

Inside Solidarity: An Interview with Ewa-Teresa Eliaz Brantley*

The nature of the independent trade union movement in Poland was the major topic of discussion at Solidarity's first National Congress in September 1981. Ewa-Teresa Eliaz Brantley was present at that Congress as one of the drafters of the statute defining Solidarity and its role in Polish society. She spoke with The Forum about the statute and its implications for Solidarity's future, as well as the historical development of the trade union movement. Her remarks also dealt with the question of Solidarity's perceptions of itself as a union and as a political force. A first-hand observer of Solidarity's initial nationwide organizational plenum who is intimately acquainted with both the issues and the personalities involved in today's Polish labor movement, Brantley brings fresh insights to the events of the past months.

Interview by Laurie A. Lerner, with Stanislaw Kadziewicz and Zofia Klimek.

FORUM: Professor Brantley, the Gdańsk shipyard's actions in August 1980 set off a series of momentous changes in Poland. At what point did that shipyard strike change from just an isolated enterprise incident to a nationwide trade union movement, and what brought about that shift?

BRANTLEY: There were two strikes in the Lenin shipyards — one started in July and was resolved, another erupted at the beginning of August. You couldn't say it changed immediately. A series of shipyards went on strike. Gdańsk went on strike when one of the more active independent trade union leaders, Anna Walentynowicz, was dismissed from work a few weeks before her retirement. That already put it on a different plane. It shifted from a purely economic plane when the right to exist as an independent trade union was brought in. The questioning of that right to exist impelled other enterprises to get involved. In contrast, the strikes

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of shipyard workers in Gdańsk and Gdynia in 1970 were sparked by price increases. The difference between the strikes of 1970 and those of 1980 was that workers went into the streets and were fired upon by the police in 1970; Gierek came to power after the strikes, and informal negotiations were held between enterprises and the government to relieve the criticism. In 1980, the workers occupied their workplaces, leaving the government with the alternatives of either using force against the workers, and destroying hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of industrial machinery in the process, or settling the labor dispute by non-violent means.

FORUM: Were the basic undercurrents of the present unrest to be found in the labor situation in 1976?

BRANTLEY: Oh, most definitely, and in 1970 and in 1956. In 1956 it wasn't just the students who were fired on in Poznan, it was also a large number of the workers who were quite appalled by the Polish military and police force. They had formed independent trade unions largely as a political protest to the Stalinist regime. And they were very populist, if you will. They would ask for wage increases and reductions in prices, and better economic conditions, but on an enterprise level — just one enterprise, or one group, or one region. The students in 1968 wanted the workers to join them, but their demands had been formulated in such a manner that the students really didn't communicate with the workers, so the workers didn't, in fact, support the students in 1968.

Student riots in Poznan and Warsaw in 1968 involved the intelligentsia and members of Catholic intellectual clubs, and were in response to the taking of political prisoners, the educational system, and the economic stagnation and deterioration under Gomulka. They were met by police force. The workers did not join in those demonstrations, for they felt they had been deceived by the students in 1956, when workers had tried to claim their rights to unions and to self-management but had been met by the police and forced to accept not only the system of government-chosen factory managers, but also the denial of the right of worker councils to negotiate with managers over wage increases and working conditions. In 1970, the then largest independent trade unions in the Gdańsk, Szczecin region struck. Wałęsa was, in fact, not the leader of that independent trade union, but he was certainly involved in the independent trade union in 1970, and had been one of the negotiators with Gierek at the end of 1970 and at the beginning of 1971. During the course of those negotiations certain promises were made and they weren't kept. They were promised that there would be some type of, if not de jure, then de facto recognition given to the trade unions. In 1976, the economic authorities began raising

prices, and the economic situation generally deteriorated. Also, it was thought, and probably correctly thought, that there was much more abuse and corruption in certain of the biggest state enterprises. And so there were big movements of worker unrest in Radom and Ursus in 1976. When those movements collapsed, the intellectuals and students who had been involved in 1968 decided to form a Committee for the Protection of Workers' Rights — or *Komitet Obrony Robotnikow* (KOR). One of their main functions was to make the existence of small independent trade unions known to other independent trade unions, and to come up with a program for integrating those unions. With that in mind, they published *Robotnik* (The Worker), a weekly which not only informed workers about other independent trade unions, but also suggested what should be done in the event of arrest or police harassment (either in the workplace or outside the workplace) and developed certain types of economic programs that could be understood by the workers. KOR also set up a system of financial aid for workers who lost their jobs, and a system for legal defense.

FORUM: How did the union movement manage to rally the support of the students this time around?

BRANTLEY: The students just joined. Basically, it was just the symbolism once the strikes happened and once the Gdańsk agreement had been reached. For the first time, the workers' demands, as stipulated in the Gdańsk agreement, didn't just pertain to wage increases or price reductions or promises of more houses or better supplies of meat. The workers asked, for example, for the release of political prisoners and they specifically stated the names of the prisoners.

FORUM: What prevented the functioning of free and independent trade unions after the events of 1970?

BRANTLEY: It wasn't so much that they were prevented, but Gierek realized that unions could be most effective in the larger enterprises and could get into a position of more power, so he consciously courted the trade unionists. And I think that what developed was the strategy of populist strikes, namely, that you would strike within an enterprise and formulated demands relating only to that enterprise. Those would then be satisfied, and the next enterprise would go on strike; they'd get better terms than you got, so you'd go back out on strike again. Gierek had certainly deflected that from happening until about 1975 by very cautiously courting the interests of the largest enterprises. So it wasn't a question of being prevented, but unions were blocked by tactics from forming

effectively, and when they did form it was rather in the smaller enterprises, at lower echelons, and in enterprises that were not as basic to the Polish economy as, say, the shipyards.

FORUM: Independent trade unions have existed since 1970, strikes have occurred throughout the decade, and there have been price rises previously; therefore, since all the elements were there before, what happened in 1980 to cause the situation to blow up?

BRANTLEY: Previously demands hadn't been expressed in terms of an independent trade union; they hadn't been expressed as political demands. They'd been expressed purely as economic demands within a particular sector and a particular region. Number one, there had been a response to price demands that had been stated by the government and that were going to be effected by the government. This time around they were going to be put into effect by the governors of provinces. That sort of deflected the fighting, for it was easier to deal with price rises on a regional basis than to take on the entire government. Number two, the strike in Gdańsk was initially called not because of price rises, but because of Anna Walentynowicz's dismissal. And the Gdańsk shipyard made a conscious decision that they would not reach an agreement with the government of their province until benefits for all the enterprises had been brought up to the level of their agreement. It was that decision that started the whole thing.

FORUM: Do you think that the role of KOR was pivotal in the establishment of the independent trade unions? If there hadn't been a KOR, this group of intellectuals setting out guidelines, would there have been the establishment of Solidarity?

BRANTLEY: They didn't exactly set out guidelines. KOR coordinated activities rather than set out guidelines and did legal defense work. I don't think I'd go so far as to say that KOR was pivotal, but certainly it was very important, and instrumental in the setting up of Solidarity. During the strikes of August 1980, intellectuals from KOR were invited by the strikers in Gdańsk to help negotiate their demands with the government. I think that if you read the statement KOR presented to the Solidarity Congress regarding its reasons for dissolving itself and what it thought it had achieved, then heard the discussion that followed on the floor, it would become clear that the majority of Solidarity members believe that were it not for KOR, Solidarity very well might not have taken the form that it did. It might have resulted again in a series of independent trade

unions operating more or less side-by-side, but not acting together with definite programs.

FORUM: Did KOR have a charter and a coherent idea of the direction they were going to pursue in trying to coordinate development of the trade unions?

BRANTLEY: No, a pattern emerged through intellectual discussion. And then as independent trade unions came to know of each other and as rights became more defined (not in a legal sense, but in a social sense), then the independent trade unions started working with each other. So it was much more of a process than an idea in terms of where they wanted to go. I think that was done on purpose because they thought that if they had given themselves a charter of a certain name, there might have been a split between the intellectuals and the working class, as there was in 1968. They wanted to avoid, at all costs, the situation of March, 1968 and of 1970, where the students had not supported the Gdańsk and Gdynia strikes. They also wanted to avoid repeating the situation in Czechoslovakia, the understanding being that one of the reasons for Czechoslovakia's failure was not so much the Russians coming in as the fact that it was a movement from the top down.

FORUM: How did you become involved in the Solidarity Congress in October 1981?

BRANTLEY: Well, that came about because I was involved in what, if you wanted to be neutral about it, you could call the student demonstrations in 1968 in Poznan and in Warsaw. I had gotten involved in 1976 in Polish labor law, and my mentor, Professor Szubert¹, who was one of Solidarity's advisors, asked me whether I'd like to be involved with the reform of the Labor Code, and whether I'd like to draw up the statute; especially because I'd been working on German trade unions.

FORUM: Was this in 1976?

BRANTLEY: No, this was in 1980. But I had met Szubert in 1976 and had corresponded and discussed various issues of labor law with him, and at that point the Polish Labor Code was being drafted.

1. Professor Szubert is the head of the labor law section of the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences and head of the Institute of Labor Law and Statistics in Lodz.

FORUM: Was the reform of the labor code done under government auspices?

BRANTLEY: Well, it started out under government auspices and then they decided that the Labor Code was tending much too much towards collectivism rather than individualism. What's interesting about the Polish Labor Code, and in fact, the labor codes of most socialist countries, is that they are drafted in terms of individual contracts and they deal with the employment situation and not the union situation. The reforms of the 1976 code were done partly in response to the Radom and Ursus strikes. It was thought there there was a certain amount of collectivism, in terms of the rights of the workers as a group, and there was an obligation to protect those collective rights. Rights of workers, as a group, might contrast with the rights of workers as defined in their individual contracts of employment. And the government decided that they could allow the labor reform's statements to exist as so-called principles, but that the principles couldn't be made more specific.

FORUM: It sounds as if the government wanted to keep the emphasis more on individuals and the union was trying to expand the focus to the collective. Doesn't this go against Socialist principles? Shouldn't the emphasis in a proper socialist state be on the good of the collective and not on the good of the individual?

BRANTLEY: Not really, because the collective is protected by the constitution and individual aspects of the current situation. Why should you want to bargain with the state for collective rights, when the state, by definition, is the protector of those collective rights, through the Polish constitution.

THE NATURE OF SOLIDARITY

FORUM: What is Solidarity? Is it a social movement, a trade union, a Messianic movement, a political party?

BRANTLEY: It's a question of semantics. What does one consider a political party to be? Are you defining political parties against the accepted definitions of what constitutes a political party here, or are you going to define it in the context of *the* political party in Eastern bloc countries? The same problem arises when you ask if it is a trade union. How are you defining a trade union? Are you defining it by referring to, say, the AFL-CIO? It's difficult to say, because in the context there's nothing with which you can compare it. At the moment, whatever it is, it's a fairly

unique animal. So it's difficult to attach labels to it. People within Solidarity are attaching labels, but I'm not sure whether they really know what the labels are. For example, if they hadn't agreed on the definition of Solidarity as a trade union without aspirations to a political party role, there wouldn't have been Solidarity. That doesn't mean that some people in Solidarity don't have political aspirations; it means that officially they can't. Whether Solidarity is a trade union or a political party was discussed on the floor of the Congress, as were the questions of whether it would threaten the existing nature of the state if it were a political party, and, if it did threaten the existing structure, whether it would compel the Russians to come in. Their program itself was discussed in terms of the development of Polish society, of culture, of education; in other words, the terms in which a political party would hold its discussions. In a way you could even say that, *de facto*, Solidarity is a political party. You could say that Solidarity is like the Social Democrats, no not Social Democrats, more like the Labour Party, in some respects. And the Church is like the CDU in Germany. And then you have the Communist Party. So you have the tri-party system. But it depends on how you define "the party."

FORUM: What are the main functions and aims of the trade union, as they stand?

BRANTLEY: To defend the rights and interests of the working people, as any trade union. Also, to create safe working conditions, a better educational system, a social fund in the event of unemployment, and to facilitate distribution of consumer goods.

FORUM: What legal and political guarantees are there now that will assure Solidarity's survival and growth?

BRANTLEY: That's a difficult question, because legally Solidarity is registered as an "independent trade union" so it can exist as an independent trade union. There aren't any laws governing the role of independent trade unions in Poland, but a law is in the process of being drafted. *De jure*, as far as Polish law is concerned, the right to strike does not exist, although it's been recognized *de facto*. We could however, make the argument that it does exist *de jure*, because the Polish government has ratified two big International Labor Organization conventions dealing with the rights to unionize and associate². These ILO conventions establish the rights to

2. Convention No. 87 Concerning Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise (1948) and Convention No. 98 Concerning the Application of the Principles of the Right to Organise and to Bargain Collectively (1951). Both were ratified by Poland in 1956.

work, to strike and to meet. There are also two UN Covenants — one deals with economic, social and cultural rights, the other with civil and political rights. Since their ratification in 1977, the Polish government has refrained from crushing a strike by force. At the moment, legally, there's just the fact that Solidarity has registered, the fact that censorship laws have been modified, and the fact that to some extent Solidarity has been given some rights under the laws on self-management. But again, they have more rights *de facto* than *de jure*. So, legally, guarantees rest on the plane of international law rather than on the basis of Polish municipal law. It's interesting that when the government, well Jaruzelski, recently said that they were going to crack down on strikes, the response of Solidarity was "you can't; you gave us the right under international law, and the rights that you gave us are self-executing under international law." However, the August 1980 strikes succeeded for reasons other than the ILO obligations to guarantee workers' rights to associate and strike. What the government is going to do in the matter of practice in the future is another kettle of fish.

FORUM: Has the Polish independent trade union movement relied successfully on the protection of international law in the past?

BRANTLEY: In fact, Poland was taken to task in the early 1970s for having cracked down on the independent trade unions under ILO Conventions 87 and 98. They didn't do anything about it, however. That's why I'm hoping the finger is wagged at Poland a little bit more this time.

FORUM: Was this by the International Labor Organization? And how has the government acknowledged that complaint of the ILO?

BRANTLEY: It didn't. Well, effectively, it has acknowledged the complaint now by allowing Solidarity to be registered. But, when one talks in terms of Solidarity's registration, that's somewhat incorrect. There was an initial registration, and since then various functional or regional occupations have attached themselves within the confederation that was then being structured — not on a functional but on a regional basis. So, for example, the first element of Solidarity to get registered was the industrial sector. And it wasn't till March or April that the agricultural sector was registered. And that was, in fact, what prompted the outbreak in Bydgoszcz.

Legal Aspects of the Statute

FORUM: Solidarity's legal experts, including yourself, have recently completed work on a statute for the union.

BRANTLEY: The statute has been amended and revised, but I think there's going to be another set of amendments in terms of how the executive committee can organize itself, what powers the executive committee will have, and how far it can go in its relationships to the National Congress.

FORUM: What does the statute stipulate? Could you give us a brief synopsis of it?

BRANTLEY: It's a statute which establishes Solidarity, by virtue of which Solidarity is given the wherewithal to acquire legal personality through registration. It sets out who may be members of Solidarity, how Solidarity is to be put together, all its aims and objectives. It sets out the relationship between the governing bodies of Solidarity as well as the powers and functions of the various organizations at the various levels of Solidarity. It's interesting that it goes beyond most normal trade union statutes in so far as: 1) It does not make membership contingent on employment; Social Security holders and retired people may be members of Solidarity. Loss of employment does not entail loss of union membership. 2) It doesn't limit its aims and functions to economic demands. It also states that Solidarity should play a role in terms of social and cultural relationships, which is unusual for a trade union. Its concerns are not limited to the workplace, but encompass education, culture, economic improvement, etc. 3) Another unusual fact is that power hasn't been specifically allocated within the statute. The governing body is the National Congress, which under the provisions of the statute is to meet every year, except if an emergency meeting is called. Besides that, the actual powers of the Presidium, of the Chairman of the Presidium, of the regional delegations, aren't laid down as specifically as they are in statutes seen in the West. The relationship between central and regional organs has been left undefined. This absence of rigidity in the relationships between the governing organs of Solidarity will allow the movement to gel.

FORUM: What is the present structure of the union's organization?

BRANTLEY: It is structured regionally, not functionally as were the unions of 1956 and 1970. Those had been set up on a trade or industry basis, and were profession, or enterprise, oriented. The central, or highest, organ is the National Congress, which is composed of delegates elected from regional organizations in proportion to the membership, and not through plant or enterprise election. In addition to the Congress, there is a National Coordinating Committee, within which there is an Executive Committee. On the regional level there are regional committees that break down in turn to enterprise, department, and circle. Circle is the lowest.

FORUM: What legal precedents and what legal principles did you find most relevant in trying to construct a statute for Solidarity? Are there any specific countries that lent you more examples than any others?

BRANTLEY: You can't compare Solidarity's statutes to labor union statutes in the West. We weren't drafting the statute the same way that you draft a statute here. We weren't drafting election rules the way you would here, because we don't have an election to base ourselves on. You don't have such a thing as a non-exclusivity law or principle in those countries, so first of all you have to decide whether you are going to draft a statute for a trade union or for a political party. And there was a debate as to that. If you were drafting a statute for a trade union, what were to be its principal aims? Was it to be structured along functional lines, as a functional confederation of unions, or was it to be structured across territorial/regional lines? What was to be its sphere of operations? There isn't a precedent that you could use, you'd just have to talk to people, see what they wanted, and then try and draft it, and then go back and show it to them when they go back and then start again.

FORUM: Were there other western legal experts involved in drafting the statute?

BRANTLEY: If in so far as the ILO was involved, yes. The ILO was invited by Solidarity early on in the strike to advise them.

FORUM: How many people collaborated on drafting the statute?

BRANTLEY: That's awfully difficult to say, because it went from hand to hand, from lawyers to sociologists to philosophers, and back to the lawyers again. It was very much a cooperative effort. Various statutes that had originally been drafted for separate regions were referred to.

FORUM: What is the legal status of this statute in Polish law? Is it recognized in any way by the government, and does it carry any weight outside intra-Solidarity affairs?

BRANTLEY: The statute is part of the registration documents of Solidarity. In the negotiations for the new trade union law, requests have been voiced that the statute be appended as a model document as well as the text of the Gdańsk Agreement.

FORUM: Does the statute define Solidarity's relationship to the government in any way?

BRANTLEY: No, it couldn't do that. The statute is aimed solely at defining what Solidarity is, so it can register as a legal person and thereby acquire its legal personality. Whether it will enter into relationships with the government is a totally separate issue.

FORUM: Would you say that Solidarity's functions are more concerned with the plant level, or with larger cultural, sociological and political goals?

BRANTLEY: Solidarity cannot be concerned simply with the plant level because it doesn't operate purely on the plant level. It's regionally organized, so it has to draw its aims from a wider base. For example, because of the Gdańsk compromise, Solidarity is not authorized at the moment to conduct wage negotiations with individual enterprises as a trade union, nor does it have the capacity to do so under the existing Polish labor law.

FORUM: How can Solidarity then properly protect the rights of the working class if they don't have the power to conduct wage negotiations?

BRANTLEY: You're defining the rights of the working class in Western terms, in terms of wages alone and not as they are defined in Eastern Europe, i.e. in terms of vacation, sanitary conditions, health conditions, etc. One of the points of having self-management (although it's not in the statute, or in any of the agreements) is to have a mechanism for protecting workers' rights. The wages are fixed centrally, basically through the economic plan. You could say that Solidarity has been evolving in a cooperativist, rather than a populist, fashion. I think that's seen in the whole way the strike started and the way the demands were formulated, not on a purely enterprise level, in terms of economic demands, but much more broadly. They were formulated almost as a class interest, which had never been the case before.

FORUM: What about hiring and firing?

BRANTLEY: Nothing is specifically said in the statute with respect to that. However, Solidarity will intervene in order to protect job security by negotiating with directors or managers of the various enterprises.

FORUM: How does Solidarity, as an independent union, differ from the official government branch unions?

BRANTLEY: Precisely because it is independent. It is not subsumed under the Party; it is not registered in the Central Register. Perhaps

because its aspirations are broader. It claims to be a self-governing union — it will not have its program, its structure, etc. dictated by anybody except itself. It rose from below rather than from above.

FORUM: What role do the other trade unions play in Poland, the autonomous unions and the branch unions?

BRANTLEY: Well, the branch unions are the ones that have been allowed to exist since day one, because of the 1949 law on trade unions, and they're still going. In terms of the organization of the union after the law, it's difficult to say how that's going to work. In practice, the branch trade unions were pretty influential on the factory floor, although they had to take account of what Solidarity was saying. And the demands of the branch trade unions were rather different than the demands of Solidarity. For example, they were very supportive of the existing directors; there was no division of functions in terms of management, really, between the director and the branch union. They didn't exactly represent the interests of the workers. And what Solidarity did was to form its own commissions and committees on the factory floor which formulated specifically the interests of the workers in the factory, as opposed to how the directors, in terms of the economic plan, saw those interests. For example, one big bone of contention was always who got to go to the factory holiday resorts. Vacation for the worker and his family was paid for by his place of employment; but there was a limited number of places, and it was at the discretion of the director to say who went, and those who nominated the people were usually the branch unionists. Solidarity made sure that there was a list, that there was fair representation on the list, and that there was a sufficient rotation and everybody got to go. So the demands were different. We formulated them in different ways. Since the strike and Solidarity's consequent registration, the branch unions and Solidarity have coexisted on the shop floors. How this coexistence is going to be translated into power terms once the laws on self-management are realized in practice is unclear.

DISCUSSIONS AT THE UNION CONGRESS

FORUM: What were the aims of the Congress? Were they actually achieved?

BRANTLEY: First and foremost Solidarity wanted to finalize their statute. Until then the statute had been tentative. There had been a statute from almost each region, and each province had a statute that was similar to the others but not necessarily the same. So the statute was revised and

amended and accepted by everybody as the permanent statute. Second, they developed a program of action, and Solidarity was defined. Third, they developed a method for electing delegates. They restructured and unified the election procedure for the executive committee — the coordinating, executive council of the coordinating committee — then for nomination and election to the national coordinating committee as well. They structured how the voting was to proceed in all the regions, how many delegates to have per region, and how those delegates were to be elected for future congresses. But basically, in large measure, it was determining who they were, and what they were going to do and when. They hadn't all had a chance to get together beforehand to do it. Then, the second part of the Congress was very different from the first, because the first half was much more strident, with the appeal to the trade unions of the other socialist countries.

FORUM: Were there many differences of opinion and divisions between various functions at the Congress, perhaps between those primarily concerned with economic issues and those primarily concerned with politics?

BRANTLEY: You can't separate those issues, because economic issues are political, by definition. However, there were 990 members there, and in Poland, if you have 990 people you have to have at least 3,000 opinions. But seriously, yes — there were differences that were drawn along professional lines, that were drawn along white-collar/blue-collar lines, that were drawn along regional lines, and along religious affiliation, and that arose over the question of which professions should be allowed to join and which shouldn't.

FORUM: Are there certain professions that are not allowed to join?

BRANTLEY: No, because the statute provides that all workers who are employed under a contract for employment can join. But, for example, there were people who weren't very happy at the idea of the police joining, because they don't trust the police. The same holds for the army.³

FORUM: Have there been instances of policemen joining?

BRANTLEY: No, but the police contingent petitioned the floor of Solidarity to join, and the representative who petitioned was fired the next day.

3. A new project being considered before the Sejm would prevent public employees from unionizing (i.e., army, police, etc.).

FORUM: You mentioned that some of the different leading personalities had different aspirations. I wonder if you could elaborate on that and give us some examples of the people involved.

BRANTLEY: Yasharensky thinks that Solidarity is a social movement. He was the person who had his teeth (except that they were false teeth) knocked out at Bydgoszcz. He defines Solidarity as a social movement. And he thinks Solidarity should bring about a governmental change, should bring down the government, and enact a fairly thorough reform of the system. Lis wants to operate within the system, and sees Solidarity's function as a trade union, in his own words. Wałęsa is probably enjoying the charisma. He certainly plays up to that aspect of things, and everybody loves him. He's like the Beatles in a way, except he doesn't have women screaming over him . . . yet.

FORUM: Is there a personality cult forming around him?

BRANTLEY: There is, yes. Very definitely. There has been from the very beginning; songs have been written about him. When people talk about him, they talk about him as "ours", you see, "*nasz* Lechu". There are implications if you identify somebody as being "ours". He's become a national hero, and the symbolism is very necessary for the movement. Otherwise there would not be a unified force. There are too many diverse interests and it takes time for the diverse interests (a) to be identified properly, and then (b) to settle out, like tea leaves. In order to hold the whole thing together, there has to be a very strong personality in the middle, and Wałęsa is that personality.

FORUM: Do you think that there is a danger of Solidarity becoming overly centralized?

BRANTLEY: That's one of the fears that's quite commonly held — that it would become monolithic, and not see the woods for the trees. But I think that probably at this point in time, that is what should be happening. Wałęsa, after being elected Chairman of the Executive Committee, stated that he foresaw that Solidarity, once its position had been stabilized and lines had been drawn, would redefine and become a much looser federation of unions than it is at present.

FORUM: Were the party and the state generally perceived by the members of the Solidarity congress to be against the national interest?

BRANTLEY: It's seen as not necessarily representing the national interest. Not that it's "anti," but that they're not representing it.

FORUM: Is Solidarity trying to compel the government to become more representative of national interests, or does it have more of a mind to change the state structure in order to create something representative of national interests?

BRANTLEY: I don't necessarily think those questions are alternative, or even go together. But there's the mere fact that at the 11th Plenum of the Polish United Workers' Party (commonly referred to as the Communist Party) the Politburo was elected rather than nominated. It's certainly not unimportant that Solidarity has been pressing for certain political reforms in terms of elections.

FORUM: Was the reaction of Solidarity to the Party Congress in July basically favorable? Did they see the government doing anything significant?

BRANTLEY: Those are again two different questions, because the Party Congress and the government are not really the same thing. Sure, they have to be supportive of one another, but in terms of whom and what you're going to criticize, you don't criticize the same way. And you can't make a general statement of Solidarity being "anti," because there are just so many groups. For example, many of the leading members of Solidarity are Party members. You can't say they're "anti" their party in that sense. It's much more complex than that; it's not a one-to-one relationship. Both the government and Solidarity constitute federations of regionally-based units. Solidarity's regional divisions do not correspond exactly with government voivodship divisions, however, each of Solidarity's regional units comprises at least one voivodship.

FORUM: So, would you say the criticism that exists is directed more towards the actual present government, or the past government, rather than towards the party as a concept or as a power?

BRANTLEY: It would be unfair to say that there's criticism of the party as a concept or as a power, because the position has been accepted that Solidarity does not want to overturn the existing political structure. Solidarity doesn't want to get rid of socialism qua socialism. What it wants to do is to rationalize socialism. But there are certain individuals connected with Solidarity, some of whom are very influential, for example Bujak⁴,

4. Head of the Mazowsze region which includes Warsaw and is the largest of Solidarity's regional organizations.

or Litynski, the editor of *Robotnik*, who cannot see working with the Party or with the government. On the other hand, there are other people who adopt Kuron's program, namely, that either inside or outside the present structure a committee should be formed that will be comprised one-third by the Church, one-third by Solidarity, and one-third by the Party. So you can't make a *carte blanche* statement that they're all "anti" or they're all "pro." You have to bear in mind that they're very, very strong personalities, and they have very strong, definite ideas. Also, the answer will vary again from region to region, depending on whether there has been a very corrupt provincial government, whether there's been a big crack-down on individuals or not. You'll probably find there may be more support for the party among intellectuals, in terms of realizing that they can't overthrow the existing order, than there is, say, among the coal miners. And that's not just because of a distinction between intellectuals and coal miners. Most of the intellectuals are situated in the more liberal provinces (such as Mazowsze) than are the miners, who have encountered more brutal security police in areas such as Upper and Lower Silesia. You have to bear in mind that governmentally, and as far as Solidarity is concerned, Poland is very much a federal type government and each province has its own definite identity. And Solidarity is responding according to the way individuals have been treated in the past.

FORUM: What accounts for so many Communist Party members being within Solidarity ranks now, and why did so many of them participate in the strikes during August 1980?⁵

BRANTLEY: Some of the Party members were not convinced Party members, but had only joined the Party for the sake of advancement. That's one argument.

FORUM: Is that why they have now joined Solidarity?

BRANTLEY: It may be. And that's what the government says — that's why they joined, and that's why they haven't renounced their Party membership. For example, Bogdan Lis was a Party member when he got involved in helping KOR in 1977. He says that he doesn't see a contradiction in having a Party and having a mechanism to ask the Party to rationalize. And that's how the — shall we say — more "thinking" members of the Communist Party view the situation. But then, there's

5. Bogdan Lis as well as most of the other party members in Solidarity, including Bratkowski, were subsequently expelled from the Communist Party.

another group, for example, Bujak, who say that they just do not trust Party members being in the upper echelons of Solidarity or in steering positions — “once a Party member, always a Party member.”

FORUM: Yes, but they have no effective means of keeping them out.

BRANTLEY: True. And if a vote were to be taken, I don't think people would want to keep them out. In fact, during the Congress there was a discussion on the floor in which voices against discrimination within Solidarity on the basis of religion, ethnic background, or party affiliation easily took the upper hand.

FORUM: Was the dissolution of KOR, at the second part of the Solidarity Congress, simply a tactical move to appease the Russians?

BRANTLEY: No, I don't think so, because effectively KOR had ceased to function in January, and the propaganda, which previously had been aimed at KOR, was just aimed at Kuron, Michnik and Litynski, who had transferred their activity, in terms of journalism and advising, to Solidarity. And KOR was, in fact, dissolved a week before the Congress started. They then announced its dissolution at the Congress.

FORUM: Are all the KOR members still advisors to Solidarity?

BRANTLEY: Those that are still in Poland, yes. Some are in the U.S., such as Baranczak.

FORUM: Why did KOR stop functioning in January?

BRANTLEY: As KOR, there was no need for them to function as a sort of pluralist element in Polish society, because the role that they had previously fulfilled had been taken over by Solidarity. And they — certainly the lawyers — could act as defense lawyers within the context of Solidarity rather than from outside. So their primary function had been realized by Solidarity.

FORUM: Are there discussions going on about the possibility of the Church and Solidarity forming a consultative body with the Party?

BRANTLEY: I wouldn't say that they're discussing the possibility — I think that de facto, it's happening. The problem with Kuron's plan for a Committee of National Salvation, or “Troika,” is that functions haven't

been delineated. The Church and union will advise the government, but in what framework and with what consequences?

FORUM: A recent New Yorker article stated that Solidarity recognized the Communist Party as the political leader, but not the social leader in Poland.

BRANTLEY: Yes, but they didn't even say political. The exact wording is that "we recognize that the Polish Workers' Party plays a leading role in the state," period. It's not qualified, not even by the word "political." The wording comes from the Constitution. Actually, the Party is better off saying its role is "leading" without any qualifiers, because they can always say it covers all aspects of society.

FORUM: Would you agree that there has been a lot of very negative press coverage of the whole Polish situation in most of the other Eastern European countries?

BRANTLEY: See, that's not entirely true. In the press coverage that there has been, until about January or February, the official press never mentioned "strikes" but just "work stoppages" — typical Poles going on rampages, since we're supposed to have a reputation for doing that all over the place.

FORUM: Wouldn't you call that negative? They're being portrayed as Poles just going on a rampage and not wanting to work.

BRANTLEY: Well, the American press isn't any better on that score. And the Swiss press is very bad. If you read *Die Zeit* you realize that for two months it has been against union activism, and suggesting that if the economy is in trouble the Poles should stop complaining and sit down and do something about it.

FORUM: Have the questions of how they want to influence the rest of Eastern Europe, if they do at all, come up at the Solidarity Congress?

BRANTLEY: No, it hasn't been discussed. There was enough of a brouhaha and the Soviet Union responded extremely quickly when the letter was sent stating that Polish independent trade unions support efforts in other Soviet bloc countries.

ECONOMIC ISSUES

FORUM: What's being done by the government and the trade unions to reverse the drastic decline of productivity in Poland?

BRANTLEY: One of the reasons for the decline in productivity is lack of raw materials. A primary purpose of self-management is to somehow rationalize production, certainly within the enterprises, if not horizontally. In those areas where productivity is most important to the Polish economy, the members of Solidarity have agreed to work on their free Saturdays without pay. However, on the day the miners commenced work, the government issued a decree stating that they would pay for work done on free Saturdays. The coal miners have taken it upon themselves to increase productivity. One of the problems in terms of increasing productivity in the coal mines is the way the shift system is set up. There's no time allowed for repairing machines. The machines are in constant use, so that whereas a machine would last for five, six, maybe seven years in a German coal mine, its life cycle is expended within one to one-and-a-half years in Poland. And then you waste time due to breakdowns — for if you had to buy a machine in Germany, where are you going to get spare parts and how are you going to pay for them? This in part is a question of economic planning. The government and Solidarity both have their own plans for addressing these issues.

FORUM: What form does the government envision economic reforms taking?

BRANTLEY: Basically, the government's version attempts to coordinate free market mechanisms with a centrally planned economy. How this will be done is not clear.

FORUM: Will Solidarity decide what to produce, how much to produce, and how to produce?

BRANTLEY: Solidarity, in and of itself, cannot determine that. It will, but in so far as its members are elected to the Workers' Councils and self-management. How this will operate in practice is anybody's guess. So far, the director of an enterprise has had a great deal of influence in determining levels of production, norms, etc., but through the "back door." He negotiates his quotas with the central planners; he gets more money if he meets his quotas, and the lower he sets his quotas, the more money he can get as a bonus if he can exceed them. Solidarity doesn't want a manager or a director to be party-nominated, i.e. chosen for

political loyalty rather than on the basis of professional qualifications. And if the Party does nominate a qualified candidate, Solidarity wants Workers' Council approval. This question of *nomenklatura* — the right of the Party to nominate a director or manager of a plant or enterprise — is one of the major questions of worker self-management on which the government and Solidarity disagree.

FORUM: Does either the government or Solidarity anticipate workers eventually becoming shareholders in the factories?

BRANTLEY: No, even some of the Solidarity leaders argue that if workers became shareholders, profits would be immediately distributed, and they wouldn't be plowed back. The whole market would be disrupted in terms of labor planning. That was the situation in workers' councils in 1944 and 1948, when they were also not given as much power as they wanted to determine economic reforms and how planning was to be affected. Even now, in the laws dealing with self-management, those qualifications have been left open.

FORUM: Were the issues of overmanning and full employment addressed by Solidarity at the Congress?

BRANTLEY: Yes. Although not specifically mentioned, they are implied in the statute and in the economic reform plan, that a rationalization of the economy is necessary to get Poland out of its economic crisis. One has to face not only the issue of direct command, but also the question of full employment. For the repercussions of rationalizing the economy to be born more equitably, or to be borne at all, there must be an attempt to explain the program so that everybody knows the consequences of the program in advance. Also, social and welfare funds to help cover the costs of retraining, unemployment insurance, social security, etc. must be established. Solidarity's economic program, the so-called Economy Conversion Program, aims at freezing investments in unproductive industries and transferring them into productive ones. More attention is paid to agriculture. Solidarity demands that export of food be stopped, discrimination against private farmers in favor of state collective farms be discontinued (i.e., agricultural machinery, fertilizers, seeds and land held in the Land Fund be made available to individual farmers), that the cost of agricultural machines be pegged with production, and that procurement prices for agricultural goods sold to government be increased.

FORUM: Will this create a conflict between the Polish farmer and city dwellers who will have to pay higher prices for food?

BRANTLEY: Everyone knows that food prices are unrealistic; they have been subsidized by the government. Everyone expects them to increase, but gradually. The fact that there is no schism between Solidarity and Rural Solidarity has been demonstrated by city dwellers' volunteer work on this year's harvest.

FORUM: How do Solidarity leaders reconcile the need for economic reforms with the inevitable loss of jobs and shutdowns of factories that will follow? Although the changes will be good for the economy as a whole, some of their individual constituents might have to suffer.

BRANTLEY: It is not a question of reconciliation; the problem isn't in terms of the business cycle or investment cycles in the Western sense. You're talking in terms of a Western investment cycle. The concept of reconciling is not the same as social cost.

FORUM: But how do they get support for the idea of economic reform from people who must know they themselves are working in inefficient factories and will be the first to be displaced in the event of a reform of the economy?

BRANTLEY: That's the whole point of explaining the economic program and having a social fund for the sake of retraining, unemployment benefits, etc. A separate fund was set up by KOR for such purposes in 1976.

FORUM: Where does Solidarity get its funding?

BRANTLEY: Mostly from membership contributions, the membership dues. The dues provide a tremendous amount of funding, in terms of Polish organizations. But the problem is that those zloty don't buy offset presses, grain, paper, ink, milk, cheese, etc. Though they have a lot of money internally, the commodities aren't there to be bought for internal currency. That's one of Solidarity's biggest problems. When, for example, American unions ship corn, it would be nice if they were practical about it and realize that they should ship c.i.f. and not f.o.b. For if Solidarity cannot pay customers duties in dollars, the government will not release the corn to them and it can't be distributed. It just sits in government granaries; it's totally ineffective. And the other thing that the government has done, once they realized that a lot of groups were sending foreign currency through the foreign currency account that Solidarity has in Poland, was to impose a maximum withdrawal rate on that account. And do you know how much they're allowed to withdraw per year? \$2,500. If anyone wants to help Solidarity, they should buy presses.

FORUM: Do you feel that there is still a great deal of popular support for Solidarity, or has the deterioration of the economic situation led to disaffection.

BRANTLEY: You sound as if you've been listening to Radio Moscow. Well, according to Radio Moscow the situation is disaffection, as evidenced by the fact that the autonomous unions didn't go on strike with Solidarity recently. However, the fact is that the November strike was a warning strike called within enterprises, and not within academic institutions, or within professions. It was called within the enterprise structure, while most of the autonomous unions are organized outside an enterprise structure. Radio Moscow also claimed that the branch unions didn't cooperate. But when I spoke with Warsaw this morning I was told that everybody at the factory I talked to went out on strike, branch unions included — partly because of peer pressure, I suspect.

FORUM: So, would you say that there is not a great deal of disaffection, that Solidarity still has popular support?

BRANTLEY: That's not the same question. The question of disaffection and popular support is not the same as the question of those people going out on strike. The population of Poland is 36 million, Solidarity's membership is 10 million at least, and I would say there are probably 2 to 3 million between the other associations. So, where you have massive support of and membership in Solidarity, and all the members go out on strike, how are you objectively going to say that there's disaffection? If people who aren't members don't go out, I don't think that provides you with an objective standard.

FORUM: Your impression is not that people are simply terrorized by peer pressure?

BRANTLEY: No. They wouldn't be talking about it in food lines if they were terrorized. They'd bitch at it, and they weren't bitching — at least when I was there. They were bitching at the line, but they weren't saying that the line had been caused by Solidarity and economic strikes. They were afraid, because they didn't know what the future was going to bring: Everybody was very afraid of winter, and if there's a harsh winter, and the situation doesn't improve, and "government propaganda" is effective (because when the government propaganda issued against Solidarity works, boy, is it forceful — it's incredible) — if you have that combination of circumstances, then the chances are that you will have disaffection. There's only so much that people can take in terms of economic deprivation. You

especially have to remember that Poland has a very young population. There are many more young people, in terms of age distribution, than there are in this country. It's not just a question of the war; it's a question, partly, of the pill being incredibly hard to get. You have an incredible number of young mothers with young children. And that group of the society is the most vulnerable. An adult can do a large number of things for himself when he doesn't have anyone else to consider. But if you have your children that are hungry, and don't have enough clothes, etc., that's a totally different kettle of fish. For example, I had a friend who, in order to get milk for his baby, had to leave Krakow on the 10 o'clock train in the evening, go to a remote section of Silesia, return at 6 o'clock in the morning, and then go through a whole day's work. Those are the kinds of things that people are prepared to do for their children. But if they can't get those necessities, even with all that scrambling, things are going to crack. That's what is scary about the winter.

FORUM: If this economic deprivation does continue, do you foresee that the people, in their anger and frustration, will turn against the government, or turn against Solidarity, or . . .

BRANTLEY: They're not that organized. That's sort of asking the Polish to be un-Polish. It would not surprise me if it turned into a situation of chaos and anarchy. I think people would just go out into the streets. It would turn into anarchy in the sense that there would not be any form of rational appeal.

FORUM: Do you think it will be possible for Poland to achieve the degree of relative success that Hungary has achieved by its economic reforms?

BRANTLEY: I don't think you can answer that question, because it depends on who's in power, which reforms are accepted, whether or not those reforms are circumscribed by external affairs, what happens on the world situation, etc. It's not something that you can answer by a yes or no. The problem with Gierek's plan was that it was not formulated in a wider context. The attempt has now been made to formulate the plan and the reforms in a wider context, but nobody knows. After all, who knows whether Reaganomics are going to succeed?

FORUM: Thank you, Professor Brantley.

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