polish sociological review 1(153)'06
ISSN 1231 – 1413

JACEK KURCZEWSKI
Warsaw University

The Social Functions of "Solidarity"

Abstract: The paper from 1981 on the social functions of "Solidarity" is re-published and commented from the 2006 perspective. In the original paper five pairs of the opposed functions were discussed: 1) activation vs. totalisation; 2) unification vs. polarization; 3) civilization of the opponent vs. demystification of the opponent; 4) non-egalitarian egalitarianisation; and 5) institutionalization of the change. In 2006 the author observes the continuing social function of the "Solidarity," again the conflicting way, as the positive myth that more and more serves as normative reference in current political debates, and as the real political actor that compromised itself through the active participation in politics. The significance of the old functions is discussed in reference to the complexity of non-egalitarian egalitarianism that seems to undermine the whole transformation since 1989 and went to the fore today. The value of the "dialectical functionalism" is thus reasserted.

Keywords: "Solidarity," equality, freedom, transformation

The following paper was published 25 years ago under circumstances, which when recalled, shed more light on the context of the events that tend to be forgotten on the way to becoming the domain of conventional historians. From the summer of 1980 until December 1981 the Polish People's Republic enjoyed an unusual period of political freedom based on economic disaster. The level of tolerance institutionalised, as it then seemed, in the Agreements signed on one part by the government and the other by the Inter-Enterprise Strike Committees in Gdańsk, Szczecin and Jastrzębie gave Poles a touch of freedom excelling even the unusual post-Stalinist liberalisation in October 1956. Of course there were limits. In 1980 as well as in 1956 a red light appeared whenever someone dared to speak about "free elections." "Market reforms" after 1956 became part of Marxist economic rhetoric, but there was enough variety of it, with the majority soon acquiring the stigma of "revisionism" that few people were actually thinking of the re-introduction of capitalism. One should also remember that a Yugoslav mixture of party authoritarianism with enterprise self-government was still functioning and positively appraised as an attempt to rationalise socialism and to democratise communism. And there was the strong, as it seemed, military superpower of the Soviet Union run in a centralised way by the Communist elites with the globalisation of communism as an openly advertised project.

Author is Professor of Sociology in Institute of Applied Social Sciences, Warsaw University; Warsaw, Poland; e-mail: j.kurczewski@uw.edu.pl

The partial liberalization in 1980 meant among others a limitation of censorship. I have described it elsewhere (Kurczewski 1993), but here it is important to recall that printed materials, up to one hundred copies, were free from preliminary censorship. My paper was then published in a mimeograph form under the provision of the new and first law on censorship, which after 35 years openly acknowledged the existence of censorship and regulated it providing exceptions as well as the judicial procedure to appeal against the administrative decisions of the thus "normalised" official and previously secret agency called the Main Office for Control of Press, Publications and Presentations. I was therefore free to publish anything except that which I thought was politically wrong to publish. And I was both an independent academic researcher as well as a politically committed person like many of my fellow sociologist in those years. It is little known to the reader, even in Poland, that "Solidarity" developed its own network of research institutions. It was a side effect of political compromise. The Communists, when negotiating with Inter-Enterprise Strike Committees, were eager to speak directly with the "workers" (even if in fact with engineers and office clerks from the enterprise) in an understandable aim of (1) to escape legitimising the political opposition (dissidents) acting together with the strikers, (2) to overpower the strikers with their own expertise and competence that the party in government had at its disposal, and (3) to save face and legitimise the negotiations in terms of dealing with the "purely working class" protest, so the problem was that of almost a technical fault in the assumed representation of that class and not in the system of power itself.

However, the recognition of "Solidarity" as a trade union had its own logic. The new union rightly expected the right to develop its own expertise in order not to rely on government experts when negotiating such mundane trade union topics as working hours and safety conditions in the workplace. The Party also allowed the Centre for Socio-Economic Studies to exist at the disposal of the National Committee of "Solidarity." The Centre then had a Programme Council. In this Council "political" advisors such as Bronisław Geremek, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, Jacek Kuroń and others were enlisted, which gave them the right to appear officially on the part of "Solidarity" during talks with the government. In this way, the "trade-unionisation" of the political opposition was attempted, and in fact it was partly successful, though at the same time the union was "politicised." In truth though, it was politicised from the very beginning. The paper I presented was written in my capacity as a sociologist, but at the same time I was member of the aforesaid Council and a voluntary worker at the Studies Centre headed by Andrzej Wielowieyski. At the Centre my duty was to coordinate the sociological expertise on "Solidarity." It was a politically delicate task as the Communist Party and its secret police were infiltrating the union and looking for all possible kinds of data that may help to overcome this uninvited partner in the country's politics. Fortunately, the regional autonomy of "Solidarity" meant that almost all regions quickly established their own centres to provide their regional leaders—together forming the National Committee with Lech Wałęsa as the head of it—with their own expertise, which was an important asset in the competitive democratic politics whithin the "Solidarity" self. Therefore, it was even practically impossible to collect systematic sociological information on "Solidarity" to be stored

in one place (pace secret police archives). And I was aware that when speaking about the union at the 1981 Sociological Congress in Łódź I had to remain rather general in my observations.

The Social Functions of "Solidarity" in 1981[1]

"Deliberations over the functions of 'Solidarity' are enclosed within the magic triangle: trade union—political party—social movement." The first of these concepts was a form of legitimisation of the social protest in the eyes of the authorities and their allies, the second one was a form of reproof by these authorities and allies, and the third one, not without the help of sociologists, has found its way into Poland's political vocabulary as a substitute term which was supposed to legitimise "Solidarity's" political aspirations within the framework of the August (1980) Accords.

We know all too well that all these forms are ambiguous and that their current meaning has been adjusted to the present political needs of all involved parties. If we want to understand this new post-August system, whose permanency I accept somewhat arbitrarily perhaps, I shall try to outline some of the important explicit and implicit functions of "Solidarity" as they have emerged from research, declarations, activities and sentiments, both social and personal. This will be done with the help of the "dialectic functionalism" method, i.e. by indicating in each case the tensions inherent in the performance of these functions. Perhaps this arbitrary selection of functions will help us to gain a better understanding of the terms listed at the beginning.

Activation and Totalisation. The first of the five "Solidarity" functions to which I want to draw the reader's attention is the activation of great membership masses who, though taking many different courses of action, remain nevertheless within the confines of the organisation whose nature is therefore increasingly holistic. As of this day [1981], "Solidarity" has over nine million members[2] and is the largest active social organisation in the country. It is also a voluntary organisation, a meeting place for people of many different opinions, habits and interests. Its significant function is that it fills the space between the individual's private life and the official structure of the centralised state. "Solidarity" is not just a social movement. Every active trade union is a social movement. However, this movement may be only outwardly-directed, instrumental, and a means to specific goals.

For its members, however, "Solidarity" is more than that. It offers them a new, independent and self-governing social environment which they can call their own. Within this environment new patterns of thinking and conduct evolve. The trade unionists define their identity by manifesting their affiliation with the union and by

[1] Jacek Kurczewski 1981a.

[2] The number here given was adjusted to the official numbers announced by the National Committee of "Solidarity." In everyday propaganda of the period figure of 10 millions were used. When asked to make the census of the membership in the Union I quickly discovered that numbers I am receiving are not exact and dynamic as well that some, interestingly, continue to be counted as members in the old Party controlled unions, to which almost everybody belonged. The membership figures were also the means in the inter-regional political competition within the "Solidarity" herself, J. K. 2006.

participating in various forms of collective action—field religious services, strikes, electoral meetings, etc. Most of them, particularly the workers, have close friends who are also members of "Solidarity." It is very important that the union maintain this community because these internal activities and personal bonds are one of the safeguards of "Solidarity" in the case of external threats or mistakes in their own policy.[3]

Our own research[4] allows us to give a rough estimate of the intensity of trade unionists' public activity in the Mazowsze region and the former[5] Katowice chapter of the union since August 1980 and to identify the forms of this activity. About three-quarters of the trade unionists in the two regions have gone on strike at least once. Equally important are other more popular forms of public activity, such as petitions or group letters, and one trade-union member in four spoke up in public on general issues or the problems of other people. These are enormous reserves of public activity. From 69% to 73% of all Trade Union members do not belong to any other organisation, however, be it political, social or cultural. Their public activity evolves only within the union. For most of its members, "Solidarity" is still the only organisational form of direct public participation. This leads us to the next function.

Social Unification and Polarisation. Through constantly facing party and state bureaucratic resistance, "Solidarity" has become stronger, but this fortification has also been a burden. *Nolens volens* it has served as an umbrella under which various tendencies, trends and social movements have sought protection from the authorities. The familiar "St Matthew's effect" has repeatedly been produced: the stronger one is, the more power one has. This power is troublesome, however, because (1) whatever the majority's beliefs and opinions or its interests as an organisation are, it is encumbered with the consequences of the fact that it has served as a protective shield for various groups, e.g. the Confederation for Independent Poland (KPN);[6] (2) the development of civil self-government is being delayed and instead of producing a wide range of associations and movements "Solidarity" is becoming more and more ramified; (3) the union is becoming "totalised" in the general sense of the word, i.e. it is embracing the entire social activity of the majority of its members; (4) the process which Marx identified as the transformation of "a class within itself" into "a class for itself" is taking place within the union because, due to party-state resistance, various group differences between the different categories of members are giving way to the unity of interests; (5) as is usually the case, as the majority of active members of society unite, polarisation is increasing and people must declare which side they are on, and in the face of acute conflict, two opposing camps clearly emerge; and (6) this polar-

[3] Cf. for example Zbyszek Bujak's recent tales of his conspiratorial peregrinations through Warsaw and its vicinities, *Gazeta Wyborcza* December 2005, J. Kurczewski 2006.

[4] Cf. J. Kurczewski 1981b. This paper was in fact the report prepared for the delegates to the 1st Congress of "Solidarity." J. K. 2006.

[5] The territorial structure of the regions, large main autonomous political units within the "Solidarity" was changed after the 1st Congress held in Autumn 1981, J. K. 2006.

[6] KPN was the first opposition group organised in late 1970s by Leszek Moczulski openly as political party though considered illegal by the Communist authorities and therefore subject to arrests, jailing and other repressions, J. K. 2006.

isation leads naturally to the concentration and uniting within the other camp and to the natural weakening of those groups and factions which have more affinity with the ideas of part of the "Solidarity" camp. Polarisation leads to the exacerbation of conflict and to the distancing of compromised standpoints.

Civilising and Demystifying the Opponent. One of the paradoxes of the method of analysing social phenomena adopted here, which is called "dialectic functionalism," and perhaps one which illustrates this method most clearly, is the process identified as the increase of tension proportional to the withdrawal of the other party and its increasing acceptance of the standards of public life which are more typical of democracies. The considerable loosening of censorship and exposure of the secrets of governance after August 1980 have led to the progressing demystification of power. Various methods of abuse of authority throughout the last few decades have been exposed. The speed with which this has happened and the context thereof have been a great shock for the majority of the public. To this we must add various current events which are also possible in normal public life, such as the brutality of the police or politically biased court verdicts, but which, in the present situation, seriously violate the public's heightened expectations and motivation to change. All this means that as the other side is becoming "more civilised," i.e. adopting more democratic rules of conduct, resentment towards the other side is increasing due to various past and present violations of law-abiding behaviour, etc. The authorities are becoming demystified. Until the economic system is transformed and until the Party-State apparatus ceases to be in charge of enterprises, strikes—a legal and normal occurrence in the post-August model—will continue to testify that this apparatus is the employer of the employees united in "Solidarity" and those who are not affiliated. Needless to say, this process is very dangerous for further developments in Poland. If the process continues, I shall have to withdraw the optimism I expressed in previous writings (cf. J. Kurczewski 1980) that it will be possible to preserve a peaceful and hence praiseworthy transformation in Poland within the bipolar model which was developed after August 1980.

Egalitarianisation Without Egalitarianism. Despite the suppositions of most of the sociologists, journalists, etc. who have voiced their opinion on the matter, "Solidarity" does not seem to be heading for the realisation of egalitarian programmes although the role of the egalitarian component in the union's motives, behaviours and declarations has not yet been sufficiently explained. Of all the axes of social differentiation perceived by post-August society, "Solidarity" has focused on the most important one, but not the only one, i.e. on the distinction between "the authorities" and "society," the governing and the governed. Nothing seems to indicate that the movement as such has referred in any way to other categories of social differentiation. Men and women who have participated actively in the movement and have led it come from various social backgrounds, although those who are better educated and have more material resources are strongly represented. My research clearly showed that the vast majority, i.e. about 80% of the TU members, do not accept egalitarian postulates. On the contrary, they endorse income heterogeneity and—in general—the standards of living appropriate to input, qualifications and quality of work. It is worth recalling that

last summer [1980], in spite of the persuasion of such people as Professor Andrzej Tymowski,[7] the strikers refused to include a definition of maximum income among their postulates.

The egalitarianism postulate is therefore formulated explicitly only with respect to the authorities who, being no longer legitimate in the eyes of the people, have also lost the right to the privileges associated with their positions. Meanwhile, within the movement, it is recognised that one's own TU elite are entitled to certain privileges. Therefore, if we consider the union's manifest functions (according to R. K. Merton's terminology), then it would rather be the freedom to become rich through one's own work and enterprising and universal opportunities to access not only everyday goods but also luxury goods. The right to become rich thanks to one's own work is a common motive here. At the same time "Solidarity" has a powerful egalitarianising effect not only on the relations between the power apparatus and the rest of the population but also on society in general. This function is expressed in many different ways. One example is efforts to equalise various cross-regional differences in the standard of living, differences which—*nota bene*—have been rather neglected by sociologists. August marks the revival of social activity out of Warsaw. Lower and Upper Silesia, the Małopolska, Lublin and Łódź regions, Gdańsk Pomerania, West Pomerania and Wielkopolska have all supplied "Solidarity" with both activists and ideas. Is it not symbolic that—at least so far—nobody has questioned Gdańsk's title to the union's seat. Gdańsk contra Warsaw, the capital of the union contra the capital of the State—this opposition symbolises the process. By inhibiting the development of various branches, "Solidarity" has contributed to the inhibition of the process of social differentiation between various "branches" and professions. If I am right in my claims concerning the driving force of the "new middle class" and the ensuing strive to open various channels of prosperity and upward mobility (Kurczewski 1980), then the processes outlined above will eventually also inhibit the aspirations of this social basis of the union, at least in times of crisis which, under these conditions, serve to egalitarianise that portion of society which is affiliated with the union.

Institutionalisation of the Revolution. The last on this rather arbitrary list of the functions of "Solidarity" is the that which is most often attributed to the union. Much has been written about it (e.g. Staniszkis 1985) and even more has been said about it, thus I have little to add. The dilemmas of the "self-limiting" revolution are also the dilemmas of the institutionalised revolution. The institutionalisation of social protest in the form of an independent and self-governing trade union is precisely what leads to the multi-functionality of "Solidarity," i.e. the fact that "Solidarity" must simultaneously defend the interests of factory crews, act as a partner in negotiating the new socio-economic system, play the part of an extra-parliamentary opposition advocating change in the public life by the power apparatus, organise strikes which automatically become political in such a system, and violate the economic interests

[7] Andrzej Tymowski was deputy president of Polish Sociological Association in those years, expert in social policy, author of the social minimum sent as opposition expert to Szczecin Inter-Factory Strike Committee in Summer 1980 and later also member of the Programme Council of the Research Centre of National Committee of "Solidarity," J. K. 2006.

of the workers. Free elections would probably be healthier for the national economy than this revolution conducted by means of strikes. This brings us to the question of the internal, plant-cum-regional structure of "Solidarity," which means that activity in the plants and workplaces corresponds with the traditional model of trade unionism in Poland and supra-plant/supra-workplace activity enables it to play the role of an independent workers' organisation despite the fact that it also "politicises" "Solidarity," which must oppose the political authorities as long as they are united with economic authority. All this is accompanied by a process with truly excellent prospects for the future, i.e. the fact that a new political elite emerged after August, an elite consisting of supra-workplace Trade Union activists. It is political because it conducts the conflicts and negotiations with the Party-State apparatus. "Solidarity" may be described at this point as an organisation that, without eliminating the other side, wants to lead the aspirations of the majority of society to victory. If the Polish United Workers' Party is the *leading* force,[8] then "Solidarity" is the *guiding* force of society. "Solidarity" is not a political party, just as the Party is not a "political party" in the usual sense. "Solidarity" is both a larger political force which has taken the form of a trade union in the existing system and a trade union which must play the role of political force in that system. One may ask, what system am I talking about? Unfortunately, it is a system of confrontational democracy built on the tension between two forces, two poles (extremes). This confrontational democracy will survive as long as the two antagonists are more or less equally strong. This unsteady equilibrium will be reached when "Solidarity" has the support of, say, 90% of the population and the state apparatus has the support of about 10% of the population, i.e. its own support."[9]

The Social Functions of "Solidarity" As Seen Today

Now that we have looked at the period of 1980–91 as narrated in the past, what can I write about the past today? As the next section reveals, there is a lot to be written about the function of the former "Solidarność" in contemporary Polish society.

"Solidarity" exploited the freedom of trade unions as officially recognised by the Communist authority being the signatory to the ILO conventions and Helsinki agreements. It organised itself not on trade but on the territorial principles in order to counterbalance the Communist power, it opened its ranks to the managers of the then predominantly state economic and other establishments and it also helped the private farmers to be recognised as entitled to their own trade union organisation. This is was certainly not the trade union organisation in the original meaning of the term albeit

[8] PUWP (Polish United Workers Party) rule over the country was not defined by the law until the constitutional amendments made in 1976 and contested by the small intellectual's opposition then active. Amendments introduced the PUWP into the preamble speaking of its "leading role." The Inter-factory Strike Committees were almost ritually asked to acknowledge the "leading role" of the Party in the agreements signed in the Summer 1980 in order to show that they respect the political-constitutional regime of the Communist Party-State to what they finally agreed, despite the opposition from more radical activists, J. K. 2006.

[9] In those days the Party membership amounted to about 10 percent of the adult population of the country, J. K. 2006.

the form, the instruments and some of the goals were trade unionist. It is beyond doubt, however, that "Solidarity" was an independent civil society institutionalised on a mass scale (for the first time in Poland after WWII), that the form was of secondary importance, and that this has shaped democracy in Poland until today as Polish trade unions are running in elections and their activists have seats in the parliament and in the government of the country.

The transformation to democracy in Poland started in 1980 when the first independent trade union "Solidarity" was officially recognised by the Communist government. "Solidarity" was not only a trade union but it was an organisation that served all possible interests for the Polish civil society in general. The form chosen was due to the recognition of the freedom of trade unions enshrined in the ILO convention, and the protocol signed by Polish Communist government recognised the unconditional freedom to establish unions. This was a legal way to assert the right to act publicly independent of the recognition by the government, and within the wider context of the Helsinki agreements some dissident human rights activists like Lech Wałęsa decided to proceed in this way. This was also in accordance with a lesson learned in the past, when Polish resistance used institutions like literacy courses, church lay circles, and self-help associations against the alien powers, extending their activities much beyond the scope that was officially registered. Until the summer of 1980, though both independent trade unions and human rights organisations were treated as illegal by the political police of the regime and by the courts, it was only through the growing number of strikes that recognition was given, although the new independent trade union had to been registered in accordance with a new law passed for this occasion. It must be kept in mind that the recognition of "Solidarity" was not accompanied by freedom for other public initiatives on the part of the society, whether political parties or associations of war-time anti-German resistance veterans. The Communist regime played a trade-union game with "Solidarity," meaning that no other freedom was to be recognised since the freedom of trade unions was acceptable within the (at least non-Leninist) socialist doctrine. The working-class character of the union had to be exaggerated in order to legitimise it within the frame of the then official Marxist doctrine. On the other hand, "Solidarity" was open to all those employed, including the directors of the vast state enterprises, while self-employed farmers with the support of "Solidarity" had been granted the right to form their own trade union following an eccentric precedent from another continents. Though "Solidarity" was promoting the freedom of association by its example, the postulate was considered aggressively political by the authorities, so "Solidarity" was soon forced to accept within its own ranks the mushrooming of various public action committees and other initiatives which gave rise to the doctrine that the independent and self-governing union *is* the civil society. There was lot of truth in it, not only due to the umbrella role "Solidarity" played, but also in that the "Solidarity" media were the only free and uncensored media, if only for internal use; secondly, that "internal" use was for about 8 million members plus their families, the majority of Polish society being employed with the state-controlled economy extending over more than 90% of jobs, except for agriculture. Martial law, which was introduced on December 13, 1981, ended this

experiment. However, previous public initiatives continued to exist within the climate of the resistance, the clandestine activity of the independent media, and an attempt by Communists to pacify the society through giving freedom to some politically neutral initiatives, especially by recognizing the Church-related activities, as well as tolerating more diversity on their own side. This was not sufficient, however, as there was obviously a need for political change of a structural character as the economic potential of the old system was exhausted. Western aid was needed, the Soviet system of dominant power was itself facing the crisis of identity, and society was unresponsive to the ruling class.

In 1988 the Civic Committee led by Lech Wałęsa was established to whom the legal leader of the then delegalised [NSZZ Solidarność] Independent and Self-Governing Trade Union "Solidarity" nominated several dozens of intellectuals, experts or political writers whose official mission was to advise the president of "Solidarity" on the various matters. At that time, the trade union had a relatively low level of activity, but on the other hand, its reactivation was seen as a possible obstacle to the delicate process of diplomacy, which mostly via the Catholic Church was pursued between Wałęsa, other leaders of "Solidarity" and the leaders of Polish United Workers Party (Communists) and their government. The Committee, without clear rules and being illegal in the sense of Communist law and practice, used to meet irregularly, each time at the personal request of Lech Wałęsa. With the passing of time and the growing likelihood of a negotiated settlement of the decade-long conflict between the Solidarność movement and Communist authorities and organisations, the informal leaders of the committee agreed with Wałęsa to establish relevant commissions to develop the expertise and manifest the readiness to perform the role of the Shadow Cabinet. The committees formed the base for the "Solidarity" representatives in the subsequent 1979 Round Table negotiations. The committee also served as a kind of ad hoc independent body claiming to represent the Polish public opinion. This body had been also used as the source of personal decisions during the nomination process for the first semi-democratic elections of 1989. It is often forgotten that the opposition was institutionally represented in the electoral process as the Civic Committee and not by "Solidarity," even though after the re-legalisation of the trade union the body was significantly rebaptised as the Civic Committee by the president of the ISGTU Solidarność. At the start of the electoral campaign the committee received the right to use the famous "Solidarity" logo. Before the elections in June 1989 the committee appealed to the regional boards of the re-legalised "Solidarity" to establish regional civic committees. One should note, however, that already in 1988 such a local civic committee was created in Rzeszów, and in March 1989 another one was established in the small city of Włodawa.

The origins of the local committees varied. Soon after this phenomenon began, the following sociological description was given:

> Where the independent political life and the settled infrastructure of independent organizations existed, civic committees "Solidarity" were set up with their assistance not waiting for help from the syndicate structure just in process of re-birth. In "weaker" centres they were initiated by the union. Sometimes activists of Solidarność reemerging from the underground chose this type of activity instead

of a trade unionist one. Persons of personal authority were included in the committees. Sometimes those who were remembered from the days of first "Solidarity" were recalled. One of the activists, when asked about how the civic committee was created, simply answered—"Solidarity" from 1980. In the country, in *gminas* (communes) and small towns—committees were set up by the local "activity elites" identified with the widely understood ethos of "Solidarity." Often they have been set up by former rank-and-file members of the union or local Catholic activists. The situation in localities was different because they were without political life. Friends or simply volunteers were engaged into cooperation. In effect, "Solidarity" civic committees were a form not so much of the already active groups or trade union's agency but a platform of organisation of public activity. Solidarność needed outposts in all electoral districts. Those envoyes were picking up collaborators on the spot. These outposts, similarly to the Warsaw district electoral [Solidarność] offices developed later into the local Solidarność civic committees. During the fervent electoral campaign the local committees' activity was similar to a social movement. The electoral campaign had mobilised vast resources of human energy. A network of committees of various levels was developing rapidly. The candidates were nominated, campaign leaders were found for them as well as confident people [to check the election process] and members of the electoral committees (Dunin and Rykowski 1990).

In light of this quotation, some comments should be provided. The elections, in order to provide democratic legitimacy to the expanded (nobody was imagining the total change as occurred afterwards), political order had to be organised with participation of the "social," as it was the vocabulary of the day, element in the whole process. The electoral process as such gave the impetus to develop a nation-wide territorial structure parallel to that of the Party-government. Solidarność, though aware of the political importance of the territorial structures and organised therefore on the territorial and not on the trade lines, was nevertheless unevenly dispersed over Poland, with obvious dominance in the major industrial areas and cities. This was exacerbated by martial law and pacification by the Communists, which resulted in limiting the active support for the union in the militant industrial and university centres. The participation in elections with its supposedly fair deal as for the Senate (fully free elections in the majoritarian system) and negotiated access to the Seym (a maximum of one third of the seats to be won under the proportional representation rules in competition with other non-Communists or their allies) had been a major challenge that not only helped to extend the influence of Solidarność beyond its base but also to develop the new independent political force where there was no Solidarność or its potential at all. This is where the local Church influence was so important. Whereas the establishment of a committee was in the hands of the re-born Solidarność union, a Bishop may try to veto out a candidate, but in a locality without "Solidarity" it was the Bishop and his advisors who decided. After all, the Church also survived 1980 as the only legal organisation independent from the Party-State and better known publicly than most of the Solidarność leaders. The Church was on the side of the society and had moral support greater than Solidarność had in the society.

The National Assembly by its nature could absorb only a small fraction of these squadrons; self-government served as a sui generis compensation for those who have not yet have access to power. Independent of the systemic visions of the creators of the territorial self-government in Poland, its creation led to a radical increase in the quantity of positions of power accessible to the new, post-Solidarność political class… Numbers in the new regime are of importance. Territorial self-government is an army of several hundred thousand of nominees and later elected members and office-holders… Through self-government elections vast masses of members of society have been mobilised to support the new political regime independent of their political views. When entering P. one month prior to elections young and old women asked on the road seemed to know nothing about we are asking about, even withdrawing from

conversation on elections though vaguely recalling themselves that elections are approaching and that there is a "committee." The next visit just before the elections did not change the image for visitors from the outside that much. The meeting was called upon as well as small meetings of individual candidates. In R. at the crossroads…there was a poster for an electoral meeting, but only about forty people appeared… It might seem to be a paradox, but elections to the local self-government in 1990 were run by the above-local level, nation-wide network of information and state organisation and related Solidarność-civic [committees] camp. Programmes were local, the electorate and elected were local, but elections were not a local affair but rather a national one (Kurczewski 1990).

Fearing the exploitation of civic committees by various political orientations beyond its control, the National Executive Committee of "Solidarity" dissolved the committees on June 17 1989. Many committees, however, resisted this decision and continued their activity on the local level. These committees were left without political leadership, which led to their further diversification. The Grass Roots Initiative Movement, which linked many of them, organised a conference that decided on the political and self-government aspects of the movement declaring that "committees should be left open to various orientations and movements accepting 'Solidarity' and especially should represent the interests of local communities. Civic committees should participate actively in preparing and organising the local government elections" (Lewenstein 1999: 69). Two personalities—Zbigniew Bujak, an underground "Solidarity" hero and Zdzislaw Najder, the former director of the Polish Radio Free Europe—proposed alternative ways for developing the movement that was left suddenly orphaned by "Solidarity." Bujak advocated the creation of a political party out of the civic committees directly referring to the Mexican example of the Institutionalised Revolutionary Movement, while Najder criticised it as preventing the development of authentic political pluralism and suggested committees as a forum where the conflicting political tendencies could emerge, discuss and mature. The 1990 local government elections provided concrete political motivation for strengthening the movement, whatever it was to become in the future.

After 1989 "Solidarność" entered national politics with full strength of a moral victory, even if its membership was much lower than before martial law and the new Communist trade unions that OPZZ created after the ban on "Solidarność" remained a strong competitor after the shift to democracy. "Solidarność" delegated its activists to the new parliament and ran its own list in the elections until the government under its aegis was in power. The democratic right that was identified with "Solidarność" was successfully compromised in those years, giving the benefit of innocence to the post-Communist party in power after the next elections in 2002.

Three years of post-Communist government resulted in a number of scandals at various levels of power but including the top political figures of the country as demonstrated in the so-called Rywin affair. The 2005 electoral campaign seemed as simple as just moving the political pendulum back to the right, but the right became divided depending on the attitude towards the past 15 years. The Round Table agreements were criticised more, and the word "Solidarność" was often invoked as a key word suggesting the moral and social contents of the proposed new Polish Fourth Republic.

Did "Solidarity" have an egalitarian effect on Polish society or not? At first glance the answer is negative. Its important to point out that even in the years of the rule of "Solidarność" the income inequality was steadily rising as evidenced in Table 1 below, which uses the Gini index.

Table 1

The Gini's Index of Inequality in Poland, 1996–2002

1996	1998	1999	2001	2002
.272	.288	.296	.309	.315

Source: Calculations of Bogdan Cichomski (Institute of Social Studies, Warsaw University) based on the Survey of Structure of Remunerations by Occupations, www.monitoring.rownystatus.gov.pl.

I myself studied the emancipation effect with the help of three simple and otherwise ambiguous (but what is not ambiguous in the area of freedom and equality) questions that had been asked several times to the representative random samples. The first deals with the assessment of freedom in the country (table 2).

Table 2

Is there too much, or too little freedom in Poland?

	1988 100% = 926 OBOP	1990 100% = 898 OBOP	1992 100% = 1319 OBOP	1994 100% = 983 CBOS	1999 100% = 1521 CBOS	2004 100% = 988 CBOS
Decidedly too little	16	6	5	6	13	3
Rather too little	35	24	25	22	26	10
Just enough	29	40	36	41	43	39
Rather too much	9	16	19	18	10	26
Decidedly too much	1	4	6	5	2	12
Difficult to say	10	10	10	8	7	9

Source: data from author's private collection.

Though Poland in 1988 was still a Communist country, the fact that I was allowed to have the question on freedom printed in the questionnaire proves that it had already been on the road to liberation. One was not allowed to ask such questions before. Still, the difference is clear though possibly dismaying to someone involved in the democratisation process. In 1988 the majority in the sample thought that there was too little freedom in Poland (51%), while 29% of the sample was satisfied with the degree of freedom and 10% was overly satisfied. As to the latter, I never found the means to study why they felt that way. Then the Round Table negotiations happened, the first partly non-Communist government formed and partly free elections were held, the freedom of political association was established, "Solidarity" was re-legalised and the ban on censorship was lifted, and in 1990 the most frequent opinion was that there is just enough of freedom in the country while the percentage of those judging that there is too little of it went down by 21%. This figure represents the political emancipation rent, and while it may seem relatively small in numbers, at the same time it represents complex political sympathies certainly better than the political simplification of the "whole nation…" sort. After all, the Communists had support,

even if they remained the ruling minority, and General Jaruzelski's Party-junta was not alone against the pacified society but was supported by what remained of the Party and the reformed Communist trade unions. The Communist faction remained strong and did not disappear as it was naively expected, but it evolved into social democracy that ousted the "Solidarity"-linked government out of power twice in the subsequent elections and its leader Aleksander Kwaśniewski was elected twice as President, thus defeating the "Solidarity" candidates, Lech Wałęsa and Marian Krzaklewski. What is surprising, nevertheless, is that though the distribution of answers concerning the assessment of freedom in Poland remained relatively stable in the transformation years, in the year 1999 the frequency of those expecting less freedom increased at the expense of those expecting more, and it almost equals those who are satisfied with the current state of affairs.

To understand that, I believe that one must take into account the second issue covered by our questionnaire, that is equality (table 3).

Table 3

Is there too much or too little equality in Poland?

	1988 100% = 926 OBOP	1990 100% = 898 OBOP	1992 100% = 1319 OBOP	1994 100% = 983 CBOS	1999 100% = 1521 CBOS	2004 100% = 988 CBOS
Decidedly too little	25	21	25	28	30	34
Rather too little	49	51	50	45	43	38
Just enough	11	13	14	17	18	16
Rather too much	3	4	3	4	2	2
Decidedly too much	1	1	1	1	1	1
Difficult to say	11	9	1	6	6	9

Source: data from author's private collection.

Despite the stereotype that was prevalent not only outside of Poland, Communist society was not perceived as equal. *In no way the regime change may be constructed as a deal of exchanging equality for freedom*. In 1988 a decisive majority of the sample (74%) was expecting more equality, and in fact this has not changed after 1989 as it remains at level of 72% until today.

Regarding the rise in freedom and continuing inequality, it is not clear yet until the weight of these two opposing principles is compared as in the last of the three questions asked (table 4).

Table 4

What is more important?

	1988 100% = 926 OBOP	1990 100% = 898 OBOP	1992 100% = 1319 OBOP	1994 100% = 983 CBOS	1999 100% = 1521 CBOS	2004 100% = 988 CBOS
Freedom	50	50	48	47	57	39
Equality	42	43	43	45	35	49
Difficult to say	8	7	9	9	8	11

Source: data from author's private collection.

From looking at the fifty/fifty distribution of choices, which is most likely a result of the forced choice made between those two, one could say that equally important for the society was the fact that the values remained constant until the rise in importance of freedom at the end of 1990s giving way in the latest survey to the slight preponderance of equality.

One could assess that Polish society had been saturated with freedom well enough to start to expect the never accomplished dream of equality. The delayed consumption of the equality dream embodied in the "Solidarity" myth is growing social expectation. This is one interpretation. Another one refers to the previously mentioned increase in social inequality as measured with help of the Gini's index.

The emancipatory process started in Poland already in 1980, not only at the level of the political expression of discontent, but also at a deeper level of liberating the structures of everyday life and allowing for the institutional structures of social citizenship to develop. The privatisation of the anonymous public property under the Party State control occurred with the help of the development of self-management structures in the economic units, 'as if were ours.' The programme of self-management was developed by "Solidarity" in order to overcome the Party State power. The consequences were, however, real, and the industry (an important part of the economic power) was effectively dispersed among the population and put under the democratic control of the employees. Although the discourse of the 'working-class' was employed, it was not the working class but the workers as well as engineers and managers who were in control. On the other hand, it was not all, but the better educated part of the employees, the company's middle class, that effectively appropriated the assets acting as the representation of all employed. For the sake of political compromise, the new ruling elite of the martial law period had allowed this self-management to continue, and in fact it was strengthened by making the trade unions either illegal ("Solidarity" and related) or delegitimised (the pro-government OPZZ and others), while the Party cells in the companies were also dependent on the outside military power. This industrial democracy model was seen by the majority of both government and opposition economic experts and politicians as detrimental to economic recovery. Once political reforms started, which attracted the general attention, the second process started, i.e. the transformation of property and power structures in the largely state-owned economy.

Through this process called 'commercialisation', the support of the former company nomenklatura was secured by making insider privatisation possible. However, a crucial point was how to win the support, or at least the neutrality, of the staff. This was effected through (1) the democratic procedure of referendum in which the right to veto the privatisation was implemented, (2) the incorporation of the staff representatives into the category of transitory property managers, and more importantly (3) the preferential sale of the shares in the privatised stock. In the first years of transformation,

> ownership change processes… have been primarily a result of the "enfranchisement aspirations" of workers, especially "the industrial middle class." The implementation of these aspirations was not hampered by the lack of credit and financial support from "central privatisers." If the privatisation of state enterprises,

primarily small and medium-sized firms, has already taken on a relatively widespread nature, this is precisely owing to these "enfranchisement aspirations," articulated through the employee self-management movement, part of the trade union movement, including the "Sieć" (an organised network within "Solidarity" acting as lobbyist at the national level) and by the main actors on the collectivised (state-self-managed) enterprise stage (Pańków 1993: 127–128).

While "small privatisation" did not lead to any large-scale social problems, this process involved a lot of social tension of the transformation period. The staff surrendered to the loss of property rights when confronted with the dilemma of choosing between unemployment and bankruptcy and the prospect of organised restructure—which included a reduction programme, benefits and timetables as well as investment necessary to grow. This process—called by some the counter-revolution or the treason of (or by) "Solidarity"—has been possible due to the lack of alternative economic prospects regarding the growth of the self-management economy as well as the genuine involvement of the powerful trade unions in negotiations with the government and prospective new owners. This led, however, to the disenchantment with the transformation and legitimisation of post-Communist and opposition to the transformation cabinets, which independent of their ideological past and present affiliation were generally pursuing the same general direction of change.

The whole question was made fully clear by Jacek Kuroń, a former dissident and "Solidarity" advisor, who after 1989 became one of the leading Polish politicians:

> When in June 1989 we were going to elect ourselves I have had no imagination as to the scope of the so-called transformation or change of the order. The change was significantly harming a significant part of my electorate. And here we have the case in which I (and majority of deputies) was acting in the way harmful for the aspirations of the electorate and in contradiction to what was claimed in the electoral programme. The electoral programme was changed because the conditions have changed. This is the reason for the deep political crisis as in the effect we are facing today the rejection of the politics. We shall pay the price for it for a very long time. One could ask therefore today if that was not a political mistake. Were we right when assuming then that this was necessary? I still do not see any other way to set up conditions for a market economy when the central system was breaking down.[10]

The alternative had been unrealistic, at least under the circumstances, but the tension disclosed the basic contradiction of the transformation process. On the one hand, there was the emancipation in all possible areas, including property rights, while on the other hand, the new exclusion as the privatisation of the large industries was concentrated in the hands of a few. On the one hand there was liberation from communism, and on the other hand there was the suppression of socialism if the nice distinction between the state command and self-management may be using these terms. A society torn between these two processes seems to be the best definition of Poland today. A realistic comment, however, might be that even today there is a strong socialist component of the Polish reality, which despite the liberal modernisers' condemnation as the "vestige of the homo sovieticus" is in fact an effect of the previous struggle of Polish labour with the Communist ruling class. This is not a Communist vestige but a leftover from the same socialist tradition that came back to the forefront of French democracy and which is behind the stress on participation in the "social Europe" today. The emphasis on participation was successful

[10] Quoted as Interview 101 in Kurczewski, 1999.

in general terms at least for some parts of the economy, such as the monitoring of the documents of employee-owned companies. "Looking at the history of employee ownership in Poland since 1989 (when fierce debates on the role of employee ownership and employee participation in management were occurring in connection with the general debate on what shape the Polish transformation was to take), one might hypothesise that given the existing legal, organisational, and financial possibilities, employee ownership has become one of the principal instruments by which citizens have adjusted to the new order in general, and privatisation in particular" even if sharing ownership and profits may sometimes render economic development difficult (Jarosz 1996: 138). At the same time, it might very well be that the anti-emancipatory privatisation is the most economically prudent decision that was made. The answer is in the social consequences of the process. If the privatisation of the economy will lead to economic growth with the effects distributed in the society so that the affluent middle classes will become the majority, then the last judgment may be of acquittal.

It was my theoretical intent to combine two apparently contradictory traditions as an example of dialectic functionalism. While Robert K. Merton emancipated the functional analysis from the isolationist perspective of self-contained homeostatic system, he had not put enough stress on the often contradictory character of the social processes and events. The whole story of "Solidarity" as developing in 1980 and 1981 was for me the best example. The post-script tries to narrate this story as we see it from the 2006 perspective further, thus giving even more support to the dialectic approach. While "Solidarity" was attacked, one may say today, rightly by Communists as the capitalist counter-revolutionary it was thoroughly socialist in its structure and expressed goals. Later, when the ruling Communists themselves started to dismantle the socialist state economy, it was the pre-1989 Rakowski government not the post-1989 Mazowiecki government that made room for development of capitalism, institutionalised freedom of entrepreneurship and started to promote businesspeople to the government positions as the emblematic case of Mr. Wilczek, both private businessman and Minister of Economy in Rakowski's government, shows. They have attempted what succeeded in Communist China, i.e. the continuity of political power over the capitalist market economy, but they failed in 1989. However, the paradoxes of "Solidarity" Poland did not end then. Certainly, "Solidarity" has led to the consolidation of the capitalist economy in Poland, but at the same time it remains the institutionalised myth that is until today nourishing the anti-capitalistic tendencies and attitudes.

The myth is again totalising and thus both unifying and dividing. Political discourse in Poland today is again full of references to "Solidarity" and the past. The parliamentary elections in 2005 led to the victory of political parties critical of the post-1989 development. The major victor, PiS [the Law and Justice Party], was running on the promise to establish a new, Fourth Republic as distinct from the Third which was established after 1989. The word "solidarity" is the one used most often, on part with "justice" in this context. The legitimacy of the Republic based upon the Round Table agreements has seemingly been already over-exploited and the old "Solidarity" is back. Dialectic functionalism continues. The defects of functionalism

are well-known, however, the dialectical version that points to the contradictory effects behind the apparent paradoxes seems to escape the criticisms. As a permanent re-interpretation of the contradictions within the on-going social process it retains its value as no homeostatic assumptions are a priori made and no effect is solidified as given for ever. At least I hope that telling the story about an old story may have its merits as helping to interprete the present.

References

Dunin, K., Rykowski, Z. W.1990. "Komitety Obywatelskie: Organizacja czy reprezentacja" [Civic Committees: Organization or Representation], in: S. Kowalski (ed.), *Pierwszy krok do Europy, OPSZ KK NSZZ Solidarność* [First Step to Europe, NSSZ "Solidarity"]. Warszawa: .

Federowicz, M. 1996. "Ewolucja konfliktu i konsensusu związanego z prywatyzacją" [Evolution of Conflict and Consensus concerning Privatisation], mimeo.

Frydman, R., Rapaczynski, A., Earle, J. S., et al. 1993. *The Privatization Process in Central Europe*. Budapest: CEU Press.

Jarosz, M. (ed.). 1996. *Kapitał zagraniczny w prywatyzacji* [Foreign Capital in Privatisation]. Warszawa: ISP PAN.

Kurczewski, J. 1980. "Dawny ustrój i rewolucja" [Ancien Régime and Revolution] (mimeograph).

Kurczewski, J. 1981a. "Społeczne funkcje Solidarności" [Social Functions of "Solidarity"]. Warszawa: *Biuletyn Spraw Związkowych*.

Kurczewski, J. 1981b. "Solidarność od wewnątrz" ["Solidarity" from within], special issue of *Wiadomości Dnia*, 31 August 1981, pp. 3–7.

Kurczewski, J. 1990. "Dziennik wyborczy" [Electoral Diary], in: S. Kowalski, *Pierwszy krok do Europy, OPSZ KK NSZZ Solidarność* [First Step to Europe, NSSZ "Solidarity"]. Warszawa: Ośrodek Prac Społeczno-Zawodowych NSZZ Solidarność.

Kurczewski, J. 1993. *The Resurrection of Rights in Poland*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kurczewski, J. 1999. *Posłowie a opinia publiczna* [Deputies and Public Opinion]. Warszawa: Institute of Applied Social Sciences, Warsaw University.

Lewenstein, B. 1999. *Wspólnota społeczna a uczestnictwo lokalne* [Social Community and Local Participation]. Warszawa: Institute of Applied Social Sciences, Warsaw University.

Pańków, W. 1993. *Work Institutions in Transition*. Warszawa: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung.

Szomburg, J. 1993. "The decision-making structure of Polish privatization," in: J. S. Earle, R. Frydman, and A. Rapaczynski (eds.), *Privatization in the Transition to a Market Economy*. New York: St. Martin's Press, pp. 75–85.

Staniszkis, J. 1985. *Self-limiting Revolution*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.