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From the Editor

In mid-2005, when political Poland began to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of “Poland from August 1980 to December 1981,” the editors of the *Polish Sociological Review*, many of whom had actively participated in those events, decided to publish a special issue on the various dimensions and functions of the first “Solidarity.” It must also be mentioned that the institution with which our journal is affiliated, i.e., the Polish Sociological Association, was an independent forum for independent political and social ideas in those days and has not forgotten August 1980 or its consequences for Polish society and Polish culture.

Our goal was not to prepare a special issue which would participate in the festive apologia of “Solidarity,” whose main purpose was to remind society in Poland and throughout the world about the uniqueness of this social movement. On the contrary, our goal was to collect in one issue a selection of interesting analyses whose authors:

- Tried to provide a sociological explanation of the axiological and institutional projects of this complex social phenomenon by drawing upon the theory of social movements, the theory of civil society, the theory of social order, the theory of collective memory, the theory of collective responsibility, etc. (The authors of the texts in the first part of this volume, most of them well-known Polish sociologists who have been studying changes in social structure and social consciousness in Poland since the nineteen-eighties, successfully took up the challenge and tried to identify the axiological and institutional uniqueness of the first “Solidarity” in theoretical terms).
- Drew upon the methodology of recent history, especially the history of communist Poland, and upon the source material from 1980 and 1981 (material concerning the organisation of the first “Solidarity” convention in Gdańsk and interviews with youth in those days) to diagnose the organisational structure of “Solidarity” and youth’s social reaction to the first “Solidarity.” (Encouraged by our editors, young and gifted Warsaw historians who study the social history of communist Poland responded positively to this challenge; their articles are published in Part Two of the present issue).

- One author offered his comments to his own article, written for the authorities of the first “Solidarity” in 1980, directly after the strikes on the Polish coast and the Gdańsk Accord, and presented at the convention of the Polish Sociological Association. We included this article in Part Two mainly because we felt that this sociologist’s commentary to his own article written 25 years earlier could be viewed as a historical and sociological testimony illustrating one of the ways in which sociologists studied the phenomenon of “Solidarity” in those days.

Finally, the issue ends with several communications concerning a conference on “Solidarity” and a list of recommended books dealing directly with “Solidarity.”

Generally speaking, when collecting the articles, reports and other materials to be published in this issue, we wanted to avoid the Scylla of thoughtless political apologia and the Charybdis of uninvolved exiguous contributions to the sociological history of interpretation and analysis of so complex a phenomenon as the first “Solidarity.” In other words, what we wanted to do—and I hope that Readers will decipher our intentions correctly—was to show that even today, when society in Poland and Europe is under the pressure of so many significant social and civilisational processes, “Solidarity” is still a theoretically and empirically fascinating social phenomenon, well worth further studies drawing upon the most recent theoretical perspectives.

We also wanted to demonstrate—as attested to by the texts in both Part One and Part Two—that in 1980–81 a set of concepts and conceptions developed in Polish sociology and on its peripheries (and also in unofficial political and social journalism) which had never appeared in such a configuration before and was never again to appear in such a configuration. Concepts such as “solidarity,” “independence,” “self-organising society,” self-governance,” “work ethos,” or “self-limiting revolution.”

To help Readers gain more clarity when reading the articles in this issue, selected according to the rationale presented above, let me first offer a few comments on the *infrastructure of sociological knowledge* concerning the first “Solidarity. These comments may serve as *memory hooks*.

If we consider two reference points, other humanistic and social sciences in Poland on the one hand and sociology and related disciplines in the socialist block prior to the 1989 transformation on the other hand, then—as far as Poland is concerned—this infrastructure was quite abundant, heterogeneous and relatively free of semi-legal and legal pressure from the political authorities, both within and without the scientific structures (memory hook 1).

The problems of the first “Solidarity” have been the focus of interest of research teams with significant theoretical and empirical achievements in the field of sociology in several important academic centres (universities and the Polish Academy of Sciences), mainly in Warsaw but also in Gdańsk, Łódź, Kraków, Poznań, and Lublin. Only the closest circles of the research community knew that research was being conducted in 1980 and 1981. This work was not limited to “oral” sociology. Academic centres published research reports and articles as manuscripts in their own publishing departments. Illegal journals such as *Krytyka* or *Aneks* also published articles written by sociologists and recommended as sociological literature on “Solidarity.” (It is worth bearing in mind that decision makers learned about the existence of such

publications and sometimes even gave their unofficial approval.) These studies were widely discussed and their results were published (having first been censored) in the major official sociological journals. And one should mention the direct expertise offered to “Solidarity” by sociologists such as Jan Strzelecki, Andrzej Tymowski, Jadwiga Staniszkis, Jacek Kurczewski and many other from Warsaw and other academic communities.

The first “Solidarity” gradually ceased to be an object of scientific investigation after the Round Table which questioned the previous “we–they,” “communist authorities–sociology,” “authorities–society” dichotomous thinking and the project of “Solidarity” cum anti-state or anti-politics became obsolete. From 1989 on, work on this subject continued to appear, mainly in the Gdańsk community (with the major contribution of Marek Latoszek and his colleagues). This community, as well as the community of Warsaw sociologists (Ireneusz Krzeminski, Sergiusz Kowalski, Włodzimierz Pańków and others) and researchers associated with the “Poles ’80” project (and series of publications) headed by Władysław Adamski, (Polish Academy of Sciences) may be identified as the institutional custodians of research on the first “Solidarity.”

The second “memory hook,” which incidentally is symbolically linked with the first one, are the various structures of the Polish Sociological Association: national and regional, festive and ordinary. A look at the archives of the sociological conventions in Łódź (1980), Wrocław (1986) and, much later, in Lublin (1994), Katowice (1997) and Rzeszów (2000), suggests that rather than being an especially salient sociological problem, the first “Solidarity” was a continually present object of public and professional discussion. Also, it was these discussions and meetings within the framework of the Polish Sociological Association that helped to reanimate the memory of “Solidarity” as a sociological problem for many years and which helped to articulate this problem in many valuable individual and team works. (Let me mention, for example, the works published under Marek Latoszek’s editorship on round anniversaries of the birth of “Solidarity”).

The third “memory hook” as far as “Solidarity” is concerned is the contribution of sociologists and political scientists of Polish origin who work at academic centres abroad and also of many American, French and German researchers who specialise in social change in Central-Eastern Europe. First and foremost let me mention Alain Touraine, Pierre Bourdieu and their associates, the people at Freie Universität in Berlin or St. Antony’s College in Oxford. Let me also mention Alexander Gella and, in the youngest generation, Jan Kubik, Grzegorz Ekiert, David Ost and Michael Kennedy. At the post-1989 international conferences devoted to ongoing changes in the post-communist block foreign sociologists, political scientists and anthropologists so often referred to the structural idiosyncrasies of “Solidarity” in their search for a point of departure for political pluralism and democracy without socialism, and it was they who encouraged their Polish colleagues to pay attention to “Solidarity” as a necessary object of investigation into the nature of economic and political reform.

It would be hard to pinpoint here and now, however, the factors which stimulated this elevated interest in “Solidarity” and the society of the days of “Solidarity” most:

was it the infrastructure of Polish sociology or was it an impulse from quarters other than sociology and sociologists themselves? I would risk saying that these “hooks” helped and are still helping to maintain interest in “Solidarity” in many sociological specialities, sub-disciplines and sociological communities. Although I must say that this unabated interest is not translating into concern with such research topics as social empowerment, the difficulties involved in interpreting the processes of emergence of democracy, the problems of weakly rooted political parties, and the strategies of ennoblement of “hot sociology” (as Ireneusz Krzemiński called it), or greater acceptance of varieties of interpretative sociology focused on such problems as communities, bonds or breaking free from the linguistic constraints of various systems. However, these extrinsic impulses, together with the change of sociological style and orientation (however intensive), seems to be playing the most important role. This is attested to, for example, by the increasing interest of sociologists themselves in “Solidarity,” not only for political reasons or, more generally, the public renaissance of interest in “Solidarity” in connection with round anniversaries (e.g., in order to capture the interest of the “world”), but also by the emergence at the beginning of the twenty-first century, with great force, of the social division into the Solidarity camp and the post-communist camp. Articulation of this division should help to stimulate greater interest in the phenomenon of “Solidarity” in Polish sociology.

In presenting Readers with this issue of *Polish Sociological Review* 1/2006, not only did we want to participate (slightly belatedly) as sociologists and political scientists in “Solidarity’s” twenty-fifth jubilee. Above all, 16 years after 1989, we have devoted this issue to “Solidarity” because it is only now, in the first decade of the new millennium, in the context of the processes of European integration and globalisation which have changed the institutional and axiological order in most European countries, that the lessons of “Solidarity” can be seen more clearly, both in Poland and abroad. These are lessons not only for politicians and social activists but also for researchers: sociologists, political scientists and anthropologists. We hope that studies of “Solidarity” and the consequences of its existence will encourage researchers in Poland and other post-communist countries to undertake comparative studies of the social movements which were and still are the *rites de passage* from communism.

There is yet another reason, other than the research value of the “long-term” perspective, i.e., the wish to draw attention of those who study contemporary times to the fact that it is still necessary and worthwhile to conduct theoretical and empirical research into “Solidarity” and its political, social and cultural consequences. In other words, I would like to encourage researchers, with the help of the articles and reports in this issue, to revive the memory of “Solidarity” wisely, i.e., with the help of scientific research and analysis within the disciplines of sociology and political science. The memory of “Solidarity” and August should not be limited to jubilee apologies. It should find expression in systematic studies of the origins, dynamics and consequences of this social movement, in studies whose authors—in our opinion—should not forget what Normal Davies said so concisely: “August changed Poland’s image in the world once and for all, or at least for whole generations. During the celebrations you should also remember that it was only thanks to August that Poland regained independence.

“Solidarity” helped the nation to arouse itself from the stagnation of nearly 40 years. It also needs to be stressed that thanks to this, the entire Soviet block regained its freedom” (from an interview with Norman Davies, 25 June 2005).

Last but not least, there is still another reason why this issue of *Polish Sociological Review* is devoted to “Solidarity” and the memory of “Solidarity” and all its consequences. It is not only a journal which represents the achievements of Polish sociologists, it is also a journal which often publishes the work of researchers from other countries, especially countries in the former soviet block and—I hope—that it is also read by non-Polish readers. Another reason is that the first “Solidarity” concentrated not only on Polish matters and not only did it develop postulates addressed to the Polish state and party authorities and Polish society. It was also a movement for the expansion of freedom for the communities of Central-Eastern Europe.

These supranational social, economic and political postulates found their expression in “Solidarity’s” message to the workers of Eastern Europe which the vast majority of delegates accepted on 8 September 1981 and which was harshly criticised by communist propaganda Poland and senior authorities in the Soviet Union.

Most of the articles in this volume discuss the domestic aspects of “Solidarity” as a social phenomenon and the memory of “Solidarity” in post-1989 Poland. (The only exception is the article by Jan Kubik and Amy Linch which compares two processes of social reconciliation—in Poland and South Africa—in response to radical systemic reconstruction; in Poland, the “eruption” of “Solidarity” was the impetus for such reconstruction.) But both the various analyses of “Solidarity” in the Polish context and foreign opinions about “Solidarity” (such as the ones quoted above) suggest that “Solidarity” was not only one of the basic models of emergence from communism, as postulated by Polish sociologists and political scientists. It was also a significant modifying factor in European human rights policy, as Timothy Garton Ash has pointed out. It was a program and instrument of change in the soviet block, a struggle for human rights which eroded European political clichés in the second half of the twentieth century.