Dear friend,

You asked me what I thought about General Jaruzelski’s offer of emigration. This act of kindness applies only to internees; those who have already been sentenced, those who are currently in jail, and ordinary citizens who didn’t happen to be interned cannot apply for an exit visa.

The answer to your question is really quite simple: I do not plan to emigrate. But the problem of emigration itself is neither simple nor new nor irrelevant to the present situation. As long ago as you can remember, Polish attitudes toward emigration have been ambivalent, combining envy with lack of trust, a feeling of inferiority with megalomania. You can probably remember from your childhood those biting remarks about General Anders,1 who wanted to return to Poland “riding on a white horse”; the vicious comments about the writers who had “chosen freedom” [decided to stay in the West]; the ironic jokes about the ministers in the London government-in-exile, who had settled down nicely on British soil while grotesquely preserving the institutions of their prewar state and issuing arrogant advice to their compatriots back home.

Let’s honestly admit this much: by encouraging such opinions, the official propaganda machine scored a great success. In our youth, in the 1950s and 1960s, the community of émigrés did not have a good reputation. They were considered something alien. There existed a stereotype of the émigré as someone who turned his back on his country, who placed himself outside his nation, who did not share its good and bad times, who hopelessly yearned for a return to old times and privileges for himself—the émigré who chose easy earnings, security, and prosperity and who, for American money, told lies about Poland on Radio Free Europe.

The dominant view was that in order to speak about the most important Polish issues one had to be here, on the banks of the Vistula, where life is difficult and uncomfortable—not on the Seine or the Thames, where life is comfortable and predictable.

Few people read émigré publications then, and almost no one sought inspiration for political action in them. The “little stabilization” of the sixties was in splendid bloom. People wanted to enjoy some peace after the years of Stalinist terror. And following the years of poverty after the war, they were settling down and looking for satisfaction in professional and family life. This state of affairs was unacceptable to the émigrés’ way of thinking. For the émigrés, the “little stabilization” was not enough. They thought only of independence and democracy. Thus, whatever real substance the émigrés’ political message may have had—and I do not want to idealize it—people in Poland would accept no programs involving any major changes in their lives; the émigrés could at most upset their spiritual stability, and give them a guilty conscience for failing to try to broaden their national and human rights. The Poles who were scattered all over the world were viewed as rich relatives from abroad and not as a component of Poland’s twentieth-century history. How incredible! To think that such opinions were possible in a country whose culture is irrevocably linked to émigrés; a country that for so many years relied for its spiritual existence on its émigré community—on the writings of the romantics, the music of Chopin, the political activities of the nineteenth-century Great Emigration; a country whose people should by rights understand the reasons

This letter has been signed with one of Adam Michnik’s pen names—Andrzej Zagozda.

for and the significance of emigration better than anyone else! While the Great Emigration was shown respect and taught in schools, its praise recited at anniversary celebrations, the contemporary emigration was ignored and slighted.

This continued only until a certain moment. As the official propaganda became increasingly annoying, as the censors’ net caught disloyal allusions in newspapers and books with increasing frequency, and as the will to protest and defend oneself grew, the people turned more often and more gladly to the émigré heritage. Customs officials confiscated copies of the Paris Kultura from travelers’ suitcases; police squads, when they searched apartments, took away books by the émigré writers Miłosz and Gombrowicz, Herling-Grudziński and Mieroszewski, Wierzyński and Hlasko. Masses of people listened to Radio Free Europe, searching not only for information about the parts of the world not covered by the Polish media but also for honest news about their own country—about the follies of censorship and the protests of the intellectuals. The rebellious intelligentsia sought to communicate with Polish society via London and Paris—and they succeeded. Thus, the émigrés, too, found a language they could share with their countrymen; they, too, began to communicate with Poland, again becoming useful, again becoming a part of their nation. This was not—as you will remember—a process without its costs.

It was risky to cooperate with the émigrés, and this was demonstrated by the harsh sentences handed down at a series of trials. But the reconstructed bridge was functioning again. Emigré publications carried more and more material from Poland, and this material became increasingly interesting. The “little stabilization” was over; the “great chaos” of 1968 came.

In First Secretary Władysław Gomułka’s famous speech on March 19, 1968, in which he attacked “enemies and troublemakers,” he abundantly cited Juliusz Mieroszewski’s writings in the Paris Kultura.

2. Kultura, the most influential émigré publication, is a political and literary monthly. Founded in 1949 and Paris-based, it is published by Jerzy Giedroyć’s “Institut Littéraire” together with a historical quarterly Zeszyty Historyczne. Close to four hundred books in Polish have been published by Institut Littéraire, with authors such as Arthur Koestler, Alexander Weissberg, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, Czesław Miłosz, Włodzimierz Gombrowicz, and Boris Pasternak.

searching in them for the causes of the Polish political problems. The majority of students (you were an exception) were unfamiliar with these articles, but Gomułka, or his speechwriter, showed a keen intuition. For it is easy to see in retrospect that it was indeed Mieroszewski who managed to build an intellectual bridge between the impractical maximalism of the émigrés and the excessively practical pessimism of people in Poland. He created a vision for evolutionary change in the system, a vision which later informed the practices of the Polish democratic opposition.

Gomułka also noticed something that was not yet apparent to many people: the effects of the emigration were being felt in Poland. Books were being smuggled back across the Polish border in great quantities, passed from person to person, hidden from the watchful eye of the police. Those who emigrated sent back information about the world and truth about our nation’s history, and they sent back masterpieces of contemporary literature, and uncensored reflections on hope and hopelessness in Polish life. And the emigration itself was being enriched by new people and was undergoing an internal transformation. Émigrés were no longer the anonymous contemporaries of our parents and grandparents: they were your friends and mine.

One consequence of the 1968 March events was a reassessment by the Polish intelligentsia of the question of emigration. The state authorities allowed emigration. So the professor who was fired from his university and the student who was expelled were forced to ask themselves: now what?

The eternal Polish question: here or there, real emigration or internal emigration, compromise and grass-roots work or a firm stand and silence, work within the official structures or construction of independent ones? I’m sure that you can remember the scores of discussions on this subject, how the answers varied, how variously the reasons for and against were expressed. But isn’t it now clear that everyone contributed to the August 1980 breakthrough: those who formed independent organizations—who aided the persecuted, who created the free labor unions, who founded independent publishing houses; those in the official structures who spoke with less candor, but whose voices were more audible, and thereby created the valuable intermediate zone be-
between the illegal and the official; and, finally, those who emigrated and wrote wise books (Leszek Kolakowski, Maria Hrizowicz, etc.), edited Anekts—a superb political quarterly—organized material help for people in Poland, and informed the world about what was going on in Poland?

All this, however, is clear only today. In 1968 the conflicts were delineated more sharply, and the choices were usually seen as mutually exclusive. I am sure that you can remember the heated arguments and the accusations, the bitterness of friends and the satisfaction of adversaries. You can also remember—for how can we forget—our fury at those who chose to emigrate . . .

Today, we regret our anger but not our choices. We stayed in Poland then, even though it was neither an easy nor a safe decision. The security agents reminded us of it often enough with their unrestrained persecution. Let me repeat: everyone was right then. But if you can remember the fundamental issue of our dispute, it was how best to resist the policies of the communist authorities, who had divided us into “Jews” and “Aryans,” and then offered the “Jews” the opportunity to “choose a mother country for themselves.” The anger was directed at Gomulka, minister of internal affairs Moczar, and their colleagues, who introduced racist discrimination into our country, but part of that anger was then redirected at our friends who had given in passively to this discrimination.

Why did they leave? For many reasons: because of wounded national pride and trampled personal dignity, to make a living and to have peace and quiet, stability and security, to continue their intellectual work in conditions of freedom, and also to serve the Polish cause. Finally, because they wanted to. And a human being should have the right to do what he wants. Today, no thinking person can say that these people, by leaving, placed themselves outside the nation.

But one must also take into consideration the reactions of unthinking people. After all, to them—and also to the young, the uninformed, the deceived—all this was not so obvious. They saw emigration as running away. For the young and the unwise saw that not everyone was leaving. The activities and intentions of those who left were rendered credible by those who stayed—the scholars, the writers, the student activists. Being here, in Warsaw, Cracow, or Gdansk, taking your stand, you lent credibility and meaning to the actions of those who were in New York, Paris, London, and Stockholm; you testified to the honesty of their actions and initiatives, of their books and declarations. In other words, by refusing to emigrate, you gave meaning to those who chose to emigrate. When the question “Did today’s emigrants’ attachment to Poland end when they started being mistreated?” was asked publicly, you—by being there and acting as you did—discredited such blabber. Such questions were not asked only by people who had been trained by agents. That is why these arguments should not be ignored. The young and the unwise must be reminded of the value of emigration, but we must also take into account the emotions of frustration and aggression aroused by emigration. In captive and atomized societies, such emotions often have great popular appeal. They are a product of frustrations built up over the years. An unsuccessful life, a failed career, an overdose of moral compromise—all give rise to frustration. This can bear fruit in the form of aggression toward others—those who have done well, those who have found their place in the sun, those who do not share in our misery and are free of our humiliations. When the authorities know how to manipulate these emotions, you can observe the phenomenon of redirected aggression: the odium of anger descends not on those who are in power but on the oppositionists, and especially those in exile.

These are not new or optimistic or heartening observations but—you will agree with me—they do describe realistically the mechanisms of human anger in this best of all possible worlds.

All this is worth thinking about today when—again thanks to the good graces of the communist powers—that-be—you are confronted with the question of emigration.

This problem has been intensely discussed by the internees and one can hardly be surprised by that. At one time, an execution squad or a long jail term for espionage awaited people like us. Today, we are told that we have a choice: either leave or stay in jail indefinitely.

So you have a choice: jail or exile. Jaruzelski is a humane master. But why, in a country from which it is normally not easy to travel abroad, do the authorities give this option to people they regard as their enemies?

The government’s calculation, it appears, is simple. Emigration is
supposed to divide Solidarity from within and make the union repulsive to the public; it is supposed to prove the moral baseness of the people who once loudly demanded, “let Poland be Poland,” and who, after a few months in jail, exchange Poland for Canada. It will be easy to contrast these people with the “healthy base” who are to create the new state-sponsored labor union that will be free of “politickers” from “the Solidarity extreme.”

The government wants to follow the example of the Soviet Union, which, in order to undermine the democratic movement, has, in the last ten years, given some dissidents the opportunity to emigrate. This is the government’s reasoning: a worker activist or an opposition intellectual emigrates; then after enjoying the limelight for a short period, he turns into a troublesome acquaintance, a burdensome regular in the waiting rooms of various institutions which want only to get rid of him. He is no longer an authority at home, hence no one listens to him, and he loses his importance in the West.

You are familiar with the West, so you know that such reasoning is not absurd. Émigrés quarrel among themselves, they are condemned to dependence on one another; they are forgotten by the rest of the world.

So often, the migration from jail into exile is a road from hell to nothingness.

But this is not what I wanted to talk about right now. In political terms, each decision to emigrate is a gift to Jaruzelski by which we relinquish our authority, provide him with an excellent argument against Solidarity, and facilitate the pacification of society.

Andrzej Z. wrote in a letter to his fellow internees, “...to society we are a symbol of resistance. Not because we are so magnificent but because, by depriving us of freedom, the powers-that-be have cast us in this role in their play entitled The State of War, and we are acting in it regardless of our will.” So—let me add—noblesse oblige. “We are given,” wrote Andrzej Z., “the option of emigrating not because every citizen of our country has that right but because (rightly or wrongly) we are considered persons who are trusted by society, and the authorities want to prove us unworthy of this trust. It is one thing to have free choice of the country of one’s residence and another to win one’s freedom by helping the bandit who has deprived us of that freedom and by harming those who will not be offered this transaction.”

You do understand, I hope, why I share Andrzej Z.'s point of view. The emigration offer is a challenge to the Solidarity movement, a challenge that is both political and moral. The interned Solidarity activists who choose exile are committing an act that is both a capitulation and a desertion.

I have put it in strong terms, I know. I can just hear you say that it is not in my character, that I’m abandoning my principle of tolerance, that the decision to emigrate is a very personal one. All this is true. But the decision to be active in Solidarity, to seek society’s trust, has also been personal, and it has affected others as well. It is important to keep in mind the existence of those other people. Of many different people: those sentenced for the December strikes that were organized in your defense, those imprisoned for posting notices in your defense, those pursued by the police for organizing actions in your defense. It is worth stopping to think about all these people and their reaction to the news—which will reach them in their hiding places and prison cells—that you are leaving Poland.

And I am not talking about the political dimension of this situation—the fate of the Solidarity movement. Perhaps you no longer want to be involved in it? Perhaps you want to stop hitting your head against the wall and trying to accomplish the impossible? I have in mind ordinary human decency and elementary loyalty. Not only toward those who are fighting but also toward those who have placed their trust in you, and in whom you have lit the flame of selflessness, truth, and dignity in public life: those who bring food for you while you are interned, who pray for you in churches, think of you with faith, hope, and love, and for whom you are—as was all of Solidarity—a symbol of a better Poland, the Poland of tomorrow.

When you remember them, you will easily understand that politics here is inseparably linked with morality and that a political choice is inseparably linked with a moral choice. You must remember this.

Indeed, you do not believe in a quick victory, in the imminent reconstruction of pre-December Solidarity. You know that an arduous journey is ahead of you, that it is marked with the suffering of defeat
and the bitter taste of human frailty. But then you did not idealize pre-December Solidarity. You can remember all too well your own concern with the turn events took—with the advancement of the loudmouths and the trimmers, with the intoxication and daze brought on by sudden promotions, with the creation of a court and of court intrigues. You watched it from close by, so you must have seen the symptoms of a revolution betrayed and the seeds of degeneration sowed. But in those months, which you would exchange for no others in your life, and for which you have always been prepared to pay with years in jail, you also saw people getting up from their knees, people yearning for free and true words, people taking in those words as if they were the communion wafer, people with radiant faces and trusting eyes—and you know that no one will be able to crush all this with tanks. And you know that you are not going to see faces like these on a Parisian boulevard.

I hope that I have expressed my views clearly. From what I have written it should be clear that I have no emigration phobia. It was not phobia that dictated these remarks. And it was not patriotic blindness. And it is not courage that makes me choose prison instead of banishment. If anything, I am making this choice out of fear. Out of the fear that by saving my neck I may lose my honor.

March 1982

// The Polish War:
A Letter from
Białołęka
1982

// This is an undeclared war. On that Saturday night in December [1981], agents of the Security Service banged on our doors; then—after breaking them open with crowbars, beating us severely, and attacking us with tear gas—they drove us away to prisons and called us internees. We were the first prisoners of war in this war which the communist establishment has declared on its own people. This nighttime action was the first victorious battle for General Jaruzelski, who implemented in a most peculiar way the resolution of the Ninth Congress of the Polish United Workers’ party [PUWP] calling for a separation of powers: he became at the same time the minister of national defense, the prime minister, and the first secretary of the party. And now he is the chief of the temporary military government, WRONa [the C.R.O.W.]. He will forever be associated by Poles with that stupid and ugly bird—that caricature of the eagle that symbolizes the Polish state.

The war was declared on the Poles without a moment’s notice. In the future, the historian will appreciate the precision of the strike, the excellent timing, the efficiency of the action. The historian will appreciate the consistency with which the enemy’s resistance was overcome, and the poet will certainly sing the praises of the brilliant military victories that took place in the streets of Gdańsk and in the yards of Warsaw factories—in steelworks, mines, and shipyards. By capturing with an outflanking movement the Polish radio and television building,
announces — quoting the vice premier of the Polish People's Republic —
that the condition of the internees is satisfactory, I bitterly remember
the fate of the German Social Democrats forty-five years ago and the
assurances of various statesmen that all was OK in Germany — that the
enemies of the rule of order were being kept in humanitarian conditions.
The Polish government's vice premier, who represents himself as an
expert on his imprisoned political opponents, is a grotesque and pitiful
figure, and his German interlocutor is either cynical or naïve.

A few words about the internees. We have been jailed without the
public prosecutor's warrant, and every one of us can win his freedom
by signing a loyalty declaration and agreeing to become a police in-
former. A broken man, our guards reason, will be incapable of defiance.

We — workers, farmers, intellectuals — are hostages. Our fate is to
be a warning to others, our condition a showcase for the world outside
Poland, we ourselves goods for barter. Those who have been sentenced
for striking are worse off. Everyone (ourselves included) has been
placed in a new situation by the Polish-Jaruzelskian war (to use the
term coined in the streets of Warsaw). It is difficult to find a universal
formula. Everyone has to answer in his own conscience the question of
how to counter the evil, how to defend dignity, how to behave in
this strange war that is a new embodiment of the age-old struggle of
truth and lies, of liberty and coercion, of dignity and degradation. Let's
repeat after the philosopher: in this struggle there are no final victories,
but neither are there — and here is a slight reason for optimism — any
final defeats.

The faith that there are no final defeats has led me to write these
remarks. This is my contribution to the war. It may be some time before
I can again express my opinions. And so I wish my good friends,
especially those who are being pursued and who are fighting, much
strength to allow them to cross the empty darkness that stretches be-
tween despair and hope. And much patience to allow them to learn the
difficult art of forgiveness.

February 1982

// On Resistance:
A Letter from
Białolecka
1982

My dear friend,

You have asked me how things look from this vantage point — from
Białolecka prison — how I assess the effectiveness of resistance, what my
projections are.

Things look different from here; it is easier to avoid getting lost
in the details, to see the framework of the situation. But knowledge is
limited. The absence of detail deprives you of the flavor of everyday
life. After five months of isolation, you lose your feeling for the melody
of the streets of Warsaw and the moods of its people, whom you have
known for so many years. So you must make allowance for this.

You ask me whether I believe that it is sensible to maintain a
political underground. Before I answer this question, let me ask you a
question: Do you believe that Solidarity was an event of historic signifi-
cance, or merely an unimportant episode in Poland’s history? Was it a
coincidence of events, a unique deformation of the historic process, or
the natural, institutionally permanent embodiment of the aspirations of
the Polish people? If it was a mere episode, then we can expect the
ruling communists to wipe out its traces — and not only off the walls of
our cities. But if it was an authentic movement of national rebirth, then
no one will manage to replace it with artificial creations, such as the
Committees of National Rebirth, that are being founded throughout the
country on the orders of the army commissars. If it was authentic, then
the communists’ scheme is pathetically unrealistic, and even the most
energetic activity on the part of WRONa’s people—those armed with
guns as well as those armed with bugging devices—will fail to exterminate Solidarity.

What Are They Fighting For? Where Are They Going?

The plans of the government are clear-cut. Their aim is to force
the Polish population into the straitjacket of totalitarian dictatorship.
Again, we are to be deprived of our rights—as individuals, as a society,
as a nation. For what else happened on the night of December 12/13?
“Factories were taken by force. Workers’ organizations were dissolved
and decimated with the help of the police. The working class was
transformed into an amorphous, apathetic mass devoid of political
consciousness. From then on, the government had to deal with individuals
and not with organizations. Napoleon was right: it suffices to be
stronger at one particular moment.” This is not my assessment of the
political situation that followed December 13. These are the words used
by Bertold Brecht to describe Hitler’s takeover of Germany. And if
WRONa achieves its goals, this is how future historians will write about
Poland in the period after December 13, 1981. I did not call WRONa’s
goals a program, for those gentlemen have no political program to speak
of. Their actions, which they call the “Polish raison d’état,” are motivated
by panic and fear; their ideology, which they call “national
accords,” consists of eradicating opposition of all kinds; their methods,
which they call the “exigencies of martial law,” are brutal terror; their
dress is the army uniform, which they have stripped of the last remnants
of people’s respect. They are crude but ineffective, ruthless but ridiculous; they have even managed to make the traditional four-cornered
army cap into the Soviet lackey’s clown hat.

They have no program; they have no principles; they have no respect; they have only guns and tanks. How much longer will they
hold on to them? When will the epidemic of democracy penetrate into
the minds of the men in green uniforms? Regardless of what may be
written in their newspapers, they know that they did not win this war
but only a single battle, in which an army of a few thousand men battled
against defenseless workers. But they lost something that every govern-
ment wants most; they lost their credibility and all hope of credibility.
No one believes them now, and no one will believe them in the future.
The last hope for communism to take root in Polish society lies buried
with the bodies of Wujek miners.

They have not managed to split Solidarity, and I doubt whether they
can hope to do so in the future. Society’s resistance to WRONa is
not the work of a handful of uncompromising extremists but the
expression of society’s needs. Since these needs are not fulfilled by
official institutions, people go elsewhere. It is not surprising that under-
ground Solidarity exists; it would be astonishing if it did not exist.

We are in a completely new situation, different from anything we
have known in the past. Never before has the party apparatus been
subordinated to the army, never has the army in a communist state
exercised direct power over the population. It is difficult to foresee the
consequences of this state of affairs; the competition within the power
elite between civilians and soldiers may be full of surprises.

Looking Back

Underground organizations have never operated effectively in com-
munist states. Communists have succeeded at little else than breaking
up resistance, especially conspiratorial resistance. They have mastered
this skill perfectly. This can be seen in the differences between the
1939–41 underground in the General Gouvernement and the under-
ground in the same period under Soviet occupation in the Lvov province;
the underground thrived alongside the Gestapo and disappeared under
the jurisdiction of the NKVD. Why? It would seem that the Nazis
simply wanted to have peace and quiet in the country, under their
occupation, so they made sure that people observed their regulations
and remained calm. They could not be bothered to create political
organizations for the conquered people, whom they wanted to transform
into a race of slaves. They made this perfectly clear to the Poles. They
promised nothing; their execution squads were accompanied neither by
dreams of a better tomorrow nor by servile declarations from Hitler’s
Polish fans.

The Soviet conquistadores were different. They systematically de-
destroyed all social ties, political and cultural organizations, sports associations, and professional guilds, and abrogated civil rights and confiscated private property. They made people not merely their subjects but turned them into their property. In contrast to the Nazis, the Soviets imposed their own organizational structures on the Poles; they allowed the poor to plunder the property of the wealthy, they publicized declarations of servility, and they concealed executions and banishments. Imitating the spirit of the Crusades, they came to spread the New Faith. They left the door open by allowing everyone—in principle—to choose to convert to the religion of the Progressive System (people who proudly state that Poland never had its Quisling should be reminded of the role of Wanda Wasilewska). The Poles have sufficient grounds for national pride that they do not need to lie about their past.

In his observations about the Soviet occupation, Józef Mackiewicz, a controversial author and not exactly my favorite one, wrote that while the Nazi occupation made heroes out of us, the Soviet occupation broke our moral backbone. It was possible because of the deadly mixture of terror and social promise, because of the revolutionary demogoguey that, at a price of a denunciation, ennobled common robbery by endowing it with ideological meaning, and so destroyed the traditional structures of social organization and opened the doors wide for the Progressive System. These doors were open to anyone who had understood that, owing to history’s inescapable laws, the Old World lay in ruins. Victorious communism also promised social advancement, and, to a certain degree, it did fulfill this promise.

The regime was generous! It allowed the people to pillage the property of their exploiters and enemies. The mansions of the nobility were wrecked by peasant axes, their libraries burned, the masters’ cattle taken from their barns. Shops and workshops were robbed, as were pharmacies and private homes. Yesterday’s magnates—who became today’s adversaries—were forced into poverty and humiliation. In this way, the system founded on exploitation and private property was being eradicated; in this way the communists were implementing the principles of social equality. This reduction to the lowest common denominator brought out in people’s souls the worst and lowest instincts and reactions. But it worked.

This was the revenge for the promised but never implemented agrarian reform. This was the revenge for the lack of concern for the wronged and the humiliated. Only in the newspapers and propagandistic speeches were the workers promoted to the role of the ruling class—but one could hardly deny that the road to advancement was cleared for some of them. The party activists of the middle echelons came from the lowest social classes—from areas of poverty and misery (but the party’s highest echelons were reserved for the select few)—and became secretaries of party cells, members of people’s councils, directors of factories, employees of the security services. These people formed the social base of the Leading System. But it was not they who determined its strength. In this first high-flown pioneering and heroic period of the building of socialism the government’s power was based principally on the powerlessness of the society, which had been crippled by the war.

Communism and Society’s Resistance

Since those days, much has changed. Wanda Wasilewska’s heirs in their four-cornered hats no longer can offer the lowest social classes shops to pilage or jobs. They can no longer blame the bourgeoisie and the large landowners, the London government-in-exile, and the reactionary underground for all ills. Still, in solving the riddles of today it is important to remember those bygone years.

Under the rule of the communist dictators, people constantly looked for new and original forms of opposition, forms that would be effective against the totalitarian force. People looked for the smallest hole in the totalitarian wall, the smallest crack, for every possible way to save the nation from turning into a heap of sand. When the underground that functioned from 1945 through 1947 was finally destroyed and the legal opposition offered by the Polish Peasant party (PRL) was eradicated, a significant part of the intelligentsia chose to withdraw from public life, into “internal emigration.” In the context of obsequious declarations and slogans shouted at rallies, silence equaled resistance.
In those years, many unsubmitive people documented their opposition through silence. Others looked for institutional forms of coexistence with the government, taking advantage of the at first extensive, but then constantly shrinking, protective umbrella of the Catholic Church. The milieu of Tygodnik Powszechny [Cracow Catholic Weekly] chose to be present in public life in the realms of culture and learning, and it consciously denounced political activity. In those years, however, every article on St. Stanislaw or the September 1939 campaign, on tourism or archaeology, had a political dimension. Omissions gave the weekly its political coloring. The more brutal the government's attacks on the Church became, the more the pool of subjects that could pass into the Catholic paper through the censor's sieve shrank. Tygodnik Powszechny, edited by Jerzy Turowicz and enriched by the writings of Stomma, Zawieyski, Kisielewski, Woźniakowski, and others provided an escape for the reader, an opportunity to survive, a chance to preserve fundamental values, common sense, and psychological equilibrium in a world that had been taken over by police terror and ideological insanity. The Church provided a true barrier against the totalitarian power. It was an institution that defended the nation's identity, its rights and values. It gave strength to the frail and heart to the persecuted. It was thanks to the Church that the nation's secret resistance persisted, although it should be admitted that mass terror along with large-scale brainwashing and the corruption of conscience was also effective. It is dishonest to deny this.

In the Stalinist era, conspiratorial organizations modeled on the World War II underground were also founded. They were all short-lived and brutally repressed, and news about their existence came mostly from prisons and court records. The episcopate, let us recall, cautioned people against underground resistance.

Dictatorships either disintegrate or evolve. When they disintegrate—as a result of internal or external upheaval—the wave of social revolt brings to the top proponents of total change—"steadfast" oppositionists and imprisoned adversaries. When dictatorships evolve, the power apparatus becomes unsteady on its feet and gives birth to a movement of protest and to antagonists from the inside. The communist system contains protest in its ideological nature. It cannot get away with propagating egalitarian slogans while promoting a network of shops for the elite; it cannot get away with proclaiming ideas about worker power while using police to mercilessly suppress workers' strikes; it cannot get away with calling itself the heir of the tradition of liberty while stamping out by force every sign of freedom. As long as communism was a living ideology that claimed the allegiance of honest people, it was naturally bound to carry within it the seeds of its own heresy and negation—call it revisionism. Revisionism—which has never been defined precisely by either its enemies or its proponents—was an intellectual movement that accompanied the corrosion of the party apparatus's iron ideology. In its first attempt—in principle—to be a movement aimed at repairing the Leading System, revisionism tried to moderate and restrict the system's totalitarian character, violating—at least unconsciously—the very essence of communist rule.

There is no such thing as a nontotalitarian ruling communism. It either becomes totalitarian or it ceases to be communism. The role of revisionism was to coach the Communist party for its confrontation with the explosions of social anger that followed Stalin's death and for its attempts to introduce elements of everyday reality and traces of the language of morality into internal party discussions. The revisionists demanded liberal political reforms, although revisionism never turned into a political program. In its confrontation with the conservative party apparatus, revisionism had to be defeated. At that point, it had a choice to make: to recognize the apparat's view of social order and identify with the authorities and against society's aspirations or to continue to call for political reform and eventually part ways with the Communist party. In either case, the movement ceased to be revisionism—born of the era of ferment—and was transformed either into an accessory to power or a simple opposition group. What was characteristic of this period was that social protest gained strength while the system lost its oppressiveness. When terror subsides, the people become more courageous. Society's protests from 1953 to 1956 were not led by the revisionists, but neither were they led by those who had maintained relentless resistance since 1945. Those who had resisted since 1945 paid for it with isolation in jail or in internal emigration. The protests in the 1953 to 1956 period emerged from the depths of the disorganized and atomized society, and that society had no political program and could easily be disrupted or manipulated. They were neither social nor
political movements (in the classic definition of these terms) but an expression of the exasperation of groups whose poverty had not diminished and who had just enough courage to protest openly.

The story of the 1956 Polish October can be told on two planes: on one, it was a social revolt of workers; on the other, it was ideological opposition from party revisionists. The suppression and pacification of both groups cannot be forgotten. The methods used by Władysław Gomułka to calm the revolt should be analyzed separately. One thing is certain: the Polish October was not repressed by force (even though the police actions against the street demonstration in the autumn of 1957, following the dissolution of Po prostu, transformed Warsaw into a city under siege). The October revolt was washed away. The shape of the defeat precluded the creation of any institutionalized opposition movement.

The October movement of renewal was converted into "our little stability," which was accompanied by the tough and consistent resistance of the Church, by some criticism expressed in intellectual circles, and by sporadic manifestations of worker dissatisfaction. But there was no underground conspiracy. Underground conspiracies did not appear on a large scale even following the student revolt of March 1968 or the December 1970 workers’ protests. Here and there—but only on the margins of society—plans for creating an underground and starting conspiratorial organizations would spring up, but they played no role of any importance. Illegal attempts to organize became known only when those behind them were put in the dock. Those who wanted to act in opposition to the authorities found other methods, both legal and illegal, but the illegal methods were not underground organizations; rather, they consisted of clandestine distribution of émigré publications and clandestine shipment abroad of materials to be used in these publications, public discussions in the legal Clubs of the Catholic Intelligentsia supplemented by seminars in private homes, and by writings confiscated by the censor’s office which were duplicated and passed from hand to hand. All this represented a ferment, a resistance, and a revival of independent ideas.

2. Po prostu was a periodical that the young liberal party members founded during the 1956 period of reforms. Its closing a year later marked the end of the Polish October.

But an independent Polish political life did not exist. This only began to change in 1976. Then the first programs of social resistance were organized. The principal theme of these ideas and these activities was openness—openness at any price. Some people went as far as to walk voluntarily into a home where an open but illegal lecture of the Flying University1 was to take place and the secret police had already arrived. “Open but illegal”—in this somewhat paradoxical expression lies the very essence of the tactics of that era. Books and periodicals were printed underground, but the names of their authors and editors were openly disclosed. Openness was a way of fortifying collective courage, of widening the “gray area” between the censor’s scissors and the criminal code, of breaking down the barrier of inertia and fear. The chances for success lay in openness, not in conspiracy.

Incidentally, neither the Soviet intervention in Hungary nor the armed “fraternal aid” for Czechoslovakia provoked conspiratorial resistance on any scale. Post-Stalinist communism was also unfamiliar with conspiracy as a large-scale phenomenon. The reasons for this are worth thinking about. The post-Stalinist system was neither a system of total terror for the whole community nor of abstract promises for the underprivileged. It was a system that was able to construct a stable relationship between the powers-that-be and society. The Czech intellectual Antonín Liehm described this stability as a “new social accord” between the power elite and the people. This “accord” was based on the assumption that the authorities would not make life difficult for the people if the people would not make governing difficult for the authorities. So the government did not interfere too brutally in the citizens’ private and professional lives, and the citizens did not meddle in the areas reserved for the party nomenklatura. Gierek’s Poland and Kádár’s Hungary were classic examples of this “new social accord,” but certain aspects of it could also be seen in other countries, including the USSR.

It should be remembered that in Hungary the Kádár line was preceded by exceptionally brutal repression, which destroyed confidence in direct resistance, whereas in Gierek’s Poland liberalism was
the natural consequence of the government’s fear of the working class, whose revolt had brought Gierek to power. Liberalism in Poland was also the result of conflicts with Western countries, in which Gierek wanted to maintain a good reputation.

It was characteristic of Husák’s Czechoslovakia that the leaders of the “renewal” initiated “normalization.” Dubček himself called for an end to social resistance, and thousands of activists of the Prague Spring went into exile. The underground in post-1968 Czechoslovakia has included, and still includes, small groups of déclassé oppositionists whose spiritual atmosphere resembles the first Christian communities hiding in the catacombs more than they resemble an illegal political opposition movement.

The End of the Psychology of Captivity

The communist system in Poland did not collide head-on with a permanently active underground. At first, the absence of such an underground was the result of bloody terror and a skillful social policy; then it was the result of a new social accord, which existed only because of the continued remembrance of Stalinist terror. But at all times the communist dictatorship sought to break down social ties. The power apparatus and its institutions, which served to destroy solidarity among people and to keep society well disciplined, were the only forms of social organization.

As a result, the system created a psychology characteristic of communities subjugated by communism. Long periods of apathy and depoliticization were interrupted by sudden political earthquakes. These, however, were not followed by programs of reform or by alternative political plans. They were only protests, not reform movements. Supposed programs of reform were drawn up in government offices but they never reached the factory floors. Independent political thought did not exist in communist states; instead, the only choices left open to an oppositionist were either futile maneuvering or blind violence. At the beginning of this century, Polish thinkers and politicians called this atmosphere the psychology of captivity. Józef Piłsudski, Roman Dmowski, and Edward Abramowski, who represented conflicting political parties and ideologies, agreed on one thing: a slave revolt has little in common with a movement for social or political change. The rebellious slave does free himself for a moment; but his main desire is revenge, which is rarely constructive. The rebellious slave will at best look for a better tsar, but he is incapable of discovering his own subjectivity, for he has been deprived of his community, his ideals, and his language. He is left alone with his hate, which spells helplessness. One needs to understand this psychology of captivity in order to unravel the mechanisms of social apathy under a communist regime. Only the surface events can be seen from the outside: the commemorative celebrations, the parades, the 100 percent turnout in the sham elections, the high party membership in factories and offices. The uprisings, the burning of party headquarters, the dissidents’ open letters, and the dissidents’ solitude are also visible. But reading between the lines, it is easy to find the common denominator in all of these events—the psychology of slavery.

I believe that the August 1980 workers’ revolt and the activities of Solidarity have terminated this psychology. In those fifteen months, people had a taste of freedom; they forged their solidarity and discovered their strength; they again felt themselves to be a civic and national community. I do not want to idealize Solidarity, its actions, or its activists. I know about the demagoguery and baseness—residual effects of the captive psychology—that were present in it. But these are inevitable aspects of every mass movement and the unavoidable heritage of years of slavery. Solidarity was the first mass movement in our history that lasted for many months, that struck deep roots in Polish hearts and minds, in work places and private homes. This permits one to believe that the movement of resistance against WRONa has a real base, that the underground has a chance of surviving future police actions. This chance stems from the Solidarity tradition and from the gains won by the pre-August democratic opposition. In addition, the entire body of experience of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century underground activities serves today as a book of knowledge about the values and methods of illegal resistance. This book must be reread, so that we can adapt old examples to new situations.

Many different accusations have been made against the Poles over their stormy history, but no one could ever say that they know nothing about conspiracy.
The Forms of the Underground

Poles know a thing or two about conspiracy, and the authorities are clearly aware of it. Hence in radio and TV programs and in propaganda articles, a theme has been recurring: fear of the underground. These voices are a sign of a bizarre renaissance of the ideology of the state and of an anxiety about conspiracy that is worthy of the nineteenth-century Cracow conservatives. These voices proclaim that the highest value for the nation is the state, that antistate activities will lead to national catastrophe, that all the people should unite their efforts to support the state, and so on and so forth.

These are the arguments used to manipulate public opinion; to itself, the party speaks openly about fighting counterrevolution. What funny people! It really is overzealous to try to convince the Poles (of all people) who have been fighting for their own state for so many decades, of the worth of having a state. Yet they keep on talking about the people's own state, a sovereign state, a state that belongs to the people, a state that is ruled by the people in the interest of the people. And about a state that derives its value from being founded in law. However, when a state's power has been confiscated by a band of gangsters who impose their ways on the people, then the attitude “loyalty to the state” is simple complicity in crime. Resistance against such a “state” is natural, and civil disobedience is the only attitude worthy of respect.

The stance of the authorities toward human rights is especially important in this context. Tocqueville wrote:

Thanks to the concept of human rights people have been able to define lawlessness and tyranny. Because of this, every citizen can remain independent without being arbitrary and he can subordinate himself without degrading himself. When a man subordinates himself to coercion, he grovels and degrades himself, but when he subordinates himself to the rule of law which he himself has accorded to his neighbor, he in a sense stands above those who govern him. There are no great people without virtue, there are no great nations—and there is even no society—without respect for human rights. For what is the value of a community of thinking and intelligent individuals who are united solely by force?

No nation has ever been given human rights as a present. These rights have to be won through struggle. The question is: How should this struggle be conducted?

I am one of those who in the past ten or so years have criticized the idea of conspiratorial activity. Today I am for organizing an underground. We have no choice. Jaruzelski has made the choice for us.

This is what Polish honor and Polish thinking demand from us today. Honor: because a nation that humbly submits to those who are taking away its liberty does not deserve this liberty. Thinking: because a nation that sees no real chance for the restoration of its liberty and is not prepared to take advantage of such a chance when it arises will never attain freedom. It is difficult to be optimistic today. But who ten years ago could have foreseen the existence of a democratic opposition, an independent press, and finally August 1980 and Solidarity? It is obvious that what happened only once cannot be made into a model, but those events are an invaluable legacy. They are proof of how much can be accomplished by people who want to do something sensible for their country.

Today, the underground is a fait accompli. The forms it should take remain an open question. Let us begin by describing what it should not be. It should not be an underground state with a national government, a parliament, and armed forces. It cannot be an underground state because it has no national mandate. Our country needs many things but it does not need self-appointed national rule. It needs democratic representation—not a pseudo-parliament, which is the only thing possible in conspiratorial conditions. An underground state was able to function under the Nazi occupation because there was no middle course and because there was a war. Only a blind person could draw parallels between the General Gouvernement and WRONa, especially when it comes to armed conspiracy and attempts at terrorist action. This must be said clearly: armed actions could be conducted only by misguided people or by provocateurs, and the underground has a responsibility to protect society from such actions. Terrorism leads to nothing but revenge and a spiral of terror—to a strengthening of hatred and cruelty and to the estrangement of the majority of people from the underground.

It is not terrorism that Poland needs today. It is widespread underground activity that will reconstruct society, spreading throughout towns
and villages, factories and research institutions, universities and high schools. Underground Solidarity has to encompass all this. The institutional form of this movement should be left open. It must obviously include mechanisms for collecting money, help for those who are threatened by penal repression or by loss of their jobs. It must obviously include an intellectual movement that will offer society a vision of a democratic Poland. It must include publishing enterprises, so that thoughts about Poland and the world, intellectual life in general, and social self-knowledge can flourish. Also needed is an umbrella institution—made up of Solidarity activists—which can deal with the fundamental questions of national existence. The role of such a center is important, so it is no surprise that this issue has caused many quarrels. I would think that the existence of such a center is an indispensable condition for effective action, but it also involves significant risk.

Only concerted pressure, which may go as far as a general strike, can force WRONa to make concessions; this is one side of the coin. On the other side, however, is the fact that a centralized and hierarchical organization, modeled on a Leninist party, which would steer the whole national opposition, is not realistic. Life is always richer than organizational structures, and the power of an underground union organization must lie in its roots in factories and not merely in an apparatus made up of professional conspirators. Also, by its very nature, the organization must be connected to a network that goes beyond the factory, for this is indispensable in maintaining links between different groups in society, in publishing independently, in organizing internal union structures, and in organizing distribution of fliers. But if such an organization is detached from those who are living the everyday life of martial law, it can easily lose touch with reality and become an army of generals without soldiers. One chronic problem is the conflict between the attempt to maintain a mass base for the movement and the need for the underground union’s cadre structure to function effectively. This conflict is inevitable in a movement of this kind and can be handled wisely only once it is understood clearly. The self-awareness of activists can play an important role here. For the activists must understand that an underground movement makes sense only when it is able to create forms of action accessible to every single Pole, when it remains an open and tolerant movement, and it always remembers that many roads lead to democracy—that the Polish national anthem can be played on many different pianos. Adoption of this broad and inclusive strategy does not mean that every action conceived as a way of disadvantaging WRONa is sensible. For example, the idea of the “turtle”—that is, the call to “work slowly”—which has been appearing here and there does not seem wise. During the war, this slogan made sense because the Poles then were working for Hitler’s armies. Today, it would be unreasonable to claim that all production is being used to harm national interests. The Leninist slogan “the worse, the better” is nonsensical in today’s situation, and the Poles could pay a high price one day in the future if they destroy the work ethic today. We must look for ways to develop civil society and not just undertake actions simply in order to be a nuisance to the “junta.”

But, above all, we must create a strategy of hope for the people, and show them that their efforts and risks have a future. The underground will not succeed in building a widespread national opposition without such a strategy—without faith in the purpose of action. Otherwise, resistance will amount to nothing more than a moral testimony or an angry reaction. And the movement will cease to be one that is aware of its political goals, that is armed with patience and consistency, and that is capable of winning.

“Instant Change” and the “Long March”

Underground Solidarity’s basic goals are obvious: to create an authentic society, a free Poland, and individual freedom in Poland. No political miracle will help the Poles if they do not help themselves. A Polish democratic state will never be born if democratic structures do not exist beforehand in Polish society. And independent of the institutional success of the underground, a base for Polish democracy is being created today. It lies in the moral sphere. The importance of this sphere is clear. To paraphrase [the writer] Tadeusz Konwicki [the writer], there is more than just logic in the existence of the underground. There is also a need. Otherwise, we will turn into dwarfs and disappear, losing our national dignity. I know that no generalized moral values can replace concrete political perspectives.

Two strategies deserve to be considered: the strategy of “instant
change" and the strategy of the "long march." The former assumes a vehement and spontaneous explosion of society's discontent. Such an explosion, even if it is bloodily suppressed, can lead to polarization within the government and restore the possibility of compromise with Solidarity. The underground must be prepared for both the quake itself and the subsequent negotiations. It must figure out ways of preventing bloodshed and ways of backing rightful demands; it must work out in detail a potential social agreement which includes revocation of martial law, a general amnesty for its victims (those who have been imprisoned, dismissed from work, etc.), and the implementation of social accords. It seems that only a spectacular defeat of WRONa's pacification plans can restore to the agenda the possibility of a genuine compromise between the authorities and the people. Otherwise, the authorities will not budge an inch.

But this does not mean that we should bank on a head-on collision between the underground and the government for the success of our efforts. Today, any confrontation must lead to tragedy, since WRONa is full of determination and will not back down even if it means shedding rivers of blood. A compromise must take into account the realities of power. If it is to be a real compromise, it must formulate clearly the meaning of "the leading role of the party in the state" and of "observance of international pacts." The line that must not be crossed in a compromise is relinquishment of the autonomy of the union. The Independent and Self-governing Labor Union "Solidarity" can choose to reorganize its structure and revise its program but only following the sovereign decision of its congress. Allowing the government to interfere in the internal affairs of Solidarity—that is, accepting the leading role of the PUWP in an independent and self-governing labor union—leads not to compromise but to suppression of the union. The question of the so-called international pacts is also important. Our striving for the truth about the history of Polish-Russian relations must once and for all be distinguished from anti-Soviet political propaganda. Every nation has the right to know the truth about its own history.

An assessment of the current international situation requires a cool appraisal of our aspirations and capabilities, of potential losses and possible gains. A clear evaluation of these problems is important independently of what we do about talks with the PUWP or WRONa; it constitutes the central problem for all Polish strategies, including the "long march" strategy. This strategy is based on the assumption that the ruling elite is almost chronically incapable of learning from its postwar experiences, and that the stationary war between an organized civilian society and the power apparatus will last a long time. In the meantime, significant changes may take place in the USSR—changes that are difficult to predict but also difficult to count on. Regardless of such changes, Poland will remain the political focus of every Russian state. And the Poles will have to figure out what relations to have with any such state. In other words, I agree with the opinion of Stefan Kisielewski [the political writer] that our people must themselves approach the issue of Polish-Russian relations. I agree that today this looks like a fantasy. But if it becomes possible, then the absence of a plan will prove to have been unforgivably shortsighted. There is no room here to discuss the many aspects of this problem. Let us merely remember that as a point of departure for an analysis of Polish-Russian relations we might take another look at the contents of the Yalta agreements, which, while placing Poland in the Soviet sphere of politico-military influence, leave to the Poles the choice of their system of government. The Yalta agreement does not stipulate the rule of the PUWP—that rule is merely a consequence of terror, rigged elections, and Stalin's violation of the agreement.

The "long march" idea must assume the isolation of WRONa and the PUWP or the further discredit of the existing system of government—also in the eyes of the Soviet Union. What is inconceivable—barring a basic revision of the political map of the world—is that the USSR will simply forsake Poland; what is possible, however, is that the PUWP will become completely untrustworthy, its army unreliable and prone to mutiny, and an armed intervention of Poland politically too costly. The Polish people must be prepared for such an eventuality. But to continuously inflame anti-Soviet passions, at the expense of clear thinking about Polish-Russian relations, is a senseless mistake that can lead straight to a catastrophe. The "long march" strategy requires consistency, realism, and patience. These are not platitudes. They define a program of arduous, risky, and often ineffective activity, in the face of repression and suffering—a vision of work on economic, administrative, legal, and educational reform and on spreading among the public
a concept of a “reformist Poland.” The level of public awareness will determine the effectiveness of these actions. More than ever before, the principle of elementary national education must form a part of this strategy of resistance. To quote from a patriotic song, “Every household will be a fortress for us.” This is why it is absolutely essential that we formulate a program like the one put forward by PPN a few years ago, calling for social education for every child. To put it more broadly: it is essential that a sort of civic catechism be drawn up that will define the basic duties in martial-law Poland. There is only one institution whose recommendations in these matters people will accept: the Catholic Church.

The Church under Martial Law

Much has been written about the Catholic Church in Poland. It ought to be kept in mind that the role of the Church has grown greatly. The Church is both a party to the existing conflict between the authorities and society and a mediator in that conflict. The Church is party to it because it expresses the basic aspirations of society and is the sole officially functioning bastion of society’s resistance. But the Church is also the mediator, the builder of bridges of understanding between the rulers and the ruled. Even before December 13, 1981, the philosopher and theologian Father Józef Tischner defined the Church’s role on the political stage as that of a “witness,” not that of a political institution. If I understood his idea correctly, this witness was to guarantee the genuineness of agreements and of their implementation in the light of the basic Christian values: truth, human dignity, and reconciliation. To this I would add the teaching role. I think that it is a misperception to expect from the Church a political program. However, a sort of civic catechism for the duration of martial law fits perfectly into the sphere of priestly concern for the nation’s moral condition. It would be natural if projects for such a catechism came up for public discussion—just as the Primate’s Council theses about a national understanding have done.

4. PPN, i.e., Polish League for Independence, was a group of intellectuals who in the late seventies issued analyses of some of the most complicated and important political problems. It was the only opposition group that did not disclose the names of its members.

I believe that this distinction between political and educational activity is important, for there exists the danger of vesting in the Church hopes that it cannot fulfill. People may select out of Church documents those that seem to offer specific political prescriptions, they can imagine that they see potential leadership for political opposition within the episcopate, and finally they might then absolve themselves of responsibility in the belief that the Church’s activities would serve as a substitute for their own actions. Let us add that today the Church serves as a teacher for the entire society, and that it would therefore be disastrous for a few activists to attempt to appropriate the Church’s authority. It would also be unfortunate if programs and tactics were hidden behind a facade of Catholic faith and symbolism. And there is one more thing: the Church is infallible on questions of religious dogma, but it can make mistakes—as it has in the past—in assessing the condition of society. This may happen all the more frequently with individual priests. Therefore, in this matter, the usual critical spirit applicable to any human opinion on society’s life should be maintained.

I find something mistaken in the statement made by a well-known Gdańsk priest that contemporary youth does not need “men of marble” or “men of iron.” I believe that we do need films such as these two impressive works of Andrzej Wajda and also need the tough and uncompromising characters Wajda gave to his heroes. It is not people like them whom we should fear today but rather individuals with wooden heads and spines of rubber. I want to make this comment because attempts to separate Solidarity from the values and traditions that are reflected in Wajda’s films can serve to divide the resistance movement, to threaten its pluralistic nature. The Church’s concrete actions—defense of those who have been wronged and humiliated, assistance to the persecuted and their families, public defense of truth and concern for social peace—are major accomplishments in the life of the nation. Thanks to them, initiatives are again being taken, and new islands of autonomy come into existence among the people. In this way, the nation is rallying after the shock of December. The movement of

5. “Man of Marble” (1978) is the story of a worker who becomes a hero of socialist labor in the Stalinist Poland. “Man of Iron” (1981) shows the worker’s son becoming the leader of the opposition movement in Poland of the ’70s. Both movies were made by Andrzej Wajda.
resistance, with all its different attitudes and forms, is being reborn. And the Church is spreading again its protective umbrella over this movement.

The Specter of The Possessed

The underground will never meet all society's needs for a movement of resistance. It can only be one part of this movement, and the national interest requires us to seek a common denominator for different types of activity, different temperaments, and different models of concern for our motherland. The movement of resistance must teach freedom and democracy. The movement’s character will determine the character of Poland as it emerges from the state of war. But the shadow of the “possessed” from Dostoyevski’s novel looms over every underground movement. Every conspiracy demoralizes. In its depths flourishes the spirit of a sect that uses a language all its own, that is based on rites of initiation, on tactics to which everything is subordinated, on an instrumental attitude toward truth, and on disregard for any values that are not political. There is a unique type of activist-conspirator, whose characteristics make him as useful in the underground as they are dangerous later on. Such an activist has to make arbitrary decisions, to distrust newcomers and strangers. A spirit of democracy is not one of the virtues required by a conspiracy; pluralism is not the style favored by it. Underground activity isolates people from the taste and smell of everyday life, skewing perspectives, gives birth to dangerous absolutism and intolerance. Conspiracy requires disobedience to the enemy and obedience to the underground central command. It proclaims equality but within itself calls for hierarchical subordination. Conspiracy thrives on the spirit of Manichaecism: “He who is not with us is against us.” It is created to fight police oppression, but for the police it becomes the ideal field of activity. The police force blossoms in a collision with the underground: it penetrates it, plots provocations. Without an underground, the political police lead a frustrated life, but when conspiracy exists the police become a power, a state within a state. Sometimes the police become a sovereign state within an unsovereign state.

Police activities focused on provocation create a type of antiprovo-
cation hysteria in the underground world. It sometimes happens that the investigation conducted by the underground counterintelligence takes the place of analysis of social processes. A totalitarian regime sees the hand of its underground enemy in every crisis; the antitotalitarian underground begins to discern the involvement of hidden police agents in every one of its failures. These are the dangers that accompany the underground. This is what the political and ideological enemies of conspiracy write about it. This is probably why such remarks are rarely accepted kindly. The conspirator idealizes the underground, which is not surprising, but this is precisely why he must constantly be reminded that it is not police terror that will bring about real defeat but the hostile indifference of society. An underground that is detached from a base is doomed to become degenerate and weak.

These mechanisms, which the enemy notices easily and exploits gladly, are easier to see from the outside. But when I am again in the underground, when I again become preoccupied with avoiding the agent's eye, with organizing that one meeting, with writing that particular flier, I too will forget all this, I will become blind to these perils. I will not have the energy, time, and courage to be aware of them, to analyze and describe them. This is why I am writing about them today, as I sit safely behind bars in Białoleka.

A Pinch of Dignity

The underground must know how to interpret society’s needs and find flexible means of satisfying them. It must be attractive to people and it must be essential to them. These are platitudes; to adhere to them, however, we must make it clear to ourselves and to others that it is unrealistic to count on a return to the situation that preceded December 13, 1981, to count on a spectacular victory, with virtue rewarded and vice punished. Underground Solidarity must not seek revenge but rather a democratic alternative. Democracy is neither an easy nor a straightforward solution. It is born in pain, strengthened in conflict; it only shows its virtues after a long time. This is why we should not promise the sky to ourselves and to others, for it is not an instant and definitive solution for Poland’s troubles that awaits us but only risk, toil, and disappointment. This is usually the price of freedom.
It seems to me that the underground today does not need the moral principles and organizational structures of an army or a party of the Leninist kind. What it needs is the bond of shared aims and solidarity in action. And respect for individuality. And consent for plurality. It seems to me that the underground should not promise a world devoid of conflict. I think that it should suggest a program of practical activity for reform, a program for social self-defense, contacts with real culture and cultural values, participation in authentic civic and intellectual life. Plus a pinch of dignity, a pinch of fraternity. And a daily breath of truth. Of the truth that every compromise is temporary, that every political solution is illusory. Because, as a philosopher wrote, but for death, all solutions are illusory. This is what I think.

Let me conclude with a personal reflection. Involvement in politics in a totalitarian dictatorship always oscillates between two human motivations: the needs of moral testimony and of political calculation. If involvement loses one of these motivations, it turns into either ineffective moralizing or immoral manipulation. Both are dangerous, but both are, to a certain extent, unavoidable. To go underground one must give up professional stability and family life. One must take into account the possibility of imprisonment and loneliness. One must step outside legality, thereby abandoning tactical and political concerns in favor of a basic moral choice. But to be effective in the underground, one must repeatedly abandon ethical concerns for political ones. *La politique d’abord!* It is difficult to argue with this. This is why I believe that the underground also needs people for whom moral testimony is more valuable than political efficacy, people who do not treat the underground as a school for pretenders to the future power elite, people who understand that their political involvement will end in “normal” times when an underground will no longer be needed, people who declare that “normal” times will require other qualities, other characters, talents different from their own.

These are my thoughts in Białoleka after the first twenty weeks of this strangest of all the Polish wars.

P.S. Some of the voices in the discussion taking place in the underground union press reached me after I wrote this text. The reader will easily notice the similarity of many of my remarks to the theses of those articles. The ones that seem closest to mine, though they differ somewhat among themselves, while remaining similar in their main lines of thought, are the thoughts of Zbigniew Bujak, Wiktor Kulierski, and Zbigniew Romaszewski [leaders of the underground].

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