



association of university and college employees

Oct. 15, 1984

To whom it may concern,

Enclosed please find the text of a speech given at our August General Membership Meeting. The speaker was Wodek Karp, a member of Polish Solidarity. We found Mr. Karp's address very usefull and informative, and we would be happy to put you in touch with him if you would like to invite him to speak at one of your meetings. Also feel free to reprint, in its entirety or in part, the enclosed speech.

Yours truly,

Ted Byrne
Union Coordinator

Solidarity as a Trade Union and its Present Situation

The idea of trade unions has been destroyed in the countries ruled by the communists, since in those countries so-called "trade unions" are totally subordinate to the Party-State employer, so that they are merely façades.

Four years ago, in August 1980, after prolonged strikes in thousands of factories and institutions, the working people of Poland won the right to have independent trade unions. Out of these strikes, SOLIDARITY was born, an independent trade union, as well as a new value, a sense of community created outside of the authorities' domain. The atomization of society - the mutual indifference of human beings towards each other caused by egoism, and by fear of losing one's possessions, position, or job - was overcome in Poland in August of 1980. One of the main changes that was inaugurated at that time within the Polish nation occurred in the sphere of human relations and attitudes. The Independent Self-Governing Trade Union SOLIDARNOSC is not only the first independent trade union to have formed in a communist-ruled state, but also a movement for the dignity of human life.

Since its birth, SOLIDARNOSC has had to fight for its right to exist. Their monopoly threatened, the communist authorities were not able to come to terms with the independent trade unions. SOLIDARITY always wanted to act within the limits of normal trade union activities. However, the external conditions imposed by a totalitarian system, in which there is a lack of different political parties and independent public opinion, forced the union to exceed these limits by proposing several reforms in education, management, law and the economy, as well as by supporting the independent movements and institutions which were too weak to defend themselves against Party-State oppression.

On December 13, 1981, the State attacked the society. With the approval of Moscow, and by imposing martial law, the Party-State apparatus decided on the tactic of terror because it represented an insignificant portion of the Polish population and was unable otherwise to impose its will on the majority. Ten million SOLIDARITY members, along with the members of Rural Solidarity and of other autonomous organizations, together with their families, constituted almost the entire population of Poland. Less than one hundred thousand specially-selected police and military forces were able to terrorize the movement of millions of unarmed, peaceful people.

The state security forces moved rapidly to destroy the independent trade union and its achievements. Trade union activity has been subjected to prison terms. SOLIDARNOSC, first suspended, was then delegalized in November 1982. The same happened to Rural Solidarity, to the so-called "autonomous" and "branch" unions regarded by the authorities as partners of SOLIDARITY during its legal existence, and to the Independent Student Association. In addition, the authorities dissolved the associations of journalists, actors, artists and writers, setting up instead new associations totally subservient to themselves. Thousands of SOLIDARITY activists, freely elected by society, were interned or imprisoned. Several hundred remain behind bars sentenced for many years. Others have been dismissed from work and deprived of the basic necessities.

One of the main tasks of underground Solidarity at the present time is to force the government to legalize the status of political

prisoners, because imprisoned union members and other prisoners of conscience are denied the rights of political prisoners in the communist-ruled state. As the protest against this and against inadequate nourishment or psychological and physical maltreatment imposed on them in penal institutions, the prisoners have been driven to desperate hunger strikes. There have been numerous hunger strikes in Polish prisons, some of them lasting as long as 20-40 days.

SOLIDARNOSC is organized underground in unofficial cells in factories, universities and other institutions. Coordinating committees exist in almost all former regional centres of SOLIDARITY. The Temporary Coordinating Commission sets the strategy for the Union at the national level. One can estimate the number of people actively involved in Trade Union activities in the tens of thousands. However, there are at least one million workers directly affected by these activities, who, in spite of the the threat of oppression, read the underground press, pay union dues, receive benefits or legal aid.

Nevertheless, with the delegalization of SOLIDARITY, the working people of Poland have been deprived of their union representation. The safety standards and environmental problems are growing worse since underground SOLIDARNOSC cannot act as a partner in negotiations concerning, for example, working conditions. Lacking social support, the new government-formed unions are too weak and too dependent on the government to force any significant demands.

The publication of books and periodicals is one of the greatest achievements of underground SOLIDARITY. From over two hundred different periodicals which are published underground, some are printed on a regular basis in thousands of copies. There are basic newspapers, but there are also monthly cultural and research magazines. In addition, scores of books by both Polish and foreign authors are published every year. One must remember, that these publications are printed in extremely difficult circumstances, under the constant threat of discovery by the police, which means not only the loss of paper and printing machines, but also years of imprisonment for the printers and distributors.

Furthermore, to fill the gaps created by the treatment of the social sciences and humanities in the light of the ruling ideology at the state educational institutions, an independent education system has been organized. It includes various types of lectures, mainly held in private apartments, on topics from history, philosophy, literature and economics, as well as graduate seminars.

Finally, despite the repressions, the members of dissolved artistic and cultural associations organize performances, exhibitions, meetings with artists, and discussions, often in cooperation with church parishes. Every year, SOLIDARNOSC grants symbolic awards for works in literature, the fine arts, and essays, which are a source of livelihood for many artists dismissed from their posts by state employers.

In this manner, the idea of an independent society announced by underground SOLIDARITY has been achieved through all forms of resistance. An independent society is one in which an increasing number of people are engaged in activities outside the control of the totalitarian authorities. The broad network of educational institutions not controlled by the government, the hundreds of titles of books and

newspapers published underground, and the mass demonstrations are not only evidence for the realization of this idea, but also demonstrate the peaceful determination of the Polish people to press for freedom and social peace based on respect for the law which society will acknowledge as its own.

In the future, positive changes in Poland will result from the persistence of people and from international pressures. SOLIDARNOSC could be helped by keeping international public opinion informed about the situation in Poland, and by upholding its cause in international organizations. Public opinion abroad can extend an influence on the softening of reprisals. It is imperative that the agreements of 1980-81 on the cooperation and exchange of ideas between national, regional, or branch commissions of SOLIDARITY with the independent unions of the world be continued despite today's difficult conditions imposed on the Trade Union. Polish workers struggle for their rights and dignity, but also to extend the scope of freedom, peace and justice in the modern world. They thank the trade unions, organizations, and private individuals who by their generosity express their solidarity with SOLIDARNOSC.

SUPPLEMENT

SOLIDARITY as a Trade Union
and its Present Situation

Text of a speech given at a Membership Meeting of the AUCE, held at the University of British Columbia on August 21, 1984, by W. Karp, Vice-President of the Independent Student Association at a university in the southern part of Poland (1980-81) and advisor to SOLIDARITY's National Commission of Education and Science (1981).

Polish Credit Union, 1155 Fraser Street, Vancouver, B.C.
[REDACTED]

or
Bank CCER, 21 Rue Archimede, 1040 Bruxelles, Belgique
[REDACTED]

Donations sent to the above addresses will be used to support underground SOLIDARITY in its efforts to help political prisoners and their families, and to assist independent education, press and culture in Poland.

The Information Office of NSZZ "SOLIDARNOSC" c/o the Canadian Labour Congress, 15 Gervais Drive, Don Mills, Ontario, M3C 1Y3, is the official representative of SOLIDARITY in Canada, and is affiliated with NSZZ "SOLIDARITY"'s Coordinating Office Abroad in Brussels.

In Vancouver, some former members of SOLIDARITY, internees and prisoners of conscience have formed the Association of Friends of SOLIDARNOSC, P.O. Box L 58194, Vancouver, B.C., V6P 6E3.

The "Committee in Support of Solidarity Reports", 275 Seventh Avenue, 25th Floor, New York, N.Y., publishes regular reports about the situation in Poland gathered from underground SOLIDARITY publications, the official Polish press, and interviews with SOLIDARITY leaders.