

# Looking Back. Leszek Giljeko Speaks on His Life as a Researcher in Post-war Poland

Leszek Gilejko\*

## The Issues of Research

### Trade Unions

My stay in France in 1967 had undoubtedly impact on my interest in the issues of trade unions. I encountered there many people who were social activists, or trade union leaders. In France, I pursued my interest mainly in the issues of trade unions. I wrote my professorial dissertation on the basis of the French research of the time that was a period of wide discussion and changes in the labour movement. The French Democratic Confederation of Labour (CFDT) was created at that time; discussions were held in General Confederation of Labour (CGT); numerous sociological researches were undertaken; important books were written. Most of all,

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\* Professor Leszek Gilejko (1932–2013) was a prominent Polish humanist with consistent socialist political views. He was a very active scholar, a witness to and a participant in key academic, political and social events in Poland for more than half a century. For many years he presided over the Department of Sociology at the Warsaw School of Economics (SGH). This article is based on a conversation between professor Gilejko and his former student, professor Juliusz Gardawski in 2003. The transcript of the conversation was edited by Czesława Kliszko.

I had an opportunity to co-operate with professor Alain Touraine who was in charge of the Laboratory of Industrial Sociology. I had a chance to meet with people who had already been very important figures in the French sociology. On account of that contact I started to work on a concept of trade unions' role in Poland. I made two assumptions. Firstly, I became more and more convinced that authentic trade unions are needed for solving workers' problems, system reform and democratization not only in Poland, but in the other countries of the real-socialism as well. My French studies at the time were much helpful and inspiring. Just then, in France, the formula of trade unions' actions had been coming in for harsh criticism. Traditionally, trade unions had been heavily politicized, especially when it came to the CGT which had been linked strongly with the communist party. The situation in Italy was much alike. The trade unions sought their new identity, new role and better ways of representing workers' interest, etc. Two concepts had been acquiring significance: syndicalism and industrial society. According to the concept of syndicalism of the time, trade unions were to be oriented at the interest of all staff and have substantial autonomy to the higher trade union structures and walk away from politics to create some formula of participation simultaneously. Next, the concept of industrial society analysed relations between economic and social institutions which had developed in the post-war economic boom and became 'classically' shaped only in the 60s. Thence, my professorial dissertation was titled 'Trade unions in capitalist industrial society – the case of France'.

During a talk with André Barjonet, who was a well-known figure of CGT and the French Communist Party, he told me that new ideas were needed as well as the previous needed to be changed; and the Russian revolution had had not more but folklore value. It came to me as a kind of shock, I did not think yet about the revolution in these categories. I mentioned that because such notion was common among the majority of the French communists. I was in France at the time of the beginning of something that afterwards was called Eurocommunism. Firstly, it consisted in searching of other and different that Soviet social order, and secondly, it emphasised the need of return to 'the young Marx'. This new way of thinking had an important element: criticism of everything what was made by the Communist Party – including its beginning – revolution and the way it was executed. The thesis of inevitability of the revolution was also criticised. Then, the opening of thinking emerged. New inspirations, theses previously deemed as dogma where redefined.

Gradually, I became more convinced that the processes I had encountered for during my stay in France would have to be reflected in Poland as well. This required searching of different formula of trade union functioning and consideration of the

issue of workers' participation. I acknowledged that industrialization breeds similar results and problems in countries of different systems. This belief was proved by the events of 1970 when a clear demand for independent trade unions was expressed for the first time, spontaneously, by shipyard workers on strike in Gdańsk and Szczecin. In 1971, I and late Ludwik Stanek, who was the secretary of trade union journal *Przegląd Związkowy* (*Trade Union Review*), wrote two or three articles about the need of restoring trade union's function of representing workers' interests. We considered this function as the most important – especially in state socialism conditions. The articles were found important at that time. Soon after, in 1971, I wrote a book about trade unions in a socialist state and it was highly appraised by professor Jan Rosner<sup>1</sup>. He considered the book to be the first substantial work about trade unions which presented key social functions. Previously, trade unions were not the object of interest since they had been considered as a dummy institution without any importance and subordinated by the ruling party to function as 'transmission belt' or the subject was handled in a academician and ideology-ridden way.

The interest in trade unions and workers' self-government was preceded by workers' community fascination that had lasted as of 1956<sup>2</sup>. This fascination was reflected in the issue of research conducted in the 1970s, We did the first substantial research of workers' self-management, what had its own dramatic effects. The research was conducted shortly after 1976 when the tensions related to workers' strikes were still not suppressed. We did the research in the Lenin Shipyard in Gdansk and other big enterprises. The research was dedicated to the so-called 'large-scale industrial working class'. Two issues arose from this research. Firstly, in workers' consciousness it had been a reinforced belief that strikes, defiance and protests were necessary since only such actions assured the realization of workers' interests. Secondly, the party came in for heavy criticism also at the level of party units allotted to the state enterprises. The reluctance toward the party units was much stronger than reluctance toward official trade unions. Simultaneously, we took note of occurrence of the workers' community willingness to participate in management. This research was very important because for the first time, with the application of sampling into research method, it was confirmed that the workers' protest had solid structural

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<sup>1</sup> Jan Rosner (1906–1991) was a Polish lawyer and economist, professor at the Central School of Planning and Statistics. His interest encompassed ergonomics, social politics and international labour law. He was the president of the International Ergonomics Associations, a member of the Helsinki Committee, a participant in the Polish Round Table.

<sup>2</sup> Workers self government took two specific institutional forms in Poland: workers' self-management enacted in 1956 and staff's self-management enacted in 1981.

foundation and other visions of social organization had been developing among the workers' self-management. In the meantime, the Workers' Defence Committee<sup>3</sup> was established and new opposition started to develop. I have always set great store to such phenomena, even when we were establishing the Institute of the Working Class Research and we were publishing subsequent volumes of the Working Class Situation in Poland. The intention was to present hard evidence of actual working conditions, incomes and workers' aspirations based on competent and well collected information.

As of the early 1970s, apart from the research on workers' institutions and the working class, I along with the team of the chair, were conducting research on democracy and state. It found expression in the collection of texts 'the Concepts of Socialist Democracy' that I had prepared together with Roman Rudzinski, and in a booklet with a study about Lenin's idea of socialist democracy. It was a return to Lenin's *The State and Revolution* which we had been interested in as early as 1956. Having observed the French experience, and experience following the events of 1970, I cared to emphasise that the institution of socialist state, that had been deemed as the latest development and holy of holies, is not only in the interim period, but can be dangerous as well, hence the need of doing everything to make this danger die out or limit or change etc.

The span of 1980–1981 brought a new fascination – pertaining to social movement Solidarity. This fascination stemmed from two sources. Firstly, a new great social movement appeared in a way that I was expecting for – having taken into account the results of our research. What also mattered was my belief about the need of change and creation of conditions in which the power would have been actually controlled and institutions of representing workers' interests would have been formed. Those issues were overlapped by my personal experience for the time of August 1980. Then I hold the post of dean, I served as an official figure. All of a sudden, good friends of mine, colleagues and students as well, appeared at my place in a different role, differences of opinion were revealed; tensions and conflicts were created. The world that had been full of discussion and polemics with every hour became different and divided into 'we' and 'they'. Initially, I was slightly taken aback, since I had not been in such a role.

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<sup>3</sup> Komitet Obrony Robotników (KOR), The Workers' Defence Committee, anti-communist organization functioned from September 1976 till September 1977 and resisted the policy of the government of the People's Republic of Poland; gave aid to the oppressed in the wake of the events of September 1976 – mainly in Radom and Ursus. After the demands were partially granted by the government of People's Republic of Poland it transformed into the Committee for Social Self-defence KOR.

That drew me intensely into events. Whenever I could, I supported some actions as strikes for instance, but I could not do that all the time because of the post of dean I held. A strike at university is not something common if compared with workers' strike. There was general strike in prospect, later, Wałęsa appealed for its suspension. The students were well prepared for the strike. We agreed that the strike at the school would take place anyway, although in a symbolic form. At that time, I had an opportunity to return to my interest in workers' self-government. In 1981, a famous 'Network' of Committees of Solidarity in big enterprises was established. Also within the party, a movement of 'horizontal structures' were being made up; support for the emergent workers' self-governments was arising; discussion about a law on workers' self-management and state-owned enterprise was ongoing. This was an extra moment that made an impact on my support and commitment that became more distinct. In Warsaw, a huge meeting was held and different attitudes were presented toward trade unions, division into the world of power and the world of labour, and interests' representation. Zbyszek Bujak<sup>4</sup> was the chairman of the Mazovia Region and he partook in this assembly as head representative of Solidarity. I also attended the assembly as a supporter of change, however, I was perceived as the government side representative. Nevertheless, my speech did not differ much from the speech of Bujak, except for one element. I defended a position that reform – oriented people were not only in Solidarity, but they were present within different structures as well, and even within the party a strong democratic trend occurred.

At that time, I had an opportunity to meet Lech Wałęsa. It was an extra factor that increased my fascination for Solidarity. We were invited – professor Józef Balcerek and I – to sit on a committee which was appointed to deal with the preparation of a law on trade unions. The committee was chaired by the professor Sylwester Zawadzki<sup>5</sup>, and the main player of the opposition-cum-Solidarity side, as it was said later, was Lech Wałęsa.

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<sup>4</sup> Zbigniew Bujak (b. 1954) was an activist of democratic opposition in the time of the People Republic of Poland, co-founder of the Independent Self-Governing Trade Union Solidarity branch in ZM Ursus, Warsaw; a member of the Presidium of the National Commission of Solidarity; politician; the Sejm deputy of 1st and 2nd term.

<sup>5</sup> Sylwester Zawadzki (1921–1999) was professor at the University of Warsaw, lawyer, the minister of justice (1981–1983) the Sejm deputy at the time of The People's Republic of Poland, a participant in the Polish Round Table in the Political reform work group, subgroup of associations and local governments.

He was accompanied by a group of advisers. Among them were professors: Andrzej Stelmachowski<sup>6</sup>, Wiesław Chrzanowski<sup>7</sup> and the top Solidarity activists: Gwiazda, Rozpłochowski, Rulewski and others. We attended several meetings. We – professor Balcerek and I – jointed the talks while they were being in progress and we were new figures. During our first attendance Wałęsa wanted to figure out who we were – it was essential for him to know whom the government use. Moreover, the government did everything from their side to curb the competencies of trade unions – especially those pertaining to strikes, conflicts; and exclude some trades from the general regulations (heavy industry – especially the armaments industry.) Wałęsa made two speeches and I liked both very much. For the first time, I saw a spontaneous man, neither an official figure, nor a person from academic or political background, and I got along with him. His speeches were vehement but logical at the same time and arguments presented were of true life origin. The government representatives were helpless; they could not polemize with such arguments. Moreover, Lech Wałęsa was very flexible and he actually listened to what the advisers told him. I had known professor Stelmachowski before and he presented us to Wałęsa in quite good light. Then I embraced a conviction that all what formed the world of power should have undergone far-reaching reform and the party should have lost its monopoly of unlimited power and trade unions should have been established.

It gave me a very difficult time. Then, I ceased to believe in the ability of the party to effect reforms by themselves. I rather embraced a conviction that the party should have been squeezed as much as it could be and deprived of everything that could be taken. Therefore, in all my later actions, publications and interviews that I gave a lot, I made an attempt of verification to what extend the government was inclined to accept the opposition. Then disappointment befell me. In my opinion, too many important issues had been squandered, although they could have arranged the order of Poland in a completely different way

I took part in works over a law on staff's self-management and I contributed to it. Then, I got to know professor Ludwik Bar<sup>8</sup>, who was considered as the author

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<sup>6</sup> Andrzej Stelmachowski (1925–2009) was a lawyer, politician, academician, professor of jurisprudence, Marshal of the Senate of the 1<sup>st</sup> term, and the minister of education in the cabinet of Jan Bielecki.

<sup>7</sup> Wiesław Chrzanowski (1923–2012) was a barrister, politician, professor of jurisprudence, the Sejm deputy, Marshal of the Sejm of the 1<sup>st</sup> term, the minister of justice and the attorney general.

<sup>8</sup> Ludwik Bar (1906–1999) – lawyer, professor, expert on administrative law, advocate of workers' self-governance. During WWII he lived in the West, where he served in many units, including the Polish Armed Forces. He also lectured on administrative law at the Polish Faculty of Law of the

of the act. Then, I tried to influence dissident community to adopt some solutions pertaining to the issue of workers' self-management. Chiefly for this reason I pursued my participation in the 9<sup>th</sup> special convention of the Party. There, I sit on a committee which dealt with issues of trade unions and self-government and took the floor in order to gain support for self-government solutions. Again, I acted in accordance with my own philosophy and my conviction that the government was not homogeneous, but diversified, and a group of reformers could have been found among them. It was my conviction that the 9<sup>th</sup> convention of the Party raised such hopes. The convention, for the capabilities of this party, supported reform to substantial extent. During the convention, a conception of the system reforms was formulated – especially three times 'Self': self-reliance, self-governance and self-supporting. The convention had also adopted solutions that constituted the self-management act. The importance of this support was bigger than the support for the workers self-management given in 1956 when it was solely the decision of the Central Committee while this time it was made by the whole convention. I watched disputes being developed and who was supported by whom. I saw the party hard-liners trying to block the changes and despite that, the compromise was reached. It is hard to say if the reformatory resolution of the convention could have been implemented or whether a compromise with Solidarity would have been reached. It is possible that the convention was merely a tactical gambit or time-wasting – a kind of smokescreen behind which the martial law had been prepared. In spite of actual intention of the narrow party management, a group of real reformers at the convention consisted of many party members.

An initiative in the circles of workers' self-management – including those bound up with Solidarity, carried a lot of danger of being treated like an object by political strategists. My participation was perceived by the workers' side as representation of the group of the actual party reformers who were striving to reach the compromise. It was my own initiative to strive to attend and act at the possible high ranks of the executive where important decisions were made and I think I took advantage of that commotion. After the August '80 the commotion had prevailed. Everyone who came with any proposal as a member of the party was deemed good. Such state prevailed especially in 1980 when solutions for the situation were sought and reformatory

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University of Oxford. He returned to Poland in 1947. He lectured consecutively at the University of Lodz (1947–1949), The Academy of Political Science (1948–1949), the Central School of Planning and Statistics and the University of Warsaw where he was granted a post doctoral degree (1962) and hold the post of professor from 1969 to 1976. Since 1963 he was also bound with the Institute of State and Law of the Polish Academy of Science.



proposals were needed. I reached the executive circles owing to the fact that I was well-known as a person interested in trade unions who had something to say on that subject. In the 1970s, I wrote two books on this subject and a series of articles. The fact that I had access to the narrow circles of power might have been attributed to professor Sylwester Zawadzki who chaired a parliament committee that framed a law on trade unions. In the consecutive years he held the post of the Minister of Justice and also served in the Council of State. He was a well-known and important figure anyway, and I considered him to be the man of reform, an open-minded reformer. It might stem from his background since he had been an activist at OMTUR<sup>9</sup>. Professor Władysław Baka was another example of reformer within the closest circles of power.

Actually, I owe him my participation in the Round Table in 1989 in the subgroup responsible for the future model of social and economic order. At first, professor Baka was the minister in charge of reform, then he was the secretary and member of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Party. He was becoming more important figure anyway – as far as his formal position was concerned. Kazimierz Barcikowski was also a reformer. Of course, the party hard-liners were also present.

I think that there were some attempts to manipulate me. It was known that in some situations I would remain loyal and would not cross the border, in other words: I could be placed with some confidence. For instance, when I did my research on workers in 1977 letters denouncing me were sent to the Central Committee by the managers of enterprises and secretaries of the party. Phone calls were made and information on ‘some people coming and asking about strikes’ was provided. I obtained permission for further conduct of the research, unfortunately, on the condition that I would not publish the results instantly and I would publish them selectively and the Central Committee would be informed beforehand etc. This situation was much alike the research on trade unions carried out in 1978–1979. People were getting irritated in the Central Council of trade unions because someone were coming to the general management and kept asking how much the leaders were paid, namely, they were asking about issues that had not been asked about earlier. In order to continue the research, consent of the then director of the Central Council of trade unions had to be obtained. He agreed on it but at the cost of elimination of some questions. As a matter of fact, the research was very important<sup>10</sup>. The research concerned the vanishing group and concentrated on problems

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<sup>9</sup> The Youth Organization of the Society of the Workers’ University (OMTUR) – socialist youth organization linked to the Polish Socialist Party, existed from 1926 to 1936 and from 1945 to 1948.

<sup>10</sup> The data of this research was published for instance, in an article by Wojciech Widera – Ph.D. in a book dedicated to the collapse of flexible socialism.



that once again became important i.e. trade unions' identity and their scope and forms of politicization, the status of trade union bureaucracy etc. The same can be said about our last research undertaken by the Institute of the Working Class Research. It gave credence to the appearance of this structure at the time of looming end, the Round Table and the June election of 1989 etc.<sup>11</sup>

In the beginning of 1981 I was offered to take the post of director of the Department of Social and Economic Policy of the Party in still existing then the Institute for Basic Problems of Marxism-Leninism. Leszek Balcerowicz<sup>12</sup> was once employed in this department that was managed by professor Józef Sołdaczuk<sup>13</sup> who was proceeding to take another important post. I decided to accept this proposal. Then I was told that anxiety had sparked by uncertainty if my application would have been accepted and doubts pertaining to my engagement had arisen but I was employed eventually. Doubts about my candidacy probably stemmed from my commitment to everything that had taken place in Poland after August 1980. Jerzy Wiatr, who was my acquaintance, took the post of director of the department. He had the reputation of liberal and competent person with considerable research experience. I was hoping to carry out research and have some influence on the government decisions. The department employed numerous well-known researchers including professor Przemysław Wójcik, professor Lidia Beskid or professor Zbigniew Sufin. We pursued important projects indeed. Most of all, we did wide research in workers' community about *Solidarity*. The research was carried out after the imposition of martial law and it concerned many issues as prospects for *Solidarity* or trade unions in general. The majority of the interviewed workers from large enterprises where

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<sup>11</sup> Much of this data was used in a book by Pawel Georgica.

<sup>12</sup> Leszek Balcerowicz (b. 1947) economist, professor at the Warsaw School of Economics, exponent of the school of economics called monetarism, finance minister and deputy prime minister in the government of Tadeusz Mazowiecki (1989–1991), Jan Krzysztof Bielecki (1991) and Jerzy Buzek (1997–2000), the Sejm deputy of the 3<sup>rd</sup> term, president of the National Bank of Poland (2001–2007). Architect of Poland's economic and political reforms implemented in 1990 – the so called Balcerowicz Plan.

<sup>13</sup> Józef Sołdaczuk (1923–2006) was a professor, dean of the Foreign Trade Faculty in the Central School of Planning and Statistics, director at the Foreign Trade Institute; economic adviser the Embassy of Poland in the United States, member of numerous boards and councils including research council at the Polish Institute of International Affairs, academic board of the Institute of National Economy, academic board of the Institute of Finance, and the Committee on Economic Sciences of the Polish Academy of Sciences awarded a honorary doctorate at the Warsaw School of Economics.

we did the research were in favour of the necessity of resuming of functioning of *Solidarity*. The respondents emphasised the necessity of existence of authentic and independent representation of the interests of the workers community. They named *Solidarity* as such institution that should resume its role. Obviously, the state authorities had chosen another variant – so called option zero.

Both in the Department and then in the Institute, we tried to support important research undertaken by other researchers. In the time of the department functioning we gave financial support for the research of professor Stefan Nowak<sup>14</sup> as well as for Piotr Krasucki's post-doctoral research<sup>15</sup>. Especially Piotr Krasucki was fast tied to the opposition and had no resources to collate the results of his research. By dint of cooperation we published the first volume of a series 'The situation of the working class in Poland' which was dedicated to working condition. It was compiled in the time of 1983 and 1984 and contained harsh truth about working condition and existence of the 'ruling class'. In 1982, still in the Department of Social and Economic Policy of the Party, we carried out research on the workers self-government. Then a decision to establish the Academy of Social Science was made. Marian Orzechowski became the provost. New situations arose in the Academy and options of getting out of it were available. The first was to pack my bags and get out of there. I would not be especially difficult for me since I still worked full-time at the Central School of Planning and Statistics. The second option was to find a new form of functioning. Then I came up with an idea of establishing the Institute of the Working Class' Research. I do not know the real story behind it but I know that initially, there was opposition against establishing of such unit within the Academy. I was suggested to dismember our department team, hence to liquidate it to all intents and purposes. Then, we wrote a series of letters against this project to various people who could help, including general Wojciech Jaruzelski or Kazimierz Barcikowski. As a result, we obtained permission to establish the Institute, what I regarded as a considerable advantage. Frankly speaking, beside the factual grounds I was guided by a conviction that an institution named like that would be hard to disband and a lot could be done in the name of the working class research. Indeed, it turned out that we could take up numerous researches including environmental problems, housing construction and the issue of housing, crime issues, social pathologies that is, problems that went

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<sup>14</sup> Stefan Nowak (1924–1989) was a sociologist specializing in social research (methodology of social and sociological research) professor of the University of Warsaw, member of the Polish Academy of Science, the Chairman of the Polish Sociological Association.

<sup>15</sup> He was fanatically interested in occupation health care.

far beyond traditional research on the workers community. The credit for it goes to professor Przemysław Wójcik, who was excellent in assessment of various phenomena and had an acute and expressive look and took after professor Józef Balcerek. Thanks to professor Wójcik we had an opportunity to encounter with many interesting people, excellent experts – especially those of the opposition background. As it turned out afterwards, they had to get permission of their communities for collaboration with ‘regime’ unit what the Institute of the Working Class Research at least formally was. For the whole span of the 1980s, we maintained contact and cooperation with people of the opposition of the time and that happened at the time of sheer divisions and confrontation of both sides.

In December 1981, the martial law was imposed what was a very gloomy event in my opinion. I had always thought that talks should go on and I had also thought that to some extent, it was possible to influence on important decision and it was worth devoting time and energy. Therefore, after the imposition of martial law I sought a meeting with the opposition. The first of such meetings took place in 1982 in Serock. We invited many people. I talked to professor Wiesław Chrzanowski; along with professor Wojcik we talked to Andrzej Wielowiejski. Eventually, only a handful of intellectuals tied to Solidarity came: professor Jacek Kurczewski, professor Jadwiga Staniszkis, professor Andrzej Tymowski and someone else might be there. Before the meeting I had a conversation with Jerzy Wiatr, who, as I said, was my superior – as director of the Institute for Basic Problems of Marxism-Leninism. Having told him about the project of the meeting he asked me whether I was aware of what we had been getting into. I replied yes and précised that ‘I am getting into it and it is up to you if you get into it as well. Professor Wiatr came and stayed. I underscore that because many representatives of the government side came but they fled as soon as an English television turned up. I do not know where BBC learned about the meeting. Beside me and professor Wiatr, Ludwik Krasucki and professor Stanisław Kwiatkowski<sup>16</sup> remained from those of the government side. They were from a circle of people who opted for contacts with the opposition, although the state authorities were inclined to pacify the defiance. After the event in Serock, I was asked to the office of Stanisław Ciosek who was then a minister in the Office of the Council of Ministers and was responsible for social dialogue. He was taken aback by spontaneity with which we had organized the meeting and the fact that the initiative had originated at the side

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<sup>16</sup> Stanisław Kwiatkowski (b. 1939) is a sociologist, political scientist, professor of humanities (political sociology, public opinion and market research), retired colonel of the Polish Army. He was the first director of The Public Opinion Research Center (1983–1990).

of the Institute for Basic Problems of Marxism-Leninism – an ideological bastion. So, I went to convince Ciosek. I considered *Solidarity* as movement that we should take advantage of. But not in a way as it was made in 1956 with workers councils when they were co-opted into. I treated *Solidarity* as a terrific proposal of change for Poland. I am saying it seriously, I did think so, my contacts were justified by it and my frankness toward self-government movement as well as my actual participation in it.

Another initiative that I along with professor Wójcik took was an attempt of saving *Solidarity*. Leaders of independent trade unions provided a bridge that facilitated meetings with the union representative, Bogdan Stelmach was especially helpful, then one of the Chiefs Labour Inspectorate. Thanks to their assistance we met with leader of Mazovia Region. The meeting was also attended by Jan Olszewski – barrister acting as *Solidarity* adviser. Still before this meeting, I received a letter from Wałęsa who expressed his consent for the talks on the condition that we would partake in it personally. I still have this letter. I kept it, however I cannot remember how it was delivered to us.

The talk that took place in the premises of The Social Insurance Institution in Zoliborz district in Warsaw, as I remember, it pertained to what could be done to save the union which had been officially suspended. We arranged another appointment. I promised to submit then some proposals. In the meantime, I managed to meet with Kazimierz Barcikowski but he spread his arms helplessly and said that the decision on disbanding of *Solidarity* had been made. So, at the second meeting I said that there was no chance of saving *Solidarity*.

I made an attempt of talk with Lech Walesa. We were convinced that we had to start talks immediately because what had happened was a disaster. Kazimierz Barcikowski said then that the only person who could help us to put us in touch with Lech Walesa was general Kiszczak and he would talk with him so that we could go to Lech Walesa. The meeting did not take place eventually. Years later, I talked about this issue with Zbyszek Bujak. He told me that it was fortunate that the meeting did not occurred since *Solidarity* was decomposed and disorganized; the government side was in full control of the situation and a lot of time had to pass before the union could restore the role of the organization which had to be considered by others and dialogue on equal terms should be conducted with. Nevertheless, I wanted to talk how to resume *Solidarity* immediately.

In the mid-1980s, a seminar in the Institute of Working Class Research dedicated to self-government was supposed to be common ground for the talks. The majority of participants comprised of activists of underground *Solidarity*. They were kept under surveillance; their mutual contacts where hindered but the management was helpless

when they received invitations signed by the Academy of Social Science of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party.

The leading theme of this seminar was discussion on the subject of staff's self-management that we considered as a big chance for Poland. In case of staff self-management we tried to reach persons who made decisions. We got in touch with people who had had close relations with General Jaruzelski or with the manager of his office – colonel Kołodziejczyk or colonel Stanislaw Kwiatkowski – the director of The Public Opinion Research Center at that time. We paid visits to professor Hieronim Kubiak, Mieczyslaw Rakowski, Stanislaw Wozniak – the person in charge of economic issues, Manfred Gorywoda, professor Reykowski and others that we could win their support for issues that were, in our opinion, important. All the people reacted differently. A person that we were probably the most arranged with on many issues, but to some extent of course, was Kazimierz Barcikowski. Then he became the vice chairman of The Council of State and we hold quite frequent discussions with him. When Mieczyslaw Rakowski became the prime minister he made a gesture toward staff self-management and invited to the Council of Ministers the most notorious participants of our seminar – the leaders of the most independent workers' self-management.

The meeting was also attended by Ludwik Bar. It was a distinctive emphasis on the importance of workers' self-management, although few ensued from it. The position of Mieczyslaw Rakowski on the opposition varied though.

The self-government got the biggest support from professor Władysław Baka. It was clearly discernible when seminars were organized jointly by the Centre of Self-Government Studies and the Institute for the Working Class Research. I was appointed to the position of deputy chairman of Programme Committee of the Centre of Self-Government Studies. Professor Sylwester Zawadzki held the post of the chairman. We were successful in inviting people tied to self-government movement and *Solidarity* to debates which were attended by such persons as: professor Jerzy Osiatyński, professor Marek Dąbrowski or Szymon Jakubowicz – journalist. The post of the director of the Centre was taken by Kazimierz Mżyk – one of my co-worker from the Institute of the Working Class Research. Formally, we could by then support reviving self-government movement. This movement was particularly relevant for me because of the concept of economic reform which made an exceptionally essential role.

In the Sejm, a committee on self-government issues had been formed and it was headed by Stanisław Kania. An economic reform was still the major subject, however, attempts had been made to halt it, especially the issues of self-management and self-government of enterprises. Sessions of the Sejm self-government committee were open to representatives of works councils and they were courageous in their struggle for the

reform. We also were being invited to the sessions. In spite of manipulation there were sharp protests against changes – blockage of the reform of three ‘Selves’. The proposals of holding the reform and self-government back had been named ‘Kubiczek lex’ after one of the prominent official of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers’ Party. It is hard to say whether the proposal was an own idea of Franciszek Kubiczek or it was expression of interests and preferences of bigger part of the structure. It took place when Zbigniew Messner was the prime minister. A protest of the works councils’ representatives met with response, after all. A struggle for self-government was also a struggle for preserving of relative independence of enterprises and preventing repeat of strong centralization of economy. Then, professor Baka wrote that the self-government prevented the blockage of the then reform.

At the side of the authority we encountered with different attitudes, our future as employees of the Academy of Social Science was on the line, especially those who were in charge of the Institute. Once, we were invited to a session of the Political Bureau. We presented the results of our research and then we were attacked with unusual fierce. The situation was alleviated by general Jaruzelski who said then to the members of Politburo that he preferred them to have heart attack there while listening such information rather than have resort to force on the streets. Within this circle, the outcome of our research came as a shock. Supposedly, all of them knew something, but it made difference to know something or to sit in the most important room in Poland and where such story is heard unexpectedly. The story that was not heard through wiretapping or reported by a secret police officer, but it came from volumes of studies published by the Academy of Social Science of the Party and was based on empirical research and signed by well-known figures. Telling the truth was not a common practice then; the authorities lived in a world created by official awaiting commendation and promotion. Nevertheless, this meeting took place after the forth volume had been published. It was dedicated to environmental issues and extensive excerpts were read during the broadcasts of Radio Free Europe<sup>17</sup>. For the first time we revealed environmental hazard in Poland, what had been classified.

For a long time, it was my belief that this structure could have been reformed and I might not get rid of it. As I became more and more convicted to the rightness of arguments for the system being ossified, I hoped for contrary arguments. For a long time I nurtured belief that a lot could be changed and I did a lot in the name

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<sup>17</sup> The publications were so critical of the then situation that if their covers had been changed they would have been regarded as books of samizdat (self-publishing) despite the fact that the authors did not belong to the opposition.

of change. I do emphasise that since crises and social tensions induced me, first of all, to search for a way to reform and identify social forces which might have supported and made the change. Of course, it did affect my social political and intellectual commitment. Those engagements were more or less successful but they always deeply affected my research interest and I have tried to examine key issues – the most important at that particular moment. At the same time, I cared about our analyses of reality to be honest and free from any ideological manipulation. Nevertheless, critical tone of our elaborations did not mean that we were at that time at the side of opposition rejecting the system completely.

Till 1989 I was a member of the Party. I did not resign from the party in December 1981 what was a dividing line. At that time, one could fling down a member card ‘in glory’ as a response to the imposition of martial law, while later abandoning were a little bit dubious and time-serving. I decided to stay anyway, although all my close friends stepped out. I mean especially professor Balcererek who stepped out and we do not know which one of us was right. I justified my decision by my desire for participation in the reform undertaken by the authority and I thought that this requited support, mine as well. Of course, I had doubts whether I had been right. I talked with professor Balcererek about this issue. I could describe his position as follows: He did not acknowledge my argument but he understood it. On the other hand, I envied him his decision in a way. From his part it was very lucid and explicit outlining of the case. My position lacked such features. Yet, Professor Balcererek and I kept up our cooperation. He attended our seminars in the Institute and had fiery speech once or twice. Different choices did not affect our attitudes.

Then, the Party held the last convention, which I was invited to. All the time, I was a member of the party and belonged to the chapter of the Party at the Central School of Planning and Statistics, not at the Academy of Social Science where the Institute for the Working Class Research was located. I was elected a delegate to the convention of the Party. Finally, I lost in that election. I remember that I took part in various meetings where I presented my views that had numerous supporters. Beyond academic community, reformers were not ‘the beloved ones’. As a weekly magazine ‘Polityka’ wrote at that time, the election was odd since candidates who lost were either those who had extremely conservative view – party hard-liners, or those who were a kind of symbol of inner opposition. As a matter of fact, I was listed among the latter group. However, I was invited to the last convention as a guest. I sat on a policy committee and partook in work of one of the team and presented reports on various conferences and gave interviews. We still tried to influence on various circles and members in order to continue the reform and reinforce worker’s self-management.



We did that I a group comprised of professor Wójcik, professor Paweł Georgica, professor Lidia Beskid, professor Zbigniew Sufin, professor Juliusz Gardawski and other co-workers of the Institute.

## **The Subject of the Research of the Institute at the Last Minute**

In 1988 we conducted research which pertained directly to the party, and more precisely: attitudes and identity of the party apparatus. Unlike the earlier survey researches, this one had a qualitative character and consisted of a big series of tape recorded interviews. We produced a report from this research that was published by the underground press. It was printed with a typical title indicating that the hard-liners of the party were still present. This publication in the underground press came out at the time of The Polish Round Table when officially; the side of the party and government was propagating willingness to dialogue and compromise. We prepared a report from this research and a sizeable number of copies was sold. The outcome of the research had quite considerable political response since those who opted for the reforms and the Round Table were stimulated to point out the substantial influence of hostility toward changes and related risk of blocking and blurring the reforms.

## **The Time of Transformation: Authoritarian Socialism Yields to Free Market and Democracy**

The dissolution of The Polish United Workers' Party and forming of the Social Democracy of the Republic of Poland occurred quickly – actually during one night – the night of decisions. During this night I did not join the Social Democracy. For a while, I was non-party, and then I joined the Union of Social Democracy – established by Tadeusz Fiszbach<sup>18</sup>. For some time, I undertook some actions within the new party. I wanted to bring two sides to a meeting, the first – Tadeusz Fiszbach, who became vice marshal of the Sejm after the election of 1989, and the leaders of

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<sup>18</sup> Tadeusz Rudolf Fiszbach (b. 1935) is a politician, diplomat, academic, the Party activist and a former first secretary of the regional committee in Gdansk, the Sejm deputy of the 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> terms – at the time of the Peoples' Republic of Poland. In 1989–91 deputy marshal of the Sejm of the 10<sup>th</sup> term (Contract Sejm).

the workers' self-government movement. Such meeting took place and it occurred in a symbolic place – on the premises of Passenger Automobile Factory (FSO). The meeting was attended by head organizers of the workers' self-government with Andrzej Wieczorek<sup>19</sup> and other The Sejm Deputies with Solidarity background who were the leaders of the self-government movement at the same time. The Marshall Fiszbach entered into obligation that he would support proposals formulated by the deputies who belonged to the self-government movement. I think that this had some impact on the later course of 'social re-privatisation' law as well as on decisions related to employee share ownership. I consider that as one of my positive actions with a party established by Tadeusz Fiszbach. Among its members were Marek Pol<sup>20</sup> and Wiesława Ziółkowska<sup>21</sup>. The party however was short-lived and did not meet the harboured expectations.

I was permanently involved in the self-government movement and worked within it along with a group of *Solidarity* members – participants of the Citizens' Club in the Sejm who retained their leftist views. First of all, I mean Ryszard Bugaj<sup>22</sup>. Then, a concept of creation of 'Solidarity of Labour' was propounded and I was one of the founders. In a consecutive phase of transformation Union of Labour was established. I have been in this party so far. I am a member of the policy committee. I partook in preparation of the consecutive programmes from the moment of 'Solidarity of Labour'. I participated in preparation of other monographs including famous publication 'Poland at the crossroad' produced on the initiative of Ryszard Bugaj. I took up the role of chairman of one of the groups of the policy committee and I was the vice-chairman of the committee. I was offered to candidate to the executive of the party but I refused. The decision was influenced by many respects – I was deeply

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<sup>19</sup> Andrzej Wieczorek (b. 1948) is an engineer, oppositionist of the time of the People's Republic of Poland. In 1988 he became a member of The Citizens' Committee. He partook in sessions of one of the subgroups of the Polish Round Table. In the 90s he was active in trade union ranks including holding the post of trustee of Mazovia Region of Solidarity. He is a former Mazovia vice-governor.

<sup>20</sup> Marek Ludwik Pol (b. 1953) is a politician, former chairman of Union of Labour (currently a member of this party). From 1989 to 1991 he held a mandate of deputy during the Contract Sejm (10<sup>th</sup> term) elected from the electoral register of the Party. The Sejm deputy of the 2nd and 4th term, the minister of industry and trade in the Cabinet of Waldemar Pawlak and deputy prime minister in the Cabinet of Leszek Miller.

<sup>21</sup> Wiesława Ziółkowska (b. 1950) is a politician, economist and the Sejm deputy of the Contract Sejm and 1st and 2nd terms.

<sup>22</sup> Ryszard Bugaj (b. 1944) is a politician, economist, professor in the Institute of Economic Science of the Polish Academy of Science, a former chairman of Union of Labour. He was the Sejm deputy during the Contract Sejm and 1st and 2nd term.

involved in various tasks in the School – especially research works while age takes its toll, besides, I acknowledged that it was not a good idea if a person involved in the communists authority participates in the executive of Labour of Union. Despite the fact that Labour of Union was established as a party combining people of *Solidarity* and reformers of the Party, it seemed to me that the people of *Solidarity* or those who had left the Party should prevail in the executive.

I tried to support the new formula of leftist orientation which would have been based on ideological basis instead of pragmatic rules of fight for power. Such pragmatic approach could be found, and in my opinion, still can be found among some fraction of the left wing. But there is still left-wing view in which workers empowerment, the dignity of workers and participation are highly relevant. For me, such ideas remain the key elements of left-wing orientation anyway, and despite of deep social and economic changes they are still problems of today. In my opinion, all issues concerning the interests of the environment of employees’ – especially workers, remain important in Poland. In my personal view, the left-wing should be tied strongly to the employees’ environment and most of all, should represent their interests.

Once in a while, the subject of re-creating or seeking identity of trade unions recurs. This has been concerning *Solidarity* especially since its functions performed since the time of transformation especially when it brought the Balcerowicz Plan under a protective umbrella. It has always seemed to me that despite all the changes and marginalization, trade unions remain the leading employee organisation. Moreover, I think that in spite of many problems, trade unions have been always representing the interests of this community. As far as political parties are concerned, little employees belong to them. As our researches revealed, the low level of participation in political parties pertains to employees of ‘problematic industries’ which are well-known of their various political interrelations. This refers to mining, steel and armaments industries. The second issue is related to new enterprises where workers’ representation and labour dispute remain the fundamental institutions. My interest in trade unions are reflected in a book ‘Society and Economy’ where I described the way in which the society by means of trade unions affects the economy. Trade unions are still a very important institution at the micro, meso and macro levels. Trade unions have been involved in the processes of restructuring all over the world, what in my opinion was the progress of civilization. Participation varied. It was more or less functional but it has always existed, therefore we took up research pertaining to the role of trade unions in the process of restructuring or problematic industries in

Poland. By dint of this research we could find out what attitude was adopted by Polish trade unions in this process

The second issue, which has been still the subject of my interest, is the problem of participation. It is not only the continuation of studies of workers' councils or subsequent employee councils or other forms of participation, but research on new forms which this need of contribution takes. In the past, I intended to prepare a bigger monograph dedicated to social aspects of the emergence of workers' self-governments. The history of these institutions was written by professor Kazimierz Kloc. I wanted to concentrate on sociological determination of emergence of self-government movement and the need of participation.

## **The Issues of Research at the Time of Transformation**

In the early 1990s once again, I took up the subject of trade unions and I made contacts with various union groupings. We undertook the first after the system change sizeable research dedicated to individual unions' headquarters and their leaders. The research concerned attitudes toward economic and social reforms. We partook in a session of the Presidium of Solidarity in order to obtain permission for the execution of the research as well as conclusion forming. In the subsequent research we focused mainly on the level of enterprise. Hence I had strong ties to the second 'Network' of enterprise committees of Solidarity. It was the continuation of the first 'Network' from the time of 1980–1981 which was organized by trade unions of big enterprises. I attended the majority of meetings organized by the second 'Network' and I tried to make contacts between the 'Network' and self-government movement. At the same time, I was an active member of The Association of Self-government Activists. In the same time more or less, the Union of Employee Ownership was established. In spite of its strong ties to the 'Network', an attempt to make a common front to line up with employees' movement failed. It might stem from different aims represented by those groups. The Union of Employee Ownership became more economic than social organization and formally it had the status of economic chamber. The Union took up various lobbying actions as economic chamber. They tried to exert pressure on the government and sought support at Lech Wałęsa who was the president at the time. They had an objective of creating favourable terms for employee share ownership and they did not invest too much in joint action for the sake of participation which was the idea behind the workers councils in 1956 and then, the self-management

in 1980 and 1981. Doubtless, the employee share ownership is important, however, in my opinion, democracy of employees and participation are more important. Nevertheless, various tendencies could be found in the self-government movement. One of the tendencies was represented by Marek Krankowski<sup>23</sup> from Gdansk, and the second, more supportive for the employee share ownership, was represented by the leaders of the self-government from Warsaw. I can describe Marek Krankowski with the term of unionist. A group in which we were involved in developed a concept of social enterprise. The employees would have been given 50 per cent of shares and this was supposed to concern not only small, but middle and big companies as well. The shares however were supposed to have a limited transferability. Within the self-government movement discrepancies between those two orientations arose.

The next problem, of course connected to the preceding issues, is the research of the employees' community which has been in the state of flux. The closing of some of my observation took place when I compiled a monograph 'Workers and Society' in which I attempted to summarize some periods of my research along with some events that the dissertation was based on. It ended in the first half of the 90s. I am still interested by issues of this community and changes occurring within. My elaboration entitled 'Workers – the losing class' in the book *The Intricacies of Privatization* – prepared under the supervision of professor Maria Jarosz, was a kind of summary of the latter observations. And finally, the forth trend of my interest is the issue of social structure. I have been always interested in it and have taken every opportunity to express my opinion on the subject. Since changes in the employees' environment are mere segment of broad transformation they always affect the social structure. What I am interested in though is the process of active participation of social groups

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<sup>23</sup> Marek Krankowski (1946–1994) was a graduate from the Faculty of Law at the University of Gdansk IN 1965–1966 and 1970–1977 employed in the Gdansk ship repair yard, in 1977–1992 was an employee of the United Plants of Lighting Equipment – Polam in Gdansk. In 1978, became a member of the local appeal committee of Labour in Gdansk. In August 1980 was a co-organizer of strike on the premises of Polam. Delegate to the Inter-Enterprise Strike Committee in the Gdansk Shipyard. As of September 1980 he was a member of Solidarity and member of enterprise committee in Polam. In 1981, he was a delegate to the first general meeting of the Gdansk region. He founded the Organizing Committee of the workers self-government in Polam. In 1985–1986 he was the chairman of the employees' council. In 1988 became the president of the Gdansk Self-Government Club and the leader of self-government movement in Pomerania. From 1989 once more sat on the enterprise committee in Polam. In 1990 was delegated to general meeting of the Gdansk Region. In 1990–1992 sat on the Presidium of the Regional Board. In 1992, he co-founded Solidarity of Labour. As of 1992 he was a co-founder of the employees' property, the president of the board of management and the chairman of the board of trustees. (Source: Encyclopaedia of Solidarity)

in the creation of structure. I mean the workers community who tried to exert on the structure all the time, once they won once they lost but in general they had an impact on the general changes in the structure. Briefly, I am interested in the role of collective actors in the process of structure forming. In some respects, it is the second aspect of the issue of participation. In the process of structure forming not only technical and information determinism is involved but also an interplay of interests and strategies of collective actors.