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THE ORIGINS OF SOLIDARITY:
WORKERS, INTELLECTUALS, AND THE
MAKING OF AN OPPOSITIONAL MOVEMENT

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The case of Poland's Solidarity movement, cited by many as the quintessential expression of a powerful alliance between the working class and the intelligentsia against established authorities, has recently been the subject of a lively controversy. A key issue of contention concerns the relative contribution of intellectuals to the creation in August 1980 of the world's first independent trade union in a Communist country. It is a debate that is inextricably intertwined with larger theoretical and political issues; indeed, 'revisionist'¹ scholars such as Roman Laba and Lawrence Goodwyn² have raised anew the classical question posed by Lenin: can the working-class, acting without the assistance of the intelligentsia, attain the levels of consciousness and organization necessary to wage a transformative struggle against those who control the key levers of power?³ Conversely, if -- as many analysts have argued -- intellectuals did in fact constitute an integral part of a cross-class coalition that produced Solidarity, what forces made this extraordinary alliance between oppositional workers and oppositional intellectuals possible? How, specifically, was it constructed? And what tensions, if any, between workers and intellectuals arose during Solidarity's formative stages?

This paper will address these questions by examining the specific events leading to the formation of Solidarity. The focus will be on the city where Solidarity was founded, Gdansk, and on the enterprise where the decisive strike began, the Lenin Shipyard. For only by examining the particular setting in which

Solidarity was born can one grasp the complex dynamics that led to its formation.

The Debate Over Solidarity's Origins

Before turning to the events of August 1980, it is necessary to convey a sense of the existing debate about the role that Polish intellectuals played in the creation of Solidarity. In perhaps the most common interpretation, the oppositional intelligentsia, led by the Workers' Defense Committee (KOR), helped lay the groundwork for Solidarity by raising the level of consciousness of the Polish working-class. A characteristic version of this account is offered by David Mason, author of a major study of Polish public opinion during the Solidarity period. "KOR ... acted as a disseminator of information and an agent for 'consciousness raising' among both workers and intellectuals," he writes. Moreover, KOR "helped to provide the workers with an integrated ideology, both socialist and democratic, that was crucial later in the development of the workers' own representatives".⁴

David Ost, in a provocative book organized around 'new left' and 'postmodern' themes, also sees KOR as crucial. While acknowledging that "the idea of forming independent trade unions was first raised by the striking workers of Gdansk and Szczecin in 1970", Ost argues that it was KOR "that organized the influential Committee for Free Trade Unions in Gdansk in 1978, the leaders of which became leaders of Gdansk Solidarity two years later".⁵ And Adam Michnik, perhaps the leading theorist of

the Polish opposition, declares flatly that "The Gdansk Agreement was possible thanks to the functioning of a political strategy perfected in the KOR epoch...At the moment the Gdansk agreement was signed, KOR's historical role was fulfilled".⁶ Clearly, there is no shortage of interpretations that stress the decisive role of KOR -- and of intellectuals -- in making the Polish August possible.⁷

In 1991, a new 'revisionist' view of the relationship between workers and intellectuals appeared which seemed to turn the traditional argument on its head. The decisive force in creating Solidarity, argue Roman Laba and Lawrence Goodwyn, was the working class itself, with the intelligentsia playing at most a subsidiary role. Rejecting the "prevalent explanation" that "Solidarity ... emerged from the educative efforts of the opposition intellectuals beginning in 1976", Laba insists that "the main characteristics of Solidarity, its master frames, were created autonomously by Polish workers six years before the creation of KOR and ten years before the rise of Solidarity".⁸ That most "analysts in the West" have believed otherwise is due, he suggests, to "cultural gatekeepers" from the Polish intelligentsia who "informed Western observers that the gatekeepers themselves were the source of Solidarity".⁹

Lawrence Goodwyn, in an analysis of the rise of Solidarity that uses the approach of social history (i.e. 'history from below') and explicitly acknowledges a debt to Laba, goes a step further than his revisionist colleague, arguing in essence that the workers of the Baltic Coast created Solidarity over the

opposition of the intelligentsia. Correctly noting the deep skepticism of Warsaw intellectuals (both 'radicals' and 'moderates') about the feasibility of the demand of the Gdansk strikers for independent trade unions, Goodwyn paints a portrait of a Baltic working class whose cumulative historical experience enabled them to attain a level of "political consciousness" well "beyond the capabilities of intellectuals ... in Warsaw".¹⁰ Indeed, far from workers having had their consciousness raised by intellectuals, it was, if anything, intellectuals such as the advisors Tadeusz Mazowiecki and Bronislaw Geremek who had their consciousness raised through direct exposure to the strategic creativity and extraordinary steadfastness of purpose of the Gdansk working class.

At times, Goodwyn's ouvrierisme leads him to take on a reverent and almost mystical tone towards the workers. The strategic breakthrough that led to the success of the Gdansk strike, he writes, was not "Kuron's idea nor Walesa's ... Rather, quietly it had grown out of the accumulated experience of the coastal working class itself which, step by step, seemed almost as if it were orchestrated by collective wisdom".¹¹ For Goodwyn, the oppositional intellectuals of KOR were to be commended for their courage and for helping to "overcome the inherited passivity of increasing numbers within the mainstream of the intelligentsia".¹² But that said, KOR's widely-credited claim of having prepared "the consciousness of the workers for the strikes" must be seen as nothing less than "intellectually fanciful and institutionally irrelevant".¹³

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Revisionist Argument

In assessing how available evidence bears on these competing views of the role of the intelligentsia in the origins of Solidarity, one should acknowledge at the outset that the 'revisionist' argument directs our attention back to an elemental fact: that Solidarity was founded as a workers' movement whose very existence would not have been possible without the courage and steadfastness of the working class of the Baltic Coast.¹⁴ It was, after all, workers who took the considerable risks involved in staging an occupation strike in Gdansk's Lenin Shipyard on August 14. It was workers, too, who created an Interfactory Strike Committee (MKS) for the Gdansk region on August 16-17, and it was workers who brought the strike and the model of the MKS to Szczecin on August 18. Above all, it was the workers who resolutely insisted on the necessity of creating independent trade unions -- a demand that they had first raised during the great rebellion on the Baltic Coast in December 1970-January 1971. And it was the workers who clung doggedly to their demand for free trade unions despite repeated counsel from sympathizers in the intelligentsia that they should abandon a provocative demand that, however just, simply would not be accepted by the authorities of a Leninist state.

Revisionist scholars such as Laba and Goodwyn are correct, moreover, in emphasizing the specifically regional origins of Solidarity. During the six weeks following the July 1, 1980 announcement of an increase in the price of meat, there were

scores of strikes in Poland, including a general strike in Lublin in mid-July. Yet none of these strikes issued a clear demand for independent trade unions, and none of them managed to generate an Interfactory Strike Committee. The key analytical point emphasized here by the revisionists is that Solidarity did not emerge either in Warsaw, the major stronghold of both KOR and the Polish intelligentsia, or Lublin, a city with two universities located "well within the reach of KOR's influence".¹⁵

Instead, Solidarity was born in Gdansk, a city not especially noted for its intelligentsia, but the flashpoint of the 1970 rebellion of the Baltic working class. Laba and Goodwyn's conclusion is that the origins of Solidarity trace back not to September 1976, the date of KOR's founding, but rather to December 1970-January 1971, the period in which the workers of the Baltic Coast first put forward the demand for free trade unions and devised two major strategic innovations -- the Interfactory Strike Committee and the occupation (i.e. sitdown) strike -- essential to the success of the August 1980 strike that gave birth to Solidarity.

The revisionist argument is a provocative one, but, like many revisionist theses, does violence to the complexity of the situation and overcorrects for the alleged flaws of its predecessors. One of its problems is that it oversimplifies and sometimes distorts the views of those it opposes; thus Garton Ash, identified by Laba¹⁶ as an advocate of the view that intellectuals played a key role in making Solidarity possible by "raising the consciousness" of Polish workers, wrote in his

influential 1983 book that "December 1970 is the single most important date in the pre-history of Solidarity" and proceeded to identify four causal links between the working-class revolts of 1970 and 1980. 17

Perhaps even more serious than the oversimplification and occasional distortion of those who allegedly favor the "elite thesis" that "intellectual elites fashioned the Solidarity movement"¹⁸ is the systematic neglect of empirical evidence suggesting that the role of intellectuals in the origins of Solidarity was an important one indeed. Yet as we shall see below, the contribution of the intellectuals to the founding of Solidarity resided less in "raising the consciousness" of the working class, as many traditional interpretations would have it, than in joining with workers already hostile to the regime to form an organizationally dense oppositional culture in Gdansk.

It was this dense oppositional culture, we shall argue, that constituted the distinctive setting in which Solidarity was born. Just how distinctive it was will be revealed by a comparison with Szczecin, its sister port city in the west of Poland that, though also an historic center of working-class rebellion, stood silent during the strike wave of July-August 1980 until the pivotal occupation strike at Gdansk's Lenin Shipyard was already several days old.

The Construction of An Alliance Between Oppositional Workers and Oppositional Intellectuals

The roots of the Gdansk opposition may, as both Garton Ash and the revisionists would agree, be traced to the bloody Baltic rebellion of 1970-1971 and to its prolonged aftermath. Yet though this confrontation with the authorities had spawned a number of experienced and militant worker-activists, no organized working-class opposition had emerged in Gdansk by the mid-1970s.¹⁹ The reason for this was straightforward: in Poland, as in other Communist countries, the authorities repressed any attempt at forming an organized opposition.

All of this was to change dramatically in September 1976 with the formation of the Workers' Defense Committee (KOR), an organization of the intelligentsia par excellence. For the first time in the history of Communist Poland, a political movement explicitly opposed to the authorities was operating openly and in public. Dedicated to the stimulation of autonomous activity in 'civil society', KOR espoused -- and tried to live by -- the principles of honesty, openness, and non-violence.²⁰ By its very existence and even more so by its survival despite serious harassment from the authorities, KOR inspired the formation of numerous other opposition groups. While many of these groups emerged from broadly the same intelligentsia milieu as KOR, in time members of other social groups would act upon the same principle of social self-organization. Within the working class, one of the very first such organizations was the Gdansk-based Committee for Free Trade Unions of the Coast.

Unraveling the nature of the relationship between KOR and the Committee for Free Trade Unions of the Coast is crucial for understanding the role of the intelligentsia in the formation of Solidarity, for the Gdansk-based Committee was truly -- in the memorable phrase of Joanna Duda-Gwiazda -- the "cradle in which Solidarity was born".²¹ The key figure here is Bogdan Borusewicz, a graduate in history of the Catholic University of Lublin and KOR's sole official representative in Gdansk.²²

A KOR member since December 13, 1976, Borusewicz's import resided in part in his role in fostering cooperation among all segments of the Gdansk opposition, including both the moderate nationalist element associated with Aleksander Hall's uncensored journal Bratniak ('Fraternity', founded in October 1977) and the right-of-center, but still democratic nationalists associated with the Movement of Defense of Civil and Human Rights²³ (ROPCiO, founded in March 1977). Borusewicz's success in working with these groups may be attributed to the fact that he was himself a product of this milieu and had worked in circles in academic ministries in Gdansk with close ties to ROPCiO.²⁴

By 1977, the oppositional intelligentsia of Gdansk was heavily involved in the city's symbolically freighted 'monument politics' -- the holding of public ceremonies on May 3, the anniversary of Poland's Constitution of 1791 and a day of special import to young activists from the Student Solidarity Committee (SKS), and December 16, the anniversary of the 1970 Gdansk massacre and a day of bitter memories for the workers of the Tri-City area.²⁵ Many Gdansk residents, including Lech Walesa

himself, were present at these ceremonies, and it was on these commemorative occasions that some of the key initial linkages between Gdansk's oppositional workers and oppositional intellectuals were forged.

Borusewicz played a crucial role in stimulating the development of an organized worker opposition in Gdansk. Consistent with KOR's principle of openness, he had published his name and address in the October 1977 issue of the KOR-sponsored journal Robotnik.²⁶ The paper itself was a major recruitment device for the working-class opposition, for those who read it were sometimes moved to become involved in distributing it. One such recruit was Alina Pienkowska, a nurse at the Lenin Shipyard who, after having read several issues of the paper with great interest, went to the address listed in Robotnik and made contact with Borusewicz.²⁷

By listing his name and address in Robotnik, Borusewicz exposed himself to repeated arrests, but he also became a magnet for Gdansk workers hostile to the regime.²⁸ These workers, in turn, gave him a broad range of contacts and enabled him to bring together a group of working-class activists, each with contacts of their own, who had in many cases never met one another.²⁹ A circle of activists grouped around Robotnik and including Andrzej Gwiazda³⁰ and Joanna Duda-Gwiazda, Alina Pienkowska, and Krzysztof and Blazej Wyszowski³¹ thus emerged in Gdansk thanks to Borusewicz's efforts in late 1977 and early 1978.³² It was out of this group that the Committee for Free Trade Unions of the Coast emerged.

Founded on April 29, 1978, the Committee for Free Trade Unions of the Coast was a direct progenitor of Solidarity. Lech Walesa made contact with Borusewicz in May and by August, the Committee was producing its own newspaper, Robotnik Wybrzeza. In September, the Committee set up a worker self-education group, and by December 1978 it was playing a major role in organizing the commemoration of the 1970 massacre in Gdansk. In addition to the Gwiazdas, Walesa, and Pienkowska, individuals who became active in the Committee included Anna Walentynowicz, Bogdan Lis, and Andrzej Kolodziej.³³ Without exception, each of them was to play an important role in the August 1980 strike that gave birth to Solidarity.

The Gdansk setting in which the Committee for Free Trade Unions of the Coast emerged and developed was distinctive in several respects. First, the sheer density of organizations of the oppositional intelligentsia -- ROPCio, KOR, the Student Solidarity Committee, later Young Poland and the Confederation for an Independent Poland (KPN) -- was truly exceptional, especially in a city that was heavily working class. Second, the degree of cooperation among these organizations was uncommonly high -- an achievement due at least in part to the excellent relations that Borusewicz enjoyed with the more nationalist wings of the opposition. Third, Gdansk had a particularly rich and tragic history of working-class militancy which had, in turn, generated an unusually large number of experienced and sophisticated worker activists. And fourth, the city's singular 'monument politics' brought members of the working-class and

intelligentsia opposition together in a common enterprise on a regular basis.

What made Gdansk distinctive, in short, was not only that it had large numbers of oppositional workers and intellectuals, but also that the organizations spawned by these groups were working together well before the strikes that swept Poland in July and August 1980.³⁴ Here Borusewicz, working in the capacity of a full-time oppositionist, made a critical contribution, for he served as a contact point linking worker activists to one another and helping to connect the organizational vehicle of working-class opposition, the Committee for Free Trade Unions of the Coast, to the oppositional organizations of the intelligentsia. An informal oppositional alliance between the working class and the intelligentsia was thus already in place in Gdansk -- but not in any other Polish city -- by the end of 1978.

Intellectuals and the Planning of the Gdansk Strike

The relationship between the Committee for Free Trade Unions of the Coast and the Warsaw circle associated with Robotnik (and, more generally, with KOR) was a close one, with direct contact occurring frequently, if irregularly, during the period between the founding of the Committee of Free Trade Unions of the Coast in April 1978 and the strike in the Lenin Shipyard in August 1980. Face-to-face meetings took place both in Gdansk, where Jacek Kuron journeyed several times during this period, and in Warsaw, where Anna Walentynowicz, Alina Pienkowska, Andrzej and Joanna Duda Gwiazda, Lech Walesa, and Bogdan Borusewicz gathered more than once at the home of Jacek Kuron.³⁵

During the strike wave of the summer of 1980, a consensus emerged among both the free trade-union activists in Gdansk and the KOR people in Warsaw with whom they were in contact that some action must be undertaken at the Lenin Shipyard -- it was, after all, a major stronghold of working-class organization, with well-established connections with KOR. By late July, both Kuron and Robotnik editor Litynski, were pressing Borusewicz to organize a strike.³⁶ But the question remained: was such an action, however devoutly desired, possible?

In early August, Borusewicz organized a meeting in Warsaw between the free trade-union activists of Gdansk and Kuron in Warsaw. The perception of the militants from Gdansk at this gathering was that the shipyard workers were very reluctant to strike; indeed, an attempt by them in July to organize an action against the price increases had failed.³⁷ Anna Walentynowicz recalls being asked by Kuron when the Lenin shipyard in Gdansk would go on strike:

And I said "not soon". But he said,
 "I think it will happen very soon."
 And we quarrelled. I said, "Jacek,
 are you in the shipyard, or am I in
 the shipyard? Do you know the people
 better, or do I know the people better?
 You know some people, but I'm there
 every day. If they are afraid even
 to accept a copy of the paper [i.e.
Robotnik Wybrzeza], they will not strike".³⁸

On August 7, however, Walentynowicz was fired from her job in the shipyard. Ironically, her own dismissal provided the catalyst for the strike she had predicted would never come to pass.

Of the scores of strikes that swept over Poland in the summer of 1980, the one that began in Gdansk on August 14 was almost certainly the best planned and organized. It was also the clearest example of cooperation between a growing working-class movement and the oppositional intelligentsia of Warsaw. Emphasizing the spontaneous character of the strikes that preceded Gdansk, Jacek Kuron claimed that while "all the other strikes fell into our hands", the action in the Lenin shipyard was "the only strike we planned".³⁹

In reality, most of the planning for the strike in the shipyard took place in Gdansk. For it was in Gdansk, at a party held on August 7 in the apartment of a physician active in Young Poland named Piotr Dyk, that the idea of staging a strike in the Lenin Shipyard was hatched.⁴⁰ Though Young Poland was mainly a movement of students and young intelligentsia, both workers and intellectuals were present at the party having come together to celebrate the release of two political prisoners: the young medical student, Dariusz Kobzdej, and an older veteran dissident, Tadeusz Szczudlowski. Their crime had been to be among the organizers of the May 3 rally earlier that year in honor of the Polish constitution of 1791.⁴¹ Among those present at the party were Anna Walentynowicz, who had been fired earlier that day from her job in the shipyard, and her friends from the Committee for Free Trade Unions Lech Walesa, Andrzej Gwiazda, Alina Pienkowska, Andrzej Kolodziej, and Bogdan Borusewicz. It was there -- in a setting where members of the working-class and intelligentsia, groups usually separated in Poland by sharp social and cultural

barriers, mingled informally -- that the idea of the strike that led to the founding of Solidarity was devised.⁴²

By the next day (Friday, August 8), Bogdan Borusewicz was already in contact with militants from the shipyard to begin preparation for a strike to protest Walentynowicz's firing.⁴³ That same weekend, a group of militants associated with the Committee for Free Trade Unions of the Coast journeyed to Warsaw to discuss the demands that might be put forward.⁴⁴

The careful preparation for the strike drew upon the extensive networks of contacts that members of the Committee for Free Trade Unions such as Lech Walesa, Anna Walentynowicz, and Andrzej Gwiazda had patiently accumulated through years of organizing among the workers of the Tri-City area (Gdansk, Gdynia, Sopot). But the planning process also reflected the cooperation that had gradually grown up between oppositional workers and oppositional intellectuals -- an alliance that Bogdan Borusewicz had done so much to cement. This alliance was visible in the hours leading up to the strike as a handful of young workers distributed leaflets signed by the editorial board of the KOR-sponsored Robotnik Wybrzeza (Bogdan Borusewicz, Joanna Duda-Gwiazda, and Andrzej Gwiazda) to shipyard workers and early-morning commuters on the major streetcar lines. In announcing the strike, these leaflets called upon the workers of the Lenin shipyard to defend Anna Walentynowicz,⁴⁵ warning them that "if we fail, many of you will find yourselves in the same position" (Walesa, 1987:116-117).⁴⁶

The firing of Walentynowicz was an ideal galvanizing issue, for 'Pani Ania' ('Mrs. Ania') as she was affectionately called by the shipyard workers, was immensely popular. A shipyard employee for 30 years, she was known for both the quality of her work and her courageous commitment to the rights of her fellow workers.⁴⁷ Her dismissal -- and the implied threat of other politically motivated dismissals -- immediately provoked a surge of activity among her fellow trade unionists. While in some ways a setback, Walentynowicz's firing also provided them an opportunity that they could not afford to squander.

Well aware of the depth of discontent among the workers, the organizers believed, in the words of one activist, that "the strike was bound to be successful if we organized it the right way, that it would be like an avalanche".⁴⁸ But managing to touch off such an avalanche without being buried was no easy matter, and the key members of the Committee for Free Trade Unions set about the delicate task of determining which demands to put forward with great care. A consensus emerged that a demand for Anna Walentynowicz's reinstatement should be highlighted; this was the kind of simple demand that could be written on posters, and it was unquestionably popular. The second demand was a classical bread-and-butter one -- a pay increase of 1,000 zlotys a month to compensate the workers for rising prices. In addition, the Committee -- in a move brilliantly designed to tap directly into the angry collective memory of the shipyard workers -- decided to demand the

construction of a monument to their fallen comrades of December 1970.

Conspicuously absent from this initial list of demands was any mention of independent trade unions. This absence was intentional; the organizers firmly believed that the first priority was to get the strike off the ground, and the shipyard workers well remembered from the massacres on the Baltic Coast less than a decade earlier that a rebellion that went "too far" could result in a bloodbath. Militants such as the Gwiazdas, Walesa, Walentynowicz, and Pienkowska were, to be sure, fully committed to the creation of independent trade unions -- indeed, it was their central objective. But they were afraid that the time was not yet ripe for such a demand. As Walesa wrote some years later, "I was haunted by the feeling that August had come too soon, that we needed a year or two more of hard work to prepare".⁴⁹ Yet if a genuine avalanche of working-class insurgency were to become visible once the strike was under way, the Committee for Free Trade Unions stood ready to press forward with more radical demands.

To make sure that the opportunity provided by Walentynowicz's firing at a moment of great labor unrest would not be wasted, those most active in planning the strike decided to settle the question of leadership in advance. The strike's leader was to be Lech Walesa -- a well-known, deeply respected, and verbally adept trade-union activist popular for his long history of militancy and for his capacity to withstand attempts by management and the Party to intimidate him.⁵⁰ Though Walesa

had not been one of the initial founders of the Committee for Free Trade Unions of the Coast, he had joined the Committee very shortly after its formation and had long been one of its most active and resourceful members. In contrast to both Andrzej Gwiazda, who worked as an engineer at Elmor in Gdynia, and Bogdan Borusewicz, who was an historian and a professional oppositionist, Walesa was a shipyard worker of peasant origin -- a man who, by both temperament and background, found it easy to establish a bond with ordinary workers.⁵¹ And unlike Anna Walentynowicz, Walesa was a man: not a trivial consideration in choosing the leadership of a shipyard strike at a shipyard whose labor force of 16,000 was overwhelmingly male.

The Interfactory Strike Committee and the Twenty-One Demands

The first two-and-a-half days of the strike have been vividly described elsewhere⁵²; for our purposes here, it suffices to note that members of the Committee for Free Trade Unions played crucial roles in organizing the occupation of the Lenin Shipyard, in spreading the strike to other enterprises in the Gdansk area, and in rescuing the strike from near collapse during the critical afternoon of Saturday, August 16. Members of the intelligentsia participated at every stage of this process, but it was not until the night of August 16-17, when the Interfactory Strike Committee (MKS) of Gdansk was formed, that oppositional intellectuals put their imprint on what the movement would -- and would not -- demand.

From the moment of its birth, the MKS, a self-organized body consisting of representatives from twenty-one separate enterprises, had become the organizational embodiment of the solidarity of the workers of the Tri-City area. One of its first acts was to issue a communique stating that its goal was to "coordinate the demands and the strike actions" of the striking enterprises and factories. Giving itself exclusive power to "conduct talks with the central authorities" (n.b. not the local authorities), it also allocated to itself control over "the decision to end the strike". At the strike's conclusion, the communique declared boldly, "the MKS will not be dissolved"; instead, "it will oversee the implementation of the demands and organize free trade unions".⁵³

The Interfactory Strike Committee was a much more combative and ideologically unified body than the quite heterogeneous committee that had reached an apparent agreement with the director of the shipyard earlier that day. Many of the original sixteen members of the Presidium of the MKS knew one another from years of risky oppositional activity and shared a militant stance towards Party authorities. This was no coincidence. According to Bogdan Borusewicz, the MKS leadership had been selected "consciously" from "our people" because the fate of past strikes had demonstrated that, for an action to be successful, people "had to know one another before [in order] to have trust" and "to agree on certain things".⁵⁴

It is thus no surprise that militants from the closely-knit Gdansk opposition came to figure prominently in the strike

leadership at this stage. With Lech Walesa presiding at the late-night meeting in which the Interfactory Strike Committee's Presidium was chosen, key activists from the Committee for Free Trade Unions -- among them, Anna Walentynowicz, Andrzej Gwiazda, and Alina Pienkowska -- joined the sixteen-member body.⁵⁵ More strikingly still, the entire executive of the Presidium of the MKS was comprised of militants from the Committee who knew and trusted one another: Lech Walesa (Chairman), Bogdan Lis and Andrzej Kolodziej (Deputy Chairmen). Many of these people had met one another, it is worth emphasizing, through the activities of Bogdan Borusewicz. And it was Borusewicz himself who, on the historic night of August 16-17 when the MKS drew up the famous "Twenty-One Demands",⁵⁶ served as the Committee's chief advisor.⁵⁷

By the evening of its third day, the strike had entered a decisively new phase. It would not be much of an exaggeration to say that what issued from the all-night meeting of Saturday and Sunday constituted a second strike. With the leadership of the striking workers now both more radical and more unified, the MKS set about the task of laying out to the authorities -- and to Polish society -- their precise demands. The list that they compiled was at once far-ranging and detailed, but it was the audacious first demand -- that the authorities "accept trade unions, independent of the Party and employers, in accordance with ILO Convention 87 concerning free trade unions, ratified by Poland"⁵⁸ -- that was the most fundamental. The militant workers of the Baltic Coast, who had first called for free trade unions

during the rebellion of December 1970-January 1971, firmly believed that the other twenty demands, including the right to strike and freedom of expression, could be defended only if there was an organization that would articulate their interests and protect them from reprisals by the Party/State. And the only organization that could do this, they had concluded on the basis of the bitter experiences of the past decade, was a union that was truly their own.

On the basic issue of independent trade unions, there seems to have been little debate among those who drew up the demands. The demand for such organizations had, after all, been inscribed in the very name of the Committee for Free Trade Unions of the Coast since its founding in late April of 1978. Moreover, many of the Strike Presidium's leading members were signatories of the August 1979 Charter of Workers' Rights, which was published in Robotnik and called for the formation of independent trade unions "wherever there are strong organized groups of workers able to defend their representatives should they be dismissed from work or arrested".⁵⁹ The question, then, was not whether independent trade unions were desirable in principle, but whether it would be possible to defend them in practice. Sensing that the growing scale and unity of the strike put momentum on their side, members of the Interfactory Strike Committee decided to seize the moment and attempt the unprecedented: the creation of a legally recognized independent trade union in a Communist state.

In resolutely insisting that now -- and not some unspecified date in the future -- was the time to create free trade unions,

the militant workers of Gdansk proved bolder and more astute than their allies in the oppositional intelligentsia of Warsaw. Though supportive of the ideal of independent unions, Warsaw intellectuals, including even those radical oppositionists associated with KOR, simply could not imagine that the Party authorities would allow a genuine free trade union to exist in a Leninist regime whose primary claim to legitimacy rested on its identity as a "workers state". After Solidarity was born, Jacek Kuron admitted: "I really believed it was impossible. In fact, I knew it was impossible".⁶⁰ Adam Michnik agreed with Kuron, and forthrightly admitted that:

Jacek, like me, was very uneasy about the situation in Gdansk, where they seemed to have some pretty wild ideas ... The "wildest" idea was the one that independent and self-governing trade unions could be formed. Jacek knew this was impossible in a communist system. I also knew it was impossible and that's why I was supposed to go Gdansk, to explain to them that it was senseless to insist on such a demand. Since I was known and rather liked there, perhaps I might have convinced them. Fortunately, I was arrested. I couldn't go to Gdansk and and convince them and so Solidarity was created. [It was good] they arrested Jacek and me ... because we probably could have shown them that Solidarity simply "had no right" to exist".⁶¹

Even Jan Litynski, the editor-in-chief of Robotnik who, along with Kuron, probably had more contact with the Gdansk workers than any other Warsaw intellectual, acknowledged that "absolutely none of us considered the possibility of the creation of legal, free trade unions".⁶²

Unencumbered by excessive familiarity with the mindset of the Party elite, the workers of Gdansk grasped that the issue of free trade unions was ultimately less one of ideology than of

power. Emboldened by the growing strength of their movement, the members of the Interfactory Strike Committee had come to believe, quite unlike their fellow oppositionists in the Warsaw intelligentsia, that the strikers might well win a direct test of strength with the government.

In pressing their demand for the immediate recognition of independent trade unions, they received the full support of the one KOR intellectual who could sense the dynamics of the moment: Bogdan Borusewicz. Borusewicz was present throughout the night as the demands were hammered out, and he actively participated in their creation. His imprint -- and that of the oppositional intelligentsia more generally -- is reflected in those demands calling for "freedom for independent publishers", the restoration of former rights to "people expelled from school because of their views", and "the release of all political prisoners", and the "making public complete information about the social-economic situation" as part of the "undertaking of actions aimed at bringing the country out of its crisis situation".⁶³

Borusewicz's strongest influence, however, was over potentially inflammatory demands that were not made. During heated and wide-ranging debates over which demands to put forward that night, a ROPCiO fundamentalist suggested a demand calling for the total abolition of censorship. Borusewicz, an historian, pointedly reminded those present that the abolition of censorship in Czechoslovakia in 1968 had ended tragically and drew a line through the proposal.⁶⁴ Another potentially provocative demand vetoed by Borusewicz was a proposal for free parliamentary

elections.⁶⁵ In a volatile situation in which the specter of Polish -- and Soviet -- military intervention lurked in the background, Borusewicz was a force for moderation. Though a supposed radical, in reality he helped to persuade those around him not to transgress boundaries that Poland's powerful neighbor to the east might well consider inviolable.⁶⁶

The Role of the Commission of Experts

By Wednesday, August 20, with the strike still spreading, the strikers' allies from Warsaw KOR -- among them, Jacek Kuron, Adam Michnik, and Jan Litynski -- had been arrested by the security services. Yet just as they were being detained, another group of more moderate sympathizers from Warsaw's "critical intelligentsia" were busy organizing a declaration of support for the striking workers.⁶⁷

Brought together by Tadeusz Mazowiecki, the editor of the influential liberal Catholic weekly Wiesz ('Link'), and Bronislaw Geremek, an eminent medieval historian, a group of sixty-four intellectuals from Poland's capital signed a public appeal to the authorities. Declaring that the "present moment may prove critical for our country", they proclaimed their firm support for the strikers: "The place of all the progressive intelligentsia in this fight is on the side of the workers". At the same time, however, they sounded a call for moderation: "We appeal to the political leadership and to the striking workers to choose the path of negotiations, the path of compromise".⁶⁸ On Friday, August 22, Mazowiecki and Geremek drove off from Warsaw towards

the Lenin Shipyard, with the goal of delivering their statement of support if the authorities did not intercept them along the way. After a long drive, they arrived in Gdansk very late that evening, lacking contacts and not even knowing where the Lenin Shipyard was located. Adrift in a distant city, they decided to stop at a local church, hoping that they might find assistance there in getting to the Shipyard and making contact with the strikers. Their hope was not disappointed, and Mazowiecki and Geremek soon found themselves amidst the striking workers of the Lenin Shipyard.⁶⁹

Arriving at the Lenin Shipyard at one in the morning of Saturday, August 23, they quickly made contact with Walesa.⁷⁰ Their first act was to present him with a formal expression of the support of the intelligentsia, the "Appeal of the 64". Walesa's response was warm, but characteristically blunt:

You know, a letter is a very good thing. We will give it to our people and with a microphone, everyone will know about it. But you know the letters cannot help us. We now need assistance... We know exactly what we want but we have no experience in talking with the authorities, and [we are afraid] they will outwit us.⁷¹

Though Mazowiecki and Geremek had had no such notion when they came to Gdansk, the idea of forming a group of intellectual advisors -- ultimately called the "Commission of Experts" -- was thus born. Its task would be to assist the striking workers in their efforts to sign an agreement with the authorities. With negotiations with Deputy Prime Minister Mieczyslaw Jagielski

scheduled to begin later that very day, the timing could hardly have been better.

The role of the seven-member Commission of Experts in the negotiations between the strikers and the Party authorities that took place between August 23 and August 31 has been the subject of much controversy, with some claiming that their presence contributed significantly to the reaching of the Gdansk Accord and others asserting that they were responsible for unnecessary concessions by the workers, most notably on the issue of a clause in the final agreement concerning the "leading role of the Party"⁷². With respect, however, to the principle issue addressed in this paper -- the role of intellectuals in the founding of Solidarity -- what is most striking is that the politically moderate members of the Commission of Experts were initially in agreement with their more radical counterparts from Warsaw KOR on a matter of crucial import: that the demand of the Gdansk strikers for truly independent trade unions was at once utopian and adventurist. But unlike their militant peers from Warsaw KOR, who were by then locked up in prison, the Experts were able to see firsthand that the strikers were unanimous in their commitment not to compromise on the first and foremost of the Twenty-One Demands. As a consequence, even the most conciliatory of the Experts had by August 25 abandoned the idea of convincing the strikers to develop a "contingency plan" in the event that the authorities refused to give in to the demand for free trade unions. For just such a plan -- a proposal calling for the "radical reconstruction of the old trade unions" -- was

categorically rejected by the MKS Presidium in a joint meeting with the Experts held, according to Tadeusz Kowalik's firsthand account, "discretely in a distant part of the shipyard".⁷³

As the negotiations wore on, it became apparent nevertheless that the contribution of the Experts in working out the details of a final accord between the strikers and the government was, as we shall argue below, substantial. Yet it is worth emphasizing, especially in light of the high visibility of their role and the considerable attention that they have received in the literature, that by the time the Experts arrived, the strike had already survived its most difficult moments and momentum had already shifted to the side of the workers. Polish intellectuals had, to be sure, played an indispensable role in the creation of Solidarity. But it was locally-rooted intellectuals active in militant oppositional groups such as Young Poland and KOR -- groups which were integral parts of the Gdansk oppositional milieu out of which the Committee for Free Trade Unions emerged and which were active in the early stages of the Gdansk strike -- rather than their more moderate counterparts on the Warsaw-based Commission of Experts who were most important to the birth of the world's first free trade union in a Communist country.

A Comparison of Gdansk and Szczecin

If the contribution of some Polish intellectuals to the formation of Solidarity was critical, revisionist scholars such as Laba and Goodwyn nonetheless make a telling point when they observe that the Warsaw region -- the capital of the oppositional

intelligentsia, the citadel of KOR, and the locus of a large industrial working-class -- generated neither the demand for independent trade unions nor a single interfactory strike committee during the strike wave of July and August. The implication of this observation -- correct as far as it goes -- is that the sheer presence of oppositional intellectuals in close physical proximity to large numbers of workers (a setting that would, it should be noted, describe the Cracow region as well as Warsaw) was insufficient to create Solidarity. They also assert -- again correctly, in my view -- that Solidarity was a product not of the Polish working-class as a whole, but rather of a distinctive regional working-class culture that had grown out of the particular historical experiences of workers of the Baltic Coast. Nonetheless, their conclusion -- that, in Laba's words, the contribution of intellectuals was neither "causal" nor "creative"⁷⁴ -- is a non sequitur.

Ironically, the very comparative logic used by Laba and Goodwyn to undermine the "elite thesis" can also be employed to reveal the limitations of their own revisionist argument. For just as the example of Warsaw shows the limitations of an opposition confined primarily to the intelligentsia, so the example of the important Baltic port city of Szczecin reveals the limitations of worker opposition cut off from an oppositional intelligentsia.

Indeed, Laba's own research vividly documents how the 1970-1971 rebellion of the Baltic working class, though originating in Gdansk, reached its apex in Szczecin. For it was in Szczecin,

with the immense Warski Shipyard serving as the nerve center of the rebellion, that the demand for "independent trade unions dependent on the working class" was first put forward, and it was in Szczecin that an interfactory strike committee -- a crucial strategic innovation -- was first formed. Moreover, it was Szczecin that generated the largest general strike; in comparison, the general strikes in Gdansk and Gdynia were "shorter and less well-organized".⁷⁵ Finally, it was Szczecin that took the lead in an even more radical January strike that called for free Party and trade union elections.⁷⁶

Why, then, in 1980 did the workers of Szczecin -- who less than a decade earlier, had been in many ways strategically and programmatically ahead of their fellow workers in Gdansk -- fail to organize a strike until after their counterparts in Gdansk's Lenin Shipyard had acted? And why did the agreement that the Szczecin workers ultimately signed with the authorities fail to explicitly give them the right to strike and to form an independent trade union -- rights clearly inscribed in the Gdansk Agreement?

If the workers of Szczecin failed to seize upon the opportunities presented by the strike waves of July and early August until after their fellow workers in Gdansk took the initiative, this was not because of an absence of working-class antipathy towards the regime -- the events of 1970-1971 and their aftermath had seen to that. What is striking, however, in comparing the two cities is the difference in the size and strength of the oppositional intelligentsia. Szczecin, though

not a major intellectual center, did have among its 400,000 inhabitants a few members of intelligentsia-dominated groups such as ROPCiO, Robotnik, and later the Confederation for an Independent Poland. Nevertheless, the oppositional intelligentsia there had little overall strength.⁷⁷ In Gdansk, in contrast, the oppositional intelligentsia was relatively large and powerful, its dynamic presence visible at the biannual commemorative ceremonies. Moreover, while oppositional movements often feuded in other Polish cities, in Gdansk relations among them were exceptionally good.

It was in this context that Gdansk's Committee for Free Trade Unions of the Coast, founded in April 1978, had been able to exert a growing influence on oppositionally-inclined workers during the ensuing two years. In Szczecin, however, the parallel group, the Committee for Free Trade Unions of Western Pomerania, did not manage to establish itself until October 1979 and never succeeded in gaining a foothold among workers in the major enterprises. This contrast seems important in explaining the differential response of these two historic centers of working-class resistance to the strike wave of the summer of 1980. In Gdansk, the Lenin Shipyard was a Committee stronghold and the scene of a carefully planned strike; in Szczecin, the Warski Shipyard, which had been the center of the uprising of 1970-1971, remained silent until after it became apparent that, as one worker put it, "something very big was happening in Gdansk".⁷⁸

Thus it was that Gdansk's Lenin Shipyard went out on strike on Thursday, August 14 and was already the headquarters of a

growing Interfactory Strike Committee by August 16, while Szczecin's Warski Shipyard did not strike until well into the morning of Monday, August 18. According to an eyewitness account by a worker there, work continued until 10 a.m., when a group of workers began to move around the yard saying: "What shall we do? Gdansk is on strike; we must help".⁷⁹ Marian Jurczyk, the leader of the Szczecin strike, confirmed that the Warski workers followed the lead of their counterparts in Gdansk: "We thought that our fellow-workers in Gdansk were putting forward the right demands and we wanted to support them".⁸⁰

Yet the atmosphere of the strikes in the two cities could hardly have been more different, for while the Gdansk action included the active participation of numerous members of the oppositional intelligentsia and took place under the gaze of television cameras and foreign correspondents, the strike in Szczecin was almost a purely working-class affair, with representatives of the intelligentsia unwelcome and the foreign press banned.⁸¹ Particularly unwelcome in Szczecin, where several of the leaders of the strike were (as in Gdansk) veterans of the struggle of 1970-1971, were members of the oppositional intelligentsia associated with KOR. Indeed, on the first day of the strike, two young activists associated with Robotnik who reportedly "looked like students" arrived at the Warski Shipyard only to be shown the gate. In addition, the sole member of Robotnik's editorial board and the Committee for Free Trade Unions of Western Pomerania who did manage to make it inside the shipyard as an "unofficial observer" was not even told of calls

from Warsaw KOR requesting information on the strike. Moreover, when KOR publications addressed to him were delivered to the shipyard, they were quickly impounded by the MKS.⁸²

Though Gdansk undeniably played the catalytic role in the August rebellion of the Baltic working-class, some analysts have suggested that the workers of Szczecin extracted a better agreement from the authorities than their counterparts in Gdansk. The primary reason they did so, the argument runs, is that they were less encumbered by concession-making intellectuals.⁸³ As Staniszkis put it, the "Experts" involved in the Gdansk negotiations "distorted the authentic expression of the movement" and unnecessarily acceded to such regime demands as the inclusion of a clause on the "leading role of the Party".⁸⁴

A careful examination of the texts of the two agreements, while confirming that the greater presence of intellectuals in Gdansk did in fact have an impact, does not support the conclusion that the workers of Gdansk were somehow shortchanged.⁸⁵ On the contrary, the Gdansk Agreement arguably did a better job of defending the interests of the strikers, especially on the two fundamental issues: the right to form trade unions independent of the Party and state, and the right to strike.

On the first point, the Szczecin Agreement makes reference to the "creation of self-managing trade unions", but does not specify that the existing MKS is free to become a trade union; in contrast, the Gdansk Agreement refers to the "creation... of free and self-governing trade unions in line with Convention 87 of the

ILO" and explicitly declares that "the MKS is free to adopt the form of trade union".⁸⁶ On the second point, the Gdansk Accord declares that "the right to strike will be guaranteed by the new trade union law" and that "the government undertakes to protect the personal security of strikers and those who have helped them". Astonishingly, the Szczecin Agreement makes no explicit reference to the right to strike, though it does call for "No prosecutions against workers for strike activities".⁸⁷

Yet the most powerful way in which the Gdansk Accord protected the interests of the strikers may not have been in the text at all, but rather by the decision by the strike leadership during the early stages of the strike to allow the media, both foreign and domestic, full access to the Lenin Shipyard. By doing this, the Gdansk strike leaders accomplished two things: they informed their fellow citizens of the great events that were occurring in Gdansk, and they raised the cost to the authorities of either repressing the strike by force or reneging on an agreement that they had signed in full public view. Such transparency was simply not possible in Szczecin, where a general distrust of intellectuals and especially foreigners led the strike leadership to close the shipyard to all but a handful of Polish journalists.⁸⁸

The main point of any comparison of Szczecin and Gdansk must, however, remain that the oppositional workers of Gdansk, acting in cooperation with some of that city's most prominent and energetic oppositional intellectuals, were able to accomplish what the workers of Szczecin, acting alone, were not: a strike

that would re-ignite the historic demand of the Baltic working-class for independent trade unions. In accomplishing this task, the role of the KOR-linked Committee for Free Trade Unions of the Coast -- an organization which combined 'pure workers' like Lech Walesa and Anna Walentynowicz with members of the technical intelligentsia like the Gwiazdas, and through Borusewicz connected all of them to the world of Warsaw intellectuals -- was central. Simply put, in the absence of a coherent leadership group that had come to know and trust one another through their activities in the Committee, the historic strike at the Lenin Shipyard might never have begun and almost certainly would not have survived its most difficult moments.

Concluding Remarks

To maintain that Solidarity's origins may be located in a distinctive oppositional milieu in Gdansk that included both intellectuals and workers is in no way to deny that it was predominantly a working-class creation whose formation was possible only through the collective efforts of hundreds of thousands of workers on Poland's Baltic Coast. It was only in the fertile soil of the Baltic working-class -- the setting in which, less than a decade earlier, the shipyard workers of Szczecin and Gdansk had first put forward the demand for free trade unions and invented the interfactory strike committee -- that Solidarity could have been born. Yet it was not workers acting alone who brought Solidarity into being in its birthplace of Gdansk, but rather a complex coalition of oppositional workers

and intellectuals. In that specific sense, the fundamental claim of the revisionists -- that the workers of the Baltic Coast created Solidarity essentially on their own -- is simply not tenable.

Interestingly, the workers who took some of the greatest risks and made some of the greatest sacrifices -- the early free trade unionists who repeatedly faced harassment, arrest, and imprisonment -- had no illusions that they had created Solidarity by themselves. Their feelings on the matter are disclosed in a December 1980 group interview⁸⁹ of several members of the Committee for Free Trade Unions in which Anna Walentynowicz stated: "The social change which is currently going on is to a large extent due to the people in KOR. As a worker I am indebted to them for it... They didn't only defend the workers, they also taught them how to defend themselves against any reprisals". In the same interview, Alina Pienkowska added that "The influence of KOR on social awareness was immense. The fact that the strike ended in this way [i.e. a peaceful agreement] -- and not any other possible way -- is due to them". And Andrzej Gwiazda, agreeing with his colleagues who credited KOR with the peaceful character of the strike, claimed that, "KOR taught the people that there are other means of arguing with the authorities than molotov cocktails".⁹⁰

The most incisive comment of all was made by Solidarity's charismatic leader, Lech Walesa. "The whole affair," he said, "is based on the fact that KOR taught us this job". Walesa quickly added, however, that: "Now the pupils have surpassed

their teachers".⁹¹ And on this matter, as on so many others, the wily electrician once again hit the mark. For it was the workers who had insisted, against the advice of their KOR friends from the Warsaw intelligentsia, on demanding free trade unions now; moreover, it was the workers who held fast to this demand during the negotiations despite the best efforts of some of the "Experts" to convince them that it was simply not realistic. Yet in the end it was the workers rather than their allies from the Warsaw intelligentsia whose sense of what was politically possible proved superior. On the fundamental issue, then, the workers of Gdansk had truly "surpassed their teachers". For those intellectuals who had long labored to stimulate the self-organization of the Polish working-class, such a result meant that success had arrived earlier than they had ever expected.

FOOTNOTES

1. The description of such writers as Laba and Goodwyn, who emphasize the working-class origins of Solidarity and downplay the contribution of intellectuals, as 'revisionist' is borrowed from a penetrating essay review by Timothy Garton Ash "Poland After Solidarity", The New York Review of Books, 38 (11) June 13, 1991, pp.46-58.

2. Roman Laba, The Roots of Solidarity: A Political Sociology of Poland's Working Class Democratization (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1991) and Lawrence Goodwyn, Breaking the Barrier: The Rise of Solidarity in Poland (New York, Oxford University Press, 1991).

3. Lenin's most famous formulation on the nature of the relationship between the working class and the intelligentsia is, of course, from What Is To Be Done? in V. I. Lenin, On the Intellectuals (Moscow, Progress Publishers, 1983) pp.34-35.

The history of all countries shows that the working class, exclusively by its own effort, is able only to develop only trade-union consciousness, i.e., the conviction that it is necessary to combine unions, fight the employers, and strive to compel the government to pass necessary labor legislation, etc. The theory of socialism, however, grew out of the philosophic, historical, and economic theories elaborated by educated representatives of the propertied classes, by intellectuals. By their social status, the founders of modern scientific socialism, Marx and Engels, themselves belonged to the bourgeois intelligentsia. In the very same way, in Russia, the theoretical doctrine of Social-Democracy arose altogether independently of the spontaneous growth of the working-class movement; it arose as a natural and inevitable outcome of

the development of thought among the revolutionary socialist intelligentsia.

For some provocative reflections on the inherent contradiction in Marxist and Leninist thought between the emphasis on working-class self-emancipation and the authoritative role granted within the workers' movement to theorists from the intelligentsia, see Alvin W. Gouldner, "Prologue to a Theory of Revolutionary Intellectuals" Telos 26 (1975-1976) pp.3-36 and Alvin W. Gouldner, Against Fragmentation: The Origins of Marxism and the Sociology of Intellectuals (New York, Oxford University Press, 1985)

4. David S. Mason, Public Opinion and Political Change in Poland, 1980-1982 (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1985) p.50.

5. David Ost, Solidarity and the Politics of Anti-Politics: Opposition and Reform in Poland in 1968 (Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 1990) pp.10-11.

6. Quoted in Laba, The Roots of Solidarity, p.6.

7. Other interpretations of Solidarity's origins which emphasize the importance of KOR include Timothy Garton Ash, The Polish Revolution (New York, Scribner's, 1983); Alain Touraine et al., Solidarity: The Analysis of a Social Movement (New York, Cambridge University Press, 1983); Neal Ascherson, The Polish August (New York, Viking Press, 1982); Leszek Kolakowski, "The Intelligentsia" in Abraham Brumberg (ed.), Poland: The Genesis of a Revolution (New York, Random House, 1983), pp.54-67; Jan Josef Lipski, KOR: The Worker's Self-Defense Committee (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1985); Aleksander Smolar, "Contestation Intellectuelle et Mouvement Populaire" in Solidarite Resiste et Signe (Paris, Nouvelle Cite, 1984), pp.135-151; Krzysztof Pomian, Pologne: Defi a l'Impossible (Paris, Les editions ouvrieres, 1982), Albert Szymanski, Class Struggle in Socialist Poland: With Comparisons to Yugoslavia (New York, Praeger, 1984); Robert Zuzowski, "The Workers'

Defense Committee 'KOR': A Study in Political Dissent in Contemporary Poland." Ph.D dissertation, La Trobe University (1988); Michael H. Bernhard, "Workers II: Oppositional Politics", unpublished chapter from The Origins of Democratization in Poland: Workers, Intellectuals, and Oppositional Politics, 1976-1980. (New York, Columbia University Press, forthcoming).

8. Laba, The Roots of Solidarity, pp.181,11.

9. In the concluding pages of his book, Laba does state that:

There would not have been a Solidarity without the intellectuals, but the Solidarity they joined was built on the framework developed by workers. In other words, the roots of Solidarity were in the Baltic working class, and the intellectuals made a necessary but not causal or creative contribution (Laba, The Roots of Solidarity, p. 178).

This quote has the rhetorical effect of seeming to concede considerable ground to those analysts who have emphasized the role of intellectuals in the origins of Solidarity; the problem is that little in the preceding 177 pages of Laba's volume prepares the reader for the conclusion that "There would not have been a Solidarity without the intellectuals". Indeed, Laba argues precisely that intellectuals were not indispensable to the founding of Solidarity, thus making it a great surprise when we learn four pages from the end that "intellectuals made a necessary ... contribution", albeit not a "causal or creative" one. Exactly how a contribution could be "necessary" but not "causal" is something that Laba does not explain.

10. Goodwyn, Breaking the Barrier, p. 444.

11. Ibid., p. 216.

12. Ibid., p. 200.

13. Ibid., p. 246.

14. My own interpretation of Solidarity's origins presumes a basic familiarity with recent Polish history and, more particularly, with the events of the summer of 1980. It is based primarily on three sources:

- a. Formal interviews conducted in Gdansk and Warsaw with over 25 Polish workers and intellectuals in 1990 and 1991, as well as impressions derived from field research in Poland in 1981.
- b. An examination of relevant primary documents, including the texts of the communiqués issued by Gdansk's Interfactory Strike Committee (MKS), the transcripts of the five negotiation sessions between the MKS and the Government Commission, the thirteen issues of the Solidarity Strike Bulletin, the texts of the demands put forward by the workers of Gdansk and Szczecin as well as the respective agreements reached in both cities, and published interviews with some of the key participants in the strikes.
- c. The large body of secondary literature on Solidarity beginning with the first eyewitness accounts and journalistic treatments of 1980-1982 and extending through the scholarly monographs published in 1991.

Among the interviews that proved most important to my understanding of Solidarity's beginnings were those with Anna Walentynowicz, Bogdan Borusewicz, Alina Pienkowska, Bronislaw Geremek, Tadeusz Kowalik, Jadwiga Staniszkis, Jacek Kuron and Jan Litynski. The best collections of primary documents in

English are those by Oliver MacDonald (ed.), The Polish August (Seattle, Left Bank Books, 1981) and A.Kemp-Welch (ed.), The Birth of Solidarity: The Gdansk Negotiations, 1980 (New York, St. Martin's Press, 1983), but the volumes by Peter Raina, Independent Social Movements in Poland (London, London School of Economics, 1981) and William F. Robinson (ed.), The Strikes in Poland (Munich, Free Radio Europe, 1980) are also extremely useful. Of the voluminous body of secondary works on Solidarity, the most vivid accounts of the events in the Lenin Shipyard from August 14 through August 31, 1980 are provided by Garton Ash, The Polish Revolution; Ascherson, The Polish August; Stan Persky, At the Lenin Shipyard (Vancouver, New Star Books, 1981); Jean-Yves Potel, The Promise of Solidarity (New York, Praeger, 1982); and Goodwyn, Breaking the Barrier. In addition to Goodwyn and Laba's revisionist accounts and the items cited in footnote 3, other valuable works include Ost, Solidarity and the Politics of Anti-Politics; Michael D. Kennedy, Professionals, Power and Solidarity in Poland (New York, Cambridge University Press, 1991); Alex Pravda, "Poland 1980: From 'Premature Consumerism' To Labour Solidarity" Soviet Studies 34:2 (1982), pp. 167-199; Daniel Singer, The Road to Gdansk (New York, Monthly Review Press, 1981); Lawrence Wechsler, Solidarity: Poland in the Season of its Passion (New York, Simon and Schuster, 1982); Denis MacShane, Solidarity: Poland's Independent Trade Union (Nottingham, Spokesman, 1981); Andrew Arato, "Civil Society vs. the State: Poland 1980-81" Telos 47 (1981) pp. 23-47; Abraham Brumberg (ed.), Poland: The Genesis of a Revolution (New York, Random House, 1983); Oliver MacDonald, "The Polish Vortex: Solidarity and Socialism," New Left Review 139 (1983) pp. 5-48; Martin Malia, "Poland: The Winter War," New York Review of Books 29:4 (March 18, 1982) pp. 21-26. Adam Michnik, Letters from Prison (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1985); and Jadwiga Staniszkis, Poland's Self-Limiting Revolution (Princeton, Princeton

University, 1984). Those who wish to gain a better sense of the chronology of major events in Polish history from 1939 through 1981 should consult Wechsler's 60-page appendix to his book Solidarity: Poland in the Season of Its Passion. This appendix offers a particularly detailed chronology of Solidarity from the beginning of the strike in Gdansk's Lenin Shipyard on August 14, 1980 through the declaration of martial law on December 13, 1981.

15. Goodwyn, Breaking the Barrier, pp. 246,251 and

Laba, The Roots of Solidarity, p. 172.

16. Ibid., p. 5.

17. In his essay review of Laba, Goodwyn, and three other books on Poland, Garton Ash notes the tendency of revisionists to "overstate, oversimplify and at times even caricature the interpretation they wish to revise" and uses the treatment of his own work as an example. While describing Laba's work "a well-made, original book", Garton Ash is harsh on Goodwyn, whom he says "simply does not know or understand enough about Poland" (Garton Ash, "Poland After Solidarity", pp. 48-51). In assessing the work of Laba and Goodwyn, I have also found the reviews by Michael H. Bernhard, "Reinterpreting Solidarity" Studies in Comparative Communism 24 (1991) pp. 313-330 and Andrzej W. Tymowski, "Workers vs. Intellectuals in Solidarnosc" Telos 90 (1992) pp. 157-174, to be especially useful.

18. Laba, The Roots of Solidarity, p. 3.

19. For a description of the situation facing Gdansk's worker activists from the spring of 1971 until 1976, see Goodwyn, Breaking the Barrier, pp. 127-131. Lech Walesa's account of his activities during these years, including the events leading to his firing from the Lenin Shipyard, are included in his autobiography, Lech Walesa, A Way of Hope (New York, Holt, 1987) pp. 83-86; for a discussion of his 1976 firing, as well as his role in

the events of December 1970-January 1971, see Edmund Szczesiak, "Notes on Biography" in The Book of Lech Walesa, introduced by Neal Ascherson (New York, Simon and Schuster, 1982) pp. 30-36).

20. Lipski, KOR: The Worker's Self-Defense Committee, pp. 62-78.

21. "Voices From Poland" Social Text 5 (Spring 1982) pp. 3-21.

22. Born in 1949 and the son of a schoolteacher, Borusewicz had been imprisoned for two years as a result of activities he conducted while still in high school in support of the student uprising of March 1968. An early member of KOR, Borusewicz was also on the editorial board of both Robotnik ('The Worker') and Robotnik Wybrzeza ('Worker of the Coast') (Interview with Bogdan Borusewicz, May 14, 1990; Lipski, KOR: The Worker's Self-Defense Committee, p. 57; Potel, The Promise of Solidarity p. 220). One indicator of Borusewicz's centrality in the founding of Solidarity was that it was he who recruited Lech Walesa into the Founding Committee for Free Trade Unions of the Coast. Later, Walesa said that "Bogdan Borusewicz is my teacher" (Zuzowski, "The Workers' Defense Committee", p. 192).

23. Writing from his perspective as a founding member of KOR, Lipski notes that ROPCiO was an organization that "willingly proclaimed its Catholicism" and included a strong nationalist element (Lipski, KOR: The Worker's Self-Defense Committee, pp. 121-122). A number of other right-of-center nationalist groups were later formed as a result of splitoffs from ROPCiO; among the more important were the Confederation for Independent Poland, a militantly nationalist movement founded on September 1, 1979, and the Young Poland Movement, a neo-nationalist group associated with Aleksander Hall's Bratniak and established on July 29, 1979 (Lipski, *Ibid.*, p.123; Raina, Independent Social Movements pp. 410-412, 422-423). The Young Poland group was particularly active in Gdansk and enjoyed excellent relations with KOR.

This was possible, Lipski writes, because of its "loyalty in situations of conflict ... which made possible an atmosphere of moral trust" and an ideology that, while "moderate nationalist", was "without anti-Semitism" and "without a trace of fascist ideas" (Lipski, KOR: The Worker's Self-Defense Committee, pp. 123, 356-357, 517).

24. Lipski, *Ibid.*, pp. 15, 57-58 and Raina, Independent Social Movements, pp. 55, 311.

25. Goodwyn, Breaking the Barriers, p. 138; Lipski, KOR: The Worker's Self-Defense Committee, p. 245; and Bernhard, "Workers II," p.66.

26. Bernhard, *Ibid.*, p. 65.

27. Interview with Alina Pienkowska, May 14, 1990 in Gdansk.

28. This conclusion is based on interviews with Alina Pienkowska (May 14, 1990), Bogdan Borusewicz (May 14, 1990 in Gdansk), Anna Walentynowicz (May 16, 1990 in Warsaw), Jacek Kuron (May 23, 1991 in Warsaw), and Jan Litynski (May 22, 1991 in Warsaw).

29. Interview with Alina Pienkowska (May 14, 1990).

30. Ash notes that Andrzej Gwiazda was from an "intelligentsia family" and had been enrolled in "advanced studies" at Gdansk Polytechnic (Garton Ash, "Poland After Solidarity", p. 50). Goodwyn's own interesting portrayal of Gwiazda observes that he had "a commanding, almost imperial presence" and "a quick mind," but "could not generate a sense of camaraderie among those he knew casually" and was decidedly "not one of 'the boys'" (Goodwyn, Breaking the Barriers, pp. 150-151).

31. Krzysztof Wyszowski, who is generally credited with the idea of forming a free trade union, was a well-read carpenter who in his spare time prepared the work of Witold Gombrowicz for publication in Poland's underground press (Goodwyn, *Ibid.*, p. 141). His brother Blazej was an engineer who had

founded the Student Solidarity Committee in Gdansk and later gone on to become an exceptional sailor and an Olympic athlete (Lipski, KOR: The Worker's Self-Defense Committee, p. 244).

32. Lipski, *Ibid.*, pp. 241-242.

33. According to Bernhard, "Workers II", pp. 65-76, while Walesa, Walentynowicz, Lis, and Kolodziej were all 'workers' as the term is commonly defined (i.e. they all performed manual labor in return for wages), several of the other key activists in the Committee for Free Trade Unions of the Coast were not members of the 'working class', even broadly conceived. Such non-working-class Committee members included Andrzej and Joanna Duda-Gwiazda, both engineers (see Kemp-Welch, The Birth of Solidarity, p. 32) and members of what in Poland is sometimes referred to as the technical (or scientific) intelligentsia, and Bogdan Borusewicz, an historian and member of the humanist (or cultural) intelligentsia who occasionally gave lectures on Polish history in front of Gdansk opposition circles. Moreover, there were cases like Krzysztof Wyszowski, whose occupation made him a 'worker' but whose cultural proclivities marked him as an 'intellectual' (see footnote 31 above). Finally, as Garton Ash, ("Poland After Solidarity", p. 50) notes, there are activists who, "came precisely from the intermediate zone between pure "workers" and pure "intellectuals""; Alina Pienkowska, who had been trained as a nurse, would be a good example. According to Jacek Kuron, it was young people from this gray zone at the boundary of the working class and intelligentsia who gave Solidarity much of its energy and character:

I have to tell you that our contacts through KOR with the workers in '79 brought us to meet the group of workers who played the most important role in Solidarity later. I'm speaking here not really about a particular person but a certain sociological category. Namely, those were young people who after

the secondary school diploma, they didn't go to university because of the conditions. They went to work in large factories where they made more money. And they dressed just like their colleagues who studied. They read the same books. And they would say that they were the intelligentsia. This is the secret of Solidarity, you see (Interview with Jacek Kuron, May 23, 1991).

34. The dimensions of the Gdansk opposition have been estimated by Andrzej Gwiazda, who judged the number of "sympathizers" at the annual commemorative events to have been "around a hundred" in 1977, "six hundred" in 1978, and "several thousand" in 1979 (Walesa, A Way of Hope, p. 109). Bernhard ("Workers II, pp. 67-79) reports a somewhat higher figure, with his estimate of the number of people present at the 1977, 1978, and 1979 commemorations of the Gdansk massacre at 1000, 4000, and 5000-7000, respectively.

35. That members of the Committee for Free Trade Unions of the Coast were in frequent contact during this period with members of Warsaw KOR was confirmed in interviews with Alina Pienkowska (May 14, 1990), Bogdan Borusewicz (May 14, 1990), Anna Walentynowicz (May 16, 1990), Jan Litynski (May 22, 1991), Jacek Kuron (May 23, 1991), and Adam Michnik (May 23, 1991). Other than Borusewicz, Kuron seems to have been the key liaison with the Gdansk activists, but Litynski and, on occasion, Michnik, were also in communication with them. The number of face-to-face meetings in Gdansk and Warsaw is impossible to reconstruct with precision, but both Walentynowicz and Litynski estimated eight to ten such gatherings took place.

36. Interviews with Jacek Kuron (May 23, 1991) and Jan Litynski (May 22, 1991).

37. Garton Ash, The Polish Revolution, p. 38.

38. Interview with Anna Walentynowicz, May 16, 1990.

39. Interview with Jacek Kuron, May 23, 1991.
40. Persky, At the Lenin Shipyard, p. 6.
41. Ascherson, The Polish August, pp. 145-146.
42. Persky, At the Lenin Shipyard, p. 6 and Jerzy Borowczak, "At the Lenin Shipyard" in Stan Persky and Henry Flam (eds.), The Solidarity Sourcebook (Vancouver, New Star Books, 1982) p. 74.
43. Borowczak, *Ibid.*
44. MacShane, Solidarity: Poland's Independent Trade Union, p. 16.
45. The concern that other activists "might be next" following Walentynowicz's dismissal was a major worry among the militant trade unionists. According to Alina Pienkowska:
- "The moment Anna Walentynowicz was kicked out, we decided we couldn't wait any longer, because we'd all be kicked out and lose contact with the factories. The contact during these two years was very natural. We were just there, we worked there...people knew us. (Interview, May 14, 1990).
46. Walesa, A Way of Hope, pp. 116-117.
47. Walesa, *Ibid.* and Garton Ash, The Polish Revolution, p. 38.
48. Borowczak, "At the Lenin Shipyard", p. 73.
49. Walesa, A Way of Hope, p. 118.
50. Walesa, *Ibid.*, pp. 40, 118; Borowczak, "At the Lenin Shipyard", p. 74; and Goodwyn, Breaking the Barriers, p. 158.
51. As noted in footnote 30, Andrzej Gwiazda was born into an intelligentsia family and undertook advanced studies at Gdansk Polytechnic. Borusewicz, the son of a schoolteacher was an intellectual who had some graduate work in history. Borusewicz's mother had moved to the United States in 1977 and provided some of the financial resources that made it possible for

him to become a "professional oppositionist" (Interview with Bogdan Borusewicz, May 14, 1990). Walesa's peasant origins in a small village in rural Poland are vividly described in his autobiography (Walesa, A Way of Hope, pp. 14-39).

52. Among the most detailed accounts of the strike's early days are the versions contained in Walesa (A Way of Hope, pp. 117-125), Potel (The Promise of Solidarity, pp. 42-51), Persky (At the Lenin Shipyard, pp. 14-24, 62-80), and Goodwyn (Breaking the Barriers, pp. 158-166). An illuminating calendar of the strike was drawn up by members of the editorial board of Robotnik and is included in MacDonald (The Polish August, pp. 90-95, 97-99).

53. Lipski, KOR: The Worker's Self-Defense Committee, p. 420 and Garton Ash, The Polish Revolution, p. 42.

54. Interview with Bogdan Borusewicz, May 14, 1990.

55. On August 21, Lech Badkowski, president of the Gdansk Writers' Union and longtime sympathizer of the worker opposition, was appointed to the presidium by acclamation after reading out a support resolution from the Gdansk writers union to the workers gathered in the shipyard (Kemp-Welch, The Birth of Solidarity, p. 201). According to Walesa, Badkowski "had been with us since the announcement of the strike"; unfortunately, he does not elaborate upon Badkowski's role in these early days, though he does describe him as the "strikers' first spokesman" and acknowledges "his contribution to the [later] negotiations with the government commission" as "crucial" (Walesa, A Way of Hope, p. 133). Joining Badkowski on the presidium on August 21 was another delegate to the strike committee from the Gdansk intelligentsia: Wojciech Gruszecki, a chemist with a doctoral degree in chemistry from Gdansk Technical University who had joined its staff in 1964 and been employed there since (Kemp-Welch, The Birth of Solidarity, p. 202).

The accession of intellectuals onto the Presidium of the MKS was by no means without controversy. In his autobiography, Walesa pointedly emphasized the existence of tensions between the predominantly working class MKS Presidium and the intelligentsia:

"Today, people are saying that Solidarity is a veritable model of the alliance between the workers and the intelligentsia... But nobody cares to remember how I was reviled for getting the academics and the writers involved in the strike. In August, I was accused of acting like a dictator because I co-opted Badkowski and Gruszewski on to the praesidium. The fact is that as soon as they arrived with their declarations of support I decided, despite opposition, that they should be on the praesidium. I had to do that because I wanted to have as many social groups as possible represented. And what did some of the others say?... They said that we should send all those intellectuals to the devil, that we would be able to manage on our own, and that we would show them just how much we can do without anyone's help."

("Walesa - An Action Portrait". Lech Walesa interviewed by Marzena and Tadeusz Wozniak in The Book of Lech Walesa, introduced by Neal Ascherson (New York, Simon and Schuster, 1982) pp.196-197). Yet despite this opposition from segments of the MKS Presidium itself, Walesa's views prevailed -- perhaps because he was backed in the dispute by his fellow members of the Committee for Free Trade Unions of the Coast, for whom cooperation with oppositional intellectuals was already a well-established pattern.

56. The text of the Twenty-One Demands is included in Kemp-Welch (The Birth of Solidarity, pp. 168-179) and may also be found in MacDonald (The Polish August, pp. 102-109), Persky and Flam (eds.) (The Solidarity Sourcebook, pp. 93-100), and MacShane (Solidarity: Poland's Independent Trade Union, pp. 151-160).

57. Zuzowski, "The Workers' Defense Committee 'KOR'," p. 322 and the interview with Alina Pienkowska, May 14, 1990.

58. Kemp-Welch, The Birth of Solidarity, p.166.

59. Lipski, KOR: The Worker's Self-Defense Committee, pp. 495-496.

60. MacShane, Solidarity: Poland's Independent Trade Union, p.134.

61. Adam Michnik quoted in Ost, Solidarity and the Politics of Anti-Politics, p. 77.

62. Zuzowski, "The Workers' Defense Committee 'KOR'," p. 329.

63. The demands listed in MacDonald (The Polish August, pp. 34-35) are taken directly from Solidarity Strike Bulletin No.2 of August 24, 1980. Their wording differs slightly from the wording of the Gdansk Agreement, where the demands are presented amidst the complicated "conclusions" reached by the MKS and the Government Commission.

64. Garton Ash, The Polish Revolution, p. 44 and Walesa, A Way of Hope, p. 130.

65. Interview with Bogdan Borusewicz, May 14, 1990.

66. Without identifying his source, Potel quotes Borusewicz as saying: "To demand pluralist elections amounts to maximalism. If the Party were to give in, Moscow would intervene. We must not put forward demands which would either drive the regime to the use of violence, or would lead to its decomposition" (Potel, The Promise of Solidarity, pp. 52). Walesa reports that another intellectual with well-established ties to the Gdansk workers' opposition, Aleksander Hall, the leader of the Young Poland Movement and editor of Bratniak, was also present as the Twenty-One Demands were drawn up (Walesa, A Way of Hope, p. 130).

67. I use the phrase "critical intelligentsia" rather than "oppositional intelligentsia" intentionally here, for many of the signatories of the appeal,

though highly critical of the regime, were considered neither by themselves nor the authorities to be members of the "opposition", with its powerful connotations of radical and possibly illegal activities.

68. Raina, Independent Social Movements in Poland, pp. 478-479.

69. Interview with Bronislaw Geremek, May 12, 1990 in Warsaw.

70. Persky, At the Lenin Shipyard, p. 103.

71. Interview with Bronislaw Geremek, May 12, 1990.

72. The debate about whether the Experts constituted an asset or a liability to the striking workers extends to members of the Commission of Experts itself. For a positive view, see Tadeusz Kowalik, "Experts and the Working Group. The Formation of the Group of Experts" in Kemp-Welch, The Birth of Solidarity, pp. 143-167. He was one of the originators of the idea of sending a delegation to Gdansk (Interview with Tadeusz Kowalik, May 11, 1990 in Warsaw); for a critical one, see Jadwiga Staniszkis, "The Evolution of Forms of Working-Class Protest in Poland: Sociological Reflections on the Gdansk-Szczecin Case, August 1980," Soviet Studies 33 (1981a) pp. 204-231 and "Experts and the 'Leading Role': A Participant's Account," Labour Focus on Eastern Europe 4: 4-6 (1981b) pp. 12-13. She resigned from the Commission in a disagreement with the other Experts on matters of both process and substance. Among the numerous secondary sources that discuss the Experts, some of the more detailed treatments are included in Goodwyn (Breaking the Barrier), Ascherson (The Polish August), Garton Ash (The Polish Revolution), and Potel (The Promise of Solidarity).

73. Kowalik, "Experts and the Working Group," p. 145.

74. Laba, The Roots of Solidarity, p. 178.

75. Ibid., p.60.

76. Ascherson, The Polish August, pp.100-103.

77. Bernhard, "Workers II," p. 59.

78. "Szczecin," Labour Focus on Eastern Europe 4: 4-6 (1981) p. 16.

79. Ibid., p. 17.

80. Ibid., p. 20.

81. Ascherson, The Polish August, pp. 168-169 and Bernhard, "Workers II," pp. 58-63.

82. Bernhard, Ibid., pp. 60-61.

83. In reality, some intellectuals were present in Szczecin, but they came later and played a lesser role than in Gdansk. As in Gdansk, the workers of Szczecin, according to an eyewitness account, "wanted lawyers to frame our demands correctly" ("Szczecin," p. 19) and early in the strike accepted the assistance of a group of radical local lawyers associated as the "Club of Szczecin Bibliophiles" (Ascherson, The Polish August p. 170). Towards the end of the strike, on August 28, the Szczecin MKS permitted a small team of advisors from Warsaw to come to the Warski Shipyard. Among the members of this team were a professor of sociology, Andrzej Tymowski, and a well-known writer of the opposition, Andrzej Kijowski (Ascherson, Ibid.; Bernhard, "Workers II," p. 61; Lipski, KOR: The Worker's Self-Defense Committee, p. 422).

84. Staniszkis' perception that the Gdansk strikers would have been able to reach an agreement without a clause on the "leading role of the Party", had the Commission of Experts not been involved with the negotiations, is shared by Anna Walentynowicz and Bogdan Borusewicz (Interview with Anna Walentynowicz, May 16, 1990; Interview with Bogdan Borusewicz, May 14, 1990). See also Staniszkis, "Experts and the 'Leading Role'," pp. 12-13 and Ascherson, The Polish August, pp. 168-172.

85. The argument that the Gdansk Agreement did at least as good a job defending workers' interests as the Szczecin Agreement is made in greater detail than is possible here by Kowalik ("Experts and the Working Group," pp. 160-164).

86. MacDonald, The Polish August, pp. 113, 103.

87. Ibid., 103-104, 113.

88. Bernhard, "Workers II," pp. 60-61.

89. Another illuminating interview with many of the key figures from the Committee for Free Trade Unions of the Coast (but not including Walesa) is published under the title "Voices from Poland" in the Spring 1982 issue of Social Text. For more insight into Walesa's relationship with KOR, see his autobiography, where he acknowledges he "owed much" to Jacek Kuron, "especially the help that KOR gave me and many others when unemployed or in personal difficulties" (Walesa, A Way of Hope, p. 149).

90. "Solidarity and KOR: An Interview with Gdansk Leaders" in Labour Focus on Eastern Europe 4:4-6 (1981) pp. 13-15.

91. Ibid., p. 14.