

FIGHTING SOLIDARITY:

An American Remembers

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by G. Sobczyk

The log cabin sat back where the open meadow met the trees of the forest beyond. We were teachers, students and other professionals from Wroclaw, and we gathered on weekends seeking refuge from the city. During those early years, 1977-79, I was a green American who had come back to discover my cultural roots in the country that my grandparents had left a century before. The cabin belonged to Dr. Kornel Morawiecki and his family. I will always remember the warm friendship they extended to me, making me feel a part of their family.

Slowly, as I became more fluent in Polish, I was able to participate in the sometimes heated discussions about religion, philosophy, and, inevitably, politics. In the Winter of 1978, I returned from a visit to the West with paperback copies of Bliss Lane's, "I Saw Poland Betrayed", and another about the Katyn forest massacre. These books were an instant success. In spite of the fact that they were in English, many were eager to quench their thirst for information in a land wrung dry by the censors of its communist government.

In June 1979, John Paul II made his triumphal return to his motherland. Kornel invited me to go with him and his friends on a pilgrimage to see the Pope. We took with us a large banner, upon which had been written two simple words, "FAITH, INDEPENDENCE", against the background of a Polish flag.

Crushing crowds turned out to see their Pope. The people cheered in wild abandonment when he declared, "There can be no justice in Europe without an independent Poland on her map." He awakened the people from a 35 year nightmare of Marxist-Leninism, to their thousand year heritage as a Catholic nation.

After a rally for young people at the University of Warsaw, we marched down the streets displaying our banner with its simple message. Several hundred people followed us, some just curious, others cheering us on. As we walked by the American Embassy, on Aleja Street, Kornel offered me one end of the banner. With some trepidation, I took it and carried it proudly; it seemed the least gesture that I could make for the cause of Polish freedom. A few days later, in Czestochowa, the banner was ripped down and stolen by two secret policemen; apparently its message was too dazzling for the eyes of Poland's communist masters.

The Pope had set the Polish kettle boiling. Less than a year and a half later that kettle would boil over, and the Independent Self Governing Trade Union Solidarity would begin its

tumultuous existence." At just this time, Kornel was arrested for printing and distributing his now famous underground "Bulletin of Lower Silesia".

During the first several exuberant months of the Solidarity Trade Union's legal existence, the communist authorities were in full retreat. Kornel was quickly released from jail after the workers of the region protested and threatened a general strike.

He was elected a representative from Lower Silesia of the new trade union. Censorship was relaxed, and a flurry of new publications, both legal and illegal shortly followed. For the first time in the history of a communist country, George Orwell's book, "Animal Farm", was printed in a limited edition by the State Publishing House. People joined political discussion groups, and did things that in previous times would have landed them in jail. At the same time, people looked back over their shoulders and wondered aloud whether a time might come when they would find themselves in jail.

Although I was an American, and saw my role more as a witness than an active participant in the extraordinary events taking place around me, it was hard not to be taken in by the heady excitement of the times. I strongly identified with the cause and goals of Solidarity. It was a movement seeking economic and social justice for all. Everyone talked about building a new social-economic order, based neither on communism nor on capitalism, but rather on a new Polish socialism. A slogan for the times might have been:

"SOLIDARITY WITHOUT FREEDOM IS COMMUNISM,
FREEDOM WITHOUT SOLIDARTIY IS CAPITALISM,
LONG LIVE FREEDOM AND SOLIDARITY".

Thirteen years before, during the Czechoslovakian Spring, Dubczek had tried to build just such a "socialism with a human face". Whereas Dubczek had worked to make his reforms from the "top down", the Polish workers thought they could succeed where he had failed, because their Solidarity Trade Union was organized from the "bottom up".

The great irony was that while the Solidarity Trade Union was an authentic workers union representing the interests of its 10 million members, it was opposed by the government of the "Polish Workers Party", to which very few workers belonged. With the prodding and backing of the Soviet Union, the Polish government began preparing for the day when they would meet head on with this inherent challenge to their authority. On December 13, 1981, the Polish government declared war on its own Society. That day Kornel, and several other well known Solidarity leaders, escaped the police net and went into hiding.

The first task of those Solidarity leaders who had escaped arrest was to regroup and organize a Temporary Underground Solidarity Committee (TKK). This committee took upon itself the tasks of continuing the printing and distributing of official publications of the trade union, organizing street demonstrations, and providing financial assistance to needy families of imprisoned Solidarity members. It wasn't until April 1982, that I had the opportunity to see Kornel again. By that time he had already broken away from the TKK and organized a new underground movement called "Fighting Solidarity".

Fighting Solidarity (SW) differed from the (TKK) in that whereas the latter worked to get the authorities to reinstate the Solidarity Trade Union, SW believed that any further cooperation with the communist authorities was senseless. After all, had not the authorities, in declaring Marshal Law, proven that communism was incompatible with Solidarity? SW believed that for the workers to get back their beloved Solidarity Trade Union, they would have to no less than dismantle the prevailing political order, and establish a new "Polish Solidarity Republic". This new political order would be built upon, and fully embrace, the democratic ideals of the Solidarity movement itself.

We would still gather at the log cabin on weekends, but our numbers had diminished, and the formerly buoyant atmosphere turned mercurial. We now talked about the effectiveness of the resistance, and about who had gotten into or out of jail like a macabre game of musical chairs. Our moods changed with events and our hopes and aspirations for the future. Fighting Solidarity, under Kornel's leadership, was alive and well. It continued to attract new members, and open new chapters in increasingly distant cities. This was tempered by our ever present fear of the banging on the door that would announce the arrival of the secret police for what became almost a routine "house search".

On August 31, 1982, the second anniversary of the signing of the Gdansk Accords, hundreds of thousands of people across Poland turned out in mass street demonstrations in support of the banned Solidarity Trade Union. In Wroclaw, I saw people get clubbed and tear gassed in the streets, and Michalczyk was shot and killed. Everyone warned, "It is better to break a leg than to get caught at a demonstration." During this chaotic period I talked to as many people as I could, kept notes, and collected underground material.

On the evening of November 7, 1982, twelve secret policemen, some armed with machine guns, surprised me with a visit to my home. I spent three days in jail, followed by several weeks of almost daily interrogation. Who did I know? Who was I working for? Who was working for me? Did I know so and so? Why had I

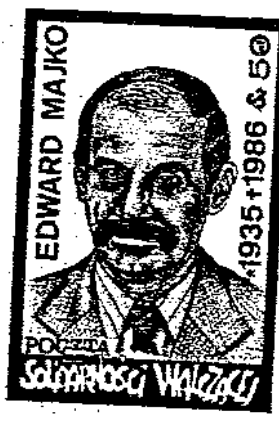
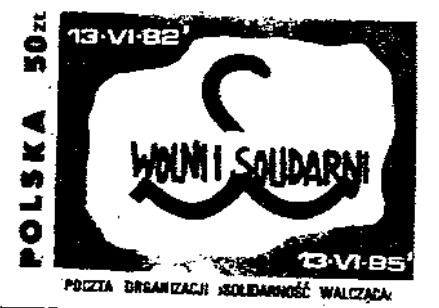
written this or that in my notes? Most of all, they wanted to know where Kornel Morawiecki was? They promised me that if I would help them find him, my troubles with the "Servants of Public Safty", as the secret police are called in Poland, would be over.

I saw the writing on the wall. It was clear that I would not be allowed to remain in Poland. On December 22, 1982, I was put under house arrest and ordered to leave the country by the end of the year. Instead, in order to protest their arbitrary decision, I escaped into hiding. During the next six weeks, I became a member of the Fighting Solidarity by swearing to fight for a "Free and Independent Polish Solidarity Republic," and to work for "Solidarity between people and nations".

Little did I realize when I said 'goodbye' to Kornel, that unlike my six weeks, he would spend six years in hiding. After I was caught, I spent a week in a Polish jail before being expelled from the country. Since Kornel's arrest, on November 9, 1987, nobody has heard anything from him, which leads some to believe that he has been taken to the Soviet Union, and others to speculate that he has been killed. I do know that he is no terrorist, as charged by the Polish government, but rather one who has dedicated his life to working for Polish independence, and for the ideals of the Solidarity movement.

Several months before his capture, Kornel said in an interview: (Przeglad Wiadomosci Agencyjnucj No.41 (80))

"... It need not necessarily be the final victory - there is no such thing. Truth, Goodness, Justice and Solidarity are always on the horizon - you can come closer to it, but it always recedes. You will never attain it, but press on anyway. It is worth it."



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