with the minister of construction, we won raises of like 1200 złotys. The people viewed us as heroes. That boosted our morale. That's when I began thinking about freedom, about independence for Poland. After all, the PZPR did not have to rule forever. That's what I thought when we began winning on social issues. As Solidarity, we forced them to allow the radio to broadcast the Mass. Censorship was curtailed. The 21 demands they agreed on in Gdańsk were being met to various degrees. And at the combine, the people knew that if I was headed to the director's office, it was to negotiate something for the workers – protective clothing, milk or regenerative soups with additional meat. Little things like that increased their trust in Solidarity. Over those sixteen months of relative freedom, our dignity was restored. It made me happy. Even such insignificant things as carnival balls being organised at the Jubilat club. Keep in mind that nobody forced anyone to do anything. We read books together that I'd never heard of. Self-teaching raised our awareness. We knew that the people's understanding of the new was at such a level that you couldn't go back, couldn't forget'.

'That's grounds for execution, Kigina'

Martial law was as much a surprise to Kigina as the strikes of 1980. He very quickly learnt that several people from his town had been interned, and that only one of the local factories had gone out on strike – Elwa – which predominantly employed women. The interned and soon also the arrested quickly received help from the Church, particularly

the parish priest of the co-cathedral basilica of the Assumption of Mary, Prelate Józef Słomski. A famous little altar was erected by the people in front of the basilica after the communists massacred the miners at the Wujek coal mine. Until 1989, the altar remained a place of prayer during such national anniversaries as 3 May, 31 August and 11 November. That was also the case in 1982, during the largest demonstration ever to take place in Kołobrzeg, organised by the local underground cell of Solidarity, which enraged the civilian and military security officers. Many attendees were arrested, beaten and tried.

Since the initial days of the martial law period, those Solidarity members who were still free were called in for interrogation, lost their jobs, were threatened and harassed, and the same happened to their families. On 14 December, Sławoj Kigina was summoned by the factory director and a Security Service agent overseeing the combine. He was informed that martial law had been declared, and that all union activity was now prohibited. Also, he was to return to his previous position at work. Security Service agents escorted him to the militia station, where he was told the same thing, as well as being warned about what was going to happen if he continued his now-illegal union work: 'Kigina, that carries the death penalty. That's grounds for execution'. They also offered to issue him a one-way passport. Kigina was interrogated multiple times over the course of several years. The agents would say, 'We'll get you a visa, just take your family and leave, and you won't have to come back to Poland'. From that moment on, a personal file was maintained on his activities, he was given the codename 'Elektryk' (Electrician), and a number of secret collaborators were planted to watch him.

From the moment martial law was declared, Kigina was summoned for interrogation multiple times, either on factory grounds or at the militia station, which housed a Security Service department. His interrogators were Security Service agents from Kołobrzeg and Koszalin. Transcripts from those interrogations, similar to all other interrogations of Solidarity members living in areas where Soviet forces were stationed, were sent to the Ministry of Internal Affairs in Warsaw, and were translated for use by the Soviets. During one of the interrogations, Kigina fainted. As it turned out, he suffered from cardiac neurosis. He was hospitalised, but resumed his underground activism after a few months, focusing on press distribution.

'I was often summoned by a particular agent, Janusz Szymanek. He was a scumbag, he tried to tell me that the militia was the only force looking after Poland', Kigina reminisces. 'Each and every Security Service agent wanted us to believe that it was the Germans, not the Russians, who'd killed the Polish officers in Katyń. Zdzisław Przybysz told me multiple times that Katyń was the Germans' doing. But there was no reason whatsoever for him to talk to me about that. He now styles himself as a friend of the people of Kołobrzeg, fighting to reinstate the pensions for those Security Service scumbags. They were so

adamant about Katyń that it gave me pause. Maybe they'd been told to say those things because of how close they were to their Russki handlers? I still don't know'.

Sławoj Kigina's underground activism at the construction combine did not escape the notice of the Security Service. As part of a wave of repressions that started in early November 1982, he was conscripted and sent to Chełmno on the Vistula. Despite the freezing temperatures, several hundred conscripts were rounded up to spend the winter in tents, a method of internment that was used against thousands of other Solidarity members. The conscripts also included invalids who were normally unfit for military service, some of whom were missing an arm or a leg, as well as young people suffering from mental trauma. One such person was Andrzej Kosiewicz, a 30-year-old worker from the VIS tools factory in Koszalin and a member of his local Solidarity Company Commission. After suffering a mental breakdown, he was sent to a military psychiatric hospital, before committing suicide several days after being discharged. During his service, Kigina was not allowed to refill his heart medicine prescription. As a result, he suffered a heart attack after a month and was hospitalised in Grudziądz. When he was released, he was forced to go back to his tent.

'I remember that scumbag of a political officer, Major Tadeusz Małolepszy', Kigina says. 'A garbage human being. When we declared a hunger strike, he started putting his gun to people's heads, asking them, "Are you gonna eat, or do I need to shoot you?" He was a thug. He summoned me one day. I spent like three hours there. He kept blabbering something about buying coal from the UK because my Solidarity friends were striking in Silesia. To punish me for taking part in the hunger strike, he banned me from showering for two weeks'.

'It took me like half a year to get back on my feet after being discharged. My wife and daughter begged me to stop with the activism. I was suffering from arrhythmia, and later also from atrial fibrillation. After I came back from internment, a rumour started making the rounds that I'd left the underground because I was scared. My heart got really bad during my internment. I have no regrets, because my health really prevented me from doing anything. I got some rest and went back to work at the combine', Kigina recalls. 'I occasionally talked to the leaders of the Kołobrzeg underground. But I was only active at the combine, I didn't really do much around town. I sometimes felt bad because Kazimierz Mirecki and Zofia Szymańska tried to convince me to join the underground, but they understood that I had to lay it off for a while. I went back to work at the combine. And it turned out that even having normal conversations with people was very impactful. It instilled hope in them. Kept their spirits high. But my conversations were noticed by the Security Service. More and more often, they summoned the deputy head of production and he then summoned me every time, saying, "Sławoj, we know that you haven't stopped agitating, that you are agitating the people for Solidarity. Against the government.

You need to quit, because if you don't then we will let you go. Or we'll dismiss you on disciplinary grounds and you'll never find work again". The combine director told me the same thing. And finally the head of HR came to the factory with the deputy director and they handed me a letter of termination by mutual agreement of the parties. They told me that they wished me all the best, but had to let me go because that's what the Security Service wanted. I knew there was no use resisting because they'd destroy me. So I accepted the letter "by mutual agreement"'.

After leaving the construction combine upon the insistence of the Security Service in 1984, Kigina struggled to find work in Kołobrzeg for several months. Eventually, he started his own business, which he runs to this day. However, he never quit supporting the underground, even though his contributions were limited due to no longer having access to the combine's workers. Most of his work revolved around press distribution, as well as being a member of the Koszalin-Kołobrzeg Bishop's Committee for Assisting the Imprisoned and their Families. In the late 80s, Kigina joined the Citizens' Committee, helping organise the elections scheduled for 4 June 1989. In free Poland, he was a member of the Centre Agreement, Movement for the Republic and Christian National Union parties, and served a term as a councillor, running as a member of the Solidarity Electoral Action party.

The Poland of My Dreams

The free Poland that Solidarity was fighting for was supposed to be perfect. Like the mythical Second Republic. Just like in our parents' romanticised stories. But the reality proved different. For Bogusław Bardon, the Third Republic of Poland still bore the taint of communism.

Bardon became an anti-communist activist in 1968. He was living in Opole when the Opole Teaching Academy and Engineering Academy went on strike, despite both institutions being heavily indoctrinated.

Flyer Distributors

Bardon began distributing flyers when he was twenty years old, in 1968. He had been raised in a patriotic family, and some of his relatives had been killed by roving bands of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA). The family arrived in Opole from the eastern reaches of the Second Republic, dreaming of a free Poland. Bogusław himself dreamt of a Poland that was a perfect state. Perfectly democratic, an example for others to follow. An avid sailor, Bardon's political coming-of-age was influenced by him joining the Maritime Club of the National Defence League – a paramilitary organisation that, despite being heavily indoctrinated, had many members who were not exactly loyal to the people's government. His mentor was a former Home Army officer whose behaviour and stories made Bardon idolise him as an exemplary patriot, someone in whose footsteps the young sailor could follow.

'Back in 1968, I didn't really think about the Jews being expelled, because I just didn't know about that. I didn't know anything about Natolin or Puławy, the two warring Jewish factions within the PZPR Central Committee. I didn't know about any of that, only that we had to help those students. I didn't want the militia to be able to just walk into a university, beat students up and decide when Mickiewicz's *Dziady* (Forefathers' Eve)

could and couldn't be performed. So my friends and I handed out flyers. Among them were Bogusław Makarucha and Andrzej Kotasiński, a university student. I don't know who referred them to us, but he came to the Maritime Club, of which I was president, asking for help – he needed a typewriter. So I got him one. Also paper, tracing paper, glue, etc. So my friends and I began distributing flyers. We also stuck them on building walls. I still have an album of all those flyers. We wrote anti-communist slogans on them'.

After graduating from technical secondary school, Bardon was conscripted by the military. He refuses to discuss the treatment of those who had been involved in the events of March 1968. He later returned to Opole, but refrained from becoming politically involved – even after the horrible massacre of 1970 and the strikes of 1976. Despite Radom and other cities calling a strike, he did not try to form a Free Trade Union, even though one was formed by Kazimierz Świtoń in the nearby city of Katowice in 1978. However, he does become the initiator and leader of a self-education movement later known as the Garage Patriots, named after the place where his tight-knit group of young people met up.

'Back then, I had no connections at the large factories that were striking. Neither in 1970, nor in 1976', Bardon recalls. 'The same goes for Świtoń's Free Trade Union, as I only met him in 1980. True, I knew about the Workers' Defence Committee (KOR), but it seemed too left-leaning for me to become involved with those guys. I was content with my garage group, where I could talk to people about contemporary history, getting my knowledge from Radio Free Europe, my parents, and also from documents on Katyń, which I smuggled from London aboard a yacht with Janusz Zygadlewicz and Bernard Wrzód'.

The Soviets Could invade Us

The first strikes in the Opole region were called in Namysłów, followed by Nysa in early August 1980. By the end of the month, more than a dozen factories were protesting, but it was not until September that new trade unions began to form. During the August strikes, Bogusław Bardon was working at the Voivodeship Medical Transport Service in Opole. With a group of trusted colleagues, he organised a strike in mid-August, lifting a white-and-red flag bearing the slogan 'Free political prisoners'. Bardon also formulated their demands.

On 27 August 1980, he established the NSZZ Company Commission, which he chaired. On 17 September, he was the representative of Opole at the Gdańsk convention. Two days later, the Inter-company Founding Committee of the Independent and Self-governing Trade Union was established at the recreation room of the Voivodeship Medical Transport Service. Bogusław Bardon became its leader.

'I never thought that the July strikes could lead to what happened in August 1980. But with each passing day, there were more and more strikes in Opole and other cities around the voivodeship', Bardon says. 'I established an NSZZ union at the Voivodeship Medical Transport Service. Other founders included my Garage Patriots, with whom I'd spent years discussing Polish history. In September and October, I noticed that more and more PZPR members from large factories in the region were joining Solidarity. They were also being elected leaders of company commissions. That really got on my nerves. I believed that people who were in fact representatives of the Soviet Union couldn't be Solidarity members. To me it was unthinkable. I filed a petition on the matter with the Solidarity National Commission, signed by the leaders of 23 regions. But we didn't get far with it. Against us were such Solidarity advisors as Kuroń, Modzelewski and Michnik'.

In the meantime, the union began forming its cells in Opole and the region, despite all the meddling of the local communist secretaries. In Opole and many other towns in the region, even despite the August Agreement being signed between Solidarity and the communist government, the union was refused venues for use as headquarters. They also tried various things to put society off solidarity. Various union leaders were threatened by local Security Service agents and militia officers. Many activists were beaten and even killed by 'unknown perpetrators', as they called them. As region head, Bogusław Bardon, tried to oust PZPR members from Solidarity. He and his Garage Patriots followed the motto 'Begone with the criminal organisation working against the Polish people, founded and managed by Moscow'.

They ultimately failed to achieve their goal, however. In consequence, Bardon resigned as the head of the Opole Silesia region in December 1980, although he remained a member of the management board. That same month, he, Aleksander Hall, Kazimierz Świtoń and Stanisław Wądołowski established the Committee for Defending Individuals Imprisoned for Their Beliefs. In addition, Bardon also became involved in the activities of the Organisational Committee for the Social Rule of Law, which he established in November 1980. He began publishing the *Praworządność* (Rule of Law) bulletin, which reported on the many crimes perpetrated by the militia, Security Service and PZPR members. In addition, Bardon began advocating for the release of political prisoners, including the brothers Jerzy and Ryszard Kowalczyk, imprisoned for planting a bomb in the auditorium of the Teaching Academy in Opole, as well as fighting for restoring crucifixes in schools, hospitals and government offices. Bardon's bulletin and activism were viewed by the government as 'anti-socialist and anti-Soviet'. In 1980, he joined the illegal Confederation of Independent Poland party, which was brutally persecuted by the PZPR and the Security Service.

'I resigned because Solidarity was starting to lean left in our region. Just like in the rest of the country. The elected leaders of Solidarity were losing influence in favour of unelected

advisors like Geremek, Michnik, Modzelewski, Mazowiecki and Lityński', Bardon says. 'So I believed that Solidarity was being taken over by communists and post-communists. That's why I shifted my focus to defending civil rights. Young people today have no idea about the everyday lawlessness of the PRL. The militia and Security Service could stop you at any time, and if you resisted – beat you to death or lock you up for a dozen years on charges of assaulting a militia officer. There were many such cases. Like that one Solidarity member from the Bobrów sugar factory who was killed by a militia officer. Thanks to our intervention, the officer was put on trial, something that had previously been unthinkable. A delegation came to me in relation to the case, and we conducted an investigation together. We made it clear that, if the case wasn't solved, the entire Opole region would go on strike. We exhumed the worker that was killed, and an autopsy was conducted. It turned out that he'd been beaten so badly that all his internal organs were mush. The officer was arrested. He was charged with murder and sentenced to… a year and four months, suspended. That was a very serious crime, but the government also perpetrated many minor ones against the citizenry. My colleagues at the Committee for the Social Rule of Law and I had to intervene around the clock. At times, we were also lambasted by our left-leaning colleagues, who thought that they could get in trouble because of us. Or, something that the communists kept trying to scare us with, that the Soviets could invade us'.

Prison Yard Stakes

Martial law being declared surprised Bardon as much as the strikes and establishment of Solidarity sixteen months prior. He and his wife were interned on 13 December. Bardon was held in prison camps in Opole, Nysa, Wrocław and Grodków, from which he was released in July 1982 thanks to an intervention by Diocesan Bishop Alfons Nossol.

'Yes, I was surprised they'd declared martial law', he reminisces. 'I didn't think there was a force in Poland that could destroy Solidarity. That was my opinion based on the geopolitical situation. I was convinced that the Soviets would be reluctant to invade us because they'd be afraid of the international repercussions. I didn't believe that a moment would come again when Poles would be killing Poles – like in 1956 and 1970. I thought that, after all, the communists were already less aggressive in 1976 than they'd been in 1970. I was certain that Solidarity would open the door to democracy for Poland. That we would be the ones to build the state's political structures, local governments and the parliament. In short: the power structure. That was the Poland of my dreams. And in December, I was brutally woken up from that dream. I never expected to be stabbed in the back, that we'd be attacked so viciously. That they'd come for us at night, drag us from our beds and put

us in prison. The women too. To add insult to injury, people's true nature was revealed. When I was in prison, some of my colleagues were angry with me, saying that martial law had been declared because of me, because of people like me – the radicals. "It's all your fault", they said. "You wanted to fight against communism, we just wanted unions". It was all the more difficult to bear because I heard those words from one of my close colleagues, a scientist whom I'd been working with as part of the Regional Management. He signed a loyalty oath, and later… he willingly became a Security Service informant. Another friend of mine, a young student and NSZ member, broke down completely. One day they were hammering in stakes in the prison yard, I'm not sure if that was in Opole or Nysa, and one of my friends said to me, with dread in his voice, "Bogdan, listen, they're hammering in stakes at the gate. They'll shoot us all. It's all your fault, you convinced me to fight against the communists". That really shook me and left a mark on me for many years'.

The Return

After his release, Bogusław Bardon did not join the Opole underground, believing it to be compromised. Instead, he and his friends continued to work as part of the Organisational Committee for the Social Rule of Law. He also returned to work at the Voivodeship Medical Transport Service, becoming the leader of its underground Solidarity cell. Working as a stoker now, Bardon continued to refrain from participating in the many demonstrations taking place in Gdańsk, Wrocław and Opole. Until 1989, he distributed underground newspapers and books, travelling between Opole, Gdańsk, Bydgoszcz and Wrocław and collecting Fighting Solidarity publications published there. In 1989, he decried the Round Table talks, believing them to be a betrayal of the victims of August 1980. He established a Citizens' Committee, although he himself calls it a failed attempt, as it was not 'close to Lech Wałęsa'. The task Bardon set for himself was to motivate people to act. In the Third Republic of Poland, he focused purely on his career, as well as his hobbies – sailing and Garage Patriot meetups. He did not run in the parliamentary elections.

For his contributions to the struggle for independence, he was awarded a Knight's Cross of the Order of Polonia Restituta by President Ryszard Kaczorowski. In 2016, President Andrzej Duda awarded Bardon with a Cross of Freedom and Solidarity, and in 2018, he was elected deputy chair of the Voivodeship Consulting Board for the Affairs of Anti-communist Opposition Activists and Victims of Political Repressions.

I Never Saw it Coming

‘If someone had told me that I’d have a hand in Poland regaining independence, I’d have politely laughed it off, I think. Even when 1989 and the June elections came, I didn’t believe that our country could be independent’, says Jan Marciniak.

Jan was born in Szczytniki, more than 20 kilometres from Kalisz, two months after the outbreak of World War II. He never knew his father, who died during the war. Raised in a religious household, God always came first in his life. Although invisible, He was always referred to as the Supreme Authority. Marciniak’s mother rejected the new system, although she made sure that her children never told outsiders about her views. In his family, stories of Poland’s pre-war past reigned supreme. They had no radio, no television, and reading books was not one of their habits. Marciniak’s mother was illiterate. His foster father, who joined the family some time after the war, was not an avid reader either, farm work being enough to entertain him. They were sometimes visited by their neighbours, who would bring news from the village and the rest of the country, as well as stories of the past. When Marciniak grew up, however, he noticed that some neighbours actually supported socialism. They said that the system was the best because school was free, unlike before the war. The young boy found that to be so ridiculous that he refused to believe it.

Living under a Three-Shift System

Marciniak graduated from primary school while also working on his family’s farm, which was normal in rural areas. He wanted to travel, and so chose to attend secondary school in Łódź, where he trained to be a locomotive machinist. However, his railway career was stopped in its tracks when he was conscripted for two years and assigned to the army’s chemical defence forces. After being discharged, he was ordered to work as a weaver at the Runotex Wool Product Factory in Kalisz, which employed some four thousand people

working under a three-shift system. He was a cog in the machine. Morning shift, afternoon shift, night shift… day in, day out for years on end. He got married. His sons were born soon after. He struggled to acquire essential products. Struggled to find a place to live. He was only given 'his own' flat more than ten years later.

'If I were to describe those times before 1980… The days blurred together, interspersed with family functions and celebrations in the village and the city. It was dreadfully boring and nothing out of the ordinary ever happened', Marciniak recalls. 'The birth of my first and second sons were major events, of course. We were all focused on our families. True, when we were with our closest friends, we would admit that things were bad. But to dismantle the system, nobody ever thought about that. The Soviet forces within our borders did a good job of dissuading us. When we went on strike in 1980, we started with our closest colleagues. Those who listened to Radio Free Europe, pretty much. But when the strikes were called on the Coast and in Pomerania ten years later, there was no reaction at the factory. Even though the people knew what was really going on. It was only in 1980 that I learnt that Kalisz had a small underground movement that began in 1968. That the Kościelniak brothers were in it, and that from the 70s onward, the Jesuits had been hosting a group of people who were opposed to communism. That they were later joined by people from the Workers' Defence Committee and the Movement for the Defence of Human and Civil Rights. But it was Solidarity that brought us all together'.

We Need to Rebel

The strikes of 1980 did not begin in Kalisz, but in Ostrów Wielkopolski, where the workers of the Ursus tractor factory demanded higher wages. Their demands were met. In Kalisz itself, the first major strike was staged at the Voivodeship Heating Company, and after the signing of the August Agreement, the workers of Runotex formulated their economic and social demands in early September.

'After the strikes in Świdnik and Lublin, we had what they used to call "temporary downtime", but not much else', Marciniak recalls. 'We only really started fighting for our rights on 9 September. I worked in the weaving department. I came in for the night shift and asked, "What's the matter guys? We need to rebel". So five of us staged a strike. I was chosen to be the head of the strike committee. We formed the Company Strike committee, and when people came to work in the morning, we demanded to talk to the managers. But they refused to speak to us for several days. Only when Antoni Pietkiewicz and Bogusław Śliwa, a lawyer, came to join us did the management sit down with us to negotiate pay raises and better benefits. We wanted 1000 złotys, we got a little more than 600. But to us, the most important thing was the support of the Gdańsk Shipyard. An agreement

had been signed, true, but who knew if the government would respect it. Soon after, we transformed the committee into a Solidarity Company Commission. I didn't run for chairman. I believed that it should be someone smarter than me, more knowledgeable. We elected a friend of mine, Władysław Urbaś. I became a member of the commission'.

Solidarity grew rapidly in the Southern Greater Poland region, with more and more factories striking and redefining their relationships with their managers. In late September, an NSZZ 'Solidarity' Inter-company Founding Committee was founded in Kalisz. For Jan Marciniak, that was the beginning of – as he himself says – fascinating months and years of working as part of the Company Commission, during which he was also chosen to attend his region's General Convention of Delegates (WZD). After being released from internment, he actively contributed to the underground all the way until 1989.

All while working at the factory during the day. He made sure that flats and coupons for washing machines, fridges and furniture were distributed fairly among all workers. He was chosen to attend the regional WZD as a delegate, but he did not run for the region's management board, believing that there were better people for the job.

'The managers didn't really meddle in our union. I was doing things virtually all day and night, as I worked at the factory during the day', Marciniak reminisces. 'There was a lot of work to do, because the managers only cared about themselves. They'd always assigned all flats and holiday trips to themselves, forcing us to make do with scraps for years. That had to change. There was a lot of resistance, because they were used to taking. And their own unions, the company boards, which we referred to as "party unions", rubber-stamped everything, so they could say that everything was "assigned in consultation with the people". We quickly organised a PA system, as well as a company newspaper. Thanks to books that we bought at various union colleges, we learnt about Poland's true history. Our colleagues would bring them from Warsaw, Wrocław and Poznań. It was a really amazing time. We had a lot of young people working with us. Incredibly virtuous and involved. The Jesuits played a very important role in Kalisz back when Solidarity was legal, and especially after martial law was declared. You could say that our entire underground life was organised by Father Stefan Dzierżek, a Jesuit. The Jesuits began organising large-scale, open meetings in 1980'.

Everyday Life as a Press Distributor

Martial law being declared came as a surprise to Marciniak. Although he had always been wary of the communists, he believed that the previous sixteen months were a time that they'd fought for, as well as something that would not end. So when the militia came for him at night, he did think it was unusual, but nothing to be concerned about.

'They came before five in the morning. I opened the door. One was wearing a militia uniform, two were in plain clothes', Marciniak says. 'They didn't tell me I was being interned, they asked me to go to some accident with them. So I asked them, what accident? They said it wouldn't take long. I got dressed and got into their car, unsure of what was going to happen next. They took me to the station. They grabbed some documents and we drove off towards Ostrów Wielkopolski. I still had no idea what was going on. They didn't treat me like I was under arrest. Finally, they dropped me off at a train station that had a militia office. That's where they started to interrogate me. But they only asked my first and last name, my responsibilities in the union and so on. Then they took me to jail. I was escorted by armed guards. The militiamen were standing in two rows. I was escorted to my cell. There, I saw my colleagues from other factories. At six in the morning, when they turned on the radios, we learnt about martial law being declared. They never gave me any internment document. At nine o'clock, a Security Service agent by the name of Dąbrowski came over, he was "taking care" of our facility. He told us what it was all about. They kept us there for a few days, and later took us to a camp in Głogów. It was a whole floor's worth of people. Several dozen. I think that's when they handed me the internment order'.

During the July strike at Runotex, Jan Marciniak had been placed under surveillance and put on an arrest list. According to Marciniak's Security Service file, which is in the possession of the Institute of National Remembrance, he was first surveilled in relation to a 'Case pertaining to the identification of the initiators of the strike at the Runotex Wool Product Factory in Kalisz', as he was the head of the strike committee. He was put on a watchlist and surveilled again in October 1981. That is when it was decided that he was to be interned. His internment did not last long, however, as he was released in late February 1982.

Although he was not laid off after his return to Kalisz, he was demoted. Almost immediately after his release, Marciniak joined the underground along with his wife, Henryka, and his oldest son, Radosław, who was seventeen at the time. This lasted until 1989. Almost every day, he and his family would distribute newspapers and books published in Kalisz and other places across Poland. Eventually, Marciniak also joined the underground Interim Solidarity Coordination Committee for Southern Greater Poland. His everyday life as a press distributor and underground activist was interspersed with various patriotic demonstrations that he helped organise in Kalisz several times a year, working class pilgrimages to Częstochowa, and helping the Committee for Assisting the Imprisoned and their Families. In addition, Marciniak helped others acquire essential products. On multiple occasions, he was put under surveillance, apprehended and interrogated, as well as punished for alleged misdemeanours. Security Service agents were frequent visitors at his flat. When he was eighteen years old, their son Radosław was

savagely beaten when leaving the church after a Mass in 1983 and was given a sentence for singing patriotic songs.

introduction to Education

'I didn't get too much rest after being released', Marciniak says. 'I spent a little more than two months in internment, and that was my introduction to education. The following years, especially those I spent with the Jesuits and Father Dzierżek, were my university. I began learning more and more about Poland, both its economy and politics, about the repressions in the 50s and those that came later, against lay people and the Church. I learnt more about the history of our region, which had contributed so much to the struggle against the partitioning powers, and also during World War II and after, when more than 20 Cursed Soldiers died in the Kalisz prison [Cursed Soldiers were members of the Polish underground resistance who continued to fight against the Soviet occupiers after the end of World War II]. Those meetings with teachers of true history, the people from the pre-August opposition movement who came here from other parts of the country, that was a breath of fresh air for me. They motivated us to keep going. I was often dead tired after work, but I still had to pick up the underground magazines and go deliver them to people. True, I was a little afraid at times, but only for my sons and my now late wife. But they were also afraid for me. Those seven years of everyday activism, though it varied in intensity, were over so quickly that I barely noticed it. Those were the best days of my life. I began to really mature politically thanks to my colleagues and Father Dzierżek, who was a living book on the history of anti-communist resistance. It was thanks to him that I not only endured, but also matured. My feelings were backed by knowledge now. When people ask me today if I fought for a free Poland in the 80s, I tell them that I wasn't conscious enough. Back then, I only fought for reinstating free trade unions, for Solidarity. When the Round Table talks began, I was both for and against them. For – because I believed we had to sit down and talk to restore Solidarity. Against – because I thought that, just like in 1980, they'd sign an agreement and then declare martial law again or something like that. No, I wasn't thinking about a free Poland, because that seemed unattainable to me. I didn't think the Russkies would allow it – that's what many people said back then. When freedom actually came, I didn't even notice. Even during the June elections, I didn't believe that our country would be independent. Maybe two or three years later, when the last Soviet troops had left Poland'.

In 1989, Jan Marciniak helped organise the Interim Regional Government, becoming one of its members that same year. He also attended the second WZD as a delegate. In 1993, in recognition of his underground activism, the Regional Management of Southern

Greater Poland appointed him as its representative during the visit of Pope John Paul II. Jan Marciniak retired in 1999.

Representing the Average Pole

Although this is a tale of a single member of the Youth Resistance Movement, Olgierd Popiel, it is actually about the two Popiel twins – Olgierd and his twenty-minute-younger brother, Ryszard. Both of them worked in the underground from 1981 to 1989.

The Youth Resistance Movement was established shortly after 13 December 1981, and transformed into the Independent Youth Movement a year later. It numbered several hundred young people from Gorzów Wielkopolski, and later also from other cities, their goal to resist the martial law regime and fight against the communist government alongside NSZZ 'Solidarity'. For eight years, its young members printed and distributed flyers and published their own magazines, in addition to other activities. Eventually, they established the underground Radio Solidarność station, which used the same frequency as the government's *Dziennik Telewizyjny* news programme. The clergy played a particularly important, formative role in the movement, especially the late Father Witold Andrzejewski.

Early Formative Years

The boys were born in April 1965 in Gorzów Wielkopolski, where they lived with their older sister and parents – teachers who had been forcibly relocated to the town for work. The family originally came to Gorzów Plain from the Tarnopol Voivodeship after the war, and the boys' grandparents were also teachers, as were their great-grandparents. The boys grew up in the shadow of the working class district of Zawarcie, basking in the victories of the local masters of speedway.

'Religious life was booming. Both my brother and I were altar boys. Father Piotr Sadownik, the oblate, was the most important person here. A great, special man. There's a roundabout named after him in our district. He built the church in the 70s. Life was a little different here. If there was a game at eleven, the priest would celebrate the nine

o'clock Mass half an hour earlier. It was a wonderful world. We loved speedway when we were kids. We'd use sticks as handlebars and go to the track. I attended almost every single training session of our adult riders. It was our passion. That, and football. In late primary and secondary school, I got really into track and field', says Popiel as he glances at the state-of-the-art Edward Jancarz Speedway Stadium.

Dreams of an Athlete

Olgierd Popiel had many talents and was passionate about track and field. His events of choice were short-distance running, the long jump, pole vault and decathlon. The pole vault record he set while attending the Marie Curie Secondary School remains unbroken to this day. Popiel's dream was to become a track and field world champion. However, in 1980, his value system was upended by the strikes and the emergence of NSZZ 'Solidarity'. The event that defined Popiel's life was his meeting with Marek Rusakiewicz, whom he got to know better at a training camp in 1981.

'I knew Marek because he lived in our neighbourhood, but we weren't close. I think it was in July that we attended an athletics camp and became friends there. And one point, he began talking to me about communism. He was a lot more politically mature than me, and had already been involved in hanging Solidarity posters. He was part of a group of guys who helped the Regional Management. He gave me a crash course on Polish history after the war. He told me about the crimes of the communists. He said that the emergence of the PZPR was a national tragedy, that we had to fight them. He treated me very seriously. I felt like an adult back then. Marek trusted me, and we decided we'd work together. And so our partnership began. I think it was still the summer of 1981.

'The moment they declared martial law', Popiel continues, 'nine of us held a meeting. We were standing in a circle as though transfixed. There were nine of us guys, fifteen and sixteen year olds. Our leader, or chieftain, as we called Marek Rusakiewicz, wasn't even seventeen. That day, he spoke as if inspired. He wasn't barking orders, he was putting emphasis on various issues. We listened intently and with much excitement. I was deeply convinced that what we were about to do was very meaningful. That we would save out homeland. My brother and I immediately knew what wanted to do – paint slogans on walls and distribute flyers'.

No Laughing Matter

Martial law being declared was met with short-lived strikes in many factories across Gorzów Wielkopolski. As a result, the communists interned nearly 100 people from the region, and hundreds went underground in response. After a debriefing with Marek Rusakiewicz, Olgierd and Ryszard Popiel quickly joined the resistance movement together with several other boys. They began making flyers and posters, hanging and distributing everything they made, as well as painting slogans on the walls of tenements in the most attractive parts of the town. They didn't have exact instructions on what slogans to paint, but they knew that they had to be anti-communist, and that they should be targeting buildings in the most attractive neighbourhoods. The first slogan that Olgierd and his friend Stefan Bohusz came up with was 'Jaruzelski – the scourge of the nation'. Bohusz also helped the young conspirators print their first newspaper, *Iskra* (Spark).

'I'm not particularly cowardly, but I'm not daring either. But back then I though to myself that was the moment when my brother and I had to make a choice', Popiel reminisces. 'We both came to the same conclusion, that we had to decide, do we get involved in the underground or not? You know what we ended up doing. When we got our first flyers and magazines, I was so excited, it was like I was on the front lines. I wasn't a prominent member, but I was one of the original founders of the Youth Resistance Movement. Together with people like Krzysztof Sobolewski and Jarosław Wojewódzki, we began printing. On one occasion, I was tasked with teaching some younger guys how to paint slogans on walls. I think those were also twins, Grzegorz and Jarosław Sychla. We had it all divvied up. Which wall, who writes what and so on. The four of us would come up to a wall. Everyone would begin painting their part of the slogan. We wanted to paint something on the walls of the militia station, but that didn't happen, and the whole thing turned out to be a traumatic experience for me. It was a regular day. We were painting slogans in the city centre, and then made A4-sized posters using sponge and cardboard that said, 'Solidarity keeps fighting'. We made 300 of those, and then we went out to hang them. The Security Service saw one of us. Whenever that happened, we would always meet up at 'the spot'. That day, the spot was the white church. We were on our way there, and I thought to myself, 'shame about the posters and glue'. I met up with Krzysztof Sobolewski along the way, and I told him that I'd keep hanging the posters. I pull one out, and suddenly someone grabs my hand. Some stocky guy. I was sixteen at the time, and lanky. And he was holding me. I couldn't break free. I decided to stall, so I asked him, 'What's this about?' And he says to me, 'Citizens' Militia' or 'Security Service'. Without thinking too much, I just headbutted him. You know, the Zawarcie way. But he didn't let me go. We got into a fight. We both fell to the ground. We were rolling around in the snow and dirt in front of the Town Hall, near the local militia station. He starts to yell, "Help!", and

so did I. It's just a funny story today, but back then it was traumatic. We were wrestling. I tried to break free, but there was no way. He was stocky, I wasn't strong enough. But eventually I managed to break free and ran towards a bus. I got on it, but he was behind me. I ran down the aisle and got off through the back door. He ran after me, but I was faster. I had a few friends from school who lived nearby. Arkadiusz and Emil Tomczyk. I ring the doorbell. Their mother opens the door. I asked the people, "Mrs. Tomczyk, is Arek home? No? What about Emil? They're not home either". So I asked her to let me in, saying that some Gypsies had attacked me near Sezam. A nearby restaurant. So she let me in. I'd thrown the flyers in the bin beforehand. I walked into the bathroom and saw my face in the mirror, it was all bloody, so I got scared. I was covered in mud, my clothes were all stained with blood. The woman patched me up. I went back home. It was difficult for me mentally. That's when I realised that it was no laughing matter, that I could really get hurt'.

They Tried to Destroy Us

In July 1982, the Security Service arrested its first underground cell consisting of nine people. Olgierd Popiel and his brother Ryszard were among those captured. Olgierd was severely beaten during his first interrogation, similar to all the other prisoners. That is how the Security Service agents responded to being accused of 'lacking ideological vigilance' by the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The agents had been denied promotions for nearly a year. Young people were treated with particular cruelty, as it turned out that 'little brats got the better of you, comrades!', to quote General Czesław Kiszczak's second-in-command and deputy head of the Gorzów Security Service, Jan Krzyżaniak. He also went on to say, 'Your pacification of the Ursus factory was so successful, so what's the matter now? Some brats are painting anti-socialist slogans, disparaging our party and our ally, right under your noses. Our minister was summoned by comrade ambassador of the USSR to explain what the anti-Soviet slogans were about. You have to put a stop to this, because if you don't, I'll have you transferred to some village'. Krzyżaniak stood at attention for more than a dozen minutes, afraid to speak.

'Except for the fifteen year olds, we were all locked up. They tried to destroy me during those interrogations. The same goes for my friends. But they failed. They wanted me to denounce the others. They beat me, and threatened with all manner of consequences. That I'd be sentenced to eight years in prison', Olgierd recalls. 'I confessed to hanging the posters, but I didn't snitch on anyone. The other prisoners tried to bully me, but they left me alone after I got into a fight with one of them. I was locked up for less than two weeks, but it felt like forever.

We didn't do anything until our trial, which was in February 1983. They sentenced me to half a year in prison, suspended for three years. Ryszard and I were expelled from school, not immediately, but after half a year'.

Not Ashamed of Crying

After their trial, the seventeen-year-olds resumed their underground activism, and even became involved in the underground Radio Solidarność station, whose first broadcast took place in late April 1983. On multiple occasions, Olgierd also acted as a courier between Gorzów and Gdańsk, delivering mail and underground publications. That is when he met the legendary Anna Walentynowicz, at whose place he stayed several times. The Security Service would not leave them alone, and conducted multiple inspections at their home. Olgierd Popiel says that his family was taking it really well, even despite the vulgarity and disrespect the agents displayed during the interrogations. The twins' actions also had consequences for their parents, and their father even lost his job because of them.

As the young conspirators matured, they became more aware of the importance of what they were doing, and thoughts of a free Poland became more and more frequent. They were forced to change schools three times over the years, taking their end-of-school exams at the Construction Technical School in distant Zielona Góra. It was only after Poland became independent that they graduated from university. Ryszard earned a degree in geography, and Olgierd in forestry. Both work in their fields to this day.

'Before 1986 or even 1987, I was in such a rush that I didn't realise how much time had passed. I find it difficult to admit it now, but one day I said to myself, so many years of work, so much activism, so much stress, so many underground publications, lost afternoons, evenings and nights spent working, but communism endures and the people haven't overthrown it yet', says Olgierd Popiel. 'Looks like the communists are so entrenched that there's no winning our freedom back. I believed in the cause, but I just lost all my energy. It may be difficult to believe, but I didn't hold a grudge against the people that they weren't manning the barricades. I used to say that maybe they'd wake up one day like I did… Yes, I believed they would. I was the last person to hold a grudge against them. Who was I to judge anyone? There were times when I was discouraged, when I felt stuck in a rut. Yes, yes, a rut. Travelling, painting, printing and so on. Day in, day out. But years went by with nothing to show for it. After all, we weren't made of iron… There were times when I was afraid, but I also knew that what I was doing was timeless, that it had meaning. That kept me going. Beyond all doubt, that was the most beautiful time in my life. We fought for the most important cause, for values such as God, Honour and Homeland. However pompous

it may sound today. I remember clearly those times when my friends and I were discussing current events in the country, and tears were running down our cheeks. But nobody was ashamed of crying. It was really moving… The best part about those times was that I got to meet some amazing people. We are still friends or very close acquaintances. We can always count on one another. That's one of my indelible achievements from those times. Or another example, some time ago one of our female friends, as there were many girl activists back then, asked us all to go on a pilgrimage to Rokitno to pray for her daughter's recovery, because she was dying of cancer. So we went. Even though not many of us were physically prepared to go. The girl is still alive. I'm not saying it's because we went, but we acted in solidarity. Those eight years sure were a turbulent time, traumatic, even. But I thank God that I was able to experience it, that I was brave enough to join the Independent Youth Movement, that I met the people I did there. A lot of people who weren't regular opposition members still supported us. They helped us a lot. I am very grateful to them today. I, who represent the average Pole, as I like to say'.

Szlęzak's Banners

Several, maybe more than ten thousand flyers printed single-handedly. Dozens of posters. Banners. Anniversary publications, including cards for Christmas, Easter and national anniversaries not recognised by the communists at the time. This is the summary of the activism of Andrzej Szlęzak from Skarżysko-Kamienna, of his protest against martial law and the communist regime.

Szlęzak's political coming-of-age did not happen overnight. Although Polish history was a frequent topic at home, and it was presented in a different light than in history class. He never rebelled, seeing no major contradictions between the two versions. At school, he was offered an opportunity to join the Union of Socialist Youth, but he was not really interested. And neither was he interested in joining the Polish United Workers' Party when he was a working adult. He knew that the PZPR was under Russian control, even though he'd have trouble proving it if asked. His parents had taught him that his grandfather, along with other Polish soldiers and officers, had been murdered in Katyń by the Soviets, and not by the Germans, despite what the propagandists would say. That was enough to instil in him a spirit of anti-communism, or anti-socialism, as was the more common term at the time. He also listened to Radio Free Europe, the Voice of America and the BBC Polish Section, from which he learnt history that differed from what was taught by Polish and foreign communists. This way, he passively absorbed knowledge that differed from what he was being taught at school and by the press, radio and television.

Uncivil Behaviour

It was in his early years of primary school that Andrzej Szlęzak learnt that his behaviour was 'uncivil', even though he was not exactly sure what that meant. On one occasion, he openly said in the middle of a class that he didn't like school because it was atheistic. That was in the early 60s.

'I don't even know where I'd heard that word. Probably from my parents', Szlęzak says. 'They were called in. It couldn't have been too unpleasant a conversation for them, or else they would have told me about it. If not there and then, then later. I do remember that the school punished me, but I can't remember my behaviour grade being lowered'.

Szlęzak's first clash with the system took place in 1968, when he was a seventeen year old student attending a vocational school at the Skarżysko-Kamienna Metalworks. That is when the party began its anti-Semitic crackdown on Jews across Poland. A crackdown that was actually an internecine war within the party.

'We talked about it a lot at school. The party condemned all "Zionists" at the factory. All manner of anti-Semitic rallies were organised. It was strange because nobody at school or the factory had ever talked about any Jews before. Nobody even made that distinction at home. A person was a person, that was it. At the time, a satirical poem related to Mickiewicz's *Dziady* was making the rounds in Poland. "Gomułka [Władysław Gomułka, the principal party official at the time] is standing in the Kraków town square when he sees the Mickiewicz monument. He says to the poet, get down here, I'm the chief secretary of the ruling party, it's my turn now. So Gomułka climbs up onto the plinth and stands there. Looking down on the people, he sees they're laughing at him. He begins to wonder why. Suddenly, he sees an inscription on the plinth: To the writer of *Dziady*, from the people of Poland". It was longer than that, I have it written down somewhere. So when we were on our way to class, I said, "Guys, I've got this funny poem here". One of my friends took it from me and started reading it aloud. A teacher came in, he was cool, we thought you could speak freely around him. So my friends says, "Professor, look what I found". He took it out and started reading. Our teacher went all pale and asked him, "Where did you get that?" And he took the poem away. You'd think that was the end of it. But shortly before Easter, I was in a workshop when they called me to the manager's office. I walk in, and see three grim-looking strangers wearing leather coats. They also had identical little green hats, like foresters. I immediately felt a wave of heat wash over me because I knew what it was about. One of them said to me, "You got a notebook?" "I do". "Give it here!" He took the notebook and said, "He wrote it!" They took me to the Citizens' Militia station. It had a Security Service office. I told them that I only had a copy of the poem. I took full responsibility. They threatened to have me expelled, that if I didn't stop, I'd have trouble getting accepted into university. Eventually I found out that the teacher took the poem to the Security Service. And he seemed so nice and courageous…'.

Remember, Son, Never Believe the Communists

After graduating from secondary school, Andrzej Szlęzak got married. He served in the military, after which he returned to work. The couple had several children. When the communists massacred the protesters in Pomerania and on the Coast, he was not yet in a place where he could protest. A few years later, he refused to attend a rally condemning the striking workers of Radom.

'They wanted to condemn them at a demonstration in town. A friend tried to convince me, "What's the problem? You just need to sign the list and you can go home'. But I didn't sign the list and didn't go. I thought it would be degrading. I don't think I was being particularly courageous. No. And I didn't condemn those who attended the demonstration either'.

When the Workers' Defence Committee, the Movement for the Defence of Human and Civil Rights and the Confederation of Independent Poland were established, Szlęzak tried to reach out to them. He might have not been motivated enough, however, as he failed to make contact with any of the organisations. Karol Wojtyła being elected pope surprised him a great deal, but he did not expect it to have a major impact on the situation in Poland.

'When the pope came to Poland, my hope was restored. For the first time in my life, I felt a rush of energy… I can't describe it. It was happiness, that's for sure. In any case, I slowly began thinking differently, being more socially-minded. I hoped, maybe not for a free Poland, but for a better life for us, economically speaking. No, I didn't expect the strikes to break out. I never thought that the commies would go down. What I began to realise was that the PZPR people were doing the Kremlin's bidding. Even though before Solidarity, people were scared of thinking such thoughts'.

The strikes in Pomerania and on the Coast were a complete surprise. At the time, Szlęzak was a senior inspector for transport and OHS at the Regional Housing Management Company. In Skarżysko-Kamienna, the first company to go on strike was the local House Factory, and that is also where the founders of the local NSZZ 'Solidarity' union met for the first time. The union began forming its organisational structure in late August, with the first commission registered at the Predom-Mesko Metalworks.

'I went to the Metalworks with my colleagues, but the room was packed full. An initiative group was elected. A sort of delegation from various companies. A lawyer came down from Masovia. He told us a lot of things about registering the union, about union rights. It left quite an impression on me. I became the head of the Company Commission at our company. It was small, because we employed a little more than 100 people. The first demand we delivered to the director was a pay raise. Then we demanded better uniforms. The director agreed without making too much of a fuss.

There wasn't a war between us. It all started when we went on strike together with the rest of Solidarity. The whole town came alive. Everyone talked about how to change companies, how to change Poland. They kept cutting off power at the Solidarity office in Skarżysko. One time, the whole delegation office was plastered with anti-Semitic flyers. The windows were painted over. It turned out that it was the Grunwald organisation, probably inspired by the Security Service. The agents were working overtime. They tried various things. They tried to label us – first as counter-revolutionaries, then as murder suspects, claiming we wanted to kill their families. They instigated things and later pinned it all on us.

Don't Let Them Break You

The declaration of martial law surprised Szlęzak as much as the establishment of Solidarity sixteen months prior. He was confused when the radio and television were shut down on the night of 12/13 December, but by then the communists had already made him accustomed to unconventional measures. So when a friend came by at eight in the morning, saying that the streets were teeming with militia and army units, Szlęzak was not really concerned. After all, the army and militia had been patrolling the streets for weeks in the form of Field Operation Groups and Military Operation Groups. But when one of his colleagues told him that the army and militia were arresting local activists, he rushed to the Solidarity office. It was closed, so he went to the nearby church instead, finding it full of people who were already reading the first flyers printed by an unknown activist.

'They contained handwritten names of those who'd been arrested. A while later, a group of agents arrived and arrested everyone reading the flyers. I think that's when I really rebelled inside. I swore to myself that I wouldn't forgive them this time. One day, as I was leaving the church after a Mass for the Homeland, I stumbled across Krzysztof Głąb. We began discussing the situation in Skarżysko. He asked me if I wanted something to read. So I said, "Sure". So he gave me some underground magazines and I got distributing'.

A Bridge Between Slavery and Freedom

But that was not enough for Szlęzak, and he eventually decided to strike out on his own. He set out to make a Solidarity banner. A large one, several square metres in size. Large enough to be visible even at the most crowded of demonstrations. The first banner was ready in 1982. It read 'Solidarity – Skarżysko-Kamienna'. Local Solidarity members took it with them to Warsaw to attend the Mass for the Homeland celebrated by Father

Jerzy Popiełuszko, and it was also present at the priest's funeral. Every month, the banner was also unfurled at the Mass for the Homeland celebrated at the church of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus in Skarżysko-Kamienna. Local solidarity members also took it on every Working Class Pilgrimage to Jasna Góra.

'I made many similar banners and flags. Local priests celebrated Masses for the Homeland every month in Skarżysko. But priests would also come from other parts of Poland – like Father Czesław Sadłowski and Father Stanisław Małkowski. And we'd always given them flowers as thanks. So I proposed that we should give them banners instead. Not as big as the ones we took to the demonstrations, but with "Solidarity" and our region's emblem drawn on them. I always drew something on them. Jesus making the V sign with His fingers. Or Jesus on the cross. When Wałęsa got the Nobel Prize – I drew the Nobel medal, when Father Jerzy was assassinated – I drew him. I made several dozen in total. Shortly after they declared martial law, I made one that read, "Skarżysko-Kamienna" and "God Save Poland". I still carry it every 11 November, 3 May and during Working Class Pilgrimages to Częstochowa. Also during anniversaries related to the Cursed Soldiers. It's like a bridge between slavery and freedom. Between the PRL and the Third Republic of Poland. I have a couple photos from my visits to Warsaw with that banner, including next to the flower cross at the church of St Anne and what back then was Zwycięstwa Square, now Piłsudskiego Square. Two years ago, in 2015, the head office of the Archives of Modern Records in Sandomierz put my banner on display during a Solidarity anniversary celebration. They didn't know who made it. It turned out they got it from my cousin, a priest. I was also told that the Sandomierz archive displayed it at various exhibitions around Poland'.

Eventually, Andrzej Szlęzak began designing anniversary post cards, always decorated with the emblem of the Skarżysko branch of Solidarity. Whenever he was part of his company's delegation, he would leave his cards in places of remembrance related to the victims of the martial law period – in churches, garden squares and such historic locations as the Wujek coal mine. The first anti-communist flyers posted on advertising columns in Skarżysko-Kamienna were also his doing, as were those which found their way under the windscreen wipers of militia cars. The local Security Service quickly identified Szlęzak as the culprit. However, after several searches that failed to produce 'physical evidence' of his 'anti-communist propaganda activities', the agents decided to play what was referred to as an operational game against him – in this case, they intended to accuse him of selling stolen paint, tools and paper. That ploy also failed, however, as the agents were ultimately unable to find enough 'credible' witnesses.

'Painting large banners was the most difficult thing. Those were several square metres in size at times. I had to make them at home, but I had and still have a tiny flat. Large banners needed letters, which could be a metre tall, or dozens of centimetres. I used to

move the table to the wall. My wife and kids would be sleeping, and I'd be working in the middle of the room. I had to cut out every letter individually. They also had to be painted separately. I also had to wrap everything up and hide it before going to work in the morning. I kept the stuff hidden very close to my flat, in the common laundry room. Whenever the agents came to inspect the flat, they also inspected the basement, but never the laundry room.

One time, I hadn't been able to hide the stuff. I came to work, and suddenly some agents came to search my office. They wanted to open my desk, to which I said that it was company property and they needed the company director's permission. So they went to get it. In the meantime, I called my wife and told her that there were probably agents on the way. I stalled them for a while to give my wife time to clean it all up. I told them that I also used the garage. He bought it and they inspected it too. That gave my wife more time to clean up the flat. She moved it all to a flat next door. They drove me to our block, and another Security Service car with agents was already there. But they hadn't inspected the flat yet, they only began once we came. They didn't find anything, obviously. But they didn't stop snooping around. In 1985, they were bold enough to come to my flat and tell me that amnesty had been declared. So I asked them, "So what?", and they said "We'd like to ask you to sign a document stating that you will cease your activism", so I said, "I'm not an activist, mister. Why should I sign anything?" In response, they told me they had proof of my anti-state activism. Later, they wrote in their documents that I'd been arrogant and rude towards them. Fair enough, I was a little angry, because they treated me like I was green. They sometimes called me and asked to come over. So I responded by saying, "Why would I, do I work for you?"".

Security Service on Trial

The Security Service was particularly active before the monthly Masses for the Homeland celebrated at the local church, as well as before important Solidarity anniversaries and national holidays that were of great importance to the people of Poland, such as 3 May and 11 November. Activists were also arrested during every pilgrimage of the pope to his homeland. During the 1987 papal pilgrimage to Poland, members from Skarżysko-Kamienna, including the unquestioned leader of the local underground Solidarity movement, Bogdan Ryś, were arrested and placed in custody for 48 hours. The intent was to prevent them from attending the Mass celebrated by the pope in Warsaw, and they were only released after John Paul II had left Poland. The pretext for the arrests was that a terrorist group from Skarżysko-Kamienna had allegedly been planning an attack on the pope. That group was allegedly led by Ryś.

‘We were in touch with Radio Free Europe, and we let them know about the arrests. I said to Bogdan Ryś, “We’re going to sue the communists for preventing us from seeing the pope”. And Ryś said, “What are you talking about, you want to sue the Security Service?” and I said, “Why wouldn’t I? We’ll make the whole world hear about this”. And Ryś agreed. It was 12 cases. Everyone who had been arrested sued the communists for deprivation of freedom. They couldn’t wrap their heads around it – how can you sue the Security Service? Our attorney was Mr Rzepka, as well as Kazimierz Ujazdowski Sr and one more person. I can’t remember who. In any case, the agents were in shock for a long time. But they weren’t vindictive about it. It wasn’t a favourable time for them, I think’, Szlęzak reminisces.

Thanks to the dedication and perseverance of the local activists, the Skarżysko-Kamienna underground remained active until the end of the 1980s. In 1988, an NSZZ ‘Solidarity’ Municipal Executive Commission was established, followed by a ‘Solidarity’ Citizens’ Committee in 1989. Andrzej Szlęzak was a member of both of these organisations. Having fallen seriously ill in 1989, he quit his job, subsisting off a meagre disability allowance. Today, he focuses on pursuing his passions – sculpture, painting and metal art. He himself says that he is proud that we was able to add even a tiny contribution to Poland’s fight for independence.

The PRL Was a Big Fat Lie

Now – awarded with a Cross of Freedom and Solidarity. Then? ‘As a young man, I saw the PRL as a paragon of peacefulness. That’s what we’d been taught at school. In the media, they kept telling us that we were “a progressive country with one of the world’s best economies”, says Edward Wryszcz from Piechowice.

‘They talked about wealth, but I had to wait in a queue to buy milk, and couldn’t get any. Because when I was on my way to work, they hadn’t delivered it yet. Any by the time I headed home, it’d all sold out. And I had multiple children. I couldn’t understand that. Yeah… and in 1980, it turned out that the PRL was a big fat lie. Even though I’d been listening to Radio Free Europe and had a friend, who I could call my mentor, who told me that everything they wrote in the paper was propaganda, that communism was a huge scam, I didn’t want to believe any of that. I only started to believe when I read about it all in Solidarity publications in 1981. When I was elected to be on the Solidarity Company Commission, I acquired an interest in world affairs. In 1980, I realised that I had to contribute to help Poland become Poland. That’s when I got involved in education’, says Wryszcz.

Censorship? impossible

Wryszcz’s parents were from the Lublin area. His father had no love for the Soviets, as he knew what crimes they had committed during their invasion of Poland in the 20s. When his family was headed to what was known as the Recovered Territories after the war, they were accosted by a band of Soviet soldiers, who tried to steal their horses and all their belongings. ‘Father tried to resist, so the Soviets knocked all his teeth out with a rifle stock’, Wryszcz says.

The family eventually settled near the Polish-German border, where Edward’s father became a logger working in Noteć Forest. They lived on the fringe of the forest,

surrounded by its indigenous population. History was being made virtually right outside his window, as well as on the pages of the *Trilogy*. 'Yes, when I was a child, I was taught history by the brilliant teacher that was Henryk Sienkiewicz. I read the *Trilogy* multiple times, and the character that inspired me the most was Kmicic', Wryszcz reminisces. In the 60s, just like many other working class children, he went to a vocational school, before being conscripted by the People's Army, where young soldiers were indoctrinated by political officers every single day.

Desperate Search for Knowledge

After being discharged from the military, Wryszcz graduated from a technical secondary school and worked as a machinist, before becoming a teacher at the 'Karelma' Karkonosze Electrical Machine Factory in Piechowice. He started a family. In his words, the 60s and 70s were a 'private time' for him. While he did listen to radio Free Europe when the communists were massacring the protesters on the Coast and in Pomerania, he didn't think he was in any position to influence what was happening. As a result, he remained passive, just like the majority of Poles, and the same thing happened in 1976. 'I didn't really understand what was going on. I wasn't aware of the importance of those demonstrations and strikes', he admits.

During the strikes that swept across the Lublin area in July 1980, there was no indication that Karelma would go on strike a month later. The workers only began organising after the signing of the Gdańsk Agreement. The Karelma plant in Piechowice employed more than 1200 people. Edward Wryszcz worked there together with his wife, who also joined NSZZ 'Solidarity'.

'Everyone became very open, even though now we know that some people were secret collaborators. But nobody knew or thought about that back then', Wryszcz notes. Shortly after the union was established, he was elected to be on the Company Commission, and was appointed editor at the factory's PA system. His wife helped him with the latter, assisting him in editing news transmitted by Radio Free Europe, as well as information relayed from the Jelenia Góra and Piechowice branches of the union. In addition, the couple discussed the current goings-on at the factory. In their free time, they also delivered local and regional NSZZ 'Solidarity' newspapers, as well as distributing large amounts of books. As an amateur photographer, Edward Wryszcz also documented the events of those times.

'I suddenly became aware of how little I knew about our history. In 1980, I realised that I had to contribute somehow to help Poland become Poland. Otherwise, the country would have withered away. So when I summarise those sixteen months of

Solidarity's legal activism from today's perspective, I see it as my desperate search for knowledge', says Wryszcz.

When the TVs Break Down...

Martial law being declared did not really come as a surprise to Edward Wryszcz. Word-of-mouth propaganda had mentioned that it was an option, although the exact term used was 'state of exception'. The people did not think the communists would dare strike out against ten million union members. And even if they did… then certainly not shortly before Christmas.

'We didn't know what was going to happen. They said that striking and union activism could be punishable by death, because the factory had been militarised. But we weren't really fazed by that', Wryszcz reminisces. 'The Solidarity Company Commission convened after the Sunday Mass, and we opted for a work-to-rule strike. The workshops were so quiet that you could hear a pin drop. We got information from various departments that the workers were pretending to work. Eventually the whole Company Commission was called to the director's office. Inside was the prosecutor and some Security Service agent. We were interrogated one after another, and they asked us if we knew about the martial law decree. We said we had no idea that martial law was in effect. Some of us told them that their TVs were broken. Some people were taken to the militia station in Piechowice. When I was leaving the factory, I had my hands behind my back. Word got out that the Security Service had handcuffed me, but that wasn't true. At the station, they made or pretended to make some phone calls, and they released us after a few hours. When I returned to work after Christmas, I was summoned to the manager's office. The manager told me to immediately report to the HR department. They said I had to go to the Voivodeship Citizens' Militia Headquarters in Jelenia Góra. As it turned out, the entire Company Commission had been ordered to go too. And we, the idiots that we were, I think 10 people in total, bought train tickets and went there. We were all interrogated. One by one. They made a show of force. They wanted us to sign oaths of loyalty. After a few hours, they locked me up with some criminals for 48 hours, and the others were released. On 27 December, I was interned in Kamienna Góra – in the infamous former German *Arbeitslager Landeshut Gross Rosen*. Cardinal Henryk Gulbinowicz called the communists out on that, so they decommissioned that internment camp soon after'.

Highest Duty: Education

Edward Wryszcz spent a total of nearly a year in various prisons – back then referred to as internment camps – including Głogów, Grodków and Uherce. After being released in mid-November 1982, he and his wife joined the underground movement, distributing publications printed in Wrocław and Jelenia Góra, both in Jelenia Góra and Piechowice. Eventually, together with Władysław Niegosz and Marian Zagórny, he established the local magazine of Fighting Solidarity – *Zerwij Kajdany* (Cast Off the Shackles). He worked as a writer and editor, as well as a photographer, making the diapositives that were essential in the process of screen printing magazines. From December 1983 to September 1986, he was also a member of the Solidarity Interim Coordination Committee for the Jelenia Góra Region. For six years starting in 1983, Wryszcz was on the board of the Working Class Ministry at the church of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross in Jelenia Góra, in addition to attending lectures organised by the Christian Thought University. He also worked together with the underground art scene as an actor at the Scena Czterdzieści i Cztery amateur theatre in Jelenia Góra, all while working a day job at Karelma. However, as he was suspected of 'inciting the workers and organising an underground movement', Wryszcz lost his job for several months in 1985, before being reinstated by the Wrocław court in October of the following year. The Wryszcz family's tiny flat was inspected by the Security Service multiple times. Edward Wryszcz's wife was also interrogated, and both were threatened with 'having an accident'. The multitude of various underground activities that Wryszcz was involved in were, in his own words, motivated by very personal reasons – wanting to make up for the ignorance he had persisted in before 1980.

In the late 80s, he helped organise such official Solidarity bodies as the 'Solidarity' Citizens' Committee, as part of which he ran and was elected as the first mayor of Piechowice in the first free post-war elections in 1990. In free Poland, he held this post for four consecutive years.

'Obviously, I was against cutting a deal with the communists', Wryszcz says. 'But when I saw the people reject the communists on 4 June 1989, I decided to run in the local government elections. It later turned out that we hadn't actually ousted the communists, but that's another matter. Poland was regaining its freedom. We even began hoping that it could become wholly independent. And that's what ended up happening. Fair enough, for many years, the country was governed by people I didn't approve of and never will, the liberal leftists. But I can honestly say that my wife, me and many people from this region fought for our country's freedom. Whatever the people decide to do with that freedom, how they will use it, that's a different matter. I also have friends who were in the underground, but vote leftist today. Some of them event want to invite Albin Siwak to the Solidarity retiree meetings, because he was a worker. It's like they forget that he

was a member of the PZPR Central Committee's Politburo, and that he was rabidly anti-Solidarity. So that's why I think that one of the most important things to a nation should be education'.

The First Successful Uprising

When the strikes began after the declaration of martial law, Witold Kaszuba did not hesitate to join them. It was his belief that justice had to be defended, or the consequences could be fatal.

He no longer remembers who instilled within him his strong sense of justice. Was it his father, who was especially sensitive to injustice, or his mother, who was herself a victim? Since he could remember, Kaszuba's parents had always fought for the fundamental human right that is the right to justice. His father, a graduate of the John Casimir University in Lwów, was a Home Army soldier and fought in the Świętokrzyskie Mountains during the war. His mother was expelled to Siberia from her home in the Second Republic of Poland when she was thirteen. There, she learnt how to fight to preserve her national identity, a story she told her two sons on multiple occasions.

When the war ended, Kaszuba's parents moved to Lower Silesia independent of each other, and that is also where they met. The couple got married in the late 1940s. Kaszuba's father taught primary and secondary school, while his mother focussed on parenting. The family first settled in Dzierżoniów, before moving to Świdnica, where they lived for more than twenty years. Witold liked to attend the schools where his father was a teacher, but when that was no longer the case, he preferred to play truant and wander around town. He also liked to go through his father's library, looking for various books, particularly on nature. He was an avid reader even in primary school, and read many historical novels in secondary school, including books on the November, January and Warsaw uprisings. He was saddened to learn that they had all been quashed. He dreamt of one that would actually succeed.

Hitchhiking instead of a Passport

His first encounter with glaring injustice was in secondary school. Some students were favoured, while others, mainly those less well-off, were derided. He had already

experienced that himself, although from a different point of view. He realised that he was treated differently after his father had been appointed school inspector, and differently again when he lost the position.

'I was considered rude because I rebelled against me and other students being disrespected. Halfway through secondary school, I noticed that we were under Soviet occupation, that there were thousands of Russkies in our town. The town was split down the middle. They had their barracks, airfield, training ground and private residential district. People used to say that Świdnica was like a smaller Legnica. But it wasn't before I started reading underground newspapers that I actually began to realise that there were foreign people here who prevented me from making my own decisions. That's when I learnt that there were people who could stick it to the system, that it was possible to do it'.

Promises, Promises

Kaszuba's aversion towards the system only grew when his application to the Faculty of Geography of Wrocław University was rejected even though he had passed his exams. In order to avoid conscription, he enrolled in a post-secondary school, from which he graduated without any problems whatsoever. Witold's brother studied economics in Wrocław, and moved to Warsaw after earning his degree. The rest of the family followed soon after. Even though Witold was initially against moving to the capital, he soon began to enjoy big city life, especially considering the fact that his company offered him very good money. Two years later, he decided to apply to the 'Ursus' Mechanical Factory, where he was promised that he would soon be granted his own flat. He was supposed to start working after completing a year-long training programme, and was even promoted to foreman. But after a year, it turned out that the work could not commence, as the new production line had not been completed yet… 'There wasn't a lot to do at my department, so we were assigned to the old factory', Kaszuba reminisces. 'I began working the lathe, even though I had no idea how to operate it. That was one of the system's absurdities. The machines were off, rusting, and we pretended to work'.

Meeting the Zbigniews

During the July 1980 strikes in Świdnik and Lublin, Kaszuba was vacationing in the Bieszczady Mountains, and the news only reached him on his way home. When he came to the factory, he was told that 'downtime', as short as it was, had happened at his company as well. The revolutionary atmosphere only died down when the managers announced

pay raises, but from then on, underground newspapers and flyers began circulating around Ursus, letting the workers know where they could report their grievances. Two points of contact were mentioned: Zbigniew Bujak and Zbigniew Janas.

'I went to see them, but I had quite a few concerns. About how they'd receive me, and whether the Security Service would start spying on me if I went. My mum and I were renting a flat without having an official registration. I was afraid I'd get her in trouble. I knew that the moment I got into politics, I could forget about a company flat', Kaszuba reminisces about those years. 'I went anyway. I wanted to change something about the PRL's stagnation. I wanted the public good to stop going to waste. That was my foremost concern. When I came to the factory hall, some guy searched me and pointed me to the workshop on the first floor. Zbigniew Bujak greeted me very warmly. I was worried that he'd ask me about my intentions, or who'd sent me. No such thing. He just whipped out some underground magazines. He let me read them. I felt so relieved that I instantly regained my confidence. I took the magazines and distributed them at my department. My second visit went how I'd been worried it would. I met Zbigniew Janas. He searched me carefully. He asked me questions, for what reason? where from? why? But I simply told him I'd already met Zbigniew Bujak'.

Solidarity

When the strikes began in Gdańsk, the Ursus factory also stopped for a short time. The rebellion stopped when the managers gave the workers a raise, but flyers soon began circulating, calling on the workers to form free trade unions. The first organisation to be formed was the Workers' Committee for Solidarity with the Strikers of the Coast and Pomerania, established on 21 August. A delegation was sent from Ursus to Gdańsk, and two rallies were held at the factory a week after, attended by thousands of people. At one of the rallies, Zbigniew Bujak explained that a strike was not yet necessary, as the interests of the workers were being safeguarded by the shipyard workers and their advisors, who were negotiating with the government at the time. However, should the talks reach an impasse, Ursus would go on strike in support of the shipyard workers. After the signing of the agreements in West Pomerania and Silesia, the Independent and Self-governing Trade Union 'Masovia' was established in Ursus in early September. Two weeks later, when all independent unions renamed themselves NSZZ 'Solidarity', the Ursus union became a member of the new organisation. Witold Kaszuba became the head of the Culture and Education Commission.

'We didn't really know what the Culture and Education Commission would do. It was formed chaotically and was an ad-hoc creation. The workers wanted to get rid of our

Culture Centre, which generated enormous costs even though nobody ever went there. But I defended it, and soon created a community around the Culture Centre that had an influence on the whole factory, and soon also the entire town. We screened documentaries and movies there. We hosted Poland's most famous sketch comedy groups, like Jan Pietrzak's group and Piwnica pod Baranami. The Ursus Culture Centre also held the first unofficial screening of Andrzej Chodakowski and Andrzej Zajączkowski's *Robotnicy '80* (Workers of 1980). The Culture Commission also helped organise the Honest Song Festival in Gdańsk, and the artists would later perform in Ursus. The commission also started its own publishing imprint. We organised philosophy and history lessons, during which we talked about contemporary Polish history without censorship. The lecturers included Krystyna Kersten and Tomasz Strzembosz'.

'The sixteen months of being a member of Solidarity was like a university to me. I studied history, literature, political theory, economics and human resources management. I met a lot of great people thanks to Solidarity, including my wonderful wife, Elżbieta. I forged bonds of friendship lasting to this day, including with Barbara Tatko, Zbigniew Bujak, Roman Bielański, Arkadiusz Czerwiński, Zbigniew Janas, Jerzy Kaniewski and Stanisław Karpezo', Kaszuba says. 'For a time, I moved into the Ursus worker hotel. I'd go to my room and drop dead because I was so mentally and physically exhausted. I'd get up in the morning to go to work. Day in, day out. We were all very tense as well, because the PZPR kept staging all kinds of provocations. Like the Bydgoszcz Affair, or some farmer strike. Shortly before they declared martial law, they attacked the students of the Firefighting School in Warsaw. In short, there was always something. But that's when I began to feel the satisfaction that I was contributing to building a different Poland. Even though I realised that it wasn't free. But back then, I didn't think a free Poland was possible. That thought never crossed my mind at the time.

Payback for the Strike

Witold Kaszuba came to the factory on the first business day after martial law was declared, which was the second day under the new regime. By then, the office of the NSZZ 'Solidarity' Company Commission at the 'Ursus' Tractor Factory had already been taped shut by the militia. However, several women had been able to retrieve the underground books and some of the documents before that happened. The head of the commission, Zbigniew Janas, was not there, although he did manage to avoid being arrested. His deputy, Wojciech Gilewski, was not so lucky. The factory was brimming with plainclothes agents, but no uniformed services had been called yet. On Monday night, the Security Service, the ZOMO and the 13th Mechanised Regiment of the Polish People's Army

launched an attack against the Strike Committee. The attackers included Jerzy Dziewulski, a popular talking head of the post-communist media in the Third Republic of Poland.

On Monday, 14 December, nearly the entire board of the Ursus Solidarity Commission convened a meeting to call a strike. The work stopped. The Strike Committee was headed by Jerzy Kaniewski. The strikers wore white and red armbands, but they never tried to encourage anyone else to join them, as the committee decided that every worker should make their own decisions. The management immediately furloughed the entire staff, and the Strike Committee decided to secure every department in response.

'We had union patrols with armbands walking around the factory. And it was more than ten hectares of floor space to patrol', Kaszuba reminisces. 'We divided the work between ourselves. We agreed on dead drops around town. By then, the factory had already been surrounded by the ZOMO and the military. We were all acutely aware of how serious the situation was, of course, and we were very careful to avoid bloodshed. The workers were obviously all tense. I was tasked with organising our information network. We agreed that I would go outside to see what was going on at other companies. One of my colleagues and I hopped into a car and went to the city centre. We visited the Świerczewski and Kasprzak plants, but the militia and the military were already there. We quite easily entered the "Warszawa" Metalworks by driving around it. Every gate was guarded by the military and the ZOMO. What really struck me there was the silence. A factory is never that silent, there's always something smoking or hissing. But that factory was dead. It was still. We then saw two guys wearing white and red armbands. We walked up to them and told them we were from Ursus. They took us to their Strike Committee. The factory hall was full of people. I got vouched for by someone who'd already met with our Culture Commission. The several hundred people there were looking pretty grim, the same probably went for us, so I gave a rousing speech. I told them that we would strike, and that we would continue to strike for as long as we could. I was told that we wouldn't get into FSO [an automobile manufacturer], as it was surrounded by even more soldiers. After two or three hours, we went back to the plant, and we stumbled upon a military patrol just in front of the factory, which we managed to run away from. I ran into a house, and they let me hide with them for a while. After several minutes I joined a group of people that were headed to the factory to strike. They had sandwiches and thermoses. I told the committee about our trip. The people were gathered in the hall. The Presidium of the Strike Committee set up shop in the common room. We sat down and talked, but the people… started to slowly trickle out. So we began wondering if we should end the strike, because the people were dwindling. In the meantime, Jan Józef Lipski and Marian Srebrny arrived to support us. So we decided to keep striking. We let all the women go home, and began waiting for something to happen. Although I think we all expected the army and the ZOMO to storm in. We decided that we wouldn't resist. That we were outmatched'.

The army and the ZOMO assaulted Ursus after midnight. After a nearly two-hour operation, several dozen strikers were arrested and taken to various militia stations. Four members of the Striking Committee were later transferred to the facility on Rakowiecka Street. On 20 January 1982, the Ursus NSZZ 'Solidarity' Striking Committee was put on trial. The prosecutor was a man by the name of Walczyk, while the defenders included the most prominent Warsaw lawyers, including Jan Olszewski, Stanisław Szczuka and Władysław Siła-Nowicki.

Witold's Time in Prison

'When I got arrested and they locked me up on Rakowiecka Street, I slept through the first few days to deal with all the stress. Of course except for the times when they interrogated me. I reached out to my brother so my family would know where I was being held. But I forgot his address, probably due to stress out of the underground habit of not committing contacts to memory. So I wrote on the letter: "Warsaw, Noakowskiego Street. The same gate as the Wróbel biscuit shop. Third yard. Right-hand staircase. Second floor. Left door". And the letter actually reached him'.

'The trial didn't really bother me much. Jerzy Kaniewski, who led the strike, got sentenced to three and a half years. Arkadiusz Czerwiński and I got three years, and Benedykt Filoda got a suspended sentence. Jan Józef Lipski's trial was postponed because of his bad health. My sentence didn't break me. To me, we lost a battle, but not the war. I felt I had support. After the sentence was announced, the audience sang the national anthem. The atmosphere was very solemn. We were escorted out down side corridors, and I felt that those who were escorting us were the most afraid. I didn't really get the impression that the judges were hostile towards us. We hoped that maybe we could get suspended sentences, because I think that was how they'd dealt with the Strike Committee at FSO. But that didn't happen. We were imprisoned as payback for the strike'.

The strikers were imprisoned in the Ministry of Internal Affairs unit on Rakowiecka Street, which was where political prisoners were held. Although the communists claimed that there were no political prisoners in Poland, the separation between this particular category of inmates and the rest was evident. Witold Kaszuba quickly made contact with prisoners held in other cells. In one of them, the inmates made tiny anti-communist flyers, which they dropped outside during yard time. Kaszuba helped distribute them, for which he was sentenced to 10 days in solitary confinement.

'Of course I knew about the prison's history. To me, it certainly was a historic place. Also depressing, in a way, because I was sitting in a solitary cell built back in the Russian

Empire era. But I knew that it was for a just cause. You could say that made up for my lack of freedom', summarises Kaszuba.

Several months later, he and the other prisoners were transported to the infamous Łęczyca prison, before being transferred to Hrubieszów in April. The facility held some 200 political prisoners at the time, which were sporadically threatened with being transferred to the USSR. The administrators and guards initially treated the inmates with a great deal of cruelty. They set Alsatian shepherds on them, a callback to the German occupation period, and the families of the inmates were treated similarly. The political prisoners staged frequent hunger strikes, which often ended in them being force-fed through a tube. During one such hunger strike, the prison governor called in the ZOMO, who battered the 'politicals'. Starting in 1983, such brutality became rarer, however.

'They did use more or less primitive harassment tactics on us', Kaszuba reminisces. 'One day, the head of security showed us some trees while we were in a room with him. He told us that identical trees grow in the Soviet Union, and if we try to start a revolution, Siberia isn't far away. The prison administrators bullied us a lot. Let me give you an example: I was about to get married, and they suddenly transferred me to Białołęka. My future wife was coming to Hrubieszów with her family, but they didn't even let me call her or send her a telegram. And Hrubieszów is a few hundred kilometres from Warsaw, and the transport options were terrible back then. But I managed to let them know another way. When they were transporting me, I was put in the back of the car. I had a Solidarity badge from Ursus in my pocket. When I saw someone driving behind us, I put it against the window and waited. Some people made the 'V' sign, others waved back. But I wanted to signal that I'd be throwing a note out. At one point, a large cement lorry drove next to us. A transit mixer. The driver saw my badge. He reacted very emotionally. He showed the 'V' sign, and wrote on the windshield, 'Spring is ours', or something along those lines. I motioned to him that I wanted to throw something out. He drove very close to our car. I threw the note out. He stopped… and it took him a few minutes to catch up to us. He gestured that he didn't find it. So I threw out another one. I waited and waited, but nothing happened. I lost all hope when, after more than ten minutes, I saw the lorry speeding towards us again. Overtaking other cars and lorries. Like it was a race. He gestured that he found the note and he would call my wife. And he did'. Elżbieta did not have to go to Hrubieszów after all.

After some two months in Białołęka, Witold Kaszuba was transferred back to the Hrubieszów prison, where he got married in mid-January 1983. He was released under amnesty in July 1983. He and his colleagues from Ursus were reinstated at the factory, but were dismissed shortly after. Even an appeal at the labour court failed to change the decision. The zealous judge kept asking them, 'Gentlemen, why are you so insistent on working in Ursus with such interesting skill sets?'.

The former Solidarity activists spent months looking for work. Their friends from Ursus supported them financially during their imprisonment and job search, and they were also helped by the Primate's Committee for Assisting the Imprisoned and Their Families, which was based in the church of St Martin on Piwna Street. Eventually, however, they had to resort to forming their own labour cooperative. We now know that the Ministry of Internal Affairs initially wanted to reject their application, but ultimately decided that the 'politicals' could be controlled more easily if they were allowed to organise. And so, the UNICUM labour cooperative was established in 1984. Out of its eleven founding members, ten were former political prisoners.

Witold Kaszuba resumed his union activities. Among other responsibilities, he was an advisor to the NSZZ 'Solidarity' Secret Interim Founding Committee in Ursus, was tasked with finding suitable venues for clandestine meetings and was responsible for underground communication. He was once again convicted, though this time his punishment was a fine – meted out for carrying banners during a demonstration. In 1985, he was arrested one more time and imprisoned on Rakowiecka Street for several months. He was once again released under amnesty. Even though he was married and had two daughters, Kaszuba continued his underground activism until 1989. When he started his own business in the late 80s, he began to support the underground financially.

After 1989, he refrained from becoming involved in politics, focusing on growing his business instead. Thanks to his tremendous persistence, studying and effort, it developed into a successful company. Kaszuba's wife Elżbieta was of great help in this regard, as she sacrificed her passion for surveying to focus on raising their daughters. However, the former head of the NSZZ 'Solidarity' Culture and Education Commission did not forget his friends, those who had worked alongside him as part of Solidarity in Ursus and in the underground. Kaszuba supported and still supports many of them, people who did not have as much luck or skill as him. Recently, he has become involved in a foundation established in Ursus. The foundation is focused on finances and history in equal measure, and, among other things, it commemorates those who were active between 1980 and 1989 and their contributions.

'When I was reading about the uprisings, I dreamt of a successful one. Solidarity was an uprising that succeeded, even though it took a long time. I am proud that I could participate in it. It's just a shame that Poland regaining independence did not automatically mean that real justice would be restored. Paradoxically, evil triumphed to some extent. Many of those who suffered at the hands of the system still suffer to this day. And the communists who used to rule benefited the most'.

The ideas of Solidarity and Poland Came First

‘My parents had salt, sugar, flour and some grain stashed away in the attic. The agents dumped it all in the middle of the room and mixed it with the clothes. I still can’t get that horrible sight out of my mind. My parents’ horror at their food being wasted, and the dull, spiteful mugs of the agents. So when it comes to the roots of my aversion to communism, I think that’s where it began’, says Stanisław Sakwa.

Stanisław Wawrzyniec Sakwa’s family arrived in Wrocław after being resettled from Komarno near Lwów (modern-day Lviv, Ukraine). His closer and more distant cousins also lived in nearby towns, and Sakwa himself says that his relatives from the Eastern Borderlands of the Second Republic of Poland could be found in virtually every district of Wrocław.

Origins of Anti-Communism

‘The house we lived in was also home to four couples from my family. I think I was like four or five years old, but I remember well that time the Security Service searched our flat, as my parents explained to me later. I remember their black coats. They were looking for a radio, because someone had denounced my parents for allegedly listening to Radio Free Europe’, says Sakwa. ‘My parents had salt, sugar, flour and some grain stashed away in the attic. The agents dumped it all in the middle of the room and mixed it with the clothes. I still can’t get that horrible sight out of my mind. My parents’ horror at their food being wasted, and the dull, spiteful mugs of the agents. I remember standing there in terror, unable to say anything. So when it comes to the roots of my aversion to communism,

I think that's where it began. There were also my grandma and great-grandma's tales of how the Russkies persecuted our family'.

Stanisław Sakwa's adult life began after he was discharged from the military, which conscripted him in his final year of technical secondary school. After serving the state, he married Aniela. Despite their difficult living conditions, the couple raised two sons, who graduated from the Wrocław University of Technology and now talk about their parents' activism with pride. Their years-long struggle against the communist regime is an example of modern Poland's heroic resistance against totalitarianism.

indentured Servitude

Sakwa began working at the Copper Mining and Smelting Combine (KGHM) in Lubin in 1977. At the time, the company employed tens of thousands of people from all over Poland, who were attracted by the higher than average wages and the possibility of quickly receiving a flat. The combine kept expanding, and being given a flat within two years was not uncommon. Less attention was paid – both by the workers and the managers – to the working conditions, which always bordered on hazardous. Therefore, it came as no surprise that the first strikes at KGHM, which began as early as July 1980, focused on improving the working conditions as one of their demands.

During the strike at the 'Rudna' mine, Sakwa became the head of the strike watch. In August, he visited the Gdańsk Shipyard, where he learnt how to properly form a trade union. Soon after, he was elected head of the Solidarity Department Commission of the piping transport and assembly department at Rudna.

'The working conditions were so terrible that many people quit fast', Sakwa says. 'Also, a lot of people from other regions of Poland would go back to their home towns after retiring. To them, working there was a punishment, slavery, a kind of indentured servitude'.

Sakwa was an active member of Solidarity for sixteen months, although he himself says that he was not as active as he would have liked. A year before the union was formed, he and his family were in a serious traffic accident. The accident was so serious that his wife remained in critical condition for five months. Sakwa had high hopes for Solidarity, seeing how effective the union was at transforming KGHM and the country. New social initiatives were formed, and public awareness was on the rise. Instead of being mindless drones, the people were beginning to consciously participate in public and political life.

Discovering Your identity

When the communists declared martial law, many companies in the Copper Basin went on strike, including the Rudna, Lubin, Polkowice and Sieroszowice mines, as well as the Głogów and Legnica copper smelting plants. History books call this the largest strike in Lower Silesia at the time. The army and the ZOMO surrounded the mines and smelting plants tightly, and company directors began negotiating with the strikers. The leaders of the strike decided that it would continue until all interned activists were released and martial law was abolished. After the pacification of the Wujek mine, a decision was made to intensify the strike and defend the mines. However, after sustained ZOMO attacks and more negotiations, the strike was ultimately called off.

Stanisław Sakwa never had any doubts whether to join the strikers. On 14 December, he became a member of the Strike Committee, before joining the Solidarity Underground Company Commission. 'Somewhat automatically, I became a member of the Strike Committee, and later the Underground Company Commission. I never had any doubts whether what I was doing was right or not. Even though I had small children and a wife who was not exactly in good health. Back then, the workers, our ideas of Solidarity and Poland came first', Sakwa says. 'I went on strike in Rudna. I led the people out through Processing so they wouldn't get arrested. I worked down there as a miner-machinist. So I knew the passages, because I'd mapped them all, as I was also a mine rescuer'.

The Rudna mine held out the longest – until 17 December. The Underground Company Commission was quickly formed, and four organisers of the strike decided to go into hiding. Upon the management's insistence, Stanisław Sakwa lost his job alongside nearly 1000 other people who were disciplinarily dismissed, which led to the closing of Rudna. Most were rehired throughout the following year, although their contracts were much worse now. Fifty applicants were rejected. On 3 Maj 1982, Stanisław Sakwa was arrested and sent to the Głogów internment camp.

'My arrest was quite unusual', Sakwa reminisces. 'Well, I was a mine rescuer. Back then, every rescuer was supposed to spend two weeks in isolation, in full readiness, without being able to contact his family. We were forbidden from leaving our posts under pain of two years in prison. When the agents came for me, the party official just let them arrest me without any reservations. He told my colleagues that those were sanitary inspectors and they diagnosed me with dysentery, and that I had to be isolated because it was contagious. That's what they wrote in the company documents. I had dysentery, so I was interned. I ended up in Głogów'.

Prisons, Prisons, Prisons

Sakwa was released from internment in October 1982. After several days, he was ordered to participate in a month-long military training exercise. The People's Army would demand that he attend its exercises several times after that.

After his return, Sakwa joined the underground movement. He was elected head of the Inter-company Coordination Committee for the Legnica Voivodeship, and until 1989, he served as an underground connection between the voivodeship's Solidarity company commissions. In January 1983, he was sworn in as a member of Fighting Solidarity. Under his leadership, the committee was involved in a wide range of activities. The Copper Basin published several magazines, as well as underground newspapers, for which diapositives were provided by couriers from Warsaw and Wrocław. Their distribution was a large-scale operation. Stanisław Sakwa also reached out to various other Solidarity branches, including Gdańsk, Poznań, Warsaw, Łódź, Katowice, Kraków, Bydgoszcz, Białystok, Szczecin, Wrocław and Wałbrzych. Underground newspapers and books were exchanged. The Copper Basin became one of the most active centres for underground activity in Lower Silesia. The local working class ministry was also very active, supporting the families of workers who were imprisoned, interned or dismissed.

The Security Service kept a close eye on Sakwa, arresting him in April 1983. Several workers who had been arrested previously had testified against him, including several who did not even know him. Some testimonies were factual, while others were made up. Sakwa was released from custody after three months, but not for long. He was arrested again in December 1984 – carrying underground newspapers and books, and was detained for more than three months. His next arrest came in 1985. This time, his nearly brand-new car, a Zastava, was also confiscated as an 'instrument of crime'. The car was quickly auctioned off at a closed auction attended by the staff of the Lubin court. None of Sakwa's family members were informed about the auction. After a three-year court battle, the Supreme Court ruled that Sakwa's wife was entitled to damages equal to half of the car's worth due being a co-owner. On one occasion, unknown perpetrators damaged the brake lines and cut the handbrake cable in his car. It was a miracle that Sakwa did not die in an accident.

The following months were marked by more arrests – in 1985 and 1986, the Security Service did everything it could to neutralise Sakwa for several years. Even though the Lubin court under Judge Tomasz Mużyło found him innocent in 1985, as agents Mazurkiewicz and Przybyszewski put it, 'Our voivodeship court in Legnica will easily give you three years'. However, the Voivodeship Court in Legnica only sentenced Sakwa to… one and a half years in prison, of which he only served a single year due to poor health. The short sentence was passed by Judge Danuta Piotrowska, who rejected the demands

of the PZPR Voivodeship Committee in Legnica that Sakwa should be given three years. After being released, he retired, but did not cease his activism, and even expanded it by joining the Political Board of the Polish Independence Party.

'We'll lock you up, Sakwa'

'They kept harassing me. My wife too, they kept transferring her to different positions. They threatened to put our children in an orphanage. They had me fired from work. In short, I experienced their bullying almost every day. They even said to me, 'We'll lock you up, Sakwa', he recalls. 'They wiretapped my flat. When martial law began, I was fit as a fiddle. But in prison, I developed heart disease and ulcers on my stomach, duodenum and large intestine. So I got on medication. I had a couple of surgeries. When they locked me up in January 1986, I felt so unwell that they had to call an ambulance. They took me to hospital, and I ended up in the ICU. The next day, the agents came to the hospital to take me back to prison. But I wasn't there. They were enraged. The rank-and-file militia officers who were guarding me got punished. But I was in the ICU. The agents had the hospital locked down. They took me from the ICU, even though the doctor protested, saying that I could die. They didn't care. They shoved me into a car and took me to the prison on Kleczkowska Street, and after a few hours in a cell, they locked me up for more than three months in the prison hospital. Doctors from Wrocław were allowed to come over and examine me and prescribe me medication. They only released me after nine months. When I was lying there, I got a temporary disability pension; 75% was garnished by the prison governor to cover my care, and 25% went to my kids. So you could say I was paying them to be locked up. They also did one more thing to me. My mum was very ill. They knew she was dying, but not once did they let us see each other. They'd only allow a visitation if I signed a loyalty oath. She passed away before my release. It was the only sad thing that happened to me during that period. Everything else was insignificant. The important thing is that Poland is free, and that despite the terrible conditions in which we had to operate, my wife and I were able to raise sons who now live in a free country and work for the betterment of independent Poland'.

Stanisław Sakwa remained an underground member until 1989. He later held various positions at KGHM, before retiring in 2006. For six years, he was a member of the Political Board of the Movement for the Republic party, and his activism was recognised by President Lech Kaczyński, who awarded Stanisław Sakwa with a Commander's Cross of the Order of Polonia Restituta. In addition, President Andrzej Duda awarded Aniela Sakwa with an Officer's Cross, and the couple were awarded with Crosses of Freedom and Solidarity.

The Underground Life of Four Friends

The them, the founding of Solidarity was no less historic than when Poland regained independence in 1989. That is why they considered the declaration of martial law to be an attack on their and Poland's freedom, and their anti-communist activism to be their patriotic duty and upholding the spirit of the nation and solidarity.

Bliżyn is a large village in the Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship. Situated on the Kamienna River more than ten kilometres from Skarżysko-Kamienna, it was known in centuries past for its coal mines and iron production. Thanks to the Plater family, the village was also famous across Europe. Today, however, all that remains of the coal and the Platers are memories, derelict smelting plants and castle ruins. More recently, Bliżyn became infamous for being a place where the Germans killed thousands of Polish and foreign prisoners. After the war, it was one of many Polish villages inhabited by peasant-workers, or farmers who also worked in cities.

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Grzegorz Jasiński, Krzysztof Kowalik, Krzysztof Pióro and Zbigniew Wolski were born in 1966. They all come from peasant-worker families. They all have university degrees. Their relationship began in the first grade, and they have cultivated their friendship ever since. To some extent, their families had always been involved in Poland's struggle for independence, either in the more distant or recent past. Since they were children, they listened to the Word of God. They were all baptised and confirmed. In their homes, the words God, Honour and Homeland were always spelled with capital letters. Since they can remember, their families listened to Polish radio programmes – Radio Free Europe, the BBC, the Voice of America. Even as children, they knew that Poland was not free, that it was occupied by the Soviets and shackled by Polish communists. Although their families forbade it, they attended local masses celebrating 3 May and 11 November and

commemorating the Katyń Massacre. This is why when Solidarity was formed, the boys believed it to be the only organisation that could lead Poland to freedom. Their discussions about Poland began the moment martial law was declared, and their inquisitiveness only grew after the brutal pacification of the Wujek coal mine and the Lubin massacre of 1982. They agreed that they had to act, but they did not form their own organisation. They did not even choose a name for their group, considering themselves part of Solidarity.

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Three of them attended the Railway Technical Secondary School in Skarżysko-Kamienna. Only Grzegorz Jasiński attended the Adam Mickiewicz Secondary School. They met up every day after class. They held discussions, until one day, they decided that it was time to act. During the national council elections in June 1984, they drew explicit 'business cards' on the posters of every communist candidate. The candidates themselves were outraged and angry, but regular people could not hold back their laughter. The event also did not escape the notice of the local militia. The next step in the boys' plan was to start making anti-communist flyers and distributing them around the Bliżyn area.

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'Solidarity accelerated our political maturation. To give an example, I learnt about contemporary history from *Tygodnik Solidarność*. That was my university', says Grzegorz Jasiński today. 'I had to stand in a long queue to get the weekly, and read it fascinated well into the night. That's how I learnt so much about the events of December 1970 and what happened in 1976. And many other facts, like what happened during the German occupation and in the Stalinist period. Martial law being declared was a blow to me. I no longer had access to my magazine, for starters'.

'A depressing stagnation set in, and you had the communist crimes at the Wujek mine, and later in Lubin in August 1982', says Grzegorz Wolski.

'It was really concerning, but also inspired us to rebel'. 'The teacher community became polarised. They'd been walking around with Solidarity badges, but now we would get Fs for even mentioning Katyń', says Krzysztof Pióro. But we saw that some teachers attended the Masses for the Homeland at the church of St Joseph in Skarżysko, and that was very important to us. The parish priest at the time was Father Tadeusz Stańkowski. During the Mass, they raised a Solidarity standard and veteran banners. That also lifted our spirits'.

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The boys ultimately decided not to tell anyone about their underground activism. Even their parents were oblivious to it. Today, they say that they took great pains to keep everything secret – thus ensuring their safety. After some time, they reached out to Bogdan Ryś, the head of the Skarżysko-Kamienna branch of Solidarity. 'As far as I remember, I got some flyers, I think from the regional management, very well printed, and I dropped them around Bliżyn. But my friends called me out, saying I shouldn't be doing that because I could be found out on accident', recalls Krzysztof Pióro.

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Their next operation involved throwing paint at a tank purchased by their gmina in celebration of the 40th anniversary of PKWN [Editor's note: Polish Committee of National Liberation] – the tank ended up looking straight from a science fiction film. The organisers had it repainted pea green at the last minute, however. The incident was a blow to the solemnity of the event. As a result, Bliżyn and the rest of the gmina came under the scrutiny of the Security Service, which established a network of secret collaborators, and began surveilling the village and its surrounding areas. Based on information found in Security Service archives acquired by the IPN, the Security Service launched a surveillance operation under the codename 'Amator' (Amateur), followed by an intelligence operation under the codename 'Uparty' (Stubborn). More than ten people were interrogated, but both operations failed to produce any results. The rules established by the four friends proved effective.

After the 1984 election, the boys began making their own flyers using a simple technique. They cut a mould from a piece of rubber, using it as a stamp to print flyers on pages cut out from a notebook. The first batch consisted of a thousand such flyers, and they continued to print them for every Solidarity-related anniversary and patriotic holiday. In total, they printed more than ten thousand of them, in addition to holiday and New Year's cards. The boys also painted slogans on walls and roads – and during the pilgrimage to Częstochowa, even on the cottonwood trees along its path. At first, the Security Service would tear the bark off the trees, but a year later they simply cut them all down.

'It was only the four of us', says Grzegorz Jasiński. 'First we would meet up and come up with a plan. Then we implemented it. It was all tedious work. Paper was costly, but we all pitched in with our pocket money. We made our own paper cutter. We needed a couple 100-page notebooks to make a thousand flyers. We didn't spend a lot of time making the

flyers. Above all we made sure not to draw any attention to ourselves. Everything was supposed to seem normal. We wrapped things up at like 9 pm so we could go home and study. But sometimes, we would make as many as three or four thousand flyers'.

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After the assassination of Father Jerzy Popiełuszko, the boys hung an enormous banner with 'Solidarity' written on it at the local cemetery. Even though the Security Service demanded its removal, none of the locals bothered to take it down. Eventually, the banner was removed by a member of ORMO [Editor's note: Citizens' Militia Volunteer Reserve]. The event was discussed by hundreds of people, and the entire village was quite agitated. The boys' next plan was to plant two crosses. The first was raised at the cemetery in 1987, the other near the church, during the Easter Sunday procession.

'We wanted to commemorate all the heroes who died fighting against communism in 1956, 1970 and during the martial law period', Jasiński says. 'The crosses had stones tied to them with hemp rope. That was a reference to how Father Jerzy died. The ropes were on the cross's arms, and we wrapped them around stones we found in the fields. At the foot of the cross, we laid flat stones with dates painted on them – '1956, 1970, 1980, 1981, Katyń'. I hear that one of the stones has been preserved. We also attached a request for prayer for Father Jerzy and all other victims of the communist regime. The cross drew a lot of attention. People lit so many candles that they made it impossible to get to the cross after a few hours. People from other villages came to see it'.

'Even back then, or maybe even earlier, we knew that what we were doing was a matter of national importance', Krzysztof Pióro remarks. 'We were increasingly confident that we were helping Poland, rousing patriotism and supporting Solidarity. We believed that we had to show those communists that Solidarity wasn't dead'.

The boys continued their work until 1987, when they were conscripted after passing their secondary school exams. Nobody ever found out who was behind the flyers and anti-communist activism in the Bliżyn area. Until 2011, that is, when the Kielce branch of the Institute of National Remembrance organised an exhibition on the underground movement in the Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship between 1981 and 1989. The boys' flyers were described as 'author unknown', so they decided to finally come clean. They told the institute's historians about their underground activism, and donated their flyers, matrices, stamps and everything else that was still in their possession. Today they all agree that the goal was not to be the talk of the town, but making sure that the people did not forget that Solidarity was still alive. And that the tiny piece of Poland that is Bliżyn contributed to the country's liberation.

Grzegorz Jasiński, Krzysztof Kowalik, Krzysztof Pióro and Zbigniew Wolski helped organise the 1989 elections, and later joined the now-legal Solidarity. Upon the IPN's request, they were all awarded with a Cross of Freedom and Solidarity in 2014. 'We always hoped and had faith that Poland would be free', says Krzysztof Pióro. 'I think that, if not for our faith, we wouldn't have done what we did'.

To Me, it Was a Mental Revolution

‘I was shocked, because the first thing I saw was a military convoy and barking dogs. Scenes from films where prisoners were being unloaded at Auschwitz immediately flashed in my mind’, says Barbara Napieralska, from Poznań. She is a former underground Solidarity activist, and has been awarded an Officer’s Cross of the Order of Polonia Restituta by President Lech Kaczyński, as well as receiving a Cross of Freedom and Solidarity two years ago.

Life Like an Oil Print

She never thought she would become a political activist. Born in the small town of Grodzisk Wielkopolski, everything pointed towards her living a calm, small-town life, her attention focused on her family and school, and later on work. Her father was a shoemaker who first worked at the local cooperative, and later at a factory, where he manufactured couches for railway cars. Her mother looked after three children. Although their parents never insisted on it, the children effortlessly internalised the words God, Honour and Homeland. Barbara’s first stepped outside her small world when she took the entrance exam to the Energy Technical Secondary School in Poznań, passing it with flying colours. She chose to go to a technical secondary school because she wanted to quickly become independent, and only went to university many years later, studying at the Humanities and Journalism College in Poznań.

The Government Might Be Communist, but the Country is Ours

An important event in Barbara Napieralska’s life was when a Pole was elected pope. The world only became beautiful and interesting to her in August 1980, when word of the

Gdańsk strikes reached the Telkom-Teletra telecommunications plant in Poznań. Barbara had worked there for six years at the time as one of several thousand workers.

'Everything new that was happening was centred around Solidarity. I didn't hesitate to join the union. The work consumed me. To me and the people around me, it was like existing concepts were being upended', says Napieralska. 'I learnt a lot about the events of 1956 in Poznań, about Katyń, and the anti-Bolshevik underground independence movement. Through my contacts in the Poznań Dominican order, Fathers Kowalczyk and Alexiewicz, I discovered how our church helped preserve our national identity. It all made me more and more open to religion, faith and the Church. The year 1980 is also when I discovered troves of new knowledge. I voraciously devoured all independent newspapers and books. The *Black Book of Polish Censorship* left a huge impression on me. I couldn't believe the things that were being censored. I was also involved in distribution. We had a large library of underground publications. I learnt about many things I'd had no idea about. Before that, my circle of friends never openly discussed the crimes of June 1956 or December 1970. But now, everyone was sharing the news or their family stories, which all combined together to paint a picture of what our people had been through. We talked about the Soviet deportations, about the horrible things the communists did to people's families. Everyone wanted to say something so it wouldn't be forgotten. To finally shout out their ideas on how to reform the country. Because we all knew that the communists had ruined Poland. Everyone knew in their heart that the government might be communist, but the country was ours, not theirs. And I began participating in events which had previously been inaccessible to me. I met people who had taken part in the strikes on the Coast. We formed Solidarity – a trade union that was independent of the government. The Union University was formed soon after. I also attended lectures organised by the Adam Mickiewicz University. I met people who could and were in a position to do more than me'.

Dues with no Ledger

Early September saw the establishment of the NSZZ 'Solidarity' Company Commission at Telkom-Teletra, with Barbara Napieralska as an important contributor. She became a writer for a newly-established magazine – *Rezonans* (Resonance), as well as working together with the *Biuletyn Informacyjny* (News Bulletin) magazine published by the Solidarity union of the Adam Mickiewicz University. The commission focused on issues that were major pain points for the workers at Teletra – fair distribution of bonuses, promotions being dependent on skills and not having a PZPR card, and fair distribution of flats and holiday trips. But apart from that, it de-falsified history and publicised

information that was glossed over by the mainstream media. In addition, a library was established for independent magazines and uncensored books. Barbara Napieralska soon became a member of the Company Commission. For the young Solidarity activist, those sixteen months of freedom were a time when she developed her patriotic and national awareness, and forged bonds with other people.

‘The bonds still hold true. Especially those from the martial law period. But what impressed me the most was the solidarity between people. Those who were members of Solidarity were friends’, Napieralska reminisces. ‘We had a lot of trust for one another. That also applied to financial matters. For some time, union dues were collected without keeping a ledger, and nobody even thought about embezzling any of the money. At a certain point I noticed that the union slowly began transforming into a social movement. It really hit me after the Bydgoszcz Affair. I began to realise how powerful we could be. That we could counterbalance the PZPR, the ZSL – the communists in general. That was a wonderful sixteen months that really gave me confidence. But most importantly, I also discovered a lot about myself. That I had to live differently than before. That I couldn’t just go to work, go home, to the cinema or for a walk. No, there was too much to be done for the country, things that I could do. And that many people thought the same way, and I wanted to be with them. To me, that was a mental revolution’.

Feeling a Bond with People

Napieralska was interned on 14 December – she was summoned to the local militia station, where the officers tried to force her to sign a loyalty oath. She refused, for which she was threatened with being immediately dismissed from her job, but when she continued to refuse to swear loyalty to the communists, she was taken to prison instead. Her cellmate was the actress and director Izabela Cywińska, who had been arrested before her. On the night of 10 and 11 January 1982, dozens of female Solidarity members from Poznań, Leszno and Gorzów, who were being held in custody in Poznań, were loaded into militia vans and taken to an undisclosed location. One of the vehicles suffered an accident along the way, however, with several of the women suffering a concussion. It was only at the insistence of the rest of the prisoners that the Security Service agreed to transport them to a hospital. The remaining prisoners were pushed into a single vehicle and taken to an internment camp in Gołdap under the cover of night.

‘It was shocking. I remembered the movies… The SS officers and the barking dogs. I think that the communists really wanted us to remember those images’, says Napieralska. ‘Fortunately enough, that was “just” the communist female internment camp in Gołdap. It was set up in a former holiday resort for radio and TV staff, so we were in a gilded cage.

Gilded – because there was a bathroom, couches and rooms for multiple people. At first, they wanted to keep us locked up. But we didn't let them. So the female guards just sat in the hallways. They loosened up later. Only the ground floor was off-limits to us, because that's where the Prison Guards and Security Service agents were. Fortunately, the internment wasn't as traumatic for me as for women who'd left little children at home. Especially since it was often the case that the father was also interned'.

Napieralska was released in July 1982. 'For me, the internment was a time when I matured politically and when my anti-communism became rock-solid', she says. 'I also felt a strong bond with the people who were fighting outside, supporting us in the process. Fighting for us, on our behalf. And a very important thing – Solidarity looked after our families'.

Napieralska resumed her underground activism immediately after being released, writing and editing texts for the underground magazine *Rezonans*. She was also reinstated to her former position, and became a member of a secret team that supported the families of imprisoned Solidarity activists. Her next arrest came in March 1984. She was released under amnesty four months later… and was dismissed from her job. Soon after, she began writing for various underground magazines, including *Solidarność Poznań* (Poznań Solidarity) and *Solidarność Wielkopolska* (Greater Poland Solidarity), in addition to joining the secret Interim Greater Poland Regional Management.

Daily Life in the Underground

As the months and years went by, a question could be heard with increasing frequency: how should Poland be governed once free? 'The answer was simple. It should have Solidarity, and it should simply be a good country. But with each passing year, it was getting more difficult to work towards that', Napieralska says. 'The society slowly got accustomed to what life was like. The underground started to leak members. For your average Joe, the martial law restrictions were becoming less severe. Those who weren't against the government didn't experience the everyday oppression. A little stability was beginning to set in again. I never doubted that what I was participating in had meaning, and that it was all thanks to Solidarity. But I began to realise how routine things were becoming and how devoid of prospects they were. Still, I knew that I didn't want to and couldn't quit. I knew that I was a solider on the front line. That there were officers and generals somewhere who knew how to bring this battle to a close'.

'I think it was in early 1988 that Włodzimiera Pajewska, then Włodzimiera Paszkiewicz, let us use her flat, and we just openly formed a Solidarity consulting and information centre there. The centre hired several people, including Ewa Zydorek, who is now the

secretary of the National Commission. That's when we broke many people's fear and helplessness barrier. At that moment, I thought to myself that our coming out of hiding was a breakthrough. Old organisations were reactivated, and new ones were established. It was actually quite funny, because on one side of the street, you had our office, and you had Security Service agents standing on the other side. So when the Round Table talks began, we were ready for Solidarity to begin operating out in the open. I trusted in the people who represented us at the Round Table, I didn't believe they'd sell Solidarity out. Back then, I didn't believe that the commies would be overthrown. I wasn't so forward-thinking then. I only thought that our union would be made legal again. That would've been enough for me back then. But things went down a different path afterwards. The lefty clique conned the people at the Round Table. But that's another story'.

Forget about my Mother and Family...?

Longin Chlebowski – co-founder of Solidarity at the Municipal Transport Company in Łódź. He was interned. Imprisoned. Member of the Solidarity underground and the working class ministry. After 1989, he was awarded an Officer's Cross of the Order of Polonia Restituta, a medal 'For Polish Independence and Human Rights' and a 'Distinguished Cultural Activist' badge.

His childhood – working class. His father – a bricklayer and steel fixer, his mother – a weaver. As a school student, he spent several years in a one-room flat from before the war, which he shared with his one-year-older brother and five-year-younger sister. Their house was on Dąbrowa Street, which at the time was on the outskirts of Łódź, and neither the local flats nor school had access to electricity. Because of that, oil lamps were used as heating in classrooms, and at home, blurred shadows loomed everywhere. The boys' only pastime was football, which they played religiously in the yard and on the school field. Both were of course huge fans of ŁKS, the local club, as well as several popular boxers from Łódź – Kubacki, Kulej, Szczepański and Szymaniak. Their favourite cyclist was Jan Kudra, 10-time Polish champion and Olympic competitor, whose sister taught Longin's class. One day, she invited her brother to meet with the students as a reward for their good behaviour. After that day, all the boys in the class wanted to become famous athletes.

Longin's parents were PZPR members, and although they considered themselves atheists, their children were baptised, and they also received their First Holy Communion. Longin's parents read various newspapers, and when they bought a radio, they also listened to Radio Free Europe in secret. They never talked about politics, however.

'We weren't really well-off, but we weren't poor either. But the model was, after primary school, we had to go to a school where we'd be paid money', Chlebowski reminisces. 'I love books. I read a lot and wanted to work in printing, because… the books at the library were usually so damaged, I wanted to make them last longer. But there was no such school in Łódź. The nearest was in Poznań, I think. So I had to abandon my dream, because my parents couldn't afford the lodging costs. I had a friend who went to the newly opened

school at Wifam. It was a vocational school that gave you a degree in assembling textile machines. Poland assembled those in 30 countries around the world, so you could travel around a little after graduating. And… there was also the financial factor. We were taught theory for three days a week, and the next three days we were putting it into practice, for which we were paid. In first grade they paid us 150, in second 300, and in third 640 złotys every month. That was a lot of money for a young guy. For example, my mother was a weaver and she made 900 złotys a month'. Only a few of Longin's classmates received a machinery assembly degree. The rest earned machining degrees. The chosen few were all children of communist officials. That was the first time Longin experienced first-hand what justice was like in the PRL.

'It was a horrible feeling. I was looking forward to my future job. I'd made plans, and suddenly I was treated so unfairly', Longin summarises. 'They told us almost to our faces that we had no say in it. That hurt. But we had a great homeroom teacher, he taught physics, who, although he yelled at us and stomped his feet, was still fair. I think he wanted to make it up to us, and convinced us to take technical school exams. We attended his condensed preparatory course. We were determined, because we needed to be consistent. And so out of the 27 people from our class who took the exam, 25 passed it.

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Chlebowski was among those who went to technical school, but he dropped out on his own after several months. He got married. His daughter was born soon after, and the family was given a flat. Then, to the couple's surprise, Chlebowski was drafted and stationed in Zgierz in 1970. The soldiers were being prepared to quash the strikes brewing on the Coast. They all slept in full gear, but they were never deployed to 'put down the counter-revolution'. However, the next year, they were sent to crush a strike staged by female textile workers in Łódź. When the young soldier said that he would not fight the workers of the Coast, he was punished with a 30-day ban on leaving the barracks. The same punishment was meted out after the Łódź weaver strike.

'In 1971, they sent us to the Marchlewski factory, which is now the Manufaktura shopping centre. They told us to get out of the vehicles. We were carrying submachine guns and had three magazines attached to our belts. The fourth was in the gun', Chlebowski says. 'The women started shouting, "Then shoot us!" So I thought to myself, what am I doing here? I'm on the women's side. So I ejected the magazine and gestured that I had no ammo. Several dozen other guys did the same. The officers quickly ordered us to go back. We went back to the base, and I was ordered to leave the barracks. They

threatened to have me court-martialled, but it would've been too much of a scandal because a few dozen of my friends also did what I did'.

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After leaving the army, Chlebowski focused on family life, as well as spending years cultivating his class awareness. He found a better paying job at a construction combine. This way, he became an 'element of the Marxist base', putting his trust in the 'civilised' First Secretary of the PZPR – Edward Gierek, who managed to earn the confidence of hundreds of thousands of workers. However, in 1976, Chlebowski experienced a breakthrough moment. The strikes that swept across Poland and their suppression put him off socialist realism. At this point, he already had access to underground literature and had connections in ROPCiO [Editor's note: Movement for the Defence of Human and Civil Rights], and indirectly also in KOR [Editor's note: Workers' Defence Committee]. So when the strikes broke out in August 1980, he did not hesitate for a second to become involved in establishing free trade unions. At the time, he was employed at the Municipal Transport Company (MPK).

'After the strike at MPK, I was offered leadership of the free trade union. But when I saw how many and how complex the demands were, primarily the economy-related ones, I didn't feel I had the courage for the job', says Chlebowski. 'I was put in touch with Benedykt Czuma from ROPCiO, and I was also in contact with KOR. We chose Czuma as our advisor, and Ostoja-Owsiany too. The next day, I think, a gaunt-looking boy from the Łódź University of Technology came to us – his name was Grzegorz Palka. We quite quickly sent out a delegation to the striking Gdańsk Shipyard. They brought back their demands, and we formed the regional management in Grzegorz's mum's flat. There were 26 of us'.

Work soon began on building Solidarity and transforming the Polish mindset from Marxist to free and civil. For many Solidarity members, the sixteen months that followed were a university course on civil rights. 'At that point, I wasn't thinking about a free Poland. Even being granted the status of a free trade union was a huge achievement for us', he reminisces. 'I was maturing faster during those sixteen months. I learnt how to talk to people. I travelled to almost everywhere in the voivodeship. I helped workers form Solidarity unions, and was around people all the time. Around television, radio and press journalists. I had to learn how to talk to them, get used to the television people, who covered almost everything live. And being on TV led to people saying good morning to me in the streets, while others would cuss me out… People came to Solidarity with various issues. I didn't understand many of those. I had to learn about politics and economics. But the people trusted us a lot. Their expectation was that we'd fix all the harm that had been

done over the span of half a century, and that we'd do it now, and it was motivating. It uplifted me as an activist. At first I thought that everything was possible for us. But with time came humility. The people put their trust not in me as an activist specifically, but in Solidarity. For me, those sixteen months were extremely exhausting and I had no time for anything. But despite that, I was happy. I met wonderful people who gave me their time and knowledge. We spent nights debating. We built from the ground up, from the foundations to the roof. We were euphoric. The sheer engagement. The genuineness of the idea. It was beautiful'.

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Chlebowski was a delegate at the General Meeting of Delegates of the Łódź Area, as well as the First National Convention of Delegates of NSZZ 'Solidarity', and he was also elected as the head of the union at MPK. It was in the middle of this frenzied time that martial law was declared. He began visiting tram and bus depots, convincing the workers to follow the union resolution on securing company buildings. On the morning of 14 December 1981, they were supposed to stage a strike to defend the workers and the company from government aggression. However, Chlebowski was interned instead, and indicted five days later by the Court of the Pomeranian Military District in Bydgoszcz. The prosecutor demanded a sentence of six years in prison, but the court sentenced him to three. Chlebowski himself always notes that his short sentence was thanks to the testimony of the then-deputy director of MKP, Czesław Rydecki.

His summary of the three years he spent in prison, including in Łódź and Hrubieszów, consists of three sentences. His cellmates still remember his unyielding spirit and unbreakable conviction as a political prisoner. 'First off, we knew why we were there. Very few of the guys had been locked up by accident. Under martial law, people had to choose: to act or not to act. What we were doing was made possible by those who still had their freedom. All the demonstrations. The magazine and book publications. That uplifted us. We knew we weren't alone', he says. 'That the world was also protesting against communism, that the pope was protesting. We knew we had to endure. My wife distributed underground magazines, even though they threatened her that they'd put our daughter in an orphanage. Our daughter was ten at the time. And when they tried to convince her to make me sign a loyalty oath, my wife was proud that I refused. And for that, the communists found her a 'better' job… where she made half of what she used to'.

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After his arrest in 1981, Chlebowski was dismissed from MPK. After being released in 1983, Jan Dębowski helped him find work at Ryszard Szczepaniak's metalwork studio. But Chlebowski never cut ties with his old company. Instead, he joined the underground Solidarity movement – both at his old company and the Łódź Regional Management, as well as becoming a member of the Working Class Ministry organised in Łódź by Jesuit Father Stefan Miecznikowski and Salesian Father Józef Belniak.

'The Working Class Ministry operated semi-secretly, or even officially. We even had IDs. And in the underground, we organised demonstrations and strikes. People put a lot of trust in us. We met in flats. Among other sources, we collected information from the crisis staff – people who weren't viewed favourably by the public at the time. Like the traffic oversight manager at MPK, Wiesław Wołoszyn. Everyone knew he was "red", but he gave me information. Or Paweł Łuszcz and co. He worked at the public service coordination company, he was like a municipal engineer – there were fifteen of those occupying important positions in the city. They gave us information that the communist government considered secret, and we published it in our magazine, *Między Przystankami* (Between Stops). We shouldn't forget about them, or the story of those times will be incomplete and distorted. It was thanks to people like that, those who let us use their flats to host our gatherings and meetings, for example, it was thanks to their nameless involvement that we could act. Those were hundreds of thousands of people across the country. Without them, our work wouldn't have been possible. We could be sitting around and debating, but if those nameless people had not gone out into the streets, begun reading underground books or newspapers, used underground stamps, calendars and posters, I can't stress this enough, it would have all been for naught. We would have been just an insignificant group of activists'.

Eventually, Father Miecznikowski, in addition to managing a group involved in distributing food, clothes and medicine, organised what was referred to as the officer cadet school, which taught its attendees skills needed in independent Poland. In addition to history and political science lectures given by speakers from all over the country, the school offered courses in economics, and trained future local government officials.

'From around the mid-80s on, we were becoming more bold in our thinking about a free Poland', Chlebowski says. 'People asked what our dream Poland looked like. What should it be like? People had various ideas, depending on their education and experience. Our generation of 30-year-olds, because that was the majority of Solidarity members, didn't remember the Second Republic, which had educated economists and politicians. From today's point of view, some ideas for Poland were naive, while others were mature. But they were all genuine and pure. I think that genuineness and purity were ruined by

the Magdalenka deal [The Magdalenka talks were a series of secret meetings between the upper echelons of Solidarity and the PZPR, held in preparation for the Round Table talks]. After 27 years of free Poland, we've managed to implement barely 10% of what we had planned. It's terrible neglect. I think that our activists abandoned the ideas of Solidarity. When I went to Gdańsk to celebrate 25 years of freedom, I noticed that certain former Solidarity activists, now prominent politicians, rarely if ever said that Solidarity equals freedom. Sadly, this hasn't changed since. The idea behind Solidarity has vanished. But freedom is Solidarity. We know how our friends who started their political parties and got elected behave now. The moment they get over the electoral threshold, they instantly forget about the people of Solidarity. Even though it's like forgetting about your mother and family'.

With Solidarity for Good or ill

‘They came at 9 pm. I didn’t open the door. They tried to kick it open. I blocked it with a table. My eleven-year-old daughter held the door handle, my son was six and was screaming in terror. The neighbours came out into the hallway to see what was going on. The agents felt their eyes on them, so they refrained from breaking down the door. For a moment there, I considered jumping out the window, but the house was surrounded. They came back at twelve am. They started to break down the door. Took them almost two hours to do it. During that time, I destroyed all documents of the Confederation of Independent Poland, of which I was a member. They could’ve used them against me’, this is how Janusz Konieczko, a member of Solidarity from the Bolesław Bierut Metalworks, now known as the ‘Częstochowa’ Metalworks, describes the first few hours of martial law.

He was born in an average working class family. His father was a bricklayer whose houses can be found in Częstochowa to this day, while his mother was a physical labourer who worked at various companies. Konieczko was born in late October 1948, followed by three brothers and a sister. His parents rejected the post-war political order, but they did not believe that they could affect any change, even though his father did try by joining the WiN [Editor’s note: the Association of Freedom and Independence – an underground anti-communist organisation founded by former Home Army soldiers], and he was arrested for ‘banditry’ in 1946 as a result. He spent several months in prison, and although in his heart and mind he still nurtured dreams of a free Poland, his hope was gone.

Not Without Threatening Eviction

Even though both parents slaved away throughout the 50s and 60s, the Konieczko family could barely make ends meet. All six family members lived in a single room, and on occasion were also visited by an aunt and her two daughters. No amount of letters to the administrators could convince them to grant the family a larger flat. Only when their neighbours moved out, Janusz's desperate parents… broke through the wall and claimed the adjacent room as their own, which the administrators eventually accepted, although begrudgingly and not without threatening eviction. Still, the family now had a room with a kitchen in an old tenement.

Ever since he was a little boy, apart from playing football in the yard or on the school field, Janusz has loved reading books, his favourite writers being Karl May and Henryk Sienkiewicz. Towards the end of primary school, he could finish two or three books a day. The future Solidarity member was also interested in electrical systems, and learnt about them by attending electronics and mechanics classes offered by the local culture centre, which greatly helped him in vocational and technical school. He began working at the local smelting plant after graduating from its vocational school. He passed his secondary school exams with flying colours, and soon enrolled at the Częstochowa University of Technology, although he was eventually forced to drop out for family-related reasons. He got married, and the couple had multiple children, so he applied for the two-room apartment in which he lives to this day. His focus was on securing essential products. Politics only interested him insofar as it was related to his immediate family members. He did listen to Western radio stations, although primarily to Radio Luxembourg instead of the BBC, Free Europe of the Voice of America. To him, Western music was synonymous with freedom at the time.

'I knew very little about what had happened in 1970 on the Coast and in Pomerania. I only knew what the official propaganda was telling us. And that shots had been fired. But the coverage was all muddled', says Konieczko, as if going through ancient notes. 'My views hadn't crystallised yet. I was only interested in my work. I was a valued professional, and that was enough for me. Back then, I did a lot of overtime, and made extra money by submitting my rationalisation projects. It was only in 1976 that I somehow began to realise what had already been widely discussed at the plant: what the government had been doing to us Poles… The first form of protest, and maybe it was naive, was my crew boycotting the opening of an overpass in 1976. I think Gierek was there, and the plant wanted everyone to go to the rally to support the government. But nobody from my crew went there, thanks to me. It may not have been much, but it was a form of protest. We all said we had work to do and wouldn't celebrate'.

Like a Piece of All of Us Had Been Elected

Karol Wojtyła being elected pope gave Janusz Konieczko wings. What also inspired him was… the *Robotnik KSS-KOR* biweekly, which an anonymous distributor began dropping in his mailbox in 1978. After finishing every issue, he would bring it to the plant for his team to read. Politics became an increasingly common topic around the factory, and dinner table discussions were continued at work. 'Yes, we were very happy when Karol Wojtyła became pope', says Janusz Konieczko. 'It lifted our spirits a lot. You could say that it lifted us up as if on wings. It was commented on a lot at the plant. It was like a piece of all of us had been elected'.

After a Pole was elected pope, history accelerated its course in Poland. More and more underground magazines began cropping up. The history and political science lectures given by the Scholarly Course Society were to all intents and purposes no longer secret. And even though the PZPR deployed the 'beating heart of the Party', a term used to refer to the Militia and the Security Service, people would no longer be cowed. And so, when the first strikes began in Świdnik and Lublin in July 1980, they did not go unnoticed even despite it being the summer season. The events of August were proof of that. Częstochowa was no exception, even though the city was considered red and was known for the leftist leanings of its residents.

In late August, the workers of the Steel Structure and Coke Factory went on strike in solidarity with the Gdańsk Shipyard, and on 1 September, the city was paralysed by a strike at the municipal transport company. The strikes were soon joined by other companies in the city, as well as the rest of the voivodeship. At the time, the plant employed more than ten thousand people, the majority of whom joined Solidarity. A Company Commission and department commissions were established, and in late September – the NSZZ 'Solidarity' Regional Founding Committee was formed. Janusz Konieczko joined his department's branch of Solidarity, and in January 1981, he became a member of the Solidarity Department Commission at the thick plate rolling department, of which he became deputy head. The commission granted him leadership of the information division, which operated the PA system. Konieczko also became involved in the activities of the workers' self-government to learn more about the plant's functioning, economy and finances.

The People Believed Us

'I was at the plant from the moment Solidarity was formed', Konieczko says. 'I was visited by representatives chosen by various departments and some divisions, as well as by specialised crews. They provided us with information. Marek Wójcik and I edited it and recorded hour-long

broadcasts. We kept in touch with twenty Solidarity regions across Poland. We began to exchange mail. So there was a lot to edit. The actress Agata Grzybowska helped us a lot. Throughout the sixteen months of freedom, we slaved away at it with great passion, barely seeing our families. My day looked like this – I was at the department until nine o'clock. Then I'd record broadcasts until 1 pm. After that, it was back to the department. I'd stay until four o'clock to meet with the crews who were on afternoon shift duty. I'd go home for a short while. I had to pick the kids up from kindergarten or school. My wife also worked different shifts, so I had to make food for the kids. When they were in bed, I read union newspapers from the country in the kitchen. I had to pick the right materials and prep them for the broadcast the next day. I had to listen to new songs. I played Pietrzak, Kaczmarski and Gintrowski, everything that was performed at the Forbidden Songs festival in Gdańsk in 1981. Our broadcast began with the song *Żeby Polska była Polską* (Let Poland Be Poland). We discussed things that affected people directly, like the collective payment agreement and bonuses in a four-shift system. And there was a lot of news on what was going on in other regions. We also had an education section, which taught people the true history of Poland, which had until recently been banned. We were really well received by the workers. The people believed us. They were happy that we could finally self-determine. That was a great school of life for me. It was only as part of Solidarity that I learnt how to explore my talents. That I could be around and talk to people. To transfer knowledge. Not only that, I also learned how to organise. And economics. I'll say it again, the sixteen months of Solidarity taught me a lot – about myself, others and Poland.

Military Unit Exclusively for Solidarity Members

Martial law being declared was a surprise to Konieczko. In his view, Solidarity was never a threat to Poland, but the Soviet agents in Polish uniforms thought otherwise. More than 160 people were interned in the Częstochowa area, and more than 50 were arrested and sentenced to years in prison in the weeks that followed. Janusz Konieczko was among those interned. He was first held in the Zaborze camp in Zabrze, before being taken to Nowy Łupków. His release came in late April 1982, after which he almost immediately joined the underground. That same year, he was conscripted by the military for three months and was assigned to a unit formed exclusively of Solidarity members.

'When I came back from my internment, it was very easy for me to get involved in the underground. The people trusted me, so they let me lead an already existing organisation', Konieczko says. 'It should be mentioned that a lot of people collected money for the interned, as well as organising help for those who absolutely needed it. For example, my family was given enough money to install a new door after the Security Service broke

down the old one. Initially, we had two thousand people regularly paying their union dues. I started collecting them in 1983, and did the accounting, which was audited by the Solidarity Founding Committee in 1989. We collected the dues almost openly every month. We had a large aquarium in our department, and we collected money to buy new fish and food for them. That was the official version. In reality, those were underground Solidarity dues'.

Reading Banned Books Together

The dues were spent on various events, such as birthdays, Women's Day, First Holy Communions and funerals. In short, they were used by union members to cover their needs, just like when Solidarity was still legal. Another aspect of the workers' solidarity was reading banned books together during the half-hour breakfast break. It was mostly Konieczko who read out loud. One of the things they read was Sergiusz Piasecki's satirical novel *Zapiski Oficera Armii Czerwonej* (Memoirs of a Red Army Officer).

'I also summarised the rules from *Mały Konspirator* (Little Conspirator)', Konieczko adds. 'I'd also tell them that, during an interrogation, one agent plays the good guy, the other the bad guy. That it's a game to soften us up and get us to testify. And on one occasion, they did actually arrest our team. My colleagues were very proud of themselves and told me that everything I'd summarised for them from the *Konspirator* was true. I'd learnt all those safety measures from the boys from the Wrocław branch of Fighting Solidarity during my internment. I was also lucky enough to know the plate rolling workshop like the back of my hand, and there were cable tunnels there. So I walked where I pleased. I dropped off and collected notes in agreed locations. I met up with the boys and relayed them information. Like where they could pick up a batch of underground press. They had the keys to the tunnels. You could say that everything related to the underground was done underground'.

Konieczko was responsible for various organisational efforts. The publishing of the bulletin was the responsibility of several other people, and another group did the editing and printing. Having learnt from past mistakes, the conspirators tried to compartmentalise all tasks, although for a time, Konieczko was forced to edit *Biuletyn Hutniczy Solidarność HBB* (HBB Solidarity Metalworks Bulletin), first established at the beginning of the martial law period. A wave of arrests caused a break of several years, however. Thanks to the connections of various workers, including Janusz Konieczko, the plant was supplied with underground newspapers and books from Warsaw, Wrocław and Kraków. Konieczko also managed an underground library comprising 600 publications, and in the mid-80s, he became involved in the official activities of the workers' self-government body, of which

he was a member for three terms. In addition, he worked with the Working Class Ministry, helping organise several annual Working Class Pilgrimages to Jasna Góra.

Community Service

Towards the end of his underground career, Konieczko helped found the Citizens' Committee, and in March 1991, he became the head of the NSZZ 'Solidarity' Company Commission at the plant. In the autumn of that same year, he was promoted to deputy director for employee affairs, a position he held for nine years. Between 1996 and 2000, he also held another public position – he was president of the first-league football team RKS Raków. Konieczko is now retired, and spends his time giving back to the community. He is a member of the Solidarity and Independence association, as well as an allotment garden owners' association.

'I joined the underground because I decided that, since I'd raised my hand in 1980 and said I wanted to join Solidarity, I had to stay with it until the end, for good or ill', Konieczko says. 'I believed that, since I was assigned to work at Solidarity in 1981 and nobody ever relieved me of my duties, then I had to keep my oath. So I did what I had to do and what I was responsible for. That's how it was until 1988, when we came out into the open. A new NSZZ 'Solidarity' Founding Committee was formed, consisting of the same people as in 1980. That's when, as the secret commission representative, I handed them all the materials and said, "Get to work"'.

Give of Yourself to Others

‘My background was good – worker/farmer’ says Franciszek Baranowski. ‘But workers and farmers were actually treated the worst in the PRL’.

He lived in the small village of Przeczno near Toruń. His parents had a little farm, but his father also had a government job, which meant that the family had no problems making ends meet. Franciszek was born five years after the war, and had three sisters and a brother. Before noon, they spent their time at school, and in the afternoon – working the fields, before doing their homework in the evening. Sundays were different: Mass, football and at times various family functions. Pleasures big and small. At home, their parents spoke a great deal about God, the Virgin Mary and the saints. As adolescents, they already knew that they were living in a country subservient to the Soviet Union. Still, their parents never talked to them about politics or forbade them from participating in the life of the village, which revolved around the Gmina Culture Centre. ‘One Sunday, an agitator from Toruń came to convince us to join the PZPR. I was considering it. That day, the Gospel was about serving two masters. I talked to mum about it. Her response was short, “Son, have you heard the Gospel?” And that put the party out of my mind’.

Strong Conviction at Heart

Franciszek graduated from the Toruń Chemical Technical Secondary School without any issues. He served in the military, after which he found work at the Chemitex-Elana Toruń Chemical Textile Factory. He started a family. and the couple had multiple children. He saw no hints of a revolution, even though his eyes had already been opened in 1976, when he refused to condemn the Radom and Ursus ‘rabble-rousers’. ‘What happened in Radom only cemented my already negative view of the communists. Even though Gierek tried to buy young married couples with cheap loans and flats. True, we were a young married couple, but we wouldn’t be bought’, says Baranowski.

In the late 70s, he began reading the bulletin of the Workers' Defence Committee. He learnt about every development from Radio Free Europe broadcasts, as well as from serious discussions with his colleagues. Despite all this, the strikes in the Lublin area, followed by the Coast and Pomerania, failed to galvanise the workers of Elana. But for Franciszek Baranowski, they came as a major surprise. 'There was no will to protest at Elana at all. Maybe it was because so many people were party members. The plant also had socialist labour brigades. So when the strikes began on the Coast, only a few people, me included, knew what was going on there. But our team wasn't ready to stage a protest', says Baranowski.

It was only when the Gdańsk Agreement was signed that, during the afternoon shift, the idea was born at Elana's DMT department to take over the existing unions making up the plant's CRZZ [Editor's note: Central Council of Trade Unions], and use them to form a new union. 'After one o'clock', Baranowski continues, 'we came to the hall with the intention of forming the union. Colleagues from the neighbouring polymerisation department reached out to us and we formed an initiative group. I think that was on 2 or 3 September. It consisted of five people, including me'.

Every issue Was Top Priority

The initiative group met with acceptance from the workers. Near-concurrently, Jacek Stankiewicz also formed his own group, and a Founding Committee was elected after the two merged. Jacek Stankiewicz was chosen as its head until the elections, and Franciszek Baranowski joined the Factory Commission, as well as serving as the deputy head of the NSZZ 'Solidarity' Department Commission.

'And that's when the frenzy that was raising public awareness began', Baranowski recalls. 'In the region, at the plant and in my DMT department. Nearly every issue was top priority. From the quality of the regenerative meals to how the bonuses were assigned. We didn't assign them, but Solidarity issued opinions. On the assignment of holiday and health resort trips and flats too. Because there were people who were given several flats, while others got none. Some got theirs fast, others had to wait for twenty years. Holiday trips were the same. Our Company Commission had to constantly respond to what was going on in the country and the region. And the communists kept staging their provocations and tried to orchestrate a stand-off, accusing us of trying to provoke them. So whenever we were staging a protest, we had to prepare the people for it. Tell them what to do, listen to their opinions. There were meetings where we were attacked. People were confused. Eventually, it turned out that it was all the work of secret collaborators. But who could've known back then? When the Bydgoszcz Provocation happened, we had to

do an education campaign to explain it all. After all, our department couldn't strike due to the nature of our job, as the work never stopped. So we participated in strikes by wearing armbands and raising flags'.

in Search of a Free Poland

The sixteen months of Solidarity's legal activism was akin to a quasi-university for Baranowski. In 1980, the NSZZ 'Solidarity' Founding Committee uncovered a series of irregularities and cases of embezzlement at the plant. This led to heated conflicts between the workers and managers, who were often the beneficiaries. Some disputes were peaceful, while others were more fierce, provoking the workers to stage frequent protests. Some disputes were intentionally exacerbated in order to associate Solidarity with a constant sense of tension and irritation.

Baranowski was focused primarily on helping the workers, without abandoning his own history education. Whenever he could, he read *Tygodnik Solidarność* and a wide range of uncensored books and newsletters on politics, history and economics, and not only about Poland. The majority of his reading centred around publications on economics. The wastefulness at the plant pained him, as did the lack of efficient planning, which eventually spurred him to join the workers' self-government.

'I invested in myself at the same time', he says. 'Because the communists always said, "don't you worry, we'll handle everything for you". And even though they never did much, you expected they would and turned off your brain. Previously, I'd been used to taking, but now I had to give of myself. It was a lot of work to organise something at the department or the plant, to make any sort of decision. Because nobody would give us anything on a platter. We had to work for it ourselves. I learnt a lot from reading underground publications. From time to time, it dawned on me that what we were doing was learning about Poland, but also learning about democracy. Every issue we had, we went with to the people, and they'd say yes or no. That must've been the most bottom-up way of learning what democracy is. PZPR activists did talk a lot about democracy too, about the worker-peasant alliance, but the divide between the workers and peasants was enormous, the same as the workers and officials. That animosity was deliberately stirred up by PZPR members. And Solidarity neutralised all those mutual accusations and prejudices. But the communists wouldn't have it, because those communities began realising that the most important thing was solidarity between people. Solidarity between people who were beginning to see they had a common goal: freedom, and maybe even independence. I thought about it sometimes, but the communists tried to scare us with the prospect of a Soviet intervention. They more or less directly said, "You mustn't go too far, or we

risk a Soviet intervention". So free elections were out of the question. Even though within Solidarity, everything was decided through free elections. We knew that free elections would happen one day. But at the time, we were focusing on more pressing issues. Those sixteen months were a terrific university for me, as well as a great lesson in courage. It was like being on the front line all the time'.

The Martial Law Period

Two days before martial law was declared, the auditorium of the Nicolas Copernicus University in Toruń hosted the General Convention of Delegates of the Toruń Region. During the convention, news constantly trickled in that the communists were allegedly planning something. On the morning of Sunday, 13 December, the ZOMO brutally crushed a farmer strike which had been going on in the city for several weeks. More than 150 people from the region were arrested.

'I kept in touch with two colleagues. In the morning, we learnt that many people from our region had been interned. From our plant too, but I didn't know how many. It turned out it was a couple, including the head and deputy head of the Solidarity Company Commission. Also, a large group of activists from the region', Baranowski reminisces. 'I worked various shifts. On Sunday, I worked the afternoon shift. A resolution we'd enacted stated that, should they declare martial law, we would go on strike. Those who played second fiddle at the plant, me included, had to enforce the resolution. We met up with several colleagues during the afternoon shift on Sunday. We decided that we'd begin the protest on Monday. Our department was a really difficult case, because you couldn't just begin striking and stop the manufacturing process. Most people were also scared, very scared, even though more than 80% of us were Solidarity members. We made things clear: the afternoon shift stays and starts the protest after being joined by the night shift team. But some people started saying that it was all so sudden, that their families didn't know that they wouldn't be coming back from work and so on. That maybe they could go home to tell their families. I told them that it was a protest, and they couldn't just go and come back. So one of the workers proposed a vote. It turned out that the majority of the workers from my department were against the strike. I was disappointed that the strike didn't pan out. I felt guilty. We were so strong, yet… The army came in and our strength was gone. I was a little scared for the next three days. After three days, I think, we issued our first statement, typed on a typewriter, a makeshift kind of flyer. We wrote something about getting busy in the underground after the dust had settled.

When the Dust Had Settled…

Several days later, five members of the DMT department, including Franciszek Baranowski, went to the Voivodeship Headquarters of the Citizens' Militia to bring a food package for an interned Hieronim Żorański, the head of Solidarity at the department. When they arrived, they were told that no packages would be accepted, and that everything was fine with their friend because he was at a holiday resort. That was a lie, as Żorański was being held in Potulice prison. One of the agents at the headquarters threatened the delegation that they would 'clean up' Elana if they started making flyers. However, despite his threats, underground activism at Elana was in full swing in less than two weeks.

'One day, I was told that there was a parcel for me to pick up somewhere', Barański reminisces. 'I picked it up, and it turned out to be underground press. At home, I split the package into smaller parts for individual departments… and that's how I became a distributor. I also collected union dues, which went to the first aid centre. There were times when they were spent on court fees or fines handed down by judges. The money was stored at the church of the Most Holy Virgin Mary. The late Gertruda Przybylska worked there, she was very devoted to the Church and Solidarity. When we were audited by the DMT Department Commission in 1989, every single złoty was accounted for. It was all in the ledger, the inflows, who got how much – their last names and nicknames'.

'My day looked like this: work, home, underground work. Day in, day out. My wife worked at a bank. She also had to do all the house chores and raise the kids. And for that, I am extremely grateful to her. Because that was her contribution to our underground work. Although we did our part too. The Company Commission organised summer camps for children and young people, and holiday trips for Solidarity members. We did various propaganda projects, like hanging flags on chimneys'.

The Security Service interrogated the Solidarity members from Elana on multiple occasions. Interrogations, searches and apprehensions began, with more than ten various operations being conducted over the years. One of the several hundred reports from between 1981 and 1989 states that, '[…] hostile propaganda is being spread in the form underground publication distribution […] and pointed and false information regarding the situation in the country is being relayed', [Intelligence operation codename GNIAZDO, IPN BY reference number 0104/90/Jacket]. Franciszek Baranowski is mentioned multiple times as one of those who were a 'threat to the security of the socialist state'.

Self-Governing Freedom

In 1983, Baranowski also became an active member of the workers' self-government. The secret agents of the Security Service made sure to note that this was '[…] a cover for his underground activism'. They mentioned multiple times that he was one of the people behind the local monument to the assassinated Father Jerzy Popiełuszko. Their recommendations included more searches and interrogations, and the agents assured their superiors that '[…] the person in question is under special surveillance by our assets', that is, by secret collaborators. Despite multiple inspections and attempts to intimidate him, Baranowski continued his self-government and underground work. Between 1986 and 1988, he was the head of the Labour Board at Elana.

'I learnt a lot about the economy and corporate economics. I had to learn the ins and outs of how a company operates. I was educating myself. I also attended courses on economics and self-government, taught by both underground and legal organisations, including by the late Andrzej Malanowski and Ryszard Bugaj. I attended country-level conventions where we debated how a self-government can completely cede from the communist system. Elana was on the list of strategic companies, so the board didn't have a lot of wiggle room. But we knew what was going on at the plant, and used every tool the law provided us with'.

In the late 1980s, Franciszek Baranowski participated in a failed attempt at rebuilding a legal Solidarity branch. He was sceptical towards the Round Table talks, although he admits that they made it possible for the union to operate legally, 'and that was a lot'. As were the free Senate elections, followed by the completely free local government elections a year later. 'But a few short months after Tadeusz Mazowiecki's government was formed, I began distancing myself from it more and more', Baranowski says. 'And when Balcerowicz and Bielecki started the privatisation, our paths diverged completely'.

In 1993, Elana was transformed into a single-person, state-owned company. This legally put an end to its workers' self-government, and Franciszek Baranowski was elected as a member of its supervisory board. In the mid-90s, the company fell on hard times, and was acquired by a private sector business in 2001. Franciszek Baranowski retired seven years ago, in 2010.

Determined to Win

Co-founder of the NSZZ 'Solidarity' Company Commission at WSK 'PZL-Rzeszów' communications equipment factory. Member of its legal, and late clandestine union branch. Interned during the martial law period. Victim of various repressions. According to his own estimates, Adam Śnieżek successfully smuggled more than ten tonnes of underground magazines.

In the Third Republic of Poland, he held various union positions, including as the head of the WSK 'PZL-Rzeszów' Company Commission, as well as serving two terms as the head of the Regional Management. As a member of the Akcja Wyborcza Solidarność and PiS parties, he was elected as a member of parliament.. Śnieżek has a degree in mathematics from the Jagiellonian University. When he was graduating, he could not expect that he would become involved in union and political activism.

A Normal Life

The children of Maria and Władysław Śnieżek enjoyed studying and did well in school, and so the couple first sent their three boys and daughter to a general secondary school, and later to university. However, their four-hectare farm was not enough to pay for all the children's expenses, which is why all four had to work after class, similar to their father, who also had a side job at a brick factory.

When he was at university, in which he enrolled in the late 60s, Adam Śnieżek joined the Academic Ministry at the church of St Anne in Kraków. The ministry was run by Marian Father Adam Boniecki. During its meetings, in addition to praying and discussing topics of a religious nature, the young student could on occasion expand his knowledge of politics and history. What he was taught differed from what the communists were saying in the media. 'But that knowledge, even though I did listen to Radio Free Europe sometimes, did little to increase my political awareness. In any case, it wasn't enough for me to

become unambiguously anti-communist', says Adam Śnieżek. 'And even though I was aware of the strikes and the communists shooting people on the Coast and in Pomerania, I actually knew very little of what had really happened there. The government kept its crimes a secret. But I'm sure those events enriched me politically and showed me a more complete image of Poland at the time, the real relationship between the government and the working class. And year after year, my dislike of the communists grew'.

In the early 70s, Śnieżek began working at the WSK PZL communications equipment factory in Rzeszów, thus fulfilling his end of a scholarship contract he had signed. Although he considered staying in Kraków, he ultimately decided to move closer to his parents, so he could come over and help out at their farm if required. His humdrum life depressed him. Every day, thirteen thousand workers clocked out of work at WSK to the sound of a blaring siren; they made pennies, struggled to acquire essential food items, and dreamt of having a flat of their own…

'You could say that it was a state of lethargy', describes Śnieżek. 'Before Karol Wojtyła was elected pope, the people had lived without any hope for a better future. Many people from my generation, those born a few years after the war, believed that they would live and die in an oppressed country. Others weren't even aware that they were living in Soviet-occupied Poland. They just accepted communism. They were party members, and depending on their position, they reaped the benefits, like being given flats out of turn, being promoted without necessarily possessing the education and knowledge, etc. In short, they served the communist government to various degrees'.

Developing Awareness

Karol Wojtyła's election gave millions of people the courage they needed to defend their faith and the Catholic Church, and they gave display of their attachment to faith during John Paul II's first pilgrimage to his homeland. Their collective courage soon laid the foundations for a wave of strikes that swept across Poland in 1980 and the foundation of NSZZ 'Solidarity' – the first post-war entity that was not only a trade union but also an opposition organisation which would soon compete with PZPR-affiliated unions. Solidarity's regional managements represented the people at the voivodeship level, and the National Commission at the state level. The union members' effectiveness at organising concerned the communists.

The strikes in what was the Rzeszów Voivodeship at the time were organised relatively quickly. As early as 1 July, several hundred, and later several thousand workers from WSK 'PZL-Mielec', which employed twenty thousand people at the time, stopped working. No strike committee was formed, however, and the strike was dealt with by the management,

who promised the workers pay raises. Not long after, on 14 August, all machines stopped at the machining department of WSK 'PZL-Rzeszów', but the company's other departments failed to join the striking workers. In total, the August strikes were attended by more than four thousand workers across the voivodeship. Śnieżek's company began its strike at the start of the following month, with a regional management being formed on 12 September.

'Western radio stations covered everything on an ongoing basis. We also listened to the accounts of those who'd come from the Coast and other striking companies in the country. Trains were standing on side tracks with slogans written on them that urged Rzeszów to support the strikes. You could feel the agitation at the plant. But it didn't lead to a general strike at WSK', Śnieżek reminisces. 'We organised mass rallies. I organised one such rally with a few colleagues. Several months prior, I'd been appointed a person of trust, so in August I made use of my position to convene a meeting of the calculation centre team, which I was a member of. More than 100 people came. We discussed pay and benefits-related issues. The rally only lasted half an hour, but we also wrote a letter in support of those striking on the Coast. When the Solidarity Founding Committee began to form at the plant, I became one of its members, and I was later elected as a member of the Company Commission. In Solidarity, I edited the news that came in from all over the country by telex. We broadcast it using the plant's PA system. Our reach was enormous, because the Rzeszów WSK plant employed thirteen thousand people. I really felt like I was participating in something really historic, something that happened once every one hundred years and could change Poland. I was sure we'd get a little freedom of speech back, but I never thought that Solidarity would become a thing, and that it would spell the end of communism. We certainly cracked the monopoly on information, which was one of the foundations of the communist regime. Solidarity's newspapers, made with a duplicating machine, weren't censored. More than ten thousand various newspapers were being published in the country. Their run sizes differed. People wrote about current issues, but also about history. And that was the most important thing. Another considerable achievement was being able to rally and strike. I knew that the protests that had taken place in 1956, 1970 and 1976 gradually transformed the public's mentality. I also knew that the formation of a ten million-strong trade union was a breakthrough that impacted the entire communist bloc, and that would also give rise to changes in other socialist countries. Those were my thoughts on the message to the working class of Eastern Europe sent by the First National Convention of Delegates of NSZZ "Solidarity". I knew that what we were doing was not only union work, but also political work. I believed that it was a time when we could peacefully stand up to communism and win some concessions'.

Direct Consequence

When the communists declared martial law, Śnieżek was surprised, although – similar to other Solidarity members – he had known it was a possibility. In the Rzeszów Voivodeship, local Solidarity branches had been preparing for a 'state of exception', as was the term at the time. However, the army, Militia and the Security Service were still able to pacify all major points of resistance, with hundreds of activists being imprisoned in Załęże, Uherce and Łupków, and female activists being taken to Nisko and Gołdap. Adam Śnieżek was among those interned during that time. The communists' success was short-lived, however. In December 1981, thanks to the efforts of Michał Stręk and Zbigniew Sieczkoś, an underground organisation referred to as the Inter-company Workers' Committee was established, which was later renamed NSZZ 'Solidarity' Regional Executive Commission. After his release, Adam Śnieżek joined the underground.

'I knew that what I was doing was a direct consequence of events that were transforming Poland. The wealth of underground magazines and publications, and the young generation joining the effort had to have a positive impact. Judging by the state of the economy, the living standards and the discussions in the underground press, we expected that something similar to what happened in 1980 would happen again in a decade or so. So I believed that we had to get people ready, to cede no ground to the communists. I was convinced that the best vehicle for that was the underground press, so I organised a distribution network. And I became a distributor myself. It's hard for me to estimate today how many magazines and newspapers I distributed. The one time I calculated, it was more than ten tonnes. A lorry and a trailer's worth… True, I realised that with each passing year, there were fewer and fewer people paying dues, protesting in the streets and buying the books. We saw it all shrink. That was additional mental strain for me. And I was still being summoned by the Security Service. When I finally read my file, I learnt that I'd been the target of a series of surveillance operations. More and more often, I'd wake up because I thought I heard the bell ring and there were agents at the door. It happened all the time. I lived in constant stress. But even though I was mentally exhausted, that wasn't the worst thing. What hurt me the most was that the interest in the underground was waning. But I could always fall back on my knowledge that I was among the several dozen people, and in the region – several hundred, maybe several thousand, who wouldn't give up. And that our determination would eventually lead to Poland changing. I never expected Poland would be free so soon'.

All Evil Must Be Rejected

Teresa Zalewska describes herself as a child of Stalinist indoctrination. Born in the third year of World War II, she went to first grade when the totalitarian communist regime was still new. She learnt poems praising the Soviets, particularly Bierut [the first leader of the People's Republic of Poland] and Stalin. She still remembers the times when entire classes of young people were transported to rural areas on flower-decorated lorries every Sunday morning to do community service, which often did more harm than good. Such trips were organised by the communist organisation 'Służba Polsce' (In Service to Poland).

'We all watched as those flowery lorries without a tarp took young people away, starting early in the morning so they wouldn't be able to go to church. It's stuck in my mind', Zalewska says. 'That's how my social awareness developed, and in a lot of cases, it was very anti-communist. And in other people as well, because they saw through all the lies. They were looking for the truth'.

Through the Lens of How She Could Help Others

Although her parents were labourers, they made sure that their daughter graduated from secondary school and went to university, and so Zalewska was a diligent student. She was an avid reader of books, which eventually landed her a job at a library. However, after graduating from secondary school, she was unable to attend university full-time, as despite the communist propaganda at the time, which claimed that every working class child could go to university, her parents could not afford to finance her education. She only graduated in the 1970s, having studied part-time at the Faculty of Philosophy and History of the University of Łódź while also working as a librarian in Tomaszów Mazowiecki.

Since she was a child, she has viewed life through the lens of how she can help others. She no longer remembers who she got that from, was it her mother or father? Regardless, she always knew that she had to help others, which sometimes caused her to neglect her own issues. To this day, she lives in a tiny flat with her daughter, who shares her mother's altruistic outlook on life. For nearly thirty years, Teresa Zalewska has run the Dar Serc foundation in Tomaszów Mazowiecki, which helps disabled children and adults. But her engagement in tackling social issues had also been recognised in the past. In the late 70s, she was elected as the chair of the Arbitration Board of the Mayor of Tomaszów Mazowiecki.

Towards Freedom

Establishing Solidarity in Tomaszów Mazowiecki was an arduous task. The same applied to the poultry processing plant where Zalewska worked. 'I knew that protests had to start from the bottom-up, and that I would join them then', she reminisces. 'I ran up to the people. They weren't sure if they should form a union. So I told them that there was nothing to fear, because the truth was on their side. I told them I knew labour law inside out and that I could help them. They believed me and agreed. A few days later, they demanded that their rights be respected by the management. And so, the NSZZ "Solidarity" Founding Committee was established at the plant in 1981'.

The spring Solidarity Company Commission elections saw her elected as the commission's chairwoman. Together with her colleagues, she began improving the living standards of the workers. Managing the commission was very time-consuming, but she was happy that the people were becoming more aware, and that they were no longer fearing their superiors. 'We produced food, so we couldn't afford to strike. So we had to use other means to make the managers agree to our demands. The demands were mostly related to pay and working conditions, which were terrible', Zalewska says. 'To the company's PZPR department and the managers, we were pretty much enemies of socialism. Even despite the fact that the director praised us, saying that after Solidarity was formed, discipline at work increased, and drunkenness and theft went down'.

Teresa Zalewska refers to 1981 as the best year of her life. She felt indispensable. People would come to her with problems which had seemed impossible to solve for years, and she could now solve the majority of them. The Company Commission held almost daily meetings that were very heated and lasted for hours. Zalewska would come home at dawn. Her teenage daughter would make her tea, she would sleep a little, and then go back to work.

Martial Law – i Couldn't Believe it

She remembers martial law being declared as a tremendous shock. She never expected such an end to her – as she herself puts it – work for the betterment of the country, people and factory. To her moral and political self-purification. The raising of the awareness of the young generation and the restoration of the hope of the wartime generation.

'I've been through various things in life. The deaths of my parents and loved ones were a blow, but the shock that was the declaration of martial law really had an impact on me', Zalewska says. 'I couldn't even believe it at first. It was only when I heard General Jaruzelski's speech that I felt I'd lost my footing. But I had to get my act together quickly. I told my people at the plant not to be afraid, and not to tell anything to the Security Service agents or whatever commissars were interrogating them. That it was all on me. I took all our documents and seals from the factory'.

Members of the plant's Solidarity Company Commission were interrogated immediately, but Zalewska was summoned shortly before Christmas. She spent hours waiting in the hallway. During her interrogation, she was told about martial law being declared and its consequences. They wanted to know where the commission's documents and seals were. Zalewska responded that she had destroyed them to prevent them falling into the wrong hands.

'They summoned me again after two weeks or so. I knew they'd want to soften me up again by having me sit in the hallway for a few hours, so this time I took a travel bag with me filled with various stuff. I also had a thermos full of coffee, and I sat down in the hallway', Zalewska says. 'I whipped out a newspaper and started reading, waiting until the agents would deign to receive me. I lit up a ciggy and started reading the rag. A few agents passed by, but I just kept on reading. Eventually an agent flew out of the room and yelled at me furiously, "Are you having a picnic here? Is this a coffee shop? What's all this?" So I responded calmly, "I didn't want to interrupt you, sirs, I know that you have very important work to do", making sure to emphasise the "sirs" and "very important work". "I have a lot of time, so I'll keep drinking my coffee while I wait". That's when I heard someone shout, I think that was the department head, "Come in right now!" Later on, whenever I was summoned, and they interrogated me multiple times after that, I don't think I had to wait in the hallway for longer than five minutes. But still, all Solidarity members adopted the principle that even if they used a breaking wheel on us, we would always deny everything, it was like an oath, although it wasn't easy to keep. And it was best to say nothing. During another interrogation, one of the agents asked me what the people's thoughts were on the supply shortages. I told him that it's best to get in line to the butcher's at twelve am and wait until the delivery comes in the morning – you'll learn everything there is to know about what people think. That was the end of his questions. That's what the conversations

were like. But it was all very mentally taxing. I pretended to be flippant or oblivious. But whenever I left the interrogation room, I had tears running down my cheeks for a few hundred metres, and I couldn't stop crying. It really took a toll on me'.

The First Arrests

The Tomaszów branch of the Solidarity underground commenced its activities the moment martial law was declared. The union reached out to its Regional Management, based in Piotrków Trybunalski, as well as other regions, including Łódź and Warsaw. Anti-communist slogans began appearing on tenement walls, and flyers began circulating, as well as the first copies of underground newspapers. The Church also became involved, including the Oratorians and the parish of the Most Holy Virgin Mary, led by its parish priest, Father Ryszard Salski. The Security Service and the military decided to pacify the opposition as quickly as possible, and the first arrests were carried out in the spring of 1982, targeting carefully selected people. By the end of May, ten activists had been given suspended prison sentences and dismissed from work. Others, like Stanisław Szubert, were banned from working as a teacher.

Some of the victims ceased their activism after that successful blow to the Solidarity underground, while others scaled theirs down. Some also left the country. Although Teresa Zalewska was never indicted, she lost her job, even though she was a single mother to a teenage daughter. It took her nearly a year to find work at the local museum. From that moment on and throughout the 80s, she juggled working there with being on the municipal Arbitration Board, as well as her… underground social activism. She was regularly followed, especially whenever she visited Warsaw, Łódź and other cities where she and other members of the Tomaszów underground had their contacts, which also included people involved in organising pilgrimages to such places of religious significance as Jasna Góra. She was sometimes interrogated due to her '[…] negative view of the PRL government […]', as stated in her Security Service file. Her codenames included 'Muza' (Muse) and 'Dama' (Lady). She remained under surveillance until March 1990, even when she was a member of parliament as a member of the Citizens' Parliamentary Club (OKP) party during the 10th term of the Sejm. The person who denounced her was a 'colleague', another MP from the ZSL party.

He is Scared of Me

'They tried various tricks and threats against me and others. When they interrogated me, I tried to be as polite as possible. Maybe that's why they called me "Lady"', Zalewska laughs. 'But there was one time I snapped. One day, my daughter came back from school and said, "Mum, two men were walking in front of me today, taking pictures". I immediately rushed to the Security Service headquarters. I can't remember how I got into the director's office, you needed a pass after all. There were a couple agents inside, but I started yelling at the director, "How dare you send your men after my daughter!" He was stumped. He waved his hand and the agents left the room. He said, "Can you calm down and tell me what this is about?" So I told him, and added, "I'm filing a complaint with the prosecutor, I'll tell him what you did to a child. And also, if you haven't heard your name mentioned on Free Europe in a while, then you will!" I don't know where I got that from, but I did say something along those lines. He turned pale. That was the first time I thought to myself, "He is scared of me". He cracked and said, "Please, don't go to the prosecutor, I'll handle them. It won't happen again". "Exactly", I said, "that's why I'm here, to make sure it doesn't". And true enough, it never happened again'.

In 1986, the underground Regional Management in Piotrków Trybunalski officially registered its formation with the voivode. It included one representative from Tomaszów Mazowiecki, but not Teresa Zalewska, who was, and still is, considered the unofficial leader of the Tomaszów underground. In 1989, she was an MP representing the OKP party, but she did not run for reelection. She was also a city councillor for two terms, and focused her efforts on serving the community. 'I am content', she says after all this time.

i Am Content

'I contributed because I believed that all evil had to be rejected. My main concern was my daughter… At one point I thought to myself, "What can they even do to me? The worst they can do is kill me". But I had a deal with my ex husband that if anything happened to me, he would raise her. And I think he'd do a good job. I am utterly convinced that evil had to be resisted. Regardless of the danger, no matter the cost. It was a criminal regime after all. We couldn't pretend all was well. Some people may not like the Poland we have now. But I am content. I think it was worth it. Even in the mid-80s, I didn't think that freedom was so close. I knew how long our people had fought for independence. How every uprising had been crushed in the 19th century. Why should we, I, reach freedom so soon? But fate is so inscrutable… Look how neatly God planned all of it out'.

Up From Our Knees

If you ask almost any of the thirty thousand residents of Jasło about Kazimierz Poniatowski, after thinking for a second, they will answer, 'Ah... that mathematics teacher and Solidarity member?'. Just to be sure, they'll add, 'Former senator?'.

Before graduating from primary school, he lived in the small village of Wojtkowice, where his father was the village head for many years. Before graduating from secondary school, he lived in the town of Ciechanowiec on the border of Podlasie and Masovia, the home town of the famous 18th-century naturalist, Father Jan Krzysztof Kluk. Poniatowski learnt about history from his grandparents and parents, as well as neighbours, who had returned from Siberia after years of exile. Major Zygmunt Szendzielarz, codename Łupaszka, had spent months stationed in the neighbouring villages of Podlasie, in addition to some less well-known units being present there until the 50s – and Poniatowski's neighbours would exchange tales of the guerrillas well into the 1970s. Even though he was born five years after World War II, its memory had a special place in his heart. The young boy looked up to his father, as well as his maternal grandfather, who had served in the Russian Empire's military for 25 years.

'When I was in primary school, we talked about the war at home quite often', says Poniatowski. 'Whenever you asked older people living in the area about the war, the answer was, "Which war do you mean?" Three wars were still fresh in their memories. The first war began on 17 September 1939, when the Russkies, as the locals like to call them, captured the area; the second. when the Germans moved against Russia in June 1941; and the third, when the Russians began advancing towards Berlin. Every time troops moved through the area, the local population suffered. Many lost their wealth or died in exile in the East or in Germany. When my dad was a young boy, he was imprisoned in Bielsko Podlaskie for helping local guerrillas. All that moulded me, just like every young person is moulded by the environment they grow up in'.

Poniatowski's environment was very critical of the communist masters and their Eastern overlords. In the 60s and 70s, those who were members of the Polish United Workers' Party

were few and far between in Ciechanowiec. Party members were considered abnormal by regular people. People would ask, how can you join those who are responsible for Poland's enslavement? That is why Kazimierz Poniatowski always knew whether he should join the PZPR or not. A lasting childhood memory of his is related to the word 'Katyń', which was a place where many people from his area had died. It was spoken by his family members and local residents in hushed tones, which made it sound somehow mysterious to young Poniatowski.

'And one more tangent', adds Poniatowski. 'I sometimes say that I was destined to oppose the communist system. When I was "born" as an adult, that is, when I turned 18 on 20 August 1968, my country's soldiers entered Czechoslovakia, contributing to the Soviet Union and other so-called peoples democracies' effort to stifle all attempts at their neighbours regaining freedom. That coincidence is noteworthy to me to say the least'.

At the time, Poland seemed like a country where every day spelled trouble, a country ruled by people who were ideologically detached from the majority of the population. A country whose citizens had no rights or prospects, even though the propaganda presented the PRL as the world's eighth strongest superpower. But that 'superpower status' manifested as abject poverty. As Poniatowski himself says, 'It all made you reject that deceitful, criminal system that crushed the citizens' attempts at regaining freedom'.

The Motor

When Poniatowski was in primary school, it was his uncle, followed by his mathematics teacher in secondary school, that discovered his talent for mathematics. He also enjoyed word puzzles, and in secondary school, he participated in mathematics and civics competitions. He was an avid reader, and had a keen interest in politics and sport, but he never practiced enough to place high. After graduating from secondary school in Cienchanowiec, Poniatowski studied mathematics in Kraków. Here, he noticed that some of his friends were against communism. He participated in a student demonstration organised in the Kraków town square, protesting against the massacres on the Coast and in Szczecin, and met Cardinal Karol Wojtyła while attending Communion meetings for Kraków students. Immediately after graduating, he worked at the King Stanisław Leszczyński Secondary School in Jasło, where he taught mathematics. That was his first encounter with Solidarity, which he helped organise.

'To me it was obvious that I would join the newly formed union', Poniatowski reminisces. 'I viewed its formation as a kind of national uprising. Not an armed one, but we were getting up from our knees. When I made that decision, I also hoped that Solidarity would become more than a union movement, that it would be a driver of serious change

in Poland. And it was. In the second half of October 1980, I was selected, along with my colleague Zofia Nowak, to attend a meeting of representatives of several dozen factories from the Jasło region, which established the Jasło NSZZ "Solidarity" Inter-company Founding Committee. I was also part of the committee. Back then, a system change was not on the table, we only believed that, if people were allowed to show more initiative, they could get some wonderful things done. But the words "freedom" and "independence" were still spoken without conviction. When then-senator Rulewski spoke about forming an army and attacking the Russkies in sneakers, it sounded like a provocation. Although the message to the working class of Eastern Europe proclaimed at the union's first national convention was bold'.

Kazimierz Poniatowski was soon elected president of his secondary school's Solidarity club, and later he became the head of the Jasło region Education Staff Solidarity Company Commission, which numbered 1745 members, nearly 80% of all teachers in the region. Throughout the sixteen months of Solidarity's legal existence, Poniatowski attended several meetings of the NSZZ 'Solidarity' National Education Section, which tried not only to change how history was taught, but also to reform the education system as a whole. He helped establish many company commissions in his region, confronting those managers who fought against the establishment of Solidarity unions at their companies. As a delegate for Lesser Poland, he visited various companies after returning from the first NSZZ 'Solidarity' Convention, reporting on the first free convention of Polish worker representatives since before the war. In those sixteen months, people would come to the regional management of Solidarity, as well as to individual company commissions, looking for help in settling years-long land disputes between neighbours, as well as searching for information about those who disappeared in communist dungeons after the war.

'They noticed that a new power had emerged, so they came to us. Back then, Solidarity was seen as a more or less mythical authority. We were the government, the parliament and the PZPR Central Committee in one. They thought that Solidarity could get anything done', Poniatowski says. 'So they came to us with various issues. Ranging from very important to quite peculiar. There was a horse slaughter plant in Jasło. One day, a guy came to us asking if he could rent a horse that was going to be slaughtered. He wanted to use it to plough his field, and then give it back to be slaughtered. Another absurd case: the shops had no milk. When we began investigating it, it turned out that there were seven institutions that were responsible for delivering milk to shops. It was absurd, but it was true. We met with rural authorities to try and solve various issues, but they had no say in anything. To get anything done, you had to go to the PZPR Municipal Committee'.

The Martial Law Period

When martial law was declared, Poniatowski immediately became involved in the opposition movement, although his involvement did not last long, as he was conscripted for three months to participate in a military exercise in Czerwony Bór. He resumed his activities after being discharged, writing for local underground newspapers – he was an editor for *Jasielski Biuletyn Informacyjny* (Jasło News Bulletin), made flyers, and distributed independent magazines from Kraków, Warsaw and Wrocław – some 70 underground publications in total, including *Tygodnik Wojenny* (Wartime Weekly), *Tygodnik Mazowsze* (Masovia Weekly) and *Przegląd Wiadomości Agencyjnych* (Agency News Review). Poniatowski was apprehended by the Security Service on multiple occasions, and was under surveillance until 1989. According to Security Service documents, he was 'Under operational surveillance as part of operation "Mathematician" on suspicion of "hostile" anti-state activities conducted as part of Solidarity'. A magistrate court once punished him for wearing a Solidarity pin. Poniatowski also helped those who were in prison and internment camps, and was part of the local working class ministry. He contributed to Radio Solidarity, which was managed by Wiesław Tomasik, and attended monthly Masses for the Homeland celebrated by Father Stanisław Marczak at the church of Stanislaus of Szczepanów in Jasło. The church itself soon became a symbol of resistance for local activists and regular people alike. In the late 1980s, Kazimierz Poniatowski reactivated Solidarity at the secondary school in Jasło. He participated in the 1990 local government election at the helm of the Municipal Electoral Commission, of which he was part during the next two elections as well. He remains a Solidarity member to this day, and is one of the initiators of the Solidarity in Jasło Association, established by members of Solidarity in 2012.

He himself states that, looking back on those years, it was obvious to him that he would not leave Solidarity even despite martial law being declared. As one of its founders, he had to stay until the very end. He had a debt of honour to everyone who joined the union, and was ready to fight against the regime.

Natural Human Right

Initially, he was one of ten million. When his work came to an end in 1989, he was one of thirty, maybe forty thousand activists across Poland. For Kazimierz Poniatowski, the time when Solidarity was legal was a period when people got really involved in expanding the very narrow scope of freedoms at the time. It was a time of resisting a government that did not have the mandate of the people. It was also a time of large-scale, altruistic

involvement of thousands of activists, who worked for Solidarity and Poland, often risking their lives in the process. After all, many paid the ultimate price. 'Finally, I can't stress this enough', says Poniatowski, 'those were events that gave rise to change across Europe. I view my contribution as adding a tiny particle to a country-wide avalanche that the government was still able to stop in December 1981. But after that, not anymore'.

Poniatowski opposes the theory that the transformation that took place in Poland and the rest of Europe in the late 80s and early 90s was an operation orchestrated by communist secret service agents. He believes it is ridiculous to believe that, as the transformation was a result of the Polish people's perseverance in fighting for the natural human right to dignity. 'The later actions of those who had previously been fighting the communist system, which were often difficult to understand, do not contradict my view of the causes of the transformation', he says. 'My contributions to Solidarity, both official and underground, helped, perhaps to a minor, but still not insignificant degree, to weaken the system. In my opinion, it was not the PRL's mounting economic problems that were the decisive factor in its collapse, but it was the much higher public awareness, first of the criminal, and later of the increasingly absurd system, particularly with regard to economic issues. It was the will of millions of Poles that was the decisive factor. It's just a shame that later on, a lot of effort was put in – to a large extent also by former opposition members – to slow down, silence, and eventually stifle the patriots' attempts at introducing far-reaching reforms in Poland. Many refused to abandon their fossilised, communist mentality, looking to it for help in transforming Polish society more in line with what liberal ideologues were saying, who often came from circles which had previously been championing totalitarian regimes. A truly priceless effect of my activism was that I met many wonderful people in Jasło and the rest of the country, people who had the same views on the reality at the time as me. Those relationships and friendships mostly survive to this day. Back then, I had good friends at nearly every company in Jasło. Many have since passed away, but I still meet up with a lot of them. My activism certainly helped me win the majority of votes in the Krosno Voivodeship and become a senator during the second term of the Sejm'.

Emerge From the Confines of Fear

You could say that Ryszard Ciarski became an oppositionist in 1946, at age ten. That is when, during a great convention of the Płock branch of the Polish People's Party, he hung self-made flyers with 'AK' written on them [AK stands for *Armia Krajowa* – the Home Army, an underground military organisation active during World War II, whose members were persecuted by the Soviets after they seized power in Poland] on buildings on Kolegialna Street.

The convention was organised at the church of St Stanislaus, which to this day is famous for its involvement in the opposition movement. During the meeting, the attendees were attacked by militias of the Polish Workers' Party (PPR), precursor to the Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR), as well as by Security Office agents. Many PSL members were beaten, despite the presence of people's delegates. Several members disappeared mysteriously, others were sentenced to years in prison by the Polish Workers' Party, and later the Polish United Workers' Party. That is how Ryszard Ciarski internalised anti-communism. His friends and family members spoke openly about the terror campaign launched by the communists with the support of the Soviets. The effects of communist repressions were visible everywhere.

Heavily Communised Płock

Ryszard Ciarski spent years dreaming of a free Poland. The older he got, the more he noticed how some residents of Płock were being persecuted. How some were being terrorised and demoralised. He hid away his dream of a free Poland in a box designated 'far future'. In the meantime, he graduated from the Mechanical Technical Secondary School in Płock, but despite excellent grades, he was not accepted into university. As his father was a teacher before the war, he was

considered a member of the Sanation pre-war political movement, a fact that is listed in his Security Service file. It was not before 1971 that he graduated from the Łódź University of Technology. After graduating from secondary school, Ciarski was assigned to work at the local Harvesting Machine Factory. Several years later, he found a job at the PERN Oil Pipeline Operation Company in Płock (better known as the Friendship Pipeline). Soon, he got married. His first son was born, followed by another.

'For years I hated the fact that Poland wasn't free. The excesses of the communists, their hubris, monumental stupidity and mismanagement could be seen everywhere. But you couldn't do anything about, it because they were backed up by the Soviet army', Ciarski reminisces. 'During the occupation, the Home Army had a strong presence in our region, so the regime had its forces focus on its soldiers in particular. People were dragged out of their homes at night. They shot them without a trial, without even bothering to keep up appearances. They used intimidation. The terror tactics were used especially by Security Office (UB) agents under the Rypiński brothers, who were responsible for numerous crimes. In the 50s, Płock was managed by former Security Office agents. It was the same at PERN. Płock remains heavily communised to this day'.

increasingly Nebulous Dreams

The year 1970 was traumatic for Ciarski for two reasons. One of his sons passed away, and in December, he heard about what the communists had done on the Coast. A lot about what had really happened there was relayed to him by his friends from Gdańsk working at PERN. Years went by, but Ciarski did not abandon his dreams of a free Poland, even if they were becoming increasingly nebulous, the difficult, communist reality blurring their outlines. He followed the strikes of 1976 not with hope, but with fear, concerned that they would be a repeat of 1970. Still, he listened to Radio Free Europe with hope, because it talked about the *Ruch* (Movement) anti-communist organisation formed by people such as the Czuma brothers several years prior. He also listened to broadcasts about the Workers' Defence Committee and the Movement for the Defence of Human and Civil Rights. He began reading their press as early as the late 70s. It was only when Karol Wojtyła became pope that the outlines became sharp again. His dreams began emerging from the confines of fear.

'I think it was February or April 1980 when people began writing petitions to the management. Not on their own initiative, but encouraged by the management itself. They wanted to know what we didn't like, what we'd like to see changed. But subconsciously,

we knew that they wanted a political assessment from us', Ciarski recalls. 'I think they saw the writing on the wall. Our company had an autonomous communication system. So when the strikes began in Świdnik in July 1980, we could easily stay on top of things. That was the first time I sensed that something was maturing within people. It was obvious to me that they were beginning to think politically. We were in touch with the Płock petrochemical plant. We knew that the people there were rising up too. Many people living in Płock were originally from Gdańsk. They had families and friends there. So when the strikes began on the Coast, we quickly learnt what was going on. True, we were afraid that it could end just like in 1970. But it was a minor concern. We were more afraid that the Russians would attack us. We kept asking ourselves, will they invade or not? The tension only died down when the government delegation arrived at the Gdańsk Shipyard to negotiate. We had a direct landline connection that we used to keep up with what was happening'.

During the strikes on the Coast and at PERN, Ciarski knew which side he should be on. Ciarski began collecting signatures for a new trade union, one that would soon assume the name Solidarity. He also became the head of the Solidarity Company Commission, which he registered with the still-informal Masovia Region of NSZZ 'Solidarity'. Ciarski became a full-time employee of the commission in November 1980.

'I had to deal with the directors, because they wouldn't allow us to form division commissions at pumping stations', Ciarski reminisces. 'They threatened to lay people off. When I began organising Solidarity, one day I was visited by Izydor Maćkowiak, the director of PERN and former PZPR secretary for Płock. And he began threatening me. I knew that he was a party hardliner and a crook who abused his position for personal gain. He yelled that he'd fire me. When he saw I wasn't fazed by that, he tried to bribe me with a car voucher. I knew I couldn't give in. If I had, the others would have given in too. And the workers were vulnerable back then. So I told him that I had work to do and that I had no time for him. When I told him to leave my office, I thought he was about to have a heart attack because he wasn't used to being treated like that. He was a very arrogant and rude man. He treated his subordinates like slaves.

Some time after that, the team requested that the Company Commission dismiss Maćkowiak. So they enacted a resolution stating that he was no longer the director. They didn't let him into the building. So he made a lot of noise. He even wrote a letter of protest to Wałęsa. Solidarity was victorious'.

'But the most important issue was to improve the workers' living standards. Finding flats for the many who still lived like it was the 19th century. And most importantly, we kept an eye out for fraud, because the communists were notorious thieves', says Ciarski. 'We began auditing the budget. We knew that nearly all directors were involved in various shady stuff. Whenever there was a holiday coming, for example, they would submit

massive amounts of rationalisation projects, for which they were awarded money. But nobody ever knew where those projects were implemented. So we formed the Labour Board, and had some degree of control over the company's economy. When we formed the Labour Board, I thought we could influence the Polish economy. Ninety-four percent of the workers joined Solidarity. At that point, I believed that Poland could be free. Well, maybe not immediately, but more free with each passing month. I devoted my life to Solidarity back then. I spent entire days working for it'.

Escorted by Militiamen

Ciarski was woken up by militiamen in the middle of the night on the thirteenth of December. He had been sleeping like a log after Płock's turbulent General Meeting of Delegates. When he opened his eyes, he saw two men in uniforms standing over his bed, guns in hand. They were muttering something. He was so tired that it took him several minutes to understand what was happening. The militiamen said that there was an urgent matter that they needed to discuss with him at the station. He got dressed. They left the flat. He counted the militiaman standing in the hallway. There were six of them. Another four stood outside next to the car. The 'urgency' seemed suspicious to him.

'We drove in complete darkness. Then one of them asked me, "Is it really worth it, to throw such a young life away?"', Ciarski reminisces. 'I felt a little hot, because they had guns and I didn't know where they were taking me. But I didn't say anything. I didn't let them know that I was scared. We drove towards the bridge, which could've meant that they wanted to waste me somewhere and toss my body into the water. But right before we got to the bridge, they turned back and drove to the militia station. They escorted me in, and I saw almost the entire General Meeting of Delegates. There were a few women there too. They locked us up in tiny cells. Five or six people in each. Almost all of us had to stand. Around five in the morning, we were escorted by a few dozen militiamen, who had us get into large prisoner transporters, and we didn't know where we were headed. It was dark. Eventually, the transporters stopped in a forest. It was all way too similar to Katyń. I thought they'd shoot us. Someone even said, "They'll probably waste us". Others thought the same thing. So I said, "If anything happens, we run". We stayed there for a few minutes, and we drove away. The transporters had no windows. We saw through some slits that we were headed back towards Włocławek. We stopped in Mielęcin. We saw an assembly square there lit up with powerful spotlights. Simply put, it was like stage decorations from a film about German camps. ZOMO officers with German shepherds, like the Gestapo. I think they wanted us to think that, to conjure that image. They had us form a column and led us to the prison office building. They took away our watches, belts and shoelaces'.

Ciarski was interned until the end of April. The Security Service tried multiple times to convince him to sign a loyalty oath or to collaborate. After developing serious health issues, he was released thanks to an intervention by the International Red Cross. He returned to Płock, but was laid off from PERN several days after coming back. His wife, who worked at the local petrochemical plant, was demoted and had her pay reduced. Thankfully, Ciarski's friends were quickly able to reinstate him at the Harvesting Machines Factory. He joined the underground, working primarily as a press distributor and co-organiser of his region's printing operation. In addition, he became involved in the initiatives of Church assistance committees.

Locked Up with a Poodle

The Security Service frequently kept Ciarski under surveillance, and he was often arrested for 48 hours. At times, he sat in jail with his pet dog. 'They often arrested me as a preventive measure. Together with my dog on more than one occasion. Sometimes during the day, sometimes in the evening. One day, I was supposed to meet up with someone and pick up some flyers but I was apprehended on the way. They wouldn't even let me take my dog back home. So they arrested us both. My little poodle was a bit scared. They gave him water to drink in jail. But they didn't give me any. Whenever they arrested us, they called me wife to pick up the dog. But I had to sit there for 48 hours… One time, I had to evade the militia in my tiny Fiat 126. I had newspapers, stamps and books on me. They were chasing me with their police car, and I was trying to get away in a Fiat 126. But get away I did'.

The Poland of My Dreams…

Unfortunately, the plan was to have Ciarski imprisoned for longer, which finally happened in 1985, and this time, he spent more than three months in jail. According to his indictment, he was '[…] sentenced under Article 282 "a" section 1 of the Penal Code and under Article 45 of Press Law in relation to Article 10 section 2 of the Penal Code – distributing illegal publications for the purpose of inciting public unrest in Płock […]'.

'I distributed some 1500 newspapers every week. One day, I had several dozen newspapers in my coat. The plan was, I would go to a certain basement in a large block of flats. I'd hide the newspapers behind central heating pipes. I'd ring a doorbell and say the password, and a person living nearby would pick them up. They would distribute the newspapers in several large companies in Płock', Ciarski says. 'But one day, as I was getting

out of my car, I heard tires screeching. A car pulled up and a few agents hopped out. So I ran into the hallway and down to the basement, which had another exit. I ran through the entire block, hoping to get away through the back door. But they blocked it. I saw them, and I tossed the package into some dark corner of the basement. This way, they wouldn't find anything on me. But they searched the basements and found the package. I didn't admit it was mine, but they arrested me regardless and put me on trial'.

After being released, Ciarski was once again laid off, and struggled to find work for a long time. When he finally found a job at a private company, he only worked there for several months before the owner was threatened to have his business shut down, so he quit on his own. He was scared for his son, who went to secondary school in Warsaw. They warned him that, should he continue his activism, his son could die, as well as threatening him that 'something bad' could happen to his wife, also a Solidarity member. But he did not stop. He knew that his wife was a loyal ally. And so, every day was filled with underground work. Days became weeks. Weeks became months, which became years, until he finally saw that his dream was coming true – Poland was becoming free.

'Some time in the mid-80s, I realised that the country had to change', says Ciarski. 'I was convinced that social history is dynamic. Unless the Russkies started a world war to put a stop to things. But on the other hand, I was convinced that the US was too strong to let the Soviets start a global conflict. I felt that a free Poland was not far away. And I was right. I lived to see my country free. In 1989, I took part in forming the "Solidarity" Citizens' Committee. I also helped organise the election in Płock. But as time went on, I liked it less and less what was happening after 1989 – Mazowiecki's government, the privileges for the communists. So I joined the Movement for the Reconstruction of Poland. When Jan Olszewski formed his government, I was sure Poland would soon be free. Right… but we all know how that went [Prime Minister Jan Olszewski's government was dissolved after a motion of no confidence was submitted shortly after its formation]. So I think that in reality, Poland has been free since 2015, when PiS took over. This is the Poland of my dreams…'.

We Knew We Were Needed

Nobody expected that the summer of 1980 would be politically hot. The heat in July and August was sweltering, and people from all across Poland were hopping on trains to Słupsk, from where a bus would take them to the resort town of Ustka, where they could enjoy some time off, financed by the Workers' Holiday Fund.

After the war, Słupsk became home to several thousand people involved in the underground independence movement. In a sense, those were exiles, either forcibly relocated to here or trying to cover their tracks and hide from the Security Office. The town was also a destination for people coming from the ruins of Warsaw, and for a time, it served as the headquarters for the legendary underground leader Zygmunt Szendzielarz. Many people exiled by the Soviets from the areas which had been taken from Poland, as well as many survivors of the gulags and German concentration camps also settled in Słupsk. The town was home to Poland's first monument to the Home Army, its construction initiated by Father Jan Zieja, among other people.

Everyday Terror

Although the town's new residents were still affected by the recent occupation period and the presence of thousands of Soviet troops within several dozen kilometres, the first demonstrations against the communists took place as early as 1946, and were crushed by army and militia forces.

The post-war reality in the town was similar to the rest of the country. The radio and the press were the main sources of information. Indoctrination was slowly becoming ubiquitous through the press and through radio propaganda trickling into the ears of workers from factory PA systems. Also through virtually obligatory speakers installed in flats, known as *kołchoźniki*, which broadcast Channel I of the Polish Radio. The lies knew no bounds. Słupsk had suffered virtually no damage during the war. Many buildings were

burnt and demolished by the Soviet army after all German soldiers had already left. The first Polish residents of Słupsk witnessed it all, but the press and radio insisted that the damage had been caused by the Germans.

But most importantly, everyday life in Słupsk was about hard, slave-like labour. Everyone toiled day in, day out to rebuild local factories, and to manufacture new equipment and machines to replace those the Soviets had pillaged. Older residents also remembered the Soviet reign of terror later introduced by the Polish communist government. Communist labour camps were set up in several nearby villages, which mirrored the German camps of old.

All Kinds of People in Słupsk

This was the reality encountered by a 20-year-old Tadeusz Lipiński, who arrived in Słupsk from faraway Radomsko looking for work in 1971. 'Our family cultivated traditions, but first and foremost, we were religious. We used to say, "No home without God". And where we lived, we had a strong sense of personal property, even despite communism. That was the second most important thing after religion', says Tadeusz Lipiński, who was awarded a Cross of Freedom and Solidarity several years ago. 'When I arrived in Słupsk, a town surrounded by State Agricultural Enterprises (PGRs), what struck me the most was the lack of respect for personal property. It was pretty much unknown around here. Even though so many families had come here from their farms in the East that had been expropriated. One generation was enough to root out their sense of personal property. After I got married, we rented a flat from the director of a PGR. One day, he brought us potatoes for the winter. He just gave them to us. I was thankful, but really surprised. How can you gift what isn't yours?'.

Tadeusz Lipiński knew about the events of 1970 and the strikes and demonstrations in Słupsk. When he was discharged from the military and settled into his new life and work, he started a family and began learning about the history of the town and the rest of the region. Working at the Sezamor Słupsk Ship Equipment Factory, he kept in touch with the shipyards on the Polish Coast. He learnt about the history of the country, town and factory almost lackadaisically, hearing about it at work from older workers. He himself says that he was not interested in politics at that time. 'Which doesn't mean that I never thought about the situation in Poland. Because if I hadn't, I would never have got involved in 1980. I knew what was going on. We talked about it at the factory. Even if rarely and in hushed tones. But that "worker rage", as they used to call it, was palpable. And it kept growing, until it exploded in 1980'.

A Vivid Memory

In July 1980, the workers of Słupsk refrained from staging protests of their own even as strikes began erupting in Świdnik and Lublin. It was only in August 1980 that the events that transpired on the Coast and in Pomerania galvanised the factories. One of the first 'periods of downtime', as the communists described them, took place in Sezamor, which had a partnership with the Gdańsk Shipyard. News about the workers' demands began trickling out in mid-August.

'We gathered in groups in our departments. I worked at the chain manufacturing department at the time. We discussed the situation in Gdańsk. I think it was on 20 August that we formed a group that later became the Strike Committee, which was rotational', Lipiński reminisces. 'Together with Andrzej Krzesiński, we were responsible for communicating with the Gdańsk Shipyard. But it soon turned out that the roads were blockaded by the militia, and that every car leaving town was inspected. So the safest way out was by train. To throw them off, we always bought tickets to Działdowo and other towns some distance away from Gdańsk. We always travelled alone. And so we began travelling regularly between Słupsk and Gdańsk. I would bring back newspapers. Andrzej and I were observers during the talks with the Government Commission in the OHS Room. I took a lot of pictures, and I showed them off at an exhibition at Sezamor. We also presented our recording from the strike and the negotiations. I still have a wonderful souvenir, a shipyard pass. We slept in the OHS Room. We also brought the strikers money. I can't remember if it was just from the workers at Sezamor, or from other Słupsk factories as well. I always brought various souvenirs from Gdańsk, which today have historic importance. I had an original poster from August 1980 and a Gdańsk Shipyard pass, but I think someone stole my pass to the strikers' printing workshop. Whenever I went through gate number two, where the strikers of 1970 had been killed, I was worried that they could start shooting again. On the other hand, I wanted to retaliate, to avenge those people. But most importantly, the victims gave us strength, they gave us resolve. My being at the shipyard remains a vivid memory to this day. The friendships I formed there survived into the 90s. The signing of the agreement made me euphoric, I wanted to get back to Słupsk as fast as possible to tell them about the demands. It was very important. Especially the signing of the 21 points. They gave us enormous freedom to act in factories and outside as well. Freedom of speech, the Mass on the radio. But to be honest… I thought there would be even more freedom. I didn't want anarchy, just more freedom to express our thoughts'.

The Most Thrilling Experience

Although Solidarity was a legal trade union, many of its members were harassed by the Słupsk Secret Service and Citizens' Militia. Various provocations were staged at the time, and a portion of every print run of the local Solidarity newspaper was confiscated. People hanging posters were also arrested. However, the main task the executives of the Słupsk Voivodeship Committee of the PZPR set for themselves was to pit the intelligentsia and the working class against each other, and they also tried to prevent contacts between students and factories. University students who tried to reach out or kept in touch with factory workers were summoned and warned. However, despite the swarming agents, including military intelligence, and the deployment of secret collaborators, the idea of Solidarity spread to all factories. It even reached the heavily indoctrinated Pedagogical University, modern-day Pomeranian University in Słupsk. The Security Service failed there as well, however, as more than half of all faculty members became Solidarity members. The students also actively supported Solidarity or formed their own organisations, such as the Independent Students' Association. These efforts were supported by Father Jan Giriatowicz, at the time the parish priest of the former Dominican church of St Hyacinth, a parish that could only be established thanks to an intervention by the Regional Management of Solidarity. The union was also supported by the clergy of St Mary's Church, and in the martial law period, by Father Włodzimierz Jankowski from the parish of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Tadeusz Lipiński became a member of the Free Trade Union Founding Committee at his company. Later on, he helped found the local NSZZ 'Solidarity' Company Commission. Today, he says that the sixteen months of building solidarity and a free society was one of the most thrilling experiences of his life. 'Those sixteen months passed as quickly as a quarter, maybe half a year', he reminisces. 'There was a lot of work to do, starting from dealing with important company matters, to minor issues related to working standards, like more frequent uniform replacements. But the strongest feeling I had throughout that time, which was also felt by my colleagues, was that it was the first time we knew we were needed. The establishment of Solidarity, even though we founded it ourselves, surprised us. It happened so fast and painlessly. In the first months of Solidarity, we didn't talk about independence, but by the end fo 1981, I was thinking about both freedom and independence. Otherwise, I wouldn't have become involved after they'd declared martial law. I wouldn't have had the motivation or energy. After all, many people dropped out, quit. They shut themselves in their homes. They went private.

The declaration of martial law was a surprise to Tadeusz Lipiński, but it was not traumatic. On Sunday, he went to see a boxing match of Czarni Słupsk, a successful club at the time. Even though all other events had been cancelled due to martial law being

declared, the match did take place. Nearly fifty people from the Słupsk area were interned, with more being interned and arrested throughout the martial law period. Shortly after its declaration, Tadeusz Goliński founded the Słupsk Region Interim Strike Committee. A day prior to that, the first flyers were distributed by Alicja Grzegorczyk, who was given a suspended sentence for her actions. The first protest against the communist repressions took place in front of the church of St Mary, as that was where nearly all Solidarity company commission and Regional Management banners had been consecrated in the past.

The activists and residents of Słupsk were dealt a heavy blow by a statement issued on 16 December by the head of the Słupsk Regional Management, Wojciech Zierke – who later turned out to be a secret collaborator. He appeared in the media, calling upon the workers to support the declaration of martial law, and to refrain from union activity and demonstrations. A similar blow was struck several months later in May, when three more activists, including Stanisław Gargol (a secret collaborator who later became a Security Service agent), spoke out in support of the imposition of martial law. But even that failed to break Solidarity. When the Security Service disrupted the activities of the Interim Strike Committee in January 1982, people continued to gather in front of the church. Following union leaders' recommendations, people protested by going on walks during *Dziennik Telewizyjny* broadcasts. A larger demonstration was only organised in late August 1982, but it was crushed by the ZOMO and the Security Service, and nearly 200 people were arrested and brought before the local magistrate court.

Despite there being no central underground authority, individual groups centred around underground company branches of Solidarity continued to operate until 1989. Newspapers were released, and an effective distribution network enabled magazines and books from almost everywhere in Poland to circulate. Still, the Security Service, with its numerous secret collaborators, continued to arrest and intern more and more people. Kazimierz Lipiński was among those apprehended. He was interned in May 1982, and arrested eight days later. The court handed him a six-month suspended sentence and a very large fine. He was released from jail on 22 July of that same year.

Thinking about Poland

'We actually started to meet up in secret on the second day of martial law. We knew that people were being taken for interrogation. We met up in front of St Mary's church. We sang the national anthem. People from all the major factories came, and various underground groups started to form. One of those – the White Eagle – was mine. We printed flyers that called upon people to strike, to boycott communist celebrations', Lipiński says. 'Only the two people I provided with matrices knew about me. They were tasked with doing

the printing and distribution. I made sure to involve as few people as possible. But even despite that, when I read my file at the Institute of National Remembrance, I saw that I'd been surrounded by all kinds of people. They wrote 'poems' about me, or what read like school essays. Some wrote the truth, others made stuff up. The Security Service summoned me for interrogation multiple times. They wanted me to sign my confessions, but I never did. Why? Because – and this may sound pompous – I'd been instilled with enough of the Solidarity ethos that I couldn't just throw it all away. That's how I'd been raised. How could I look people in the eye if I had? Or my wife? My kids? I knew they could arrest me, that I could be imprisoned for what I was doing. My wife had similar views, for which I am still grateful to her. I was ready for it, even though today I realise that was only in theory. When I was being interrogated by the Security Service, I was afraid. I'm not gonna say I wasn't. I knew that their first question would be important. Would I have the courage to say 'no'. But whenever an interrogation began, I mustered up the courage to answer every question with 'I don't know', 'I can't remember' or 'I won't answer that'. I knew that it was best not to talk to them, because they had better psychology training than me. When I got the internment order, the first thought that came into my mind was that they were probably gonna take me to Siberia or whatever. But they put me in a car and we drove to a forest. So I thought, "Uh-huh, they're taking me to some military airfield, and then most likely to Siberia". Imagine how surprised I was when we stopped at the gate of the camp in Strzebielinek. And I was even more surprised to see my interned friends when I walked into my cell. After I'd calmed down, I thought to myself, "Nothing to fear but fear itself"'.

In 1983, Tadeusz Lipiński was laid off from Sezamor, followed by a string of dismissals from every new job he could find. Still, he did not cease his activism. A symbol of his perseverance still adorns a rock dedicated to Father Jerzy Popiełuszko at St Mary's Church. The inscriptions carved into it are the work of Tadeusz Lipiński. In 1983, he was assigned to a special penal military unit in Chełmno for three months. The least brutal bullying tactic the conscripts were subjected to was having to sleep in tents in freezing weather.

After being discharged, Lipiński continued his underground union activism, working together with the priests who served as the chaplains of Solidarity: Jan Giriatowicz and the now-departed Włodzimierz Jankowski. He participated in various patriotic celebrations organised by the Church, helping organise some of them. Month after month, year after year, he worked in tandem with small resistance groups, distributing newspapers and books and painting anti-communist slogans on walls. In his fervour, he barely noticed when the year 1988 came – and with it the first attempts at officially registering a Solidarity Company Commission and the Round Table talks, which Lipiński approached with a great deal of enthusiasm, similar to the 1989 parliamentary election.

'But what happened later, under the Mazowiecki and Bielecki administrations, I view that as bad', Lipiński says. 'I saw all the stealing, the mismanagement. That Poland was

being held by the throat. That things were sold off for next to nothing. Privatisation was seen as a magic bullet, a solution to everything. Many people were delighted. They weren't critical because they associated privatisation with full shelves in the shops. But in small towns such as ours and the nearby state-run agricultural villages, privatisation is first and foremost associated with unemployment. But, as they put it, there was no other way. That was supposed to be the price of success. I'd dreamt of a Poland that would become a democracy more gently, more fairly. I didn't like the misappropriation at all. And no political party has ever really answered for that… But despite all that, it was worth it. Poland is free. We are free. We are democratic. We decide what Poland should be like today'.

Tadeusz Lipiński has two sons. Both are university graduates. One has his own business. The other holds an important position at a large corporation. 'We sometimes talk about Solidarity. Mostly the historical aspects', says the former underground activist. 'I don't think they're holding it against me that I spent too little time with them because of my underground work. My grandson has an interest in our history. He asks me about Solidarity. I talk to him about Polish history, the history of Solidarity. I've experienced wonderful moments with my wife Janina, who's never told me not to do something. She was also a Solidarity member anyway. And I thank her for that'.

I Wanted to Be in Poland on That Day

Tytus Czartoryski – interned and harassed by the PRL Security Service. One of the co-founders of the Individual Farmers' Solidarity of Lower Silesia, and a co-founder and member of the Solidarity Interim Polish Board of Individual Farmers, established in the autumn of 1986. He worked with railway workers' Solidarity, as well as Fighting Solidarity, and contributed to underground newspapers, in addition to distributing them himself.

A farmer, he graduated from the Agricultural Academy in Poznań, and completed a post-graduate African studies programme at the University of Warsaw. He is married and has five children. According to his friends from the underground times, Tytus Czartoryski and his family have always been honest, kind and helpful. Their farm also sheltered underground activists forced into hiding.

For his efforts, President Bronisław Komorowski awarded Czartoryski with a Knight's Cross of the Order of Polonia Restituta in 2013 – which he refused to accept. In his explanation, he wrote, 'With all due respect to the Knight's Cross of the Order of Polonia Restituta and the office of the President of the Republic of Poland, I refuse to accept this prestigious award from your hands. Your position is necessarily one of responsibility. Your decisions, followed by your negligence, have led to a cross being publicly desecrated with no consequences […]. Holding the highest office in the state, you are responsible for the actions of the government of your party colleagues, for their disdain for the working class, for denigrating your predecessor and for creating the atmosphere in which the Smoleńsk air disaster took place, for ruining Polish democracy by discouraging people from voting in the Warsaw referendum, for hindering Polish farmers' access to Polish soil, for ruining education in Poland, for the state's ineptitude with regard to detecting and prosecuting the most heinous of crimes […]'.

Country People

His entry in Marek J. Minakowski's *Genealogia potomków Sejmu Wielkiego* (Genealogy of the Descendants of the Great Sejm) reads, 'Duke Tytus Czartoryski of Klewań and Żukowo, of the Lithuanian Chase coat of arms, born in Kraków on 30 March 1945'. The Security Service gave him the codename 'Książe' (Duke), as well as several others, including 'Obszarnik' (Landowner).

Tytus Czartoryski's parents, Adam Tadeusz and Zofia Eleonora Wysocka-Woyszkiewicz, had been kept under communist surveillance from the mid-1940s, and were banned from being within 30 kilometres of their pre-war estate of Szurkowo. Their son Tytus was intermittently surveilled by the Security Service over the course of several decades. The first mentions of him in communist records are related to the Poznań student protests of 1968, when he was a student at the Agricultural Academy. Tytus's parents owned 500 hectares of land in the Rawicz area before the war, which were stolen by the Germans in 1939, and later confiscated by the communists. Still, they did not teach their children to hate anyone. During the war, they were part of the underground independence movement, and sheltered Jews at their home.

After the war, Tytus's parents moved to Oborniki Śląskie near Wrocław. For many years, the communists made sure that his father would lose every job he found, and so the family was supported by the mother, who earned a meagre wage working at a consumption sanatorium in Oborniki. 'My parents had farming experience from before the war and always saw themselves as country people', notes Czartoryski. 'When in the 1970s we got the opportunity to move to the countryside, we bought some land in Morzęcin, which is where I live to this day with my wife Danuta'.

History is Like Breathing

Nobody really bullied him for being a 'landowner' at the public school he attended. Czartoryski himself stresses that other people actually helped his family. Every summer, Tytus and his siblings were sent to live with the families of their parents' and grandparents' farmhands from before the war. Though for obvious reasons, it was best to keep their real last name a secret. 'Every summer, we went to a cabin in Nadnotecka Forest', Czartoryski reminisces. 'Back then, we had our holiday last names. Mine was Kwiatkowski. My older brother used the last name Kapusta. On one such stay, my brother lived with a forester near Szurkowo. One day, a local farmer came to his house, and he'd known my parents well from before the war. He kept looking at my brother… and suddenly asked, "Boy, what's your name?" And my brother did as he'd been instructed to do, and said, "Kapusta".

But the farmer was somewhat inquisitive, and smart too, so he asked, "Uh-huh, and what's your daddy's name?" And my brother said, "Czartoryski"'.

For Tytus Czartoryski, his parents were examples to be followed. From early childhood, he learnt history and patriotism as if it were breathing, listening to adult conversations and Radio Free Europe broadcasts while sitting under the table. His father also taught his children Polish history and literature. 'Father read us Mickiewicz, Kraszewski and Sienkiewicz's *Trilogy*', Czartoryski says. 'I can say with complete certainty that Sienkiewicz's writings – the *Trilogy* – had a significant influence on my views. It informed by value system. But the most important thing was religion. Catholicism taught me how to distinguish right from wrong. I also had great neighbours, who were staunch patriots. I spent time with them since I was a kid. They talked about what they'd been through. Most of them were from the Polish lands taken by Russia. You could say they had doctorates in Sovietology. They'd experienced terrible things in the East. When I was older, Radio Free Europe had a tremendous impact on my adolescence and knowledge of politics. And also expat literature, which made its way to Poland using various methods'.

The Road to Freedom

Tytus Czartoryski's first political act came in the form of painting slogans in protest of the Soviet invasion of Hungary of 1956, followed by his attending the student demonstrations of 1968. The events of 1980 came as no surprise to him, and were seen by him as a sign of the people's desire for a free Poland, as was the election of Karol Wojtyła as pope, which was a breakthrough moment.

'My brother left Poland for Denmark in 1957. He graduated there and became an architect', says Czartoryski. 'Whenever I got my permit and travelled to the West to work, we would meed up. When Karol Wojtyła became pope, he was proud and congratulated me. That year, I was staying in the West with my wife and child. He asked me if it was wise to go back to Poland. To which I said, "Listen, I believe that the day will come that the people of Poland will understand their situation, and I want to be in Poland on that day". So when John Paul II came to Poland, I saw it as the next stage in consolidating a previously atomised nation that was beginning to understand how important it is to be whole. That visit was a source of strength, optimism and hope. A very strong stimulus that integrated the people around the independence cause'.

Czartoryski joined Solidarity when it began to form, even though he was worried his 'landowner' name would harm the farmers' cause. However, an old Home Army soldier eventually convinced him to help the union establish a foothold in rural areas. Throughout its legal existence, Czartoryski worked with the NSZZ 'Solidarity' Interim

Voivodeship Founding Committee of Individual Farmers in Wrocław and its local branches. 'Right… I was an active contributor because that's what the situation demanded, and it demanded that we acted there and then', says Czartoryski. 'I travelled across the Wrocław Voivodeship, helping found village and gmina branches of Individual Farmers' Solidarity. The communists really wanted to keep the countryside from consolidating'.

A Just Cause Should Be Fought For

Czartoryski was interned on the third day of martial law. The Security Service tried to force him to sign a loyalty oath or become an informant, but he refused to do either of these things. He was released after a month, and joined the underground shortly after, organising and co-organising the institutions of Individual Farmers' Solidarity. In February 1982, he attended a three-day farmer meeting at the Carmelite monastery in Czerna, the topic of which was 'a peasant programme for rural areas under martial law'. He miraculously avoided being arrested while attending the meeting. The Security Service raided the Czartoryski farm in Morzęcin on multiple occasions as a means of repression, and his wife, who had a degree in forestry, was laid off from the forest inspectorate. When he began working as a taxi driver on the side, his permit was withdrawn without being given the reason.

'Right after I was released from internment, I got my first magazines to distribute: Kornel Morawiecki's *Z Dnia na Dzień* (Overnight) and *Biuletyn Dolnośląski* (Lower Silesia Bulletin) from Wrocław', says Czartoryski. 'I also distributed underground newspapers that were sold across Poland, such as *Tygodnik Wojenny* (Wartime Weekly) and *Tygodnik Mazowsze* (Masovia Weekly), delivered from Warsaw by the now-departed Józef Teliga. When they locked up Władysław Frasyniuk for the first time, I wrote a letter to the communist prosecutor general, offering to serve the sentence instead of Frasyniuk. But the people's government didn't even deign to respond. Władysław and I were friends, and we still are, even though we are on the opposite sides of the aisle'.

After the Security Service assassinated Father Jerzy Popiełuszko, Tytus Czartoryski helped found the Committee for the Defence of the Unjustly Harassed. The committee numbered more than a dozen members. The voivodeship prosecutor's office summoned them to give them a 'warning', but he was never indicted.

On 18 September 1988, Tytus Czartoryski and his friends from the Solidarity underground decided to officially resurrect Individual Farmers' Solidarity in the Wrocław Voivodeship. They informed Janusz Owczarek, the then-voivode and a PZPR member, about the fact, who in turn warned them that they could be arrested, and submitted a report of a suspected offence to the prosecutor's office. The prosecutor summoned

all the 'troublemakers', but nobody was arrested in the end. The Round Table talks were drawing near, and the communists were readying themselves for a transformation.

'Back then, I believed that the Round Table talks had to happen', says Czartoryski. 'As someone put it, we had to get our foot in the door. True, the communists outplayed us on many fronts, but we won what mattered – a free Poland. I was thrilled, but that was only the beginning. After all, we didn't know what freedom was. Transforming a country takes time. Kraków wasn't built in a day either. Even though building Poland may be going fast or slow, we are independent. The nation decides for itself now. So we got what we and previous generations fought for, although they paid for it with their blood. Today, in 2018, I think that Civic Platform's policies are unacceptable, but I still try to see the human behind every differing opinion. I make sure that even the most drastic differences of opinion never lead to hostility, resentment or, God forbid, hate or aggression. Even if someone's views are completely different than mine, it doesn't mean I have to shun them as a human being. The most important goal of politics should not be to defeat and destroy those who think differently, but to convince them that you are right'.

A Friend of Father Popiełuszko's

For her efforts, Ligia Urniaż-Grabowska was awarded a Commander's Cross of the Order of Polonia Restituta by the late President Lech Kaczyński. In 2015, at the NNW (Unbowed, Unbroken, Cursed) International Film Festival in Gdynia, she received the Doors to Freedom prize, awarded to supporting characters for their courage and dedication.

The future doctor's first act of political courage was writing and reading a poem. Ligia was in her second year of secondary school at the time, and wrote her poem after the death of Stalin. Its title was *Na śmierć tyrana* (For the Tyrant's Death). At the time, she was attending a school run by the Sisters of Nazareth in Kalisz. The poem was reported to the school authorities, and Ligia had to take her final exams at the Anna Jagiellon State Female Secondary School. After graduating, she refrained from becoming involved in politics, as studying medicine proved so time-consuming that she could spare no time for any other activities.

The Militia Station incident

After graduating from the Warsaw Medical Academy, Ligia Urniaż worked at a clinic in Legionowo near Warsaw, where she lives to this day, although she has also worked at the hospital in nearby Nowy Dwór Mazowiecki. By the mid-1960s, the young doctor was already a wife and a mother. Her life seemed stable. But some ten years later, a certain event virtually forced her to become involved politics. Although, as she herself admits, she also had family legacy to consider. Her grandfather fought against the Soviets in 1920, and her parents were members of the underground resistance movement during World War II. For this reason, Ligia's political education took place at home, where listening to Radio Free Europe was an everyday ritual.

‘I was on duty at the Legionowo A&E when I got called to a car accident. Someone had allegedly brought the injured victim to the militia station’, Urniaż says. ‘But when I examined him, I said, “This man was not hit by a car. You beat him up. He shows no signs of being hit by a car”. All hell broke loose. The militiamen started yelling at me, saying that my accusations were baseless and that they’d sue me for slandering the Citizens’ Militia. So when I left the station, I ran straight to the victim’s house and told the family everything. I asked his wife to sue the militiamen, because I expected the victim to die. And that’s what ended up happening. The wife was brave enough to make sure it went to trial. They didn’t get sentenced, which was normal back then, but the entire staff of the Legionowo station was replaced’.

In the late 70s, Urniaż joined the Movement for the Defence of Human and Civil Rights. Today, she tends to downplay her involvement, claiming that her efforts were surface-level. She says that she only distributed underground magazines, which she received from her physician colleague, Wojciech Celiński. ‘True, I made sure that the underground press made its way to as many doctors and nurses as possible. And the people devoured the underground knowledge. But I never expected a system change in Poland’.

I Was No Longer Afraid

What gave Ligia Urniaż-Grabowska hope that the people of Poland would finally rise up was when Karol Wojtyła was elected St Peter’s successor. Around that time, Doctor Urniaż also began working at the Healthcare Ministry, organised by Father Jerzy Popiełuszko at the church of St Anne in Warsaw. Her life changed completely as a result. ‘The pope impressed me from the first day of his papacy’, she says. ‘And when he said the words in Zwycięstwa Square, “Let your spirit descend and renew the face of the earth. The face of this land!’, I knew that something would happen. I just didn’t know what. I never expected anything as enormous as Solidarity… I was hungry for the Pope’s every word. My house had been searched by the Security Service, I’d been apprehended in the past. I was afraid, like everyone else. After that Mass, I was no longer afraid, and that’s what mattered. The fear had been completely lifted. I knew that, since we’d managed to rise up once, we had to keep going.

The Doctor's Other Life

Ligia Urniaż-Grabowska was one of the original founders of Solidarity at the healthcare institutions of Legionowo and Nowy Dwór Mazowiecki. The Legionowo clinic became one of the most important information centres in Masovia in 1980. It offered the latest news on what was happening in Poland, and sold underground newspapers and uncensored books. Ligia Urniaż soon also became the head of the Legionowo branch of NSZZ 'Solidarity'. For her uncompromising activism, she was… assaulted by unknown perpetrators in November 1981. 'I remember well the beginnings of Solidarity. People would join of their own volition. We never forced anyone'. says Urniaż. 'They told us their demands. Soon, there were hundreds of them, but pay was one of the least important ones. Solidarity was seen as the first independent institution capable of reforming the state. Sometime in late 1981, people began talking about the need to fight for independence. Solidarity was a great hope for independence, for a moral rebirth of the people. For those sixteen months, we were one large community. We were faithful to one another. We were loyal to one another. We didn't suspect anyone of denouncing anyone. That great trust was only destroyed by martial law'.

The Martial Law Period

From the first days of martial law, Urniaż was active as part of the Primate's Committee for Assisting the Imprisoned and their Families. The committee was based in the church of St Martin. That is also where she met many people who to this day are prominent public and political figures. Many of them spent months in prison, and Urniaż herself was also interned in July 1982. Between her release and 1989, she worked at the committee and was involved in the underground, distributing newspapers, securing meeting venues and organising transport. She was shaken when the militia murdered the young poet Grzegorz Przemyk, the son of one of her friends, Barbara Sadowska. 'Yes, it remains a stain on the honour of our people to this day. The fact that the murder and other crimes of the martial law period were never investigated, and that their perpetrators and their superiors were never punished', Urniaż laments.

In the martial law period, she also strengthened her relationship with Father Jerzy Popiełuszko, which eventually transformed into a friendship. 'There's something inexplicable to it, that they murdered a priest who had so much love for others and was such a good-natured person', says Urniaż. 'He was so boyish, and at the same time also so full of gravitas and reverie. He was always well prepared for every Mass. As if he was already mature enough for the role he was supposed to play. We often talked about the

threat the communists posed to him. I tried to convince him to agree to the offer of full-time protection the workers of the 'Warszawa' Metalworks and FSO [Polish automobile manufacturer] had made him. But he said, "If the Security Service want to kill me, they will". That conversation took place a few days before his death'.

Controlled Freedom

In the Third Republic of Poland, Urniaż remained a member of Solidarity until the end of the last century. She was also a city councillor and was a senator during the 4th term of the Senate as a member of the AWS party, in addition to being elected as the deputy mayor of Legionowo. When she summarises the last twenty-five years of independence, she calls them crippled and unjust. 'Many former Solidarity members are destitute today. And it's really painful to see. Those who submitted to the corrupt communist system seized power', says Urniaż. 'The actions of many of them make Solidarity look terrible to this day. With the state's approval, the oppressors were given high pensions: the military, the militia, the Security Service agents and PZPR members. And those who fought for freedom were largely thrown overboard. That's why I say that our freedom is mangled. Smoleńsk and the events of 2010 also showed that we aren't completely free as a country. That Soviet agents are still at large in Poland, and they influence important political and economic decisions. They've cleverly concealed themselves in positions of power, and that's something to be concerned about'.

We Are Capable of Great Things

During the sixteen months of Solidarity's legal existence, Roman Wilk helped found the information team at the Unitra plant in Białystok, organised an information network spanning more than 100 companies, in addition to doing many other things. He was also a member of the presidium of the Inter-company Founding Committee, and later the Białystok Regional Management of NSZZ 'Solidarity'. He established the Białostok Publishing House, as well as 45 company libraries offering independently released books. In the martial law period, he was one of the most engaged underground activists in the Białystok area, and had to remain in hiding for more than a year. Despite being arrested in December 1982 and spending several months in prison, he returned to the underground after his release, working with it all the way until 1989.

At home, his parents spoke little about other family members. The occasional exception were the siblings of Roman's maternal grandfather, including Lieutenant Colonel Władysław Michał Dec. A member of the Polish Legions, he served in the 3rd and 4th Infantry Regiment, with which he travelled all the way back to Poland, later also fighting to fend off the Soviet invasion. Another family member was Jan, a priest who is mentioned in the memoirs of General Haller. In primary school, however, the boy's imagination and sensibilities were shaped primarily by the works of the German writer Karl May, a popular author or Wild West-themed stories.

'The people I looked up to were my parents. But the person I looked up to when it came to politics, or history, in primary school was a complete stranger, Major Jan Gryczman, an officer who'd fought at Westerplatte and now lived in Nowa Dęba in the Rzeszów area. I was born three years after the war, so the German occupation was something they talked about almost every day in primary school. The Soviet occupation was a taboo, though. I learnt

about it much later, or rather, I really understood what it was when I was in secondary school', Wilk ponders. 'I knew little about Lieutenant Colonel Dec back then, whatever a young boy could remember from his mother's stories about his visits before the war. The communists didn't take kindly to heroes like that. Even though many of them were discussed on Radio Free Europe, to which we listened every day'.

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Wilk has no special memories from his time as a secondary school student. He was getting really good at basketball and was passionate about photography. He also spent a lot of time poring over the weeklies, monthlies and books bought by his father. When he graduated in 1966, he moved to Białystok, where he attended the local State Technical School.

'I was annoyed by what everyday life was like, but that didn't translate into full political awareness. It's not like I woke up one day wanting to change the world. I simply rebelled, just like all young people do, against the adult world', Wilk recalls. 'My political awareness grew as I matured and with every new event. One such event took place in 1968. Someone dropped flyers at our school that urged people to support the 'democratic struggle', or something to that effect, and to condemn Gomułka, I can't remember the exact words. But what stuck in my mind was that they called for a meeting at the Medical Academy. Back then, there were two universities in Białystok. The academy and the Engineering University. So five of us went to the rally. Two girls and three guys, but we were sorely disappointed… We were the only ones who came'.

The year 1970 and the December massacre perpetrated by the communists did not meet with indifference from Wilk, but the events did not have a major impact on his life. He got married, after which his first child was born, followed by another. Now there were four of them living in a seven-metre room.

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What kickstarted Wilk's political maturation was the year 1976 and the worker protests that took place in several regions across Poland, as well as Karol Wojtyła's ascension to popehood. To Wilk, a telecommunications technician and leader of a small team at the time, time sped up, leading to his rapid political development. 'When the strikes started in Radom, Ursus and other cities, my team and I were on a construction site in Białystok. I was one of the subcontractors building a furniture factory there', Wilk says. 'PZPR activists

convened a rally at the stadium. People from all factories were herded there and asked to condemn the "rabble-rousers", which is what they called the strikers. But I didn't let my team go there. So I said, "No way, keep working". Some were upset with me that they couldn't go to the stadium and get some time off work. Many people treated that rally as a break. Fortunately enough, nobody noticed that my team wasn't there. But for me, it really was a breakthrough when it came to my political maturation. Just like when a Polish person was elected pope. Today, it's difficult for me to describe how moved I was when I saw Cardinal Wojtyła come out onto the balcony in the Vatican. It brought tears to my eyes. The PRL had been so oppressive and unbearable that I'd thought nothing would ever change in Poland, that we were stuck in that sh… system for good. But then came the stimulus. In simple terms, we realised that we were worth something. I didn't believe things would change overnight, but with each passing month, I thought that maybe… I wasn't thinking of anything specific. But I became more confident. And you could feel that other people at the company did too. The pope proved to us that it was possible, that we're capable of great things'.

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Still, the July and August strikes that swept across dozens and later hundreds of companies across Poland were a surprise to Roman Wilk, similar to thousands of other workers in the region. It was not until late August that a strike began at one of the largest factories in Białystok, the Tool and Chuck Factory, popularly known as the Chucks (*Uchwyty*). Roman Wilk had changed jobs several months prior to that, joining the newly built Unitra-Biazet Białystok Television Hardware Factory. The workforce consisted mostly of new and young people who had come from all over Poland, attracted by higher wages and the possibility of being granted a flat.

'We had two young children, so I decided to stabilise my life. At my previous job, I was always on the road. Unitra wasn't like that. There were also many specialists from Dzierżoniów, Wrocław, Gdańsk and the south of Poland. One of them was Stanisław Gościniak, who played a major role in establishing Solidarity at the company', Wilk recalls. 'When the strikes broke out on the Coast and the August Agreement was signed, rumours began to spread that the communists would agree to the establishment of independent unions, but only in large cities, certainly not in Białystok, because it was too close to the USSR border and the Soviet Union wouldn't have that. Those rumours sparked a wave of strikes in the Białystok area in September, and resulted in people joining the new union en masse. At Biazet, people signed their names in a notebook that circulated around the factory. Nearly 100% of our three thousand-strong crew joined Solidarity'.

These events once again proved to Wilk that, apart from food, the search for truth is one of the most important things in life, and for that, reliable information was key. Thus, he decided to take over the PA system. Wilk established the Information Commission, which relayed news and commented on various events taking place in the country, city and factory, presenting to the crew the real truth of what was happening every morning break. Fragments of previously banned books on Polish history were read, and Wilk was also able to get access to the company's copying workshop. Not long after, he began collecting signatures for a petition to release all political prisoners, as some people were still being held in custody despite the signing of the Gdańsk Agreement. Another initiative inspired by Roman Wilk was an attempt at abolishing censorship, and it was actually thanks to companies such as his, as well as thousands of others across Poland, that censorship was significantly restricted, and any changes introduced by the censors now had to be marked.

'I believed that, if people didn't have reliable information, they wouldn't be able to form opinions of their own', says Wilk. 'I felt the need to search for the truth and what it represented. I'd been able to reach the truth, so I thought that others should too. That's what motivated me during those sixteen months of legal Solidarity. And after we'd gone underground too, actually. I believed that only reliable information could serve as the basis for responsible decision-making. So I made sure that companies and cities could exchange information as freely as possible. In some towns, our company commissions even helped me get long-unused telexes running again, they were similar to what email is today. In some PZPR Voivodeship Committee meeting, they apparently complained that Solidarity "even uses our telexes"'.

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In 1981, Roman Wilk was elected as a member of the presidium of the NSZZ 'Solidarity' Regional Management. He continued to focus on growing the printing operation, distributing books and increasing the workers' access to the region's News Bulletin. Wilk expanded the distribution and transport network, whose couriers included local taxi drivers, for example, and he also established the Białostocka Oficyna Wydawnicza publishing house. Public meetings were organised in factories with independent writers who published their books underground. 'I didn't really contribute that much', he says with modesty. 'People wanted to organise, and I helped them out. They felt the need within them. The goal of my union activities was to serve others. That's why I encouraged others and established company libraries. That was my mission'.

The sixteen months of Solidarity's legal activities were over in a flash. Wilk spent the majority of that time helping the people, setting aside very little time for his wife and children. In his fervour, he only rarely thought that it could all end in a savage counterattack by the communists. The capstone event of that era was Wilk's meeting with John Paul II, which took place during a visit of the Białystok Solidarity delegation to the Vatican. The meeting was organised by the chaplain of the Białystok branch of Solidarity, Father Sławoj Leszek Głódź [Currently archbishop emeritus of Poznań].

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On 13 December 1981, Roman Wilk came home from the Regional Management's printing shop, where he and Jan Radziwon had finished printing Marian Kukiel's book *Generał Sikorski. Żołnierz i mąż stanu Polski Walczącej* (General Sikorski. Solider and Statesman of Fighting Poland). He was about to drift off to sleep when the Security Service agents and militiamen came. Wilk remained calm and did not open the door. His children woke up, but stayed quiet. The silence led the people waiting at the door to believe that nobody was home, but they continued to wait in front of the house for a long time. Wilk left the building several hours later, fully aware that he may never see his wife and children again. Still, he decided to take his activism underground.

'The martial law period was not in any way traumatic for me. To me, it was a consequence of our actions. I knew that sooner or later, it would all end in… some kind of war against the communists. I knew my history, so I expected them to kill us or deport us to Russia. The most important thing for me was to ensure the effective flow of information, so I could keep up with what was really going on in the city, the region and Poland as a whole. I'd been hearing conflicting things', he says. 'People from the company commissions at major factories started coming to me. We decided that all factories in Białystok would go on strike on Monday, 14 December. They all assured me that all work would stop. But it later turned out that those assurances were just that, assurances. Only my Biazet came out on strike when Monday came. And some workers at Biawar, too. Some other factories tried to strike as well. But that was it. I'll be honest, I was sorely disappointed. Together with Krzysztof Burek, who was the editor in chief of the *News Bulletin*, we decided that we would continue to publish it underground. That was really important and kept people's spirits high. We managed to get the copiers, ink and paper from the Regional Management HQ. We now had to get matrices, paper and money to finance the underground printing operation. The money initially came from the Białystok publishing outlet, which had been operating semi-legally at the Regional Management HQ. We quickly issued a statement on the declaration of martial law. We also managed to get the first issue of the *News*

Bulletin to Father Głódź in the Vatican, together with our statement on martial law. They read that statement on Radio Free Europe as one of the first pieces of news from Poland. That was very important to us. Białystok had always felt like it was behind on all the news. But now, we felt special'.

Roman Wilk remained in hiding for more than a year, organising the Białystok underground. He met with worker representatives from various companies, helped organise the printing and distribution of underground newspapers, books and underground publications from all over Poland, organised poster hanging operations, as well as managing the Białystok Publishing House. He was arrested three days before the Christmas of 1982. The magistrate court handed him a fine for not being registered as the resident of the flat where he was apprehended, and he was brought before a military prosecutor, who had him placed in custody for three months for his underground activism. After spending several months in prison, Wilk was released under amnesty, but he did not cease his activities. He continued to work in organisations founded by various activists until 1989. From 1988, he used his name to sign official Solidarity documents, statements, and appeals to workers. Throughout the years, the Security Service launched multiple investigations into Wilk's activities. The Institute of National remembrance is in possession of a file containing several cases against him, the latest dating from 1989.

In the Third Republic of Poland, Wilk became the deputy director and later director of the ITO Technical and Organisational Innovation Implementation Company, and also spent several years at the helm of the Białystok water supply network. During that time, he graduated with a degree in economics from the Academy of Economics in Białystok. He is currently retired.

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'When I got out of prison, I couldn't find any work. Fortunately enough, my friends who'd left Biazet had started a cooperative. They hired me. In the late 80s, my underground colleagues and I formed the Białystok Economic Society and the ITO Technical and Organisational Innovation Implementation Company. It was also a way to help finance the underground, because we were getting less and less money from dues. The ITO also hired people who'd been laid off from work as a means of repression. So, if I were to summarise those years in the underground, I'd say that it's absolutely worth the trouble to fight for your rights. And thus for freedom and independence. But did we regain complete sovereignty and freedom after 1989? I don't think so. It was evident from the sickness that was devouring us near the end of the Civic Platform administration. That sickness was the death of the concept of common good. Even though what had brought us together

before was solidarity between people. After 27 years of non-communist Poland, I don't feel we take responsibility for our country every day as a nation. Especially those in power. We allowed the PZPR and the communists to privatise Poland. And after they got all the wealth, they got the people in their pockets. They made other people reliant on them, and letting that happen was one of the fundamental mistakes of our governments. I rejected and still reject the selling off of Poland. Many companies that were sold for political reasons shouldn't have been sold. Even if they were in a bad way financially, they could've been saved by the Polish people. I gave a hopefully good example myself when I got the Białystok water supply network out of trouble. It could have easily gone bankrupt or been sold. But neither did it go bankrupt, nor was it sold. So was it possible? Yes, it was'.

Solidarity Was My Banner

Bogusław Malicki. Going on sixty years old. Father of three. Married to a fellow underground member. For his activism, he was awarded a Knight's Cross of the Order of Polonia Restituta by President Andrzej Duda.

In hindsight, he describes Solidarity as a banner that he followed towards free Poland. He learnt solidarity as a volunteer at the Zielona Góra NSZZ 'Solidarity' Regional Management. Malicki lived in Sulechów at the time. He attended a technical secondary school in Świebodzin, and visited the Zielona Góra Solidarity Regional Management to help out with union work. As an amateur photographer, he documented the events which comprised the history of 'that' part of Poland.

Born in Zbąszyń, Greater Poland, he learnt about his homeland from his grandfather, who had been interrogated by the Security Service and jailed for criticising the government of the PRL. It was in also in Zbąszyń that he took more inadvertent history lessons in the form of Radio Free Europe broadcasts, of which his father and grandfathers were avid listeners. Malicki went to secondary school the year Karol Wojtyła was elected pope. Even though the election was widely discussed at home and in his home town, it was not a common topic at school. Similar to Polish history, which was different than what was ordered by the communist propaganda.

The year 1980 saw Malicki experience an accelerated political maturation. Politics had never been a topic he ever broached with his friends. It was only the strikes, the formation of Solidarity in August 1980 and his near-daily visits to the Regional Management in Zielona Góra that made the young man realise what the situation was really like in the country. What danger his people were in. He learnt all that by zealously reading uncensored Solidarity newspapers, as well as books which he had never even heard of before. In August 1981, he attended the 270th Warsaw Foot Pilgrimage to Jasna Góra. He joined a group of known as *Karawaniarze* (pallbearers), led by Dominican Father Tomasz Alexiewicz. The pilgrimage route led from Warsaw to Częstochowa. There, he meet people his age and older than him. People who were religious, as well as doubters and those

searching for something. He never expected how these relationships would influence his future life choices.

Thank God

'When they declared martial law, I got very irritated, because for the past 16 months, I'd been reading what I wanted, saying what I wanted, and now someone tried to prevent me from doing that. When I was on my way to school in Świebodzin on Monday, I had Solidarity newspapers and books in my backpack. I was wondering if they were still legal or not', Malicki reminisces. 'I was seething with rage. I only learnt that they'd declared martial law from an army officer in Sulechów when I went outside carrying a camera. The weather was great for taking photos, but suddenly I saw tanks on the streets. Then some officer took my camera away and said I couldn't take photos under martial law. I didn't really know what that meant, to be honest. The most important thing to me was to get my camera back. He saw I didn't know what was going on, so he gave it back. I was eighteen at the time'.

For the first two or three months of martial law, the student of the Świebodzin secondary school was unsure what to do next. He could not contact the Solidarity of Zielona Góra, as all members had been interned, and he was worried that he himself could also be arrested. Malicki does not remember who gave him the idea, perhaps he came up with it himself, but he decided to contact some friends from Poznań and Warsaw that he had met during a pilgrimage. As a result, by 1982, he had attended a Mass for the Homeland celebrated at the Warsaw church of St Stanislaus Kostka. Here, he met up with his friends from the pilgrimage and made contact with opposition activists, including printers, distributors and organisers of the Warsaw and national underground institutions. It is from there that he began bringing his first newspapers and books to the now-orphaned Sulechów underground. When he attended another Warsaw pilgrimage in August of the same year, he wore a metal *Karawaniarz* badge on his neck, circled by barbed wire and engraved with '1982', and also had a Solidarity pin on his shirt. He also established contacts with activists from Poznań by attending regular meetings held at the church of Our Lady of the Dolours, as well as during the Masses for the Homeland celebrated there. That is also where he met new friends from nearby Gorzów Wielkopolski. They were young like him, and as determined to fight against the communist regime.

In the early 80s, the Oasis movement was established in Sulechów [Editor's note: the Community of the Movement for the Renewal of the Church – the Light-Life Movement], and in 1983, the informal Working Class Ministry was formed, which included older underground Solidarity members and young people. Soon, Bogusław Malicki would meet

priests who lent spiritual support to his generation, including Edward Koper and Mirosław Gass from the Sulechów church of St Stanislaus Kostka, as well as Witold Andrzejewski from Gorzów Wielkopolski.

'I attended Masses for the Homeland in Poznań and Warsaw with Zygmunt Zamroziewicz and Marek Kulczyński, who were my age, and with whom I survived until Poland was free. We are still friends', Malicki says. 'In Poznań, I met Elżbieta and Tomasz Mielcarek. In Gorzów Wielkopolski, we got in touch with the Independent Youth Movement and Father Witold Andrzejewski. I travelled a lot. I could visit Warsaw or Poznań twice in one month to get uncensored books. Sulechów was a small town, but it had quite an appetite for underground publications, both free and paid. Although there were times that I wasn't able to sell what I got in my backpack. In such cases, I just gave them away or threw them off blocks of flats, and people always picked them up. Whenever we went to Warsaw, Poznań, Gorzów, Międzyrzecz or Gdańsk for a demonstration, I photographed nearly every march, the banners, the Masses and crosses, the symbols of our struggle for freedom. It lasted all the way until the late 80s. I thank God that He protected me and nothing bad ever happened to me. Today, I could make an exhibition about the demonstrations using only my own photos. Or about the pilgrimages of John Paul II to Poland'.

Foundation of Our Values

In 1983, Bogusław Malicki graduated from secondary school and found a job. The Sulechów church of St Stanislaus Kostka, similar to other churches in the country, began celebrating Masses for the Homeland, young people could be heard singing patriotic and religious songs, and invite-only patriotic concerts began to be organised in private homes. The people who attended these would later participate in demonstrations and patriotic and religious trips to Warsaw, Poznań and Gorzów Wielkopolski, the annual pilgrimages from Warsaw to Jasna Góra, as well as the farmers' foot pilgrimages from Klenica to Częstochowa. That is where Malicki met experienced farmers' Solidarity members, including Edward Lipiec, a future senator, as well as Eugeniusz Derlatko, a co-organiser of various church movements from Sulechów.

'The parish priest was Father Edward Koper, who was known for his patriotic and anti-communist sermons. He was an important person to me, extremely devoted to God and Poland. He was able to instill his love for free Poland in us', Malicki recalls. 'So for our church group, he was the foundation of our values, our guide. Today you'd call him a chaplain of Solidarity. Father Mirosław Gass, the vicar, also looked after us. He organised various trips for us, to the mountains and other places. I remember that one time when

we used stones to make a huge "Sulechów Solidarity" sign in the Tatras, in Zawrat Valley. It was a huge organisational challenge, but we managed to pull it off. And it was a major emotional victory too. Father Koper also issued a certificate that stated that I could join the Church Steward Service at the church of St Stanislaus Kostka in Warsaw. I was doing karate at the time, and after the death of Father Popiełuszko, I served as a bodyguard for Father Stanisław Małkowski. I was accompanied on my trips to Warsaw by Zygmunt Zamroziewicz, Marek Kuczyński and his sister, Arkadiusz Chudyka, Arletta Stein and Alicja Zjawień, who became my wife a couple years later'.

In 1985, Malicki became a school teacher in Świebodzin. However, the headmaster did not take kindly to the young man's views and his fondness for underground press, which he would sometimes notice circulating in the school buildings. Thus, the young teacher was let go. On 11 November 1986, the young people of Sulechów who were members of the Oasis movement and the Working Class Ministry decided to establish a new organisation: the Young People's Solidarity Movement, with Bogusław Malicki as its leader.

Operating as RMS

'The Sulechów underground was mostly made up of young people, seventeen, sixteen, even fifteen-year-olds', Malicki recalls. 'Among them were Marek Kuczyński, Zygmunt Zamroziewicz, Adam Kieryło, Bogdan Siemaszko, Piotr Merda and Arkadiusz Chudyka, as well as active female members: Alicja Zjawień, Irena Kuczyńska and Arletta Stein. Before the flyer distribution operation on 11 November 1986, Piotr Merda said, 'We really need to come up with a name for ourselves. If they lock me up, what am I gonna tell them? That I'm Piotr Merda? That I'm doing this on my own? No! We need to have an organisation'. At first, we wanted to name our alliance after Father Jerzy Popiełuszko. But after some discussion, we chose the name Young People's Solidarity Movement [RMS]. We believed that using Popiełuszko's name would be involving the Church in politics, and we didn't want to harm the church in any way. Especially since some of us had already been harassed or investigated by the Security Service'.

The establishment of the RMS did not have a major impact on how the group operated. They continued to distribute flyers in secondary schools around Sulechów, but from now on, they had a name. The movement began issuing signed statements. In them, the RMS defined its goal as fighting against the communist regime and totalitarianism. In 1987, they also began publishing *RMS. Biuletyn Informacyjny Ruchu Młodzieży Solidarnej* (RMS. News Bulletin of the Young People's Solidarity Movement), and in 1989, *RMS. Pismo Ruchu Młodzieży Solidarnej* (RMS. Newspaper of the Young People's Solidarity Movement). 'We

always wanted to reach as many people as possible. Bringing newspapers from other cities was one thing, but printing your own newspaper that discussed what was going on in town or in the region, that was something else', Malicki emphasises. 'From the outset, we tried out various printing methods. We looked for ways to print thousands of copies. We made contact with printing operations in Wrocław and Poznań. In 1986, we independently released the *Śpiewnik Ojczysty* (The Homeland Songbook) and our first flyers, but later on we had our texts printed in Poznań. In January 1989, we printed a thousand copies of the RMS newspaper. We also printed special issues. Like the one celebrating the third anniversary of the RMS. Marek Kuczyński was the editor in chief, and he also wrote his own articles. Several other people also contributed. We distributed the newspaper primarily around Sulechów, but we also sent some to Wrocław, Międzyrzecz, Gorzów Wielkopolski, Warsaw and Zielona Góra. We published it out of our own pocket. We sometimes got the paper for it from Edward Krzycki from Krosno Odrzańskie. He was a lawyer and had a legal document business, so he had access to paper. Our newspaper was printed mainly by Fighting Solidarity in Poznań. The print runs ranged from 300 to 3000 copies'.

The establishment of the RMS greatly concerned the Sulechów militia and Security Service. ORMO [Volunteer Reserve of the Citizens' Militia] units were sent to local schools, while PZPR and Polish Teachers' Union members were urged to keep an eye out for 'anti-socialist occurrences', and secret collaborators were sent to infiltrate the local community. This led to the first arrests and interrogations of RMS members, including Marek Kuczyński, a secondary school student. However, '[…] due to the difficult financial situation of his family, the Security Service decided to refrain from submitting a motion for his punishment, instead mandating that he attend a preventive and educational meeting in the presence of his parents and other students', says Dr Zbigniew Syska in his book *Z bibułą w plecaku* (With Underground Newspapers in the Backpack).

Near the End of the Communist Era

In March 1988, Bogusław Malicki was arrested and beaten while in custody. Near the end of the communist era, the Zielona Góra branch of the Security Service decided to demonstrate its 'effectiveness'. After his interrogation, Malicki was indicted by the local magistrate court. In the justification for the indictment, the court stated that Malicki had distributed illegal publications without a permit, and that he had been found in possession of several hundred illegal works, including cassettes, which could spark civil unrest.

'The Security Service came for me at work and my house was searched, but they didn't find anything', Malicki reminisces. 'But one day prior to that, they'd found large amounts of magazines, cassettes and books in my block's drying room, which they were claiming

were mine. And it was true, they were mine. My case was worked by Captain Augustyn Piwko and Second Lieutenant Adam Pajuk from Sulechów. They took me to the Sulechów militia station, and later to the Security Service headquarters in Zielona Góra. I had a cross necklace with a crowned eagle, a Fighting Poland pendant, and an image of Our Lady of Częstochowa. The militiaman forgot to include the Virgin Mary image in my list of possessions, so I reminded him. To which the officer said, "Shit like that?" So I told him he offended my religious feelings and that I'd report him to the relevant authorities'.

'At first I declared a hunger strike', continues Malicki. 'I began by saying that I am in solidarity with Kazimierz Sokołowski from the Gorzów Independent Young People's Movement, who'd also been arrested, and Sławomir Dutkiewicz. I demanded the release of all political prisoners. Almost every time I was escorted to my cell, some sergeant would beat me up. They would threaten me as I sat there, saying, "People like you… I can f… you up any time". One day, a militiaman beat me on my kidneys and chest. I never learnt his name. I submitted a complaint to the voivodeship prosecutor in Zielona Góra, in which I said that I'd been beaten and my religious feelings had been offended because they'd insulted Our Lady of Częstochowa. And you could tell they'd already seen the writing on the wall, because in April 1988, I got a response from the Voivodeship Office for Internal Affairs that said that they partially agreed with my complaint and that the officers would suffer disciplinary consequences. When I was being interrogated, the agents said they'd lock me up for eight years. But I was released after three days. Later on, they brought me before the magistrate court. It ruled I was guilty, and everything they'd found in the drying room was subject to forfeiture. Those things were worth a lot of money, it was roughly six months of my wages. They primarily confiscated books, newspapers, tapes, stamps and suitcases. They didn't punish me, but I had to cover the costs of the proceedings myself. I had an excellent lawyer – Walerian Piotrowski from Zielona Góra – who was elected senator twice later on'.

When the year 1989 came, Bogusław Malicki was living his life as an opposition activist. He helped found the Solidarity Citizens' Committee in Sulechów, and reactivated the NSZZ 'Solidarity' Regional Management in Zielona Góra, serving as its head for several months. He was sill a member of the Young People's Solidarity Movement. In 1991, he married his friend from the underground, Alicja Zjawień. They have three children together: Joanna, Anita and Mariusz. Malicki has a degree in law and administration, and as he himself puts it, 'Although I'd never imagined what Poland would look like, I am still proud that my country is headed in the right direction. That we managed to effect change peacefully. That we changed the system without bloodshed'.

Solidarity is about Cleansing the Lies

Adam Żabicki never thought he would become involved in politics. He was not a member of any of the approved political parties, and he was not in contact with the nascent opposition either. And although he had an interest in history, he never thought he would help make it.

His unremarkable childhood was spent in Masovia, the home voivodeship of his parents. When Żabicki was six, the family moved to Silesia, a move he did not appreciate, as he was treated like an outsider at school. He was disparagingly referred to as *gorol* – a pejorative nickname for non-Silesians. But Żabicki fought back – together with his fellow *gorols*, he called his Silesian peers *hanys*, a pejorative term for Upper Silesians, and he also defended his Masovian dignity by getting into fights with other boys at school.

An Example He Could Follow

In the 'background' field on documents, he always put 'working class'. His father was a shoemaker, and his mother a manual labourer. At home, Żabicki and his siblings were taught that the words God, Honor and Homeland were sacred. He devoured the stories of his grandfathers' involvement in the Second Republic's fight for liberation and independence, as well as of his maternal uncle, who served in the Home Army and was sentenced to seven years in prison by the communists as a result. Adam Żabicki says he once dreamt of inheriting his grandfather's Cross of Independence. That did not happen. But what he did inherit was an example he could follow. For his contribution to the Polish struggle for independence, he was awarded a Cross of Freedom and Solidarity, which itself is based on the Second Republic medal. His home teachers of history and patriotism were soon joined by the faculty of Radio Free Europe (RFE). As an adolescent, he devoured every history lecture given by Władysław Pobóg-Malinowski [Polish historian and military officer who fought in the Polish-Soviet war].

Eventually, Żabicki had absorbed so much information that he could no longer keep it all to himself in class. As a result, his father was often called to school in relation to his son's 'inappropriate' knowledge of history. For many years, Żabicki was an altar server at the church of St Anne. It was here that he experienced a very hands-on history lesson when the communists arrested the local parish priest, Father Franciszek Pietruszka, expelling him from Zabrze for allegedly attempting to Germanise Silesia.

Escaping into Sport

Żabicki's escapism from the drab reality of communist Poland was sport. He was a successful boxer, placing second twice in the Silesian championships, first as a junior and then as an adult. During that time, he graduated from a vocational school affiliated with the Zabrze Metalworks, where he trained as a machinist. He continued his education by enrolling at a technical school, after which he worked as a foreman at the maintenance department of the Zabrze Metalworks for many years. Żabicki started a family when he was nineteen years old, and spent the next fourteen years of his life doing sports and looking after his children. He was shocked by the events of 1966, when the PZPR government urged Polish society to condemn the Church, and by the 1970 massacre on the Coast and in Pomerania, but that was not enough for him to rebel.

'They organised obligatory worker rallies at the plant to condemn "the Western imperialism that attacked the working class of Gdańsk"', Żabicki recalls. 'At the first rally, they told us that the Germans had attacked Gdańsk, and that the Polish army had to defend the city. When someone said they weren't sure that it had been the Germans attacking Gdańsk, the propagandists proclaimed at the next rally that we shouldn't listen to rumours that it had been militia forces shooting at workers, but that it had been the leaders of the rebellion who were shot at. None of the workers believed that, but nobody protested either. We knew what had really happened there from RFE. Besides, our plant had a recreation centre in Rewa, near the Chylonia district of Gdynia'. We knew from the locals, although they weren't really eager to talk about it, just how terrible the massacre had been'.

A Ray of Hope

For Adam Żabicki, Karol Wojtyła being elected pope was so unexpected that it bordered on unbelievable. Nearly everyone in the family cried tears of joy. Żabicki himself

says that he felt a ray of unspecified hope. The joy that overtook his family and friends could not be ruined even by the cynicism of the authorities, who tried to downplay the importance of the historic moment. When he heard the pope's words spoken during his first pilgrimage, "Let your spirit descend and renew the face of the earth. The face of this land!', he was certain that something special would soon happen in Poland.

The July strikes in Świdnik and Lublin broke out when the Żabickis were on holiday near Lublin. The events piqued their interest, but when Adam Żabicki shared the news with his colleagues several days later, they were incredulous. At the same time, he got the impression that they had already heard about the strikes from the BBC, the Voice of America or RFE. 'They didn't want to make waves', says Żabicki today.

During the August strikes in Gdańsk, however, the workers of the Zabrze Metalworks gathered openly, sharing their opinions on what was happening on the Coast. Their superiors would run from group to group, shouting, 'No standing around! No standing around! Back to work! Back to work!' But this time, their yelling and pushing had no effect. When the strike broke out at the plant, it was massive, and the majority of the workers were also joined by local PZPR members. The Gdańsk demands were quickly accepted. Department and company commissions were formed, which soon assumed the name NSZZ 'Solidarity'. Everyday life began to change drastically. Adam Żabicki became one of the founders of Solidarity in his department, first as a member of the Department Commission, before joining the Company Commission.

Against Enslavement

'We supported the Gdańsk demands even though the money wasn't so bad at the metalworks. But nearly everyone knew, to a greater or lesser degree, that it wasn't about material things, but real freedom', Żabicki emphasises. 'We used to say back then, "What do we need the Russkies for? We shouldn't be feeding and supporting them as thanks for being occupied…". That's what many of us thought at the time. I think that's what everyone had been thinking, but didn't have the courage to say it out loud for many years. And the Solidarity boom was a massive movement against that enslavement'.

During the sixteen months of the union's legal existence, Żabicki spent the majority of his time performing his duties as a member of the Company Commission. In his free time, he brushed up on his history knowledge thanks to previously inaccessible books published by Polish organisations based in London, Paris and New York. From them, he learnt the full extent of the communist lies and propaganda. It was a crash course on his own country. The feeling of being cleansed of the filth and falsehoods was almost physical. When the PZPR

declared martial law on 13 December, he did not hesitate to oppose the occupiers, starting from the very first day of martial law.

Security Service on the Premises

‘I rushed to the machining department, where the machinists had lit candles on every table. They were collecting funds and held their first discussions. I ran back to my workshop and asked, “The machinists have lit candles”. No response’, Żabicki recalls. ‘I asked the mould makers, “Maybe we should stop working?” No response again. They were sad, but didn’t do anything. I didn’t feel they were scared. The masters were feverish, calling on everyone to refrain from any forms of protest. They threatened us that the Security Service would come to the factory. Then a friend from the KPN party [Editor’s note: Confederation of Independent Poland] came up to me and said, “The Region is busted, they’ve locked everyone up”. I sheltered him, because the Security Service was after him. A few days later, the agent assigned to the plant summoned me to interrogate me in relation to his case. Things died down after that’.

Adam Żabicki was active in the Silesian underground from the first days of martial law. He mainly distributed local newspapers and publications coming in from the rest of the country, and he also collected and edited news for underground magazines and newsletters. He managed to remain undetected until 19 May 1982, which is when he was arrested. The Security Service also searched his house, as well as the houses of his parents and brother.

‘I was supposed to pass some underground magazines to an engineer from the Koksoprojekt plant. He came on his bicycle. When he got close, two guys ran up to me and one of them, pretending to be drunk, leapt towards me’, Żabicki recalls. ‘I resisted at first, but I couldn’t smell any alcohol, and that made me suspicious. I quickly realised something was wrong, that those were probably agents. I had a suitcase full of magazines, so I told the engineer, “Lucek, run!” He grabbed the suitcase and ran off. Later on, it actually turned out he was an undercover informant. One of the agents grabbed me by the arm. I pushed him away and started running. A Fiat was parked in front of the church. I thought it was a friend’s car. Someone got out, pushed me in, and I crashed into the seat like a ball. I thought they were random people who saw I was being chased and decided to help. The driver asked me, “Where do you live, where do you want me to take you?” I told him the neighbourhood. It was only when I noticed that the route was a little strange that I asked the driver, “Why did you turn left? We could’ve gone straight ahead”. He said it was faster that way. And that was their devious way of taking me to the militia station. One of the agents greeted me there by saying, “You son of a …, I’d empty an entire magazine

into you if I could get away with it!" Then some agent came down from the voivodeship headquarters and asked me a lot of questions about people at the plant. First, he asked me about a female colleague who'd been interned. Then about completely obvious things, like if I knew my colleagues. Of course I knew them. It was probably a ruse, because he suddenly started asking about things he had no business knowing about. But I didn't tell him anything'.

internment Order

The next day, on 20 May, Żabicki was handed an internment order, and he was also disciplinarily dismissed from the metalworks for allegedly stealing a cable. He was taken to a camp in the Zaborze district of Zabrze, before being transferred to prison facilities in Grodków and Uherce. But he did not waste time. He and his cellmates printed anniversary stamps, made envelopes and attended secret prison university courses. As a former boxer, he also organised gymnastics classes for the inmates. Żabicki returned home on 12 December of the same year, but was arrested just a week later for distributing flyers. He spent two months in jail in Katowice, and on 13 February, the Silesian Military District Court sentenced him to a year in prison, suspended for two years. Żabicki's indictment states that he was accused of '[…] distributing publications containing "false information on the sociopolitical situation in the country that may incite civil unrest or riots, as well as content that insults the chief governing bodies of the People's Republic of Poland"'.

He was released after a trial that took place in February 1983. Żabicki never once considered leaving the underground, and instead continued his distribution work, as well as collecting information for underground press outlets. His wife proved to be his staunch ally in this regard, distributing underground publications among her fellow teachers throughout the entire martial law period. Throughout this period, he was intermittently followed in the streets by the Security Service. According to Security Service documents collected by the IPN, '[…] As part of the case, information acquired from informants was used, as well as private correspondence monitoring, wiretapping and observation; numerous preventive and warning conversations were held, and his place of residence was searched'. His surveillance continued until one day before the June 1989 elections.

'By the late 80s, I knew that the economy was in a shambles and was about to collapse. I'd been attending lectures by excellent economists', Żabicki says. 'I wasn't happy about that at all, it was our country after all. But nothing made us believe the communists would face us head on. I expected they would try to dismantle their own system in some way. But I was also convinced that they would negotiate with us. So when the Round Table Talks were organised, I was content. I was also content with the elections of 4 June 1989.

I was even head of the Zabrze electoral commission. But it quickly turned out that Wałęsa and his advisors had sold us out. So we really had to wait a long time to regain agency. For a right-wing government like the one we have today. A government that respects the people and adequately represents the words God, Honour and Homeland.

Never Lived in Free Poland

‘I was shocked when I learnt the truth about our history after August 1980. So joining the anti-communist movement was as natural to me as breathing. I wanted to prevent the government from lying to other people’, says Leszek Kuziko. In 1980, he worked at the quality control department at the Unitra-Unitech factory in Białogard, and it was in 1980 when he joined Solidarity. From 1981 to 1989, he was a member of the underground, and is currently a business owner.

‘My parents came here from Brześć on the Bug. They knew full well who the Soviets were. My political guide and mentor was my grandfather, Aleksander Zawadzki’, says Eugeniusz Zieliński, who was in his thirties in 1980. He was a machinist at Unitra-Unitech, and it was in 1980 when he joined Solidarity. From 1981 to 1989, he was a member of the underground. Currently retired, he was a businessman in the Third Republic of Poland. ‘Every 1 May, during the communist celebrations, my grandfather would say that it would be better to give all the banners and red flags away as rags for the poor. When I was in vocational and secondary school, almost all of us listened to Radio Free Europe. We knew what was going on in Poland, but we rarely if ever talked about it with classmates. I knew what had happened in December 1970 and in 1976. But what was I supposed to do?’, Zieliński says.

‘My grandfather, a Piłsudski supporter, was given land in Iwacewicze near Baranowicze in 1920’, says Anna Sztark. ‘In 1939, my family was deported to Siberia, near Arkhangelsk. My father was too weak to get off the train on his own. He died soon after. My mum’s sister then died of typhoid, she was thirteen. Then my mum’s grandmother died. And so, my mum, barely a year older than her sister, was all alone. Complete strangers took her in, the Mik family. I only learnt about it in the 70s. After the war, they were repatriated to Dębno Lubelskie. That is where my parents met and got married. They were both orphans. Father’s entire family got massacred by the Ukrainians in Volhynia. We moved to Białogard in 1956. Our parents didn’t want to talk about their families. When I was in secondary

school, I complained to my mum, "Everyone has grandfathers and grandmothers, and we don't. Why?" Mum started crying…', Sztark reminisces. In 1980, the 26-year-old found work at the Białogard Gmina Cooperative. She was a member of the independence underground from 1981 to 1989. In the Third Republic of Poland, she was the head of the Koszalin Pobrzeże Region of NSZZ 'Solidarity', the voivode of Koszalin, a city councillor and a three-time senator.

'Father went to France before the war. He fought in its defence. During the war, he was a prisoner in the German camp in Schneidemühl, or modern-day Piła. My mum, a Ukrainian, was a labourer there. That's how they met', says Regina Nalaskowska. 'After the war, the Russkies would come to our house looking for her. They wanted to arrest her and take her back to the Soviet Union. We had to keep mum hidden in Poland, because despite being married to my father, she was here illegally. She was only granted citizenship in 1956. Father often regretted not going back to France. He never accepted that Poland was communist. He died young, I think grief killed him. Mum had to find work to support her three children. She became a cleaner. We also had a cow, a pig and hens, so we were somehow able to make ends meet. After primary school, I went to vocational school in Białogard, so I could start earning money quickly. Then I got a job at Unitra-Unitech', Nalaskowska says. In 1980, she was on the Voivodeship National Council in Koszalin, and joined Solidarity that same year. She moved to the United States in the mid-80s, but returned to Białogard in 2016.

in the Shadow of a Soviet Base

Białogard. Known in German as Belgard before the war. More than ten thousand people were resettled here after the Second World War, primarily from the Second Republic areas absorbed by the Soviet Union. This is also where the communist government relocated former soldiers of the Home Army and other anti-communist formations, as well as former landowner families viewed as 'class enemies'. Białogard was the birthplace of such people as Anna Maria Komorowska of the Korczak coat of arms, mother to a Belgian queen. The town was surrounded by Soviet training grounds and military installations that were home to more than twenty thousand soldiers. Białogard used to be jokingly called Bethlehem, as every road leading to the town, be it from the east, west, south or north, was adorned by a star… the Soviet star.

The Russians had pillaged most of the town's valuable assets after its capture, but it was not long until various factories were reopened, including mills and tanneries. One of the first newly-established plants was the Electronic Hardware Factory, later renamed Unitra-Unitech. The young people of Białogard grew up in the shadow of Soviet bases.

They were similar to their peers from other regions of Poland, the difference being that they were a little more aware of the danger posed by the Soviets.

'As a young boy, I treated them as friends', Kuziko says.

'When they marched, stomping their boots under our windows, mum would move deeper into the flat. She couldn't stand looking at them. It was the trauma she had suffered in that inhuman land', says Anna Sztark.

'Several, maybe a few dozen people actually liked the fact that they were stationed in Białogard. They cut various deals with them. The bakers and gardeners, for example. But I also know that the Soviets would take the best cuts of meat from the local butcher for themselves. My friends from the power station also said they didn't always pay their bills. That's the kind of friends they were', says Eugeniusz Zieliński.

'The Russkies thought they owned our town. If they wanted something, the local authorities couldn't object', says Regina Nalaskowska, who was known at the Unitra-Unitech plant for being rude, that is, for actually looking after her fellow workers. One of her managers once told her, 'Then go become a voivodeship councillor. Maybe then you'll be able to help the people here'. So she did.

'The breakthrough moment for me was when Karol Wojtyła became pope', says Anna Sztark. 'I saw that as the Polish people being rewarded for the years of slavery and denigration. But I didn't think Poland would become free because of that'.

'When John Paul I died, my 20-year-older friend told me, "The next pope will be a Pole", to which I said, "What are you talking about?"', says Eugeniusz Zieliński. 'But when it actually happened, I thought that would really strengthen the Catholic faith of the people. But I never hoped for anything special to happen in the country'.

Free Trade Unions?

When the strikes broke out on the Coast and in Pomerania in August 1980, Marian Stoppa, an engineer, left the Unitra-Unitech plant to go to Gdańsk and learn more about the situation. What he brought back was information on the status of the factories in Tricity, particularly the Gdańsk Shipyard, as well as instructions on how to form free trade unions. Thanks to the efforts of around a dozen people, more than 90% of Unitech workers had joined Solidarity by mid-September. That same month saw the establishment of the Inter-company Solidarity Founding Committee, which included factories from Białogard and the gminas of Karlino and Tychowo.

In 1980, Anna Sztark worked at the human resources department of the Białogard Gmina Cooperative 'Samopomoc Chłopska' (Peasants' Self-help). 'At first nearly everyone joined Solidarity', she reminisces. 'But when the time came to fight for free Saturdays, there

were no volunteers. Especially since management was pressuring everyone to leave the union. And so, between 1980 and 1981, Solidarity became problematic for many at the cooperative'.

'Unitech was very solidary in that regard', says Leszek Kuziko. 'I don't remember anyone leaving the union. We were the factory everyone in town looked up to. Almost 100% of all workers joined Solidarity. Even those who were also PZPR members.

'There was so much work that we had to do everything all at once. The plant had so many issues that the best thing to do would have been to make the day longer', says Regina Nalaskowska. 'The people wanted the government to stop the lies. But the main issue was the supply shortages, because the lack of essential products was insulting. And of course pay raises, more kindergartens, shorter queues to the doctor. Those were the biggest pain points. And people really hoped things would change in that regard'.

'The MKZ [Editor's note: Inter-company Founding Committee] in Białogard, where I worked as a secretary, was visited by a lot of people who came with various problems. That's when it became obvious just how many issues were plaguing our community', says Anna Sztark.

Martial Law, or What is There to Be Afraid?

'I knew that a confrontation with the communists was bound to happen sooner or later. They wouldn't just step down of their own volition', says Leszek Kuziko. On 14 December, when the workers of Unitra-Unitech came to the plant, the managers informed them about martial law being declared. The morning was spent working, however, and it was only after Zdzisław Bełtkiewicz, the head of the NSZZ 'Solidarity' Company Commission, held a meeting with team representatives that a sit-in was called at noon. Unitra-Unitech was the only company in Białogard that went on strike.

'I was scared stiff. There were Soviet barracks a few hundred metres from the plant. I was on the Company Commission, so I was also responsible for the people', says Zdzisław Zieliński. 'Some 300 people declared they'd join the strike, which was the vast majority of the morning shift. We decided to exempt the women from the strike. Some 180 people in total remained'.

The managers shut the company down and did not let the next shift in. The commissars and prosecutors arrived between two and three o'clock. Makary Kalas opened his shirt ostentatiously and shouted, 'Now shoot me!' The managing director read out the rules of martial law. According to one of the articles, violations could incur the death penalty. The commissars and directors encouraged the workers

to call off the strike, but the Strike Committee decided that it would continue until martial law was abolished. One of the workers was tasked with contacting the parish priest of the church of the Nativity of Mary and asking him to celebrate a Mass at the company. In the evening, Father Czesław Berka sent three priests, who granted the strikers absolution.

'I was tasked with getting supplies', Regina Nalaskowska recalls. 'Mrs Sadowska, who worked at the cafeteria, brought us food. Ryszard Kamiński impressed me a lot. He was a PZPR member, I think he was the second secretary at our plant. He always said that the system was good, only the people were evil. During the strike, he threw away his PZPR card and said, "You can eat it". He then lost his management job'.

'Around three o'clock, we got information that the army, ZOMO and ORMO were coming', Zdzisław Zieliński recalls. 'They entered the factory after three in the morning. They wrecked the ground floor. We were on the first floor. Around half past three in the morning, we decided to call off the strike. Their commander, colonel of the Polish People's Army, Henryk Hinc, gave us his word that they would let us go home in peace. But his word was as worthless as the army and its commander'.

Everyone was convoyed off to a nearby school for interrogation by ZOMO and the army. Four union members were arrested: the head of the Company Commission, Zdzisław Bełtkiewicz, Makary Kalas, Henryk Podsiadło and Paweł Szumski. They were all sentenced to years in prison several weeks later. Nearly twenty strikers were handed fines by the magistrate court, and many workers were disciplinarily dismissed. Among them was Leszek Kuziko.

'When I came back from the strike all distraught, my father said, "Son, don't worry, we'll manage". My wife was also very supportive. But it took me a long time to find work. I later became a warehouse worker at the Gmina Cooperative.

The Underground

On the evening of 15 December, a Mass for the Homeland was celebrated at the church of the Nativity of Mary. Four veterans of the Unitech strikes stood watch at the altar, wearing white and red armbands with Solidarity written on them. These were Zdzisław and Eugeniusz Zieliński, Czesław Kowgier and Jerzy Wawrzyniak. After a few days, a group consisting of several dozen people commenced its underground activities. The group was informally led by Marian Stoppa, who was in Sweden when martial law was declared. He took the first, almost empty ferry back to Poland and came back to Białogard. On the very first day of martial law, local Solidarity members and activists began painting

anti-communist slogans on walls. Several hundred anti-regime flyers were also printed and distributed. When Marian Stoppa arrived, they also began printing their own News Bulletin.

From the very beginning of the martial law period, the informal group consisted of such people as Anna Sztark and her sister Krystyna, Regina Nalaskowska and her husband, Leszek Kuziko and his wife, the Kamiński family, Andrzej Szałek, Paweł Szumski, Jan Owczarczyk, Zdzisław Zieliński, Eugeniusz Zieliński and his wife, the musician Tadeusz Korobowicz, Jan Grabowski, as well as the young Jacek Figiel and more than a dozen others. Regina Nalaskowska and Marian Stoppa left Poland after enduring a great deal of harassment (Stoppa ended up admitting his involvement in the underground to the Security Service).

'The underground did not have a formal organisation', says Leszek Kuziko. 'Stoppa wrote articles for the News Bulletin. Anna Sztark typed them up. I think it was Regina Nalaskowska who copied them using the copy machine. Zdzisław and Eugeniusz Zieliński did the distribution, among other things. We distributed the newsletter in nearly every factory, in the streets, threw it off the roofs of blocks of flats. Regina Nalaskowska was in contact with Gabriela Cwojdzińska from the Koszalin Committee for Assisting the Imprisoned and Their Families, and with Anna Bogucka-Skowrońska, a lawyer from Słupsk. Thanks to her, we also had great contacts in Warsaw'.

Monthly Masses for the Homeland also began to be celebrated at the church of the Nativity of Mary. The Białogard church and its shepherds, particularly the now-departed parish priest Czesław Berka, as well as Fathers Piotr Pruszkowski and Zdzisław Kroplewski, were active contributors to the local underground all the way until 1989. In 1982, Anna Sztark began reading the sermons of Father Popiełuszko at the Warsaw church of St Stanislaus Kostka. She continued to read them even after the priest's assassination. This did not go unnoticed by the Security Service. The first arrests were made in the early days of 1982. Regina Nalaskowska, Krzysztof Szymkowicz and Marian Stoppa were apprehended. The first two were handed sentences, but Stoppa was acquitted.

'I stayed tough – I knew that freedom wasn't free', says Regina Nalaskowska. 'But one day, I broke into tears in the prison yard. Ewa Kubasiewicz from Gdańsk asked me, "Why are you crying, girl?" And I said, "I have two little children at home". "So what? I got ten years. But don't worry, we'll get out soon enough". I was temporarily released in late October or early November 1983. My friends from the underground said I shouldn't go to back to prison. But I did, because I was afraid that they wouldn't let any other girl out. But things changed after some time. My daughter was losing her eyesight. Turned out it was the stress. My son was twelve. When I came back, he grabbed onto me, crying frantically and asking me not to go back to prison… I thought my heart would break'.

In April 1983, the garrison court granted Regina Nalaskowska prison leave. She was taken to hospital, and never went back to prison. Nalaskowska was jobless, however, and was later often summoned for interrogation. The Nalaskowskis decided to leave Poland after their 14-year-old daughter was assaulted, as they had every reason to believe that the Security Service was responsible.

Everyday Life as an Oppositionist

For his underground activism, Leszek Kuziko was forcibly drafted and assigned to a penal military unit in December 1982. In the spring of 1983, shortly before he was supposed to be discharged, he was arrested by the Security Service and taken to the Koszalin prosecutor's office. He was accused of printing and distributing flyers.

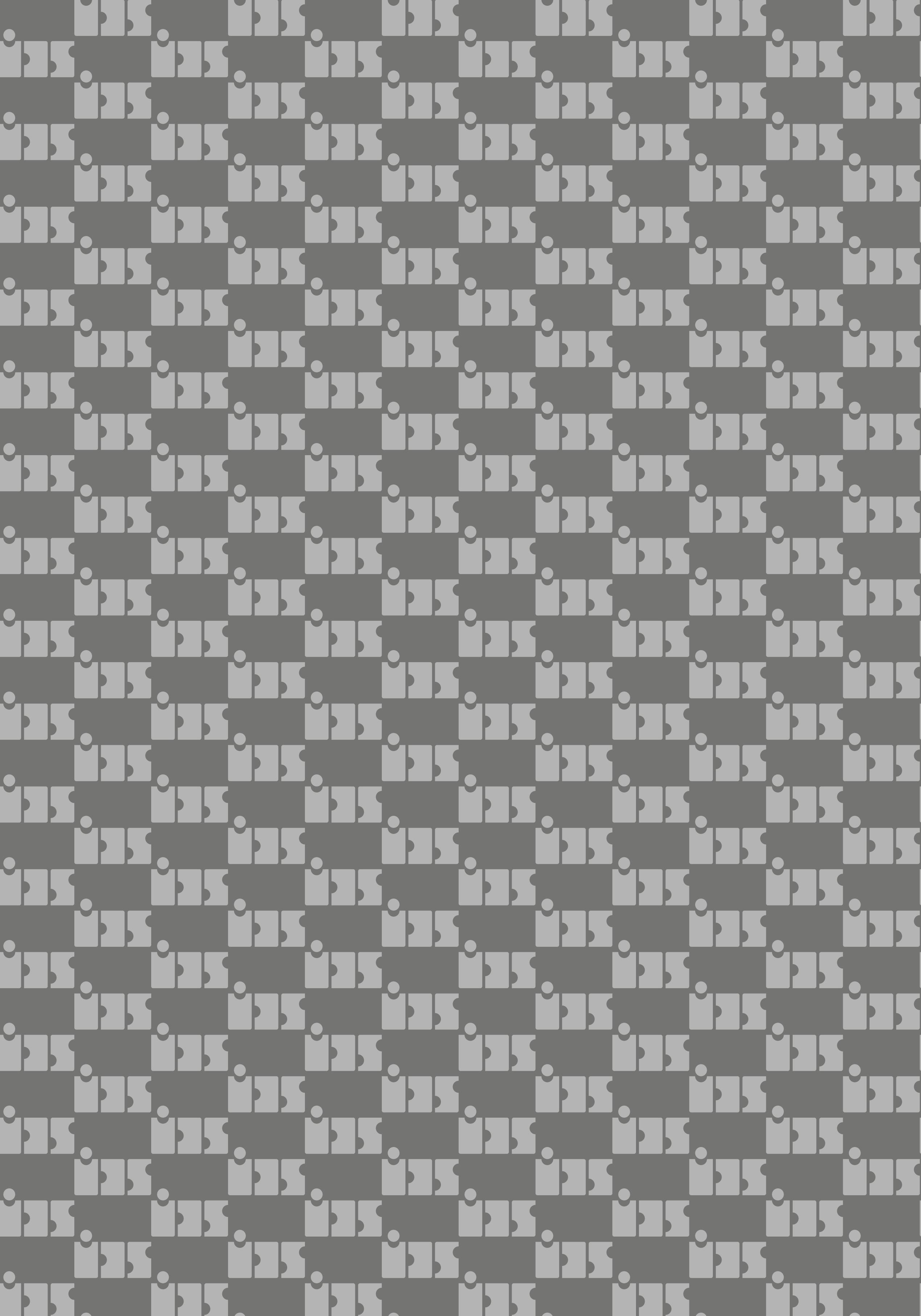
'I now know from IPN records that it was my neighbour who denounced me', Kuziko says. 'I think they caught him red-handed while stealing something insignificant. They told him they'd let it slide if he found some dirt on me. I spent two weeks locked up in Koszalin. I followed the underground manual and refused to confess. Then I spent another three months in jail in Szczecinek, and after that, my case went to trial. My attorney was Piotr Andrzejewski from Warsaw. I was sure I'd get three years, but Andrzejewski successfully defended me. The judge handed the case back to the prosecutor's office, and it was dismissed'.

Anna Sztark was arrested in 1985. She was kept in prison from December 1985 to March 1986. 'They arrested me for organising an illegal gathering, a prayer meeting at a cross. They also arrested my sister Krystyna and some of our friends. They also accused me of assaulting an officer. We didn't do anything spectacular in Białogard, but we persevered and did our own thing. In the first days of martial law, the underground numbered dozens of active members. Maybe twenty lasted all the way to 1989.

After 1989, people were given freedom of choice. An independent country'. 'Free Poland? I didn't seem real', says Anna Sztark. 'I had a tiny suitcase which I called dziadóweczka (little tote bag). Inside, I kept essential things I'd need if they arrested me. I only opened in after 1990'.

About the Author

Mirosław Mateusz Wyrwich – political scientist, journalist and writer. Graduate of the Faculty of Journalism and Political Science of the University of Warsaw. Member of NSZZ 'Solidarity' since 1980. In 1981, he worked as a journalist, contributing to the union news section of *Tygodnik Solidarność*. Deputy head of the Solidarity Company Commission of *Tygodnik Solidarność*. In the 80s, he was a prolific commentator and contributor to underground publications, including as an editor and coordinator of local branches of *Tygodnik Wojenny*. He co-founded, edited and wrote for the underground bi-weekly *Samorządna Rzeczpospolita*, and coordinated its local branches from 1985 to 1989. In 1989, he sat at the Round Table as part of the Territorial Government sub-team. From 1989 to 1993, he was deputy director at the Council of Ministers Office (Office of the General Electoral Commissioner). In 1990, Wyrwich returned to writing, publishing reports in such magazines as *Spotkania*, *Nowa Gazeta*, *Nowe Państwo*, *Życie*, *Niedziela*, *W Drodze* and *Przewodnik Katolicki*. He is an author of screenplays and television reports on social issues and history for TV PULS and TVP PR I, and has written audio dramas for the Polish Radio Theatre. Most importantly, however, he is an author of books on contemporary Polish history, particularly the Stalinism period and the 1980s. Wyrwich is also a political commentator who has made appearances in such media outlets as Polskie Radio 24, TVP INFO and TV REPUBLIKA. He is a member of the Association of Polish Journalists, Polish Writers Association and the Free Speech Association. He has been awarded a Distinguished Cultural Activist badge (1999), a silver Cross of Merit (2007) and a Knight's Cross of the Order of Polonia Restituta (2011, refused to accept). In 2018, Wyrwich was also awarded a Cross of Freedom and Solidarity.



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Distributors of History is a gripping tale of people who fought for Polish independence in the 1980s. The biography of any of its characters could serve as a screenplay. Their stories draw parallels to the lives of the anti-German and anti-Soviet resistance fighters of World War II and the insurgents of the partition era. Some of the biographies contain echoes of the struggles of our ancestors, such as Józef Piłsudski's decades-long war waged with the use of underground press. But *Distributors of History* also paints a picture of the collapse of communism in Poland as seen from the perspective of individual people. The picture is full of personal trauma, internments, imprisonments, beatings and injuries, but also various absurdities of the communist regime, such as when an underground activist was arrested together with his dog.

Mateusz Wyrwich

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