
EAST & WEST

A Letter from Poland

Between Euphoria & Mortal Danger

By Tymoteusz Klempski



THE ATMOSPHERE in Poland . . . enthusiasm, uncertainty, discouragement, outbursts of resistance. The main topics of conversation take either a more abstract approach—will they tighten the screws, or won't they?—or a more concrete: will they invade? The Poles are an

emotional people; they react violently, but are not noted for being especially consistent (though it's said nowadays that all previous national characteristics no longer apply!). It seems to me that our nation is at a turning point of one kind or another. The impetus of 1980 is still there, and the sense of a great burst of energy has not yet vanished; but it is quietening down, subsiding. Everything is fading, and a certain grey ordinariness (perhaps a grey extraordinariness) is developing. But the two things are essentially the same: in an ill-defined situation, we maintain a delicate equilibrium.

Last spring, a joke went the rounds: *Can things in Poland get any worse?* ANSWER: *No—if anything could get worse, it would already have done so. . . .*

My God, what bad prophets the joke-writers have turned out to be! That spring was by comparison a veritable consumer's paradise, marred only by the odd difficulty with meat and fats. At the moment, the look of the shops is almost amusing. You can still get packet soup, spaghetti, salt, and occasionally you see dried peas or vinegar. In many towns there is no cheese, and there are queues for butter whenever it is (as the phrase has it) "thrown into the shops." All sweets have disappeared, all jams. Some toiletry items have disappeared. Two recent notices in adjacent Warsaw shop-windows announced respectively: "NO MIŁOSZ" and "NO SHAMPOO."

It would seem that the Polish United Workers Party (PUWP), grasping at every straw, even at the cost of creating an absurd situation, settles the problem of pay increases on a "Want-some?-Well-here-you-are-then" basis. Here are what? Bits of paper which won't buy you anything anyway.

But I am digressing, attempting to describe the landscape after the battle—and the battle is by no means over. It has merely moved on from the phase of the spectacular cavalry charge to the war of entrenchment, the war of nerves. Everything here follows a logical pattern; what happens today is the consequence of what happened yesterday. But what happened yesterday obeyed no logic, or, if it did, it went beyond our wildest fantasies. I would go so far as to say that last June, even last July, no one in Poland (not even those at the centre of events) could have foreseen what was to happen in August and all the succeeding months. The unimaginable cannot be accepted—or not immediately. Polish society needs a little time to recover and—after getting away from the crushing greyness of the queues and the staggering daily revelations of a new chapter in "the history of Polish idiocies"—to understand what it has lived through.

JUDGING BY THE TONE of the Western press, there too, especially in the circles of the oh-so-learned, oh-so-morally-pure journalists of the European Left, no one knows what really happened. My guess is that if the Soviet Union now threw all its force into this "new Afghanistan" (in Europe, this time), out of the commotion, the diplomatic notes, the declarations and demonstrations would come one great sigh of relief from the whole world: "*Lordre règne à Varsovie*", at last.

The Poles' incomplete awareness of what has happened stems not only from the fact that things are greyer and greyer, and that "front-line" news tends to turn into a series of communiqués from headquarters. For some people too little has happened; for others too much. Suffice it to say that those who truly know the magnitude of what has taken place form a tiny minority.

How to sum it up? It can best be described as a total discrediting of the ideology and its related system. (Systems, rather, since yesterday's best friend, Pol Pot, is today's worst enemy; and it cannot be denied that this Asiatic mini-Stalin is precisely the consequence of Communist ideology in the specific historical/cultural circumstances.) Some will say that that ideology and our system (or systems) were discredited long ago. And over the last few years they have certainly been shaken by the witnesses of history—by all those who demonstrated to the world the immeasurable cruelty and terror that are inextricably bound up with a

Marxist type of system, the current historical form of dictatorship which is by its very nature anti-democratic, and directed against the individual as a member of the community.

Thus, unfortunately, in political reality there are two ways of being discredited: one moral, which results in the elimination of terror; and the other the discrediting that goes with defeat and obvious breakdown. That is why the helpers and closest associates of one 20th-century European genocide appeared in the dock at Nuremberg, and the representatives of the second sat on the Judges' bench, while he let himself be idolised by the terrorised masses, and also by his allies from the democratic camp, who discreetly turned a blind eye to the essence of this second, victorious, totalitarianism.

THE EVENTS of the "Polish August" of 1980 discredited the system—not, it is true, in the sense of a total victory over evil, but by indicating a new direction, by completely disrobing the always very scantily dressed emperor who, though retaining the immense capital of political power, has made and continues to make mistakes. And, in politics, where there are mistakes there are always winners and losers. The mass action of the Baltic workers showed two things to the world. First, that it is not only crazy intellectuals or dissidents who are against the government. Second, that, in spite of the fragmentariness of the phenomenon (seen in terms of the whole Soviet bloc), the events were irreversible. Those who declare that after a period of spasmodic action things will simply return to the old rut are undoubtedly wrong. Nothing will be as it was. They can "tighten the screws", they can "move in"—both they and THEY—but things can never be the same again. On the Baltic coast, a chapter in the history of the Marxist system has ended. What will the next chapter be?

The mechanism of the Party which grasps, or attempts to grasp, the reins of power is mentally shattered, morally discredited, but still, because of our neighbouring "friends", very powerful. In this situation, the problem becomes first and foremost one of tactics. A paradoxical situation has been created. The people has shown its mass dissatisfaction with a totalitarian and incompetent government, and a majority of the people apparently agree that the PUWP must be supported, perhaps not as "the leading force of the people", but as an essential guarantee of the state in its present situation: encircled and aware of the indifference of uncertain allies.

We have been terribly alone with our problems.

¹ "Bialy Domek"—literally "little White House"—is a nickname given to the Party headquarters in Warsaw.

The course of events depends largely on us. We have to avoid the quicksand and at the same time glance sideways at the actions of the Party. A situation has arisen which is completely new in this part of the world, through the spontaneously formed body that represents society—and *Solidarity* is undoubtedly such a body.

UNTIL NOW, "the leading force of the people" governed as it wished and as it had the power to do—and we know how that was. Now it merely fulfils a mandate of geopolitical necessity. It must serve the Orwellian "proles" which it has so naively and insolently ignored. It is not because of "objective" difficulties (what on earth does that mean anyway?) that everything is tottering, and that some points of the Agreement—either deliberately or through incompetence—have not been implemented. It is because this despotic organisation of puny supermen cannot, does not wish to, does not know how to come to terms with the new situation.

The situation continues to develop as a result of unforeseen and unplanned changes within the PUWP. Up until now, if you strained your ears just a little, you could hear a constant scratching and gnawing in the monumental pyramid that culminated in the little White House.¹ Behind the wonderful façade of unity and unanimity (the only mechanism in the country which had no need of spare parts), a fierce struggle was waged between individuals and between factions for a higher position or at least to ensure that the snout stayed in the trough. Now all that has been exposed, and continues to be laid bare. Many citizens of this country suffer sleepless nights from fear of tomorrow, but it's probably especially the members of the PUWP who are insomniacs—in proportion to their position on the pyramid. A few years ago, as a result of both internal and external corruption, the PUWP began to realise that it had fewer places at the table where "surplus value" was greedily divided. It was then that the dissatisfied and unsated grew in number, since "appetite grows by eating." Now things are even worse. Tears come to one's eyes at the thought of the fallen angels for whom there is no longer a rung on the ladder.

This is no joke; it is a very real problem. The people are supposed to check the mechanism, and even push it along—for the mechanism exists not in order to be efficient but because it cannot be replaced, although it is cracking at the joints. The number of "fallen angels" grows, in other words a two-pronged Opposition grows: against any kind of "renewal", and against the present structure of the Party's personnel. Among these the greatest number are potential candidates waiting for "fraternal neighbourly help" so that they may return to their paradise lost. The Party, like it or not, has revealed and daily continues to reveal its true moral

face. Let us have no illusions: they will not be swayed by patriotic feelings or responsibility to society. Those who are truly dangerous are those we do not see—or at any rate not at meetings and “economic discussions.”

GOING TO WORK, walking along the streets, standing in the queue, looking along the empty shelves, and watching more and more scandals on television. I sometimes wonder if it hasn't all been organised deliberately: this torpor, disorganisation, lack of supplies, this feeling of surrealist grotesqueness and absurdity. Certainly the weather was bad this year, so there may be less potatoes or fruit. But the year before the harvest wasn't too bad (that was just stupid government propaganda). Isn't anything left over from last year's reserves? It is true that within the ranks of the Party and in the previous ruling cadre (cadres, rather) there were fewer and fewer qualified people, and the degree of incompetence at the top rose almost as steeply as the fictional production statistics. But now it seems as if someone is deliberately trying to sow the conviction of absurdity all around us—and no way out. I hope I am wrong. But of one thing I am sure: in our country there is no lack of those who would like life to be in all respects more and more difficult, grimmer and grimmer.

AND HERE, as I see it, lies *Solidarity's* main role. (In talking about the new unions I am of course thinking only of *Solidarity*; the rump unions had an obvious and inglorious role, as nobody in their senses can possibly doubt.) *Solidarity* must not simply fight against the dinosaurs of the system, but must also repair it, even in a sense protect it. For, after years of being implicitly discredited, and now a year after being openly discredited, there was no great difficulty in toppling this house of cards.

In articles, broadcasts, and discussions, two phrases are repeated with extraordinary frequency: “the building of trust” and “social contract.” These phrases are just waffle, but in their way rather necessary in certain circumstances. Let us try to sort out what is really being talked about. It is possible to build up trust in “the leading force”, yes—but not in the ways that the Kaniás and other smaller fry mean; or rather, not in the way they dream of. Third time lucky, the saying goes. Perhaps I am prejudiced, but once was enough for me. And for society those three times would be enough for ever. No, comrades, there will never again be trust (if there ever was any). Gomułka and Gierek have exhausted not only foreign credits but their moral credit too. We propose something quite different. The credit of trust for work well

executed—responsible, difficult, but excluding every kind of double-dealing. There's no trust that you will lead us into the bright, radiant future: all there can be is trust that you will carry out well those tasks which we, your employers—the Poles—give you to do. And if you fail? Just as your predecessors failed, from Boleslaw Bierut onwards? Then you will be forced to go, just as they did: into political oblivion and historical disgrace.

And now, “the social contract.” Jean-Jacques Rousseau did not envisage it as a group of more or less unscrupulous persons who take over the government, and when this government “doesn't work” retain their prerogatives—which they had gained by sheer fluke—by making a few insignificant concessions to the governed. There can be no social contract when one side is not really a side at all, or is at best self-styled. And yet the genuine representatives of society sign some kind of agreement with that “side”, and thus grant a bargaining partnership.

Let us allow this much for a moment: the bargaining and agreements are, at their best, a social conspiracy. For our society, in spite of what its leaders believed (they were not so much incompetent as naïve), has a highly developed sense of self-defence and an instinct for security, built up during centuries of constant threat. The “social conspiracy” is not what was signed in Gdansk, Szczecin and Jastrzebie, but is what I have been speaking of: retaining “the leading force of the people” as a temporary guarantee of external security. All other agreements are merely individual clauses which affect the facts of ordinary daily life up until today. Because tomorrow, comrades, of the PUWP, you will have to sign more commitments. What will they be? That's not up to you. And don't count on any further credit.

THIS SOCIAL CONSPIRACY has external manifestations—various documents which confirm, by detailed decisions, the Party's subordination to the people; and these must be jealously guarded. One must also understand the specific function of colloquial language and of certain semiotic conventions which operate in the official language. A single example will suffice, as common in the mass media today as were its predecessors: “*democratisation*.” It is an excellent formula. It indicates, on the one hand, what society wants in its own actions with regard to the Party, and, on the other, the gradual loosening of the bonds which have tied it up till now.

But why, then, is there no talk of “*democracy*”? After all, not so long ago nonsense formulae like “socialist democracy” were in common use. The simple fact is that no longer can anyone be taken in

by the possibility of democracy and Marxist-style socialism co-existing. "Socialist democracy"—precisely because of that superfluous extra label—meant what it said: eliminating the maximum possible number of the institutions, functions, and elements of life which together make up the concept of democracy. And that is why today we talk of "democratisation", in other words the partial recovery of certain spheres of social action which "socialist democracy" had taken from us—that socialist democracy which grew (for Marxism has never worried about paradoxes or non-sequiturs) out of the dictatorship of the proletariat (read: a group usurping to itself the right to represent the People).

Democratisation is one fragment of the social contract: in conditions of external threat, society agrees to the party playing "the leading role" but subjects it to a most careful control. As a consolation (and at the same time a warning), "democratisation" is talked about, combining fire with water. In such an ambiguous—and perhaps even cynical—situation, but in accordance with the morality of success, we need to consider certain facts about the situation. There are many such facts. I have quite deliberately concentrated only on a few, and it is necessary to present even these in a very abbreviated form.

THE ROLE OF THE POLITICAL OPPOSITION. In my opinion, in this legally unclear, semi-official situation the political opposition should continue to resist, guaranteed by the tacit agreement of the pacified authorities. And so too should "unofficial" publications continue to appear, since just as so-called Marxist socialism cannot be democratised, so there is no way to democratise its instrument, Censorship. Arguments about "new statutes" for that distinguished institution will continue for a long time to come, but will not bring the anticipated results, for as long as the Party exists, then so will censorship, the anti-democratic weapon of the authorities. The strikes at the Ursus works (and the arrest of Narozniak and Sapela for circulating state prosecutors' secret documents) are clear proof of this.

No statute which reaffirms any kind of political control can guarantee a sufficiently broad margin of freedom of information. For how can "secrecy" protect this freedom—a secrecy which undertakes on behalf of society actions which are directed against society? The whole business has the bitter taste of a Polish-style Watergate—and how opportune here is the timing of the film *Washington: Behind Closed Doors* which is at present showing in our cinemas! This film, which was licensed by the authorities as showing the repulsive nature of the USA, is transformed into a distorting mirror of our own reality: the White House is our

"little White House", and along its corridors run, with tense faces, the American Bafias and Czubinskis.

THE POLITICAL OPPOSITION should not officially unite with *Solidarity*, since this would harm *Solidarity*. I understand all those who cry hungrily for "action." (It is terrible but true that that natural activistic breed multiplies unnaturally in such conditions as ours!) However, we must show a little restraint in order to see the background of reality through our as yet incompletely satisfied dreams and appetites. But in this situation the opposition continues to be absolutely essential, and should not miss the opportunity for taking semi-official action under the legitimate umbrella of social support. To abandon its semi-official nature and undertake any kind of merger with *Solidarity* is both unnecessary and very dangerous—for both sides. Within the framework of a social contract, *Solidarity* should be apolitical. At the same time, political activity in the practical and ideological spheres is essential for the re-education of society. A new, creative ideology, suited to the times that are coming, should replace what has up to now ruled supreme—a decrepit and reactionary Marxist ideology. There are no immutable and universal ideologies; any ideology which is obviously falsifiable ossifies and dies.

Similarly, I believe that the *Sejm* should not take on the appearance of a democratic institution. Under our present system, it can never be that. It can merely fulfil the role of a kind of auxiliary apparatus to the work of the government and have a limited controlling function. The *Sejm*, which consists largely of Party comrades, cannot hold the PUWP in check, nor will NIK [the Chief Controlling Board] ever do so. There are certain limitations to these controlling functions, and they can even be useful, as long as they are understood as merely a part of the whole.

There has always been a danger that, because of its name and our national tradition, the *Sejm*

RESEARCH CONSULTANTS

Leading academics

RESEARCH ASSISTANTS

Experienced honours graduates

TRANSLATORS

Qualified, most European languages

ARCHIVISTS

Editing and indexing by word processor

Research Assistance Routledge Associates

25 Woodhayes Road, London SW19

Phone 01-947 5614

(oddy enough, our television news-readers have recently started calling it “Parliament”) is predestined to play some essential role. That is untrue; it cannot do so. The *Sejm*—appointed, through fictional elections, by the PUWP—is even more corrupt and discredited than its patron. No attempt should be made to reform it in the direction of an apparent democracy, for it will only become an impediment to the execution of social control, which is already in the proper hands: those of the genuine representatives of society, the unions. It may be completely unrealistic, but I would like the *Sejm* to be called, not “Parliament”, but simply the Chief Council; it would thus simply be at the head of the Provincial National Councils, which are similarly unchangeable.

I KNOW THERE IS a handful of honest, intelligent, and necessary people in the *Sejm*. I was extraordinarily moved by one or two recent speeches. But until we have free and democratic elections (I don’t know when that will happen, and I suspect nobody else does either), we cannot place any confidence in representatives who have been thrust upon us. What is more, we should not let the fiction be created that an organ dominated by *apparatchiks* is a body that represents society. Let those Reiffs, Zablockis and Ozdowskis play out their little roles; but that is not, and cannot be, the representative body of the Poles.

IN THE GREAT national contest where—for the moment—the People are winning against the Party by umpteen goals to nil, one absolutely essential problem is tending to disappear from view: the peasant farmers. Let me call them agriculturalists—for I would not like to separate the millions of “small-farm capitalists” (as the leader of the Soviet Trade Unions described them) from the few hundred thousand PGR (State Farm) workers and the foresters. The refusal to register the Farmers’ Independent Trade Union passed at first without much comment, but the government was later forced to reverse that decision. A great deal is written about farming and all its disasters, its paralysis, and so on. The gloomy reality of the economic mistakes of the Ideologists, on the one hand, and the immense incompetence of the Bureaucrats, on the other, have meant that Poland—for so many centuries the granary of Europe—now has to import grain from all over. They even take a kind of delight in this: just look how we’ve managed to finish off our own true natural treasure—the patient, productive Polish soil!

Amidst this fuss, this intoxication with disaster and official “economic concern”, the essential

problem is that of drawing the village socially into a single homogeneous Polish movement. For the village, in the majority of cases, sits as it were on the sidelines of events. It criticises—it has always liked to criticise and complain, although, as I see it, farmers are one of the most privileged social strata. But politically they lag a long way behind the workers. The workers have become mature owners of their country; the peasant farmers remain, above all, owners of their own patch of land. And in this respect the Trade Union boss, Kruczek, that puppet of the Soviet Union, was really right, though his diagnosis is, unfortunately, very much to the advantage of the “People’s Democracies.” Capitalists are indeed very happy to support communism, if they can count on relative peace and the possibility of making some money out of it.

WE HAVE WITNESSED a considerable mobilisation of the farmers’ United Popular Party (ZSL), that inglorious appendage of the PUWP. Suddenly its representatives were splashed all over the media, suddenly the pre-war peasant leader, Witos, was remembered, suddenly the popular movement from before the First and Second World Wars was recalled, and only at the last were contemporary peasants (read: individual farmers) mentioned. The hubbub was designed to distract attention from the essential problem of rationalising and modernising our agriculture, which lags so far behind the average in developed countries. It tried to divert attention from the question of forming a genuinely popular rural movement. But the attempt proved a failure: *Rural Solidarity* has been officially recognised and Gucwa, the head of the puppet ZSL, has resigned.

For decades, the Communists have tried to neutralise the peasants and forcibly reduce their involvement in society. That has had piecemeal results, and has brought about the sociological phenomenon of the “worker-peasant”, but it has not altered the fact that it is people from the villages who form the majority of the population. They have had one success: small rural social groups have been penetrated by *apparatchiks* of varying calibre. The peasants—or at any rate peasants from different parts of the country—do not form a socially and politically coherent body. They are, I am afraid, the stratum in which the process of social corruption has sunk deepest.

THE COMMUNIST LEADERSHIP has made many mistakes; we pay the price for most of those mistakes, for some they pay themselves. Thus, one of the Party’s greatest errors has been its paranoid fear of the peasant. They believed that “the peasants are powerful, and that’s that!” Because of this they completely failed to notice the moment

when the proletariat matured—inasmuch as a proletariat exists, since the distinctions between manual and white-collar workers are becoming vaguer and vaguer. But the legacy with which society now has to come to terms includes the remaining peasant “silent minority.” And here the PUWP has had a certain measure of success, so the problem must be faced immediately.

AS FOR THE PROBLEM OF the Proletariat and the Intelligentsia. I am convinced that the evolutionary process that is taking place in our society (perhaps in all societies) is heading towards eradication of the hard-and-fast barriers which reflect various degrees of education. Rather, within the intelligentsia there is a division between the proletarian intelligentsia and the intellectuals (among the latter I include specialists, professors of physics, chemistry, medicine, highly-qualified engineers, and not just “university philosophers”). This is right and proper, as regards the integration of the “proletarian” with the intellectual. But for the intellectuals, the problem is a little more difficult. By the very nature of things, they must play a leading role; it is for them to show the way and mould opinion.

In order to fulfil that role, however, two qualifications are essential: they must have, on the one hand, a kind of panoramic view, and on the other, high ethical standards. Judging by what one hears and sees in the press, on radio, and on television, the moral level leaves much to be desired. Among the suddenly “activised” intellectual élite there is an extraordinary number of people who are simply cunning rogues. Circumlocutions are standard practice, and they strenuously avoid plain language. Usually any bold statement is immediately wrapped up in the waffle of some safely ambiguous sentence.

Worst of all is their lack of even a hint of humility. To be able to inspire, or to co-govern, it is not pride that is essential, but the acquisition of humility. And that includes responsibility for the immense burden they have taken on themselves.

HERE I WOULD LIKE to comment on the intellectual processes which accompany great social changes. In our country’s immeasurable economic catastrophe, the one thing of which we can continue to be truly proud is the high intellectual standard of that cultural élite, even if a part of it has allowed itself to become corrupt. For intellectuals, after a while, become like the erstwhile aristocracy. Always the easiest to buy, they still give a general indication of those great potentialities which have made it possible for our society to produce in the space of a single generation a Pope, a Nobel Prize-winner, and

several dozen scientists and writers of world stature. I greatly respect the workings of the holy spirit, but I would make so bold as to say that the phenomenon called John Paul II is the result of an accumulation of certain specifically Polish cultural and intellectual tendencies.

It seems to me that a very important task faces this élite: fashioning the conceptions of a new socio-political *Weltanschauung*—a new ideology, if you will.

Criticism is necessary, but recently it has not gone hand in hand with creativity to the extent that it should. In any case, criticism should be left to the journalists and economists, and to the failed managers: they need to be seen to be rehabilitating themselves. Those who do not need rehabilitation and have been gifted by nature with a strong intellect should open the gates of the future.

POLISH SOCIETY was supposed to be held together by the ideology of Marxism-Leninism. That was pure wishful thinking. What holds it together today is undoubtedly Catholicism. It has been a force (occasionally a fatal force) in our history, and continues to be so today. But Catholicism did not remain unchanged through the centuries. Catholicism was, is, and will be what the society that embraces it was, is, and will be. I am

**SUBSCRIPTION RATES
ONE YEAR**

UK	£15.75
USA/Canada	\$36.50 (surface) \$46.00 (air-speeded)
Elsewhere	£17.00 (surface) Air rate on request

Full-time students

UK £12.60. USA/Canada \$29.20 (surface), \$38.70 (air). Elsewhere £13.60 (surface). Please state place and course of study.

Payment by sterling or dollar cheque, money order, or National Giro (no. 501 1752).

If you prefer not to cut the coupon below, please order by letter.

To: ENCOUNTER, 59 St Martin’s Lane, London WC2N 4JS, England.

Please send me ENCOUNTER for one year starting with the issue.

I enclose (payment)

NAME

ADDRESS

.....

.....ZIP(USA).....

thinking here of Polish Catholicism (and I know that in the West the Catholicism of the Polish peasants is sometimes spoken of with a slight sneer). I do not intend to delve into this complex problem; indeed, I am not qualified to do so. But I accept that Catholicism is moulded by specific historical conditions, and that the newly-developing national and social consciousness of Poland will create its own special kind of Catholicism.

What interests me, as regards both the present and the future, is the predicament of those who lead that Catholicism in Poland. Possibly I have anti-institutional tendencies, but recently I have been worried by the attitude of the Church and its institutional way of thought. It is one thing to call for "a return to work" and "the maintenance of order" in the name of security for a country and a people. What is not acceptable is acting against social initiatives on the basis that "the final settling of affairs with the government should be left to us... We are experienced in such matters..." The Party, with its back to the wall, is prepared to make any concessions—even to hang a Crucifix next to the Hammer-and-Sickle so that Kania and Ozdowski, the Communist and the Catholic, may feel comfortable as they sit side by side. But is that really the point?

Permission to build any number of new churches, the further relaxation of censorship and teaching, and the concession of broadcasting Sunday mass on the radio—all these are, of course, great advances, and the last is a very important gain indeed. But earth is at stake as well as heaven—"our native soil", about which John Paul II spoke so movingly in his address at Nowy Targ.

The Church cannot and should not make any arrangements on behalf of society. It is not called upon to do so. Its consolation and its initiatives should, however, extend to the field of social ethics. There is a Christian "social science", but it should not stop with Leo XIII. On the other hand, we must not equate Polishness with Catholicism. Catholicism should set itself a limited programme—and not hang back (as the Party did) until the limits are set by society.

HERE WE REACH an equally crucial problem—that of social morality. A few years ago I wrote about the threat posed to society by venality and corruption, that dangerous weapon of weak and despotic rulers. Here great possibilities exist for the activities of the clergy. But that cannot absolve us—neither *Solidarity* nor the intellectual élite—from our own serious obligations.

HITHERTO, as sociologists have documented, our society has been divided into "Us" and "Them." This split occurs in any state where the

leadership is not elected but is imposed from above. When such a state calls itself socialist and in fact possesses three-quarters of the national wealth, the "Us/Them" split begins to work in a distorting, even diseased, manner. All sense of property is obliterated, and all responsibility and initiative disappear. Ethical anarchy fills the resulting void. "They" have to give you a flat and a job ("whether you work or loaf, you still get two thousand zlotys", as the saying has it). "They" are supposed to assure the supply of raw materials and the market. But "They" are also the other side, and so you do your work any old way and steal "Their" property whenever possible.

A very black joke appeared during the strikes: *What's the difference between working and being on strike?* ANSWER: *When you're on strike you don't drink.*

IT'S SAID THAT Soviet immigrants to Israel cause immense problems for the local population. They are simply not adapted to any life other than the one they have lived hitherto, in other words a state-directed life which excludes any individual initiative. We Poles can be proud of some things. The immense maturity and the sense of responsibility for collective order (for which the preliminary exam was the Pope's visit, and last August represented the arduous finals) should not, must not, blind us to the sickness within the organism. A diseased doctrine is difficult to treat. Soviet society appears to be incurably ill—but only apparently so, since societies possess extraordinary regenerative strength, even, or perhaps especially, when the tesserae in the mosaic are composed of many nationalities. Our own social order has been least affected by the disease, and it was for that reason that what had to happen somewhere, some time, in the People's Democracies, occurred specifically here—in Poland.

That does not mean we displayed no symptoms. Drunkenness and deliberately bad, careless work; theft; neglect of everything that is not privately owned, ("my" property); lack of personal responsibility or any sense of shared responsibility for every kind of misdemeanour; institutional thinking and the categorisations of Party doctrine (you don't need to be a member of the PUWP to react in that very characteristic way). I could add many additional symptoms, but it is not my purpose to compile an index of the contemporary Pole's own sins to add to the list compiled by Party governments, in their inverted euphoria, over the last 30 years.

What I do want to suggest is that any renewal of the structure of the state must go hand-in-hand with the renewal of society itself. The Church has an important role to play here: on the ethical level,

in intensified teaching of basic moral principles, and in the propagation of Christian social doctrines. To be sure, priests will always retain something of their penchant for theorising (as when they teach about the Family and Motherhood). But, above all, society must be responsible for its own re-education; and that duty falls in the first instance upon *Solidarity*. (People may even need to be taught socialist—but not Marxist—ways of thinking!)

THE CHARACTER OF the Them-and-Us relationship has changed. Before, “They” were the owners of the People’s Republic of Poland; now we are reprivatising that common property. Before, “they” dictated to us, and reaped the harvest they deserved—an appalling regression, not only as regards the dearth of products on the market, but on a world scale. We lag behind almost all countries which operate a commonsense economy. But now we are beginning to dictate to “Them” the conditions on which they may govern us. Gradually, the proportions are becoming more equal, though there are some difficulties, some resistance, and some evident touches of sabotage. The state is ceasing to be a dominant, self-contained entity, and is being transformed into a mechanism that serves society.

Side-by-side with this change must go social re-education, the building of sensible attitudes, a realistic ideology, and above all a basic school of social ethics. The boundaries between private and social property take on a different meaning once the “This-is-mine/This-is-the-State’s” division ceases to function. Instead, the consciousness of community begins to be important, as expressed in the notion of “mine” and “ours.”

The hurly-burly of late 1980 and early 1981 will no doubt continue for a long time to come (assuming that our “friends” allow us to disentangle our—and this time it really *is* our—

affairs independently). During this period we must be especially sensitive to the gains that we have made: they must not be squandered. As I have said, the time for credit in advance has passed—“NO CREDIT”, as the signs in pre-War restaurants and little grocer’s shops used to announce. There can be talk only of mutual loyalty, of the fulfilment of obligations, of creative participation in saving a country that is involved in an unprecedented crisis. *Our* country, comrades! Society, for its part will guarantee you loyalty for loyalty—but nothing in advance.

At the same time, society itself must undergo an enormously difficult, but essentially very satisfying cure. It must liberate itself from the moral and mental corruption with which it has been afflicted.

August 1980 has become an especially important page in the history of our country, and will be written into the history of the world. I trust that it will rank with the baptism of Poland and the coronation of Boleslaw the Bold; with the first unification of Poland after it had been broken up into different regions following the battle of Grunwald; with the Union of Lublin; with the series of rebellions and the achievement of national independence.

I have consciously omitted one date which we have tended to honour overmuch: the Third of May. On that date we honoured an 18th-century constitutional declaration which was in fact never implemented but became a nail in the coffin of our independence. May our children and grandchildren come to honour the day of the Gdansk, Szczecin and Jastrzebie agreements as one on which the will of the people to control its own national life reached a culmination—and not as a date on which a mere mass of obligations was formulated. It should mark not the signing of commendable and fruitless documents, but the day on which a whole people began to renew itself, and set out on a new path.

Only Eyes

The sudden coincidence. An hour
torn out of time makes an appointment
with another hour. Years
leafed through like a book
read again and again.
An old address
and a telephone number. Eyes
which have seen only eyes

David Rokeah

*Translated from the Hebrew
by Ruth and Matthew Mead*