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A Complicated Solidarity

The Swedish Labour Movement and Solidarność

Klaus Misgeld



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A Complicated Solidarity

The Swedish Labour Movement and Solidarność

Klaus Misgeld

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“[...] during this year, in the first instance, the situation in Poland has taken its toll.” (Gunnar Nilsson, President of the Swedish Trade Union Confederation, on the Confederation’s international engagement, 1981)¹

“We will never forget that the Trade Union Confederation of Sweden was among the first which gave us their support and help [...]” (Lech Wałęsa, telegram to the National Conference of the LO, 1986)²

“[...] after August 1980, Eastern Europe will never be the same again.” (Olof Palme, Chairman of the Swedish Social Democratic Party, 1981, at the party congress)³

“I note that you for your part have expressed a desire for information on our Swedish experience in different sectors of society, solutions that are usually described internationally as the Swedish model. We are naturally very gratified if our experience can be of use to Poland.” (Speech by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr Sten Andersson, at a dinner on 9 February 1989 during his official visit to Poland)⁴

One of the most significant acts of international solidarity undertaken by the Swedish trade union movement in the second half of the twentieth century was the support of NSZZ “Solidarność”.⁵ “Solidarity with Solidarity” was a widely used slogan both inside and outside Poland, including in Sweden, but Sweden’s engagement has received relatively little attention, not only in Swedish historical research but also internationally. The role played by Sweden and Swedish trade unionism in supporting – partly at the behest of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) – the newly founded independent and self-governing trade union movement in Poland has therefore received little consideration.⁶ This is especially true of the early years, after the movement emerged in August 1980, gained stature

¹ Speech to the leaders of the member unions; Landsorganisationen i Sverige (LO), Representantskapets protokoll 29 April 1982, § 8, LO archives (“Representantskap” is the meeting of representatives of all member unions of the LO).

² Landsorganisationen i Sverige, *21:e ordinarie kongress 20-27 september 1986, protokoll*, Part 1 (Stockholm, n.d. [1987]), p. 495.

³ Sveriges Socialdemokratiska Arbetareparti, *28:e ordinarie partikongress 26 September – 3 October 1981*, Protokoll, Vol. 1, Part A (Stockholm, 1981), 26 September 1981, p. 59.

⁴ Archives of Sten Andersson 2.1.1.9, Labour Movement Archives and Library in Stockholm (ARAB).

⁵ NSZZ “Solidarność”: Niezależny Samorządny Związek Zawodowy “Solidarność” (Independent Self-Governing Trade Union “Solidarity”), hereafter referred to simply as “Solidarity”.

⁶ See for example the latest history of the ICFTU which deals with the period. There is no mention of the cooperation between the ICFTU, the Swedish trade union movement, and Solidarity: Rebecca Gumbrell-McCormick, “Facing New Challenges: The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (1972-1990s)”, in Anthony Carew *et al.* (eds), *The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions* (Berne, 2000), pp. 341-517; Stefan Berger, “Solidarność, Western Solidarity and Détente: A Transnational Approach”, *European Review*, 16 (2008) pp. 75-84. Denis MacShane, *Solidarity: Poland’s Independent Trade Union* (Nottingham, 1981), pp. 108, 121ff., has a short but misleading account of the LO. See Klaus Misgeld, “Solidaritet med SOLIDARITET: Den svenska arbetarrörelsen och demokratirörelsen i Polen kring 1980”, *Arbetarhistoria*, 30:4 (2006), pp. 24-31.

and recognition, and then – in December 1981 – met with repression.⁷ Swedish support for Solidarity was part of a global network of support for this new organization, and the Swedish trade union movement tried to find a particular role to play in this support. The role it eventually assumed is one of the main subjects of this article.

The Polish movement would, of course, come to be one of the key developments in the eventual collapse of the communist system in East and Central Europe in 1989, though events after 1982 are largely beyond the scope of this article. They will be touched on, but mostly in general terms.

Sweden – Poland: Internationalism and Transnationalism

Despite a longstanding relationship in both war and peace, and geographical proximity on either side of the Baltic, with a direct ferry service, most Swedes nevertheless tend to regard Polish society as strange and unfamiliar.⁸ In 1980 there were at least 20,000 residents of Polish parentage living in Sweden.⁹ However, only with the growth of the democratic

⁷ There is an extensive amount of archive material concerning Sweden and Solidarity in Poland, most of it in the archives of the LO in the ARAB. There is an extremely rich literature on the “Second Cold War”, the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe, particularly on the political situation inside and outside Poland, and especially on the democratic movement in Poland in the 1980s. Only some of this important material is listed in this article. See especially Andrzej Paczkowski, *The Spring Will Be Ours: Poland and the Poles from Occupation to Freedom* (University Park, PA, 2003); Helene Sjursen, *The United States, Western Europe and the Polish Crisis: International Relations in the Second Cold War* (New York, 2003); Vojtech Mastny and Malcolm Byrne (eds), *A Cardboard Castle? An Inside History of the Warsaw Pact, 1955-1991* (Budapest, 2005); John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War* (London, 2007), pp. 218ff.; A. Kemp-Welch, *Poland under Communism: A Cold War History* (Cambridge and New York, 2008). See also Immanuel Ness (ed.), *The International Encyclopedia of Revolution and Protest*, vol. VI (Chichester, 2009), especially Jan Kubik, “Solidarność (Solidarity)”, pp. 3072-3080. The Swedish literature, however, is more limited. See for example Witold Patoka, *Poland under Pressure 1980-81: Crisis Management in State-Society Conflict* (Umeå, 2001). The literature on the international union movement and “union internationalism” is also extensive, and only some is listed. With regard to Sweden I also refer to some of my own earlier work: Klaus Misgeld, “Trade Union Neutrality? The Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO) and the Trade Union International at the Beginning of the Cold War”, IISH Research Paper No. 30, 1998, available at <http://www.iisg.nl/publications/respap30.pdf>, last accessed on 30 May 2010; *idem*, *Den fackliga europavägen: LO, det internationella samarbetet och Europas enande 1945-1991* (Stockholm, 1997).

⁸ See Harald Runblom and Andrzej Ugla (eds), *Polen & Sverige 1919-1999* (Uppsala, 2005), especially Izabela Kolacz, “Bilderna av Sverige i *Gazeta Wyborcza* under åren 1989-1995”, pp. 241-251, 241ff., regarding the lack of mutual interest in both countries, but also Bernard Piotrowski, “Sverige i polsk utrikespolitik. Från den återvunna självständigheten till händelserna i augusti 1980”, pp. 205-226, 222: “During the period 1945-1981 Sweden was one of Poland’s most important partners in Northern Europe, politically, economically and culturally.” Peter Johnsson, *Polen i historien* (Stockholm, 2009), *passim*; Barbara Törnquist-Plewa (ed.), *Sverige och Polen: Nationer och stereotyper* (Lund, 2000); *idem* (ed.), *Skandinavien och Polen: Möten, relationer och ömsesidig påverkan* (Lund, 2007); and especially Małgorzata Anna Packalén, “Grannländerna Sverige och Polen: kulturkontakt eller kulturkrock?”, pp. 165-176, on mutual “social stereotypes” and Poland as a “blind spot” in the public consciousness in Sweden. In 1999 the Swedish Institute published a popular book in Polish and Swedish on the mutual relationship between the two countries in a historical perspective: *Szwecja-Polska: Lata rywalizacji i przyjaźni/Polen och Sverige: År av rivalitet och vänskap* (Stockholm, 1999); see especially the contributions by Jan Szymański and Tomasz Jastrun in that volume at pp. 50-67, and 94-106.

⁹ Eric de Geer, “Den polska folkgruppen i Sverige efter andra världskriget”, Part I: “Historisk, kvantitativ utveckling och folkgruppens nuvarande storlek”, *Acta Sueco-Polonica*, 3 (1994), p. 21; see

movement in the 1970s and 1980s and the creation of Solidarity in 1980 did Poland emerge much more into the Swedish foreground.¹⁰

There is a large amount of material available on this topic, covering a broad range of issues. But I intend to concentrate on the Trade Union Confederation of Sweden (LO) and its collaboration with the ICFTU in supporting Solidarity from the summer of 1980 until December 1981, with some comments on the following years. This will – to some extent – take into account the international situation and how the Swedish labour movement, including leading social democrats, assessed developments in Poland. During 1980-1981 the main focus of Swedish trade union support for the new movement in Poland involved mostly organizational assistance. After 13 December 1981 and martial law there was, partly, a shift towards humanitarian aid. Although I intend to concentrate on the support of the unions, it should be acknowledged that other Swedish organizations – such as churches, political parties other than the social democrats, economic organizations, and NGOs – also extended considerable assistance during the 1980s.¹¹

The LO is self-evidently central to our research. It is the largest and best resourced Swedish trade union federation, founded in 1898, extending to twenty-five affiliated trade

also Harald Runblom, “Polish-Swedish Migration Patterns”, in Runblom and Ugglå, *Polen Polen & Sverige 1919-1999*, pp. 33ff.

¹⁰ Contemporary books in Swedish include Maria Borowska and Jakub Swiecicki (eds), *Kamp för demokrati: Ställningstaganden, artiklar och dokumentation från den polska demokratiska rörelsen* (Stockholm, 1979); Mika Larsson, *Det började i Gdansk* (Stockholm, 1981); Sten Johansson [in collaboration with Maria Borowska], *Polens sak är vår: Om övergången till demokrati under kommunismen* (Stockholm, 1981); Göran Skånsberg, *Polen – folkmakt eller enpartimakt?* (Stockholm, 1981); Olli Arrakoski (ed.), *Solidarność: En bok om den polska solidaritetsrörelsens födelse* (Stockholm, 1981); Gunnar Fredriksson, Mika Larsson, and Charles Kassman, *Solidarność – och kampen för en fri fackförening* (Stockholm, n.d. [1982]); Anders Beijbom, “Än är Polen ej förlorat.” *Kyrkan och Solidaritet i kamp för demokratin* (Vällingby, 1982); Gunnar Fredriksson, “Polen och den svenska arbetarrörelsen”, in *Inte bara ord ...: Arbetarrörelsen och den internationella solidariteten* (Stockholm, 1984), pp. 81-89; see also Håkan Wiberg *et al.* (eds), *Konflikt och solidaritet i Polen: Sociologiska analyser inifrån* (Stockholm, 1983); Marek Nowakowski, *Polen: Krigstillstånd* (Stockholm, 1982); Maria Borowska (ed.), *Krigstillståndets Polen: Artiklar och dokument från den demokratiska rörelsen* (Stockholm, 1983); Bo Hammar, *Från förnyelse till militärstyre: En skrift om Polen* (Stockholm, 1982), is by a leading Swedish communist critical of developments after 13 December 1981. Important contemporary articles can be found in *AIC-bulletinen* (Stockholm), *Tiden. Tidskrift för socialistisk politik och kritik* (Stockholm: Social Democratic Party), *LO-tidningen* (Stockholm: Swedish Trade Union Confederation), and other union papers, in addition to numerous articles in the daily press, as well as in the conservative *Svensk Tidskrift* (Stockholm). New interviews with some of the most important actors can be found in Peter Kadhammar, *Fru Anna och generalen* (Stockholm, 2009).

¹¹ Paweł Jaworski will shortly be publishing more about the NGOs. There were also a lot of important local initiatives. The best known is the Support Committee in Lund (southern Sweden). See Maria Heino and Barbara Törnquist-Plewa, “Svenska Stödkommittén för Solidaritet – The Swedish Solidarity Support Committee and Independent Polish Agency in Lund”, in *Skandinavien och Polen: Möten, relationer och ömsesidig påverkan* (Lund, 2007), pp. 25-61. The Trotskyite Socialist Party (SP) actively supported Solidarity, but it had few resources. The Polen-Solidaritet support organization was partly an instrument of the SP. Documents in the archives of the party, box 81, 334, 439ff., ARAB. On international Trotskyism and Solidarity see Jan Willem Stutje, *Ernest Mandel: A Rebel's Dream Deferred* (London and New York, 2009), pp. 224-237. There were far fewer initiatives undertaken by the Swedish Communist Party (Vänsterpartiet kommunisterna/VPK = Left Party), according to the documents in the archives of the party, ARAB. The support by the Social Democratic Party (SAP) was channelled mainly through the Labour Movement's International Centre (Arbetarrörelsens internationella centrum/AIC), in cooperation with the LO. See below.

unions with 2.1 million members by 1980 (by 1989 there were twenty-three unions affiliated with 2.25 million members) and organized, with certain exceptions, according to industrial trade union principles. The Graphic Workers' Union (GF/Union of Printmakers), of particular interest here, was one of the smaller unions with a little more than 44,000 members, while the largest, the Swedish Metal Workers' Union (Metall), had almost 450,000 members. In contrast, the white collar unions TCO and SACO, which lay outside the LO, had more than a million members at a time when Sweden's total population was just over 8.3 million.¹²

In addition, as a major organization the LO played a key role in both the formation of labour movement ideology (unions were, in fact, in 1889, the founders of the Swedish Social Democratic Party – Sveriges Socialdemokratiska Arbetareparti, SAP – and by the 1980s many local trade union organizations were still members of the party) and domestic politics. This raises a number of issues that can only be touched upon. For instance, how did the LO, with its close proximity to the social democrats, assess the ideological complexion of the Polish democratic movement? On the one hand it was promoted in 1976 by (mostly) academics of the Workers' Defence Committee (KOR); on the other, it was close to the Catholic Church, especially when it came to Solidarity.¹³ Of interest is the Polish organizational structure, in which, unlike with the LO, most occupational groups convened under the umbrella of Solidarity, but with a degree of regional autonomy.¹⁴

There was an awareness in Sweden of the complexities of both the KOR's and Solidarity's multiple and diverse ideologies. Nevertheless, the Swedish labour movement collaborated with and supported Solidarity, first and foremost on the fundamental trade union right to self-determination, as established by the ILO.¹⁵ This was a guiding principle for the transnational and international activities of the Swedish trade union movement, especially in the period after the Second World War. International solidarity and labour internationalism, were central to the movement's self-perception.¹⁶ In reality, however, trade union internationalism amounted to a degree of cross-border cooperation on concrete projects, some financial and practical support, and intermittent sympathy strikes and boycotts. The LO's "internationalism" explicitly involved "international union activities intended to bring about changes in the international situation which are in the interests of both their own members and foreign trade unions".¹⁷ It is in this respect that Swedish and international support for Solidarity came to embody "internationalism", or, more accurately, "transnationalism".

¹² See Anders Kjellberg, *Fackliga organisationer och medlemmar i dagens Sverige* (Lund, 1997), pp. 58ff., 233, and *passim*; Landsorganisationen i Sverige, *Landssekreterariatets berättelse för år 1980* (Stockholm, 1981), p. 3; *Landssekreterariatets berättelse för år 1989* (1990), p. 5. The Landssekreterariat was the board of the LO.

¹³ Jan Józef Lipski, *KOR: A History of the Workers' Defense Committee in Poland, 1976-1981* (Berkeley, 1985); Lawrence Goodwyn, *Breaking the Barrier: The Rise of Solidarity in Poland* (New York, 1991); Amy Linch, "Poland, Committee for Workers (KOR)", in Ness, *The International Encyclopedia of Revolution and Protest*, vol. VI, pp. 2694-2698. For references to the Catholic Church and Solidarity, see below in the section "Ideological questions".

¹⁴ This difference was mentioned in several Swedish reports, including that by Sven H. Svensson after his visit to Poland in October 1980. See below and "- Kampviljan måste leda till seger", *Metallarbetaren*, 7 November 1980, pp. 20ff.

¹⁵ Garry Rodgers *et al.*, *The International Labour Organization and the Quest for Social Justice 1919-2009* (Geneva and Ithaca, 2009), p. 51, on Poland.

¹⁶ Misgeld, *Den fackliga europavägen*, pp. 18ff.; *idem*, "Facklig internationalism, Sverige och Europa", *Arbejderhistorie*, 1998 (4), pp. 27ff., with a discussion and definitions of "labour internationalism"; Marcel van der Linden, *Transnational Labour History: Explorations* (Aldershot, 2003), pp. 151-171.

¹⁷ See my "operational" description of "trade union internationalism" in Misgeld, *Den fackliga europavägen*, p. 22.

My starting point, however, in this respect is the Swedish perspective. The focus is mainly on the Swedish labour movement, i.e. “transnational history” from a national point of view in a national context.¹⁸ One of the difficult questions to assess, difficult because of the paucity of international research, is the value and extent of this support from a Polish perspective, relative to that from other countries.¹⁹ I will return to this problem later.

Another issue was the readiness on the Swedish side to offer their own social model as a prototype for a movement seeking a new route out of an economic and ideological crisis. An internal document by the Swedish Trade Union Confederation from 1977 outlined the “export of our ideas to other lands in the same way as other countries’ organizations” as one of the principles of its international trade union activities, the same principle which provided the “moral starting point” for the foreign policy of the social democrats.²⁰ But for Solidarity in the first few years it was less about the “transfer” of ideas and more about concrete support on its own terms. Towards the end of the 1980s, “the Swedish model” and notions of “transfer”, not least the “union model”, became a theme of discussion at the highest level between the Communist Party and Solidarity on the one hand and leading Swedish social democrats on the other.²¹

Clearly though, trade union “internationalism” will inevitably express itself in the context of conflicting interests. Trade union movements need to take account of their own state’s political, social, and economic situation, and international political profile. Similarly, there are grounds for both cooperation and conflict even inside the labour movement, for

¹⁸ Concerning discussions on transnationalism, see van der Linden, *Transnational Labour History*, pp. 151-171.

¹⁹ See Stefan Berger, “Solidarność, Western Solidarity and Détente”. On the support from the Federal Republic of Germany see Rolf Gawrich, *Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund und polnische Gewerkschaftsbewegung: Der DGB als transnationaler Akteur und seine Beziehungen zur „offiziellen“ und „oppositionellen“ Gewerkschaftsbewegung in der Volksrepublik Polen (1970-1989)* (Bonn, 1996); for Denmark see Bent Boel, “Så nær og dog så fjern: LO og Solidarnosc, 1980-1989”, *Arbejderhistorie*, 2007 (2), pp. 58-76, and the critical comments by John Svenningsen (former international adviser to the LO in Denmark), “LO og Solidarnosc, 1980-1989. En kommentar”, *Arbejderhistorie*, 2008 (1), pp. 133-135. There is much less written about Norway and Solidarity, but on the very cautious politics of Norway see Hallvard Kvale Svenbalrud, “Fra ‘forsinket brobygging’ til normaliseringspolitikk: Nedbyggingen av norsk Polen-politikk i Solidaritets tiår, 1980-1990”, *Internasjonal Politikk*, 67 (2009), pp. 47-64. On the AFL-CIO, DGB, TUC, and FO see Gumbrell-McCormick, “Facing New Challenges”, p. 499.

²⁰ See the paper written by the International Secretary of the Swedish Metal Workers’ Union, Jan(ne) Olsson, for the International Committee of the LO: “Synpunkter på kontakter med fackliga organisationer utanför FFI-kretsen (speciellt med hänsyn till kommunistiska organisationer)”, 3 March 1977; LO A06:6, ARAB; on internationalism as an ideology see van der Linden, *Transnational Labour History*, especially pp. 155ff.

²¹ See K. Misgeld, “En ‘svensk modell’ för Polen? Diplomatiske sidospår under det demokratiska genombrottet i Polen 1988-1989”, in *Historien til “de andre”* (Oslo, forthcoming). On the discussions about the “transfer” of models and examples see, for instance, Jürgen Osterhammel, „Transferanalyse und Vergleich im Fernverhältnis“, in Hartmut Kaelble and Jürgen Schriewer (eds), *Vergleich und Transfer: Komparatistik in den Sozial-, Geschichts- und Kulturwissenschaften* (Frankfurt and New York, 2003), pp. 439-466; Hans-Ulrich Wehler, „Transnationale Geschichte – der neue Königsweg historischer Forschung?“, in Gunilla Budde, Sebastian Conrad, and Oliver Janz (eds), *Transnationale Geschichte: Themen, Tendenzen und Theorien* (Göttingen, 2006), p. 171; Silke Neunsinger, “Cross-over! Om komparationer, transferanalyser, *histoire croisée* och den metodologiska nationalismens problem”, *Historisk tidskrift*, 130 (2010), pp. 3-24. See also, in a different context, K. Misgeld, “Folgen des Exils. Wechselseitiges Lernen und besseres gegenseitiges Verstehen”, in Einhart Lorenz *et al.* (eds), *Ein sehr trübes Kapitel? Hitlerflüchtlinge im nordeuropäischen Exil 1933-1950* (Hamburg, 1998), pp. 399-416, 469-474.

example between a leading, often governing, party, such as the Swedish social democrats, and the Swedish LO with its unions. It goes without saying that, ultimately, “international solidarity” can win acceptance inside an organization only if it chimes with the interests of its members.²²

The Swedish trade union movement generally followed, but did not feel bound by, the foreign policy of parliament (Riksdagen), regardless of who was in power.²³ During the Cold War the LO was a Western and by no means a neutral organization, but the leadership often opposed the North American AFL-CIO attempts to dominate the ICFTU’s activities, especially in the Third World. This stance influenced its actions not just in South Africa and Latin America, but in Poland as well. Swedish support for Solidarity, however, should be seen in the general context of Western support for the democratic movement in East and Central Europe and as part of a broader settlement of accounts with the communist system. Even if the LO attempted to avoid giving this impression, it is clear that its activities in practice contributed to a weakening of this system.

International Politics and International Trade Unionism

The international situation during the period under discussion is important to an understanding of how events unfolded in Poland. The signatories to the Helsinki Agreements in 1975 at the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (The CSCE Process) had undertaken to respect individual human rights and freedom, to which the Polish democratic movement could obviously refer. However, European borders remained sacrosanct, with a requirement not to meddle in the internal affairs of other states.²⁴ In the case of Poland, when it came to considering international action in support of solidarity this presented a problem. Moreover, the strikes throughout Poland in the summer of 1980 and the establishment of a free, independent trade union movement came at a difficult time. The East-West conflict threatened to escalate following the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the build-up of intermediate range ballistic (nuclear) missiles (IRBM) on both sides, with the latter leading to widespread protest movements in the West, often supported by unions.²⁵

There was also considerable apprehension in the West that the strikes and disturbances in Poland could lead to an economic collapse with regional consequences. These apprehensions naturally existed in Sweden, and there was a more or less quiet concern that any support for Solidarity should be such that it helped to mitigate rather than exacerbate the chaos.²⁶ Both suppression and a power vacuum could lead to a flood of refugees into Sweden, disturbance of trade relations, and the disruption spilling over the border. The Swedish

²² Misgeld, *Den fackliga europavägen*, pp. 18ff., 22. Richard Hyman, “Shifting Dynamics in International Trade Unionism: Agitation, Organisation, Bureaucracy, Diplomacy”, *Labor History*, 46 (2005), pp. 137-154; published in Swedish in *Arbetarhistoria*, 28:1-2 (2004), pp. 16-27.

²³ See Misgeld, “Trade Union Neutrality?”; *idem*, *Den fackliga europavägen*. Even when the SAP was in government, the foreign policy of the party could diverge from that of the Foreign Ministry. See K. Misgeld, *Sozialdemokratie und Aussenpolitik in Schweden: Sozialistische Internationale, Europapolitik und die Deutschlandfrage 1945-1955* (Frankfurt and New York, 1984).

²⁴ Arie Bloed (ed.), *The Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe: Analysis and Basic Documents, 1972-1993* (Dordrecht, 1993).

²⁵ See for example Patrick M. Morgan and Keith L. Nelson (eds), *Re-viewing the Cold War: Domestic Factors and Foreign Policy in the East-West Confrontation* (Westport, CT, and London, 2000); Wilfried Loth, *Overcoming the Cold War: A History of Détente* (Basingstoke and New York, 2002), pp. 172-179; Silvio Pons and Federico Romero (eds), *Reinterpreting the End of the Cold War: Issues, Interpretations, Periodizations* (New York, 2005); Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945* (London, 2007), pp. 605ff. on Solidarity.

²⁶ See the section “North Americans: ‘Keep Out!’” below on Swedish responses to US policies.

response should therefore be seen against this background, as well as its long tradition of a policy of non-alignment (“neutrality”), its efforts towards bridge building, disarmament, and a commitment to human rights.²⁷ There were consequences for internal politics as well. By 1980-1981, the centre-right-wing government, which had been in power since 1976, was much more outspoken than the Social Democratic Party leadership when it came to the issue of external threats [i.e. from the Soviet Union] to Poland.²⁸ In principle, however, both then and in subsequent years all political parties in the Riksdag supported the government’s position, as stated by the Prime Minister, Thorbjörn Fälldin, on 6 October 1981: “The situation in Poland gives cause for concern. We follow with sympathy the efforts of the Polish people to deepen democracy. The Polish people must themselves decide their political future without external interference.”²⁹ And, after some initial hesitation, Swedish diplomats in Warsaw supported Swedish union engagement, albeit discreetly to avoid being seen as interfering in the internal affairs of a sovereign state.³⁰

²⁷ Alf W. Johansson and Torbjörn Norman, “Sweden’s Security and World Peace: Social Democracy and Foreign Policy”, in Klaus Misgeld, Karl Molin, and Klas Åmark (eds), *Creating Social Democracy: A Century of the Social Democratic Labor Party in Sweden* (University Park, PA, 1992), pp. 339-373; Ulf Bjereld, Alf W Johansson, and Karl Molin, *Sveriges säkerhet och världens fred: Svensk utrikespolitik under kalla kriget* (Stockholm, 2008).

²⁸ See the section on the social democrats below. “Extract from a Speech by Mr. Ola Ullsten, Minister of Foreign Affairs, in Tranås [Sweden]; 8 December [1980]”, *Documents on Swedish Foreign Policy 1980*, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, New Series 1:C:31 (Stockholm, 1982), no. 52, p. 175; “Statement by Mr. Ola Ullsten, Minister of Foreign Affairs, at the Thirty-Sixth Session of the UN General Assembly; 24 September” [1981], *Documents on Swedish Foreign Policy 1981* (Stockholm, 1983), no. 7, pp. 41-42. See Ulf Bjereld and Marie Demker, *Utrikespolitiken som slagfält: De svenska partierna och utrikesfrågorna* (Stockholm, 1995), pp. 335ff.; Vilhelm Agrell, *Fred och fruktan: Sveriges säkerhetspolitiska historia 1918-2000* (Lund, 2000), pp. 220ff.; Olof Kronvall and Magnus Petersson, *Svensk säkerhetspolitik i supermakternas skugga 1945-1991* (Stockholm, 2005), pp. 119-139. On the politics of the USSR see Mark Kramer, *Soviet Deliberations During the Polish Crisis, 1980-1981* (Washington, 1999); Vojtech Mastny, “The Soviet Non-Invasion of Poland in 1980-1981 and the End of the Cold War”, *Europe-Asia Studies*, 51 (1999), pp. 189-211; Andrzej Paczkowski and Malcolm Byrne (eds), *From Solidarity to Martial Law: The Polish Crisis of 1980-1981: A Documentary History* (Budapest and New York, 2007).

²⁹ *Documents on Swedish Foreign Policy 1981*, no. 8, p. 47, “Excerpt from Statement of Government Policy made by the Prime Minister, Mr. Thorbjörn Fälldin, at the Opening of the Riksdag; 6 October” [1981]. See also *ibid.*, no. 67, pp. 145ff.: “Statement by the Foreign Minister, Mr. Ola Ullsten, on the Situation in Poland; 16 December”, and “Statement by the Swedish Government on Account of Events in Poland; 18 December” [1981].

³⁰ The Swedish Foreign Ministry has given special permission for this research project to use the closed archives of the Ministry, especially the reports by the embassy in Warsaw (and reports from other capitals concerning Poland) and the minutes of meetings on developments in Poland 1980-1990: Regeringskansliet: Utrikesdepartementets arkiv (Foreign Ministry; UD) HP 1 EP. The reports and minutes are very exhaustive and detailed. A first impression was given in Ulf Eliasson, “Diplomatin utmanas? Svenska demokrati- och säkerhetsintressen under den polska krisen 1980-1981”, *Arbetshistoria*, 30:4 (2006), pp. 32-37. Also useful are the tapes of a seminar on Sweden and the democratic movement in Poland, at ARAB, held on 2 November 2005, and the tapes of a series of interviews with the Swedish printmaker Ture Mattsson, by Maciej Zaremba and Klaus Misgeld, held between December 1983 and January 1984, ARAB. See Lars Peter Fredén, *Återkomst: Svensk säkerhetspolitik och de baltiska ländernas första år i självständighet 1991-1994* (Stockholm, 2006), pp. 33 and *passim*, on Swedish diplomatic activities ten years later in the Baltic republics. Karl Molin (Stockholm and Södertörn University) will be following up these questions, especially those concerning Swedish foreign policy and the Helsinki Agreements.

Swedish union activities must also be seen in an international context in which many national federations, not least Nordic, had for some time attached considerable importance to (informal) bilateral union relations between East and West. The rules were that Swedish unions exchanged delegations with communist countries in East-Central Europe, but did not participate in or extend invitations to official national union conferences. Contacts between regional or local organizations in Sweden and these countries were more frequent than between federations.³¹ Bilateral union contact between Poland and Sweden had continued throughout the 1970s, despite disturbances such as the worker riots in Poland in the 1970s. The National Secretariat of the LO decided on 5 June 1978, for instance, to send a delegation under the President of the LO, Gunnar Nilsson, to “the [official] Polish union movement” (CRZZ). The main intention was to study shipping and agriculture. The Polish hosts wanted a common communiqué, but the LO refused.³² The precise nature of the relationship between Western trade unions and organizations within the communist states of the Eastern Bloc was, though, still unresolved and subject to debate within the ICFTU.³³ But with the founding of an independent union in Poland in the summer and autumn of 1980 a new situation emerged. The outside world was taken aback at – and admired – the speed with which this soon-to-be-called “self-limiting movement” had grown.³⁴ “During my life as an active trade unionist I can think of no other event that has marked such a victory for working people”, wrote Denis MacShane, then an official with the International Metal Workers’ Federation (IMF), in the summer of 1981.³⁵

The LO in Sweden and its Polish Neighbour

By the late summer of 1980 it was realised in Sweden that the new situation required a new approach; contact was established with the new, fast-growing organization in Poland and links with the CRZZ were broken off, at least at the central level.³⁶ “In Poland a remarkable development has occurred in the last year”, noted the National Secretary, Rune Molin, later, at the LO’s Congress on 22 September 1981 in the presence of three Polish guests, and just a few days before the second part of Solidarity’s first National Congress began in Gdańsk. “For

³¹ See the annual reports of Swedish unions from the late 1970s, including those of the metal workers, miners, and the Union of Graphic Workers/Union of Printmakers.

³² Landsorganisationen i Sverige (LO), Landssekreterariatets protokoll (LS-prot.), 5 June 1978 § 7a, and 11 September 1978 § 7b (oral report by Lars-Olof Lundberg), LO archives. More on this visit to Poland and other contacts between the LO and the CRZZ in the 1970s can be found in Lars-Olof Lundberg’s forthcoming biography of Gunnar Nilsson.

³³ Gumbrell-McCormick, “Facing New Challenges”, pp. 347ff. See also Anthony Carew, “Towards a Free Trade Union Centre: The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (1949-1972)”, in Carew *et al.*, *The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions*, pp. 249-254.

³⁴ The phrase attributed to Jacek Kuron, according to Johansson, *Polen i Europa*, p. 37. See Neal Ascherson, *The Polish August: The Self-Limiting Revolution* (New York, 1982); Alain Touraine *et al.*, *Solidarity: The Analysis of a Social Movement. Poland 1980-1981* (Cambridge, 1983), p. 64; Patoka, *Poland under Pressure 1980-81*, p. 18, with critical comments on the implications of the term “self-limiting movement”.

³⁵ MacShane, *Solidarity*, p. 11.

³⁶ The CRZZ was dissolved at the end of 1980 and disappeared from the documentation of the LO. The documentation of the international departments of the LO and of Swedish unions (metal, mining, and printmakers) which I have consulted shows that during the first few years after 13 December 1981, contacts between Swedish unions and the official trade union organizations in Central and Eastern Europe were rare. Hungary and of course Yugoslavia were the exceptions. The Scandinavians (i.e. without Finland) shared this policy.

the first time”, he continued, “an independent trade union has been established in communist Europe.”³⁷

The Swedish “Left” in general already had some knowledge of the situation in Poland. Since the mid-1970s a number of social democrats had been in touch with Polish democrats, mainly KOR activists, and their documents and interviews had been published in the SAP’s theoretical journal *Tiden* [The Time]. From 1980 onwards the editorial staff were making clear their strong support for the Polish opposition. An editorial in autumn 1980 held that it was “a duty for the labour movement in the West to do what it can [to help] the new union movement in Poland to gain strength and acquire recognition”.³⁸ There were also established links between Polish shipyards in the coastal towns and Swedish shipbuilding workers at Kockums in Malmö though before 1980, through the official branch organization in Poland.³⁹ Those contacts proved useful given the role that the Swedish labour movement came to adopt with the help of organizations founded in 1978 and 1979 by the LO, the SAP, the Labour Movement’s Educational Organization (ABF), and the Consumer Organization (KF) to promote international assistance and cooperation, namely the Labour Movement’s International Centre (AIC, 1978) and its Fund for Solidarity (i-fonden, 1979).⁴⁰ The i-fonden became the main instrument to finance projects supporting solidarity in many countries all over the world, projects supported by the Swedish labour movement. That was also the case in Poland.

The LO’s initial response

Apart from media reports, probably the first official Swedish account of Solidarity’s activities to the LO (also sent to the ICFTU) came just over two weeks after the Gdańsk Agreement of 31 August 1980, and was sent by the editor of the AIC journal *AIC-bulletinen*, Charles

³⁷ Landsorganisationen i Sverige, *20:e ordinarie kongress 19-26 september 1981, protokoll*, Part 2 (Stockholm, 1982), p. 1144. Solidarity was represented by its Vice-President Ryszard Kalinowski. Correspondence in LO E09A:120, ARAB. Lech Wałęsa had been invited by the President of the LO, Gunnar Nilsson, when they met on 17 May 1981 in Malmö (southern Sweden) when the “Låt-leva-priset” (“Let Live Award”) of the social democratic *Arbetet* newspaper was presented to Wałęsa, but he was unable to attend. *LO-tidningen*, 14 May 1981, p. 12, and 4 June 1981, p. 5.

³⁸ “Polen – tredje gången gillt?”, *Tiden*, 72 (1980), pp. 394ff; *Tiden*, 68:7 (1976), was devoted mainly to Poland, and also in 1977, 1978, and especially 1980-1982 the periodical published several articles about Poland on the topic of how to democratize a communist system. See Werner G. Hahn, *Democracy in a Communist Party: Poland’s Experience since 1980* (New York, 1987). The periodical *Tidskriften Östeuropa*, edited by the Östeuropeiska solidaritetskommittén in Stockholm, also reported on the situation in Poland and in other Eastern European countries, including the former Baltic republics, as did the Polish social democrats in Sweden, for example in *Biuletyn Socjalisty/Socialist Bulletin*. On the relationship between the KOR and Swedish social democrats see also *Dokument inifrån. Sverige och storpolitiken i omvälvningarnas tid* (Stockholm, 1992), pp. 112ff., by Pierre Schori (a former member of the Swedish government).

³⁹ *Metallarbetaren*, 7 November 1980, pp. 20-21. Solidarity was represented at the conference of metal workers in 1981; (*Svenska Metallindustriarbetareförbundets kongress 1981, Protokoll*, Part 1 (Stockholm, 1981) pp. 15ff.; Part 2, pp. 806ff., 811ff., 817, and 825ff.; on visiting programmes concerning Solidarity see Överstyrelsens protokoll (ÖS-prot.) 2 June 1981 § 5, Metall A02:29, ARAB; Förbundsstyrelsens protokoll (FS-prot.) 8 October 1980 § 2, Metall A03:207, and 12 November 1980 § 2, *ibid.*, A03:208, ARAB. Karl-Olov Larsson in *Metallarbetaren*, 10 October 1980, pp. 2-5. See Christer Thörnqvist, “Metall och världen: Metalls internationella verksamhet 1957-1981”, in *Det lyser en framtid. Svenska Metallindustriarbetareförbundet 1957-1981* (Stockholm, 2008), pp. 985ff.

⁴⁰ The archives of the AIC (since 1992 The Olof Palme International Center in Stockholm) and the i-fonden in the ARAB.

Kassman.⁴¹ He had been to the Lenin Wharf previously and was “the first representative from the West European labour movement to meet the strike leaders in Gdańsk” (as he summarized it in a later report, October/November 1981); in fact, there had been other visitors from Western unions before Kassman.⁴² Of particular interest is his account of a conversation with Lech Wałęsa and Jacek Kuron (KOR), at his first meeting in August, in which it already became clear that substantial help was required to overcome obstacles and develop the organization, not least in terms of money and education. Kassman also made it clear in his report that the leadership of Solidarity thought Soviet intervention unlikely, given the influence of the USSR on the governing (Communist) Polish United Workers Party, PZPR.

Journalistic accounts of the events surrounding the birth of Solidarity had, naturally, already appeared, in particular in reports by Jan Mosander for the Swedish social democratic daily *Aftonbladet* (AB). He was one of the first Western journalist to spend time with the shipyard workers in Gdańsk.⁴³ But it was Kassman’s report in September 1980 that revealed to the Swedish labour movement the urgent need for support, and the fact that the Poles considered permanent contact with external unions, initially through the ICFTU, absolutely vital. He also noted how the KOR operated with considerable finesse and confidence within Solidarity. It soon became clear, though, that the LO leadership would adopt a much more reserved stance in relation to the KOR. Nevertheless, Kassman’s report, with its proposals, was accepted – Solidarity was officially recognized and help provided towards education and the acquisition of printing and office equipment. Within the LO and its Committee for International Questions, under the leadership of the National Secretary, Rune Molin, extensive discussions began on the situation in Poland and how best to offer support.⁴⁴

During the following weeks and months many Swedish union representatives travelled to Poland. They included officials from the Swedish Metal Workers’ Union and workers from the Kockums shipyard in Malmö, who met Solidarity’s National Committee, Lech Wałęsa, and other movement stalwarts. Detailed accounts of their conversations were compiled, and often summarized in articles in the union press.⁴⁵ These reports were dealt with by the LO’s committee at the end of October and a decision was taken to pay for the printing equipment that Solidarity had obtained through loans.⁴⁶

Communication was obviously a priority for a fast-growing organization with at least ten million members throughout the country by the end of 1980, as was the need to counter

⁴¹ “Rapport från besök i Warszawa och Gdansk 15/9-18/9 1980”, “Strictly confidential”, 10 pp. with two appendices: “Samtal med Jacek Kuron” and “Utkast till program för de oberoende fackföreningarnas verksamhet”, LO F26B:1, ARAB. He published a number of articles about Poland in the periodical of the AIC, *AIC-bulletinen*, the first time being in issue 6 of 1980, pp. 15-19.

⁴² Kassman mentioned in his later report, November 1981, that in 1980 he had represented the ICFTU, “Rapport från resa till Polen 27.10.-2.11.1981”, “Strictly confidential”, 9 pp., LO FO9A:3, ARAB.

⁴³ AB, 29 August 2005. See Jacqueline Hayden, *Poles Apart: Solidarity and the New Poland* (Portland, 1994), pp. 17ff., on her first meeting with the “founders” of Solidarity in a flat in Gdańsk on 13 August 1980.

⁴⁴ The minutes of the Landssektariat (LO archives) and of the International Committee (Internationella kommittén) of the LO (LO A06, ARAB) illustrate the opinions of the leaders of the organization. Ordinary members of the Committee were Rune Molin, the “International ombudsman” (until 1983 Thorbjörn Carlsson), and other representatives of the International Department, and some representatives of the biggest federations of the LO. Correspondence relating to the ICFTU can be found in LO F26B, ARAB.

⁴⁵ For example Sven H. Svensson, report to the Metal Workers, 12 November 1980 § 2, Metall ÖS-prot. A03:208, ARAB; *Metallarbetaren*, 7 November 1980. An English translation of the report was sent to Es Gray in UAW/Cramford NJ, by Bengt Jacobsson, 10 November 1980, Metall, IMF 1980, E7a, ARAB.

⁴⁶ Report in LO F26B:1, ARAB; International Committee 29 October 1980, § 4, LO A06:7, ARAB.

negative rumours, both inside and outside Poland.⁴⁷ It was already apparent, though, that the LO was prepared to do more, just so long as it could remain in the background, at least to begin with. As the International Committee stated on 29 October 1980, “this measure will be publicly announced in Sweden to make it clear that we [only] transfer funds that have been given spontaneously [by members]”.⁴⁸ The LO wanted to avoid the impression that Solidarity was in any way dependent on external organizations. Notification of this decision, along with the new reports, was sent to the ICFTU General Secretary, Otto Kersten.⁴⁹

The Polish project was delegated to the GF who, at the beginning of November 1980, sent their technical ombudsman, Ture Mattsson, and a team of printmakers to Poland – a visit made especially difficult by the obstructive antics of the Polish authorities. Their report confirmed earlier impressions and further visits followed, either by Ture Mattsson alone or with others.⁵⁰ In December they took with them new printing equipment bought in Sweden, confirmed that Solidarity had already received some equipment from Norway and France, and agreed that from now on such deliveries should be coordinated, based on Polish requirements and with the LO acting as intermediary.⁵¹ A list of the measures to be taken and equipment needed would be compiled. It was also evident from discussions that some of the earlier deliveries had been both poorly distributed and not tailored to actual needs. “We certainly need decent printing equipment, but it must be simple to begin with”, Lech Wałęsa candidly remarked to the Swedish graphic workers when he met them for the first time on 12 November 1980, at Solidarity’s offices in Gdańsk.⁵² According to minutes of the conversation

⁴⁷ See the speech by Andrej Gwiazda, Vice-President of Solidarity, to the World Conference on the Trade Union Role in Development, New Delhi (India), 18-20 March 1981, Proceedings, p. 139, “our first priority is printing equipment”, LO F23:93, ARAB, and report by Thorbjörn Carlsson, 1 April 1981, *ibid.*, F23:92.

⁴⁸ International Committee 29 October 1980, § 4, LO A06:7, ARAB.

⁴⁹ 31 October 1980, copy/Ulf Asp, appendix, *ibid.*

⁵⁰ Report to the GF 24 November 1980, “Confidential”, 6 pp., LO F26B:1, ARAB; interviews with Ture Mattsson 1983/1984 and T. Mattsson, 2 November 2005. The visit had been coordinated by the AIC; message from Bengt Säve-Söderbergh/AIC to Rune Molin/LO, 7 November 1980, LO F26B:4, ARAB. The Swedish ambassador to Poland, Knut O. Thyberg, had sent a message to the ministry arguing that given the situation in the autumn of 1980 (there were signs of a “showdown” between the government and Solidarity) the printmakers should not come to Poland. Telegram from Thyberg to Cabinet Stockholm, 7 November 1980, UD HP 1 EP Dnr 259. There were other messages of the same kind from an earlier date (including the telegram from Thyberg to Cabinet, 3 September 1980, *ibid.*, Dnr 163 concerning Kassman and LO); the Foreign Ministry also tried on at least one occasion to persuade the LO/AIC not to send people to Poland (telegram Cabinet to ambassador, 12 December 1980, Dnr 260). Later, Thyberg changed his mind and reported in telegrams that the support of the Swedish trade union movement was important for Solidarity, that Solidarity wanted these contacts (for example, telegram 7 January 1981, *ibid.*, Dnr 2), and that even a representative of the Central Committee of the PZPR, Ostrowski, appreciated that Swedish aid was being given in a way different from that provided by unions in other countries (telegrams 18 and 22 December 1980, *ibid.*, Dnr 324, 330). On Ture Mattsson and his Polish activities see Lisbeth Ulfstedt, *Stolta starka stridbara: Grafiska Fackförbundet 1973-2009* (Stockholm, 2009), pp. 81-85.

⁵¹ Preliminary report to Rune Molin and Erik Karlsson via Ulf Asp, 12 December 1980, LO F26B:1, ARAB. A longer report by Ture Mattsson and others to GF 18 December 1980, *ibid.* The first thing Mattsson did in Gdańsk was to assemble the Norwegian equipment. Ture Mattsson to the author, 1 September 2009.

⁵² “Rapport från besöket i Warszawa och Gdansk den 10/11-17/11 1980”, “Confidential”, by Bertil Frick and Ture Mattsson, GF, 6 pp., 24 November 1980, p. 3, LO F26B:1, ARAB. See MacShane, *Solidarity*, pp. 120ff. Ture Mattsson has told me (1 September 2009) that the Polish printers wanted modern and bigger equipment, but the leaders of Solidarity, especially Lech Wałęsa, preferred smaller ones which were easy to move and to repair.

taken by the Swedes with the help of their interpreter, at a second meeting on 8 December Wałęsa expressed his tremendous gratitude for the Swedish contributions and added that he trusted that future help could be provided. Sweden had been “the first country to help them, and it would not be forgotten” – a statement he repeated in his telegram to the national conference of the LO in 1986 and which was read out to the delegates.⁵³ But the Swedes also noted, in 1980, that “the expectations of the extent of help from us in Sweden are far greater than we can live up to”.⁵⁴

The reports revealed that the Poles were eager for external contacts, not least with Swedish trade unions, that they needed other equipment besides printing supplies, and that, finally, they required organizational help and advice, seeing the Swedish labour movement as an important model. “Could you help me to identify any flaws in the organization that you’ve spotted?”, enquired Wałęsa on 12 November of the printmakers whom he had taken the time to see, despite being beleaguered by foreign reporters and camera crews.⁵⁵ One final point, which emerged when the Swedes returned home, was that the Poles clearly did not share the uncertainty and concern in Sweden over the international situation.⁵⁶

The first official response from the LO President was sent to Solidarity in a telex on 19 November 1980, stating that “the Swedish Trade Union Confederation, its national trade unions, and its two million members, note with much satisfaction” Solidarity’s successes. He noted that “the workers and government of Poland themselves had been able to settle the difficulties”, emphasizing the significance of union rights and the importance of developing them further. He pointed out “the great interest in Sweden”, Poland’s neighbour, for “your work”, and concluded by inviting a delegation from Solidarity to Sweden “as soon as possible”.⁵⁷

The role of the LO

Along with contributions for the development of Solidarity, the LO now took on the role of coordinating support for Poland from the ICFTU and its member organizations. The LO’s, and also the GF’s, greater involvement was prompted by two letters from Lech Wałęsa to the ICFTU. In the first (undated in a copy of the English translation) to the General Secretary Otto Kersten (mistakenly called “Chairman” in the letter), Wałęsa refers to “your

⁵³ “Rapport från GF:s andra besök hos ‘SOLIDARNOSC’ i Polen den 3-10/12 1980”, “Confidential”, 4 pp., 4 appendices; Appendix 4, “Grafiska Fackförbundets delegation Lennart Johansson (LJ), Herbert Eklund (HE) och Ture Mattsson (TM) talar med Solidaritets ordförande Lech Walesa (LW)”, 2 pp., LO F26B:1, ARAB. There are also audio tapes of this conversation, ARAB 2964:3:1. “Rapport om förbundets engagemang för Polen”, GF Förbundsstyrelsens protokoll (FS-prot.) 8 December 1980 § 19, GF archives. Lech Wałęsa, telegram to the National Conference of the LO 1986: “We will never forget that the Trade Union Confederation of Sweden was among the first who gave us their support and help”, Landsorganisationen i Sverige, *21:e ordinarie kongress 20-27 september 1986, protokoll*, Part 1 (Stockholm, n.d. [1987]), p. 495.

⁵⁴ There were similar reactions by the DGB. See Gawrich, *Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund und polnische Gewerkschaftsbewegung*, p. 321.

⁵⁵ Report to the GF 24 November 1980, LO F26B:1, ARAB.

⁵⁶ The reports and messages from the embassy in Warsaw during these months – sometimes several a day – and the discussions of the analysis groups of the Foreign Ministry were mostly about the risk of intervention by the Soviet Union and the consequences, such as floods of refugees to Sweden. The Swedish ambassador to Moscow, de Geer, warned in October 1980 of a development which in fact happened more than one year later, on 13 December 1981; telegram de Geer, Moscow, to Cabinet, Stockholm, 10 October 1980, UD HP 1 EP Dnr 299. Thyberg in Warsaw was calculating along similar lines; see, for instance, telegram to Cabinet, 8 November 1980, *ibid.*, Dnr 261.

⁵⁷ Copy LO F26B:4, ARAB; draft in Swedish by Thorbjörn Carlsson, 12 November, *ibid.*, LO, LS-prot. 17 October 1980, § 8b, LO archives.

representative Mr. Charles Kassman from Sweden”. In the second, dated 17 November 1980, formulated and translated with the help of Polish KOR sympathizers living in Sweden, Wałęsa suggests that the LO should be responsible for coordinating help from the ICFTU and its member organizations. “We think that the most suitable country for such an agency would be Sweden, since it is the Western country that is the closest to us, because of its neutrality, free[dom] of visa tourist movement, already established numerous contacts with Swedish trade unions and already working ways of consignment [sic!] of goods, organized by Poles living in Sweden”.⁵⁸ This last remark would later cause some trouble.

Wałęsa’s proposals were duly accepted by the ICFTU, though Kersten, in his letter to the LO, was rather vague on how this should be organized – one more reason for yet further problems. “We too share the view that Sweden is the best place from where to channel international free trade union solidarity and that, therefore, Sweden should be involved in the matter.”⁵⁹ Kersten proposed raising the issue at a planned meeting with the Committee of the Council of Nordic Trade Unions (NFS) on 11 December in Copenhagen. Gunnar Nilsson replied on 4 December that the LO would gladly discuss “at our earliest convenience the matters related to coordinating and channelling solidarity to Poland”.⁶⁰ A seventeen-point list was compiled regarding the nature of support for Solidarity, taking into account its specific wishes and issues of legality. Many of the points related directly to the ICFTU, to be conveyed to Kersten after consultation with the NFS. A key consideration was “that the ICFTU should appear barely visible”, referring any national organizations wishing to support Poland to the LO, which would then coordinate and act upon their instructions. An important point concerned the International Trade Secretariats (ITS – the unions’ international organizations): the Swedish LO would accept instructions only from the ICFTU and its members. “The Trade Secretariats must refer to their Swedish member organizations, which in turn will consult the LO.”⁶¹

This last point related to problems that had already emerged. Supplies had been sent by some ITS to Poland for which Solidarity had little or no use.⁶² And there was some suspicion inside the LO that these deliveries resulted mostly from political motives, as part of a Cold War strategy, not least because of the considerable influence exercised by North American member organizations, particularly in the PTTI and IMF. In a ten-point note with recommendations from the IMF, following a visit by IMF representatives to Poland (3-11 December 1980), one point (number seven) hints that some individuals inside the IMF had little confidence in the coordination role in Stockholm, and that the IMF and other ITS would have preferred a Polish-born Swedish citizen (living in Stockholm) as coordinator.⁶³ The LO

⁵⁸ ICFTU, 76EB/10a Appendix 1. A copy of Wałęsa’s letter had been sent to the LO, together with a letter from Kersten to the President of the LO, Gunnar Nilsson, 28 November, LO F26B:4 and F23:89, ARAB. Information by J. Świącicki about the document can be found on the tapes of the seminar at ARAB 2005. The Solidarity delegate to the Conference of the LO 1981, Ryszard Kalinowski, repeated the proposal by Wałęsa to the ICFTU and thanked the LO for its support; Landsorganisationen i Sverige, *20:e ordinarie kongress 19-26 september 1981, protokoll*, Part 1 (Stockholm, 1982), pp. 22ff.

⁵⁹ Kersten to the President, 28 November, LO F26B:4 and F23:89, ARAB.

⁶⁰ Copy *ibid*. The LO also planned to discuss these matters with the DGB; Ulf Asp to Gunnar Nilsson, 3 December 1980, “Överläggningar med DGB”, p. 2, LO F23:83, ARAB.

⁶¹ Ulf Asp/Internationella enheten, 10 December 1980, seventeen matters in preparation for the discussion with the ICFTU: “Överläggning med FFI om formerna för stöd till Solidaritet i Polen”, F23:92 and F26B:4, ARAB.

⁶² The equipment, donated by the IMF, which Mattsson found in Gdańsk was very modern, complicated, and did not work. T. Mattsson to the author, 1 September 2009.

⁶³ “Besök i Polen 3-11 december 1980, Rekommendationer”, Swedish translation in LO F26B:4, ARAB.

rejected this on the grounds that the individual concerned had links with the KOR, which the LO regarded as a political organization whose involvement should be avoided (see below). Furthermore, he was a member of the Swedish Liberal Party (Folkpartiet) and unlikely to be a union member.⁶⁴ Mainly, though, the LO was unhappy with others intervening in dealings between the Swedish labour movement and Solidarity.

There are also some indications that key personnel within the ITS were suspicious that Swedish neutrality, and its often critical stance towards the US in international matters, would make them insufficiently proactive.⁶⁵ The IMF was especially critical of Sweden. At its committee meeting on 14-15 January 1981, it adopted a resolution in support of Solidarity. Following a difficult discussion, the Swedish representatives managed, on the one hand, to delete part of the original resolution which, almost provocatively, sought to warn against foreign military intervention, and, on the other, to recognize the coordinating role that the LO had assumed. The strength of the opposition to the LO's role was made apparent in part by a report from one of the Swedish participants on the meeting to the LO, according to which the IMF General Secretary, Herman Rebhan of the US (in 1974 Swedish Metall had opposed his election to the post at the 1974 Congress, preferring another US citizen, Daniel Benedict), had insisted on coming to Stockholm to inspect the activities being carried out in support of Solidarity. Rebhan's intention was clearly to demonstrate that the Swedes were not up to the task, and that he should take on the role himself, encouraged in this respect by the German IG Metall's President, Eugen Loderer, to whom he was close.⁶⁶ It had already been noted though by the leadership of the Nordic Metal Workers in September 1980 during an internal meeting that Rebhan had a tendency to act rashly in the case of Poland.⁶⁷

By now, the LO leadership had discussed and accepted Wałęsa's and the ICFTU's proposals (12 January 1981), with the proviso that all contact should take place directly between the Swedish labour movement and Solidarity, and not through Polish intermediaries living in Sweden, especially not those associated with the KOR.⁶⁸ Whether or not Solidarity

⁶⁴ Letter from Rune Molin/LO to ICFTU, 15 January 1981, copy F26B:4, ARAB; report by T. Carlsson on a meeting with the Vice-General Secretary of the ICFTU Vanderveken, Stockholm 9 January 1981. More documents about these conflicts in F 26 B:2 and 7; see tapes of the seminar 2005 at ARAB. Concerning the KOR and connections with the Liberal International through Sweden see Lipski, *KOR*, pp. 360ff.; see also Jakub Świącicki, "Representative of KOR (Poland), Member of the Swedish Liberal Party", in a speech at the Congress of the Liberal International in Berlin, 5 September 1980. Manuscript in the collection of Elżbiety and Jakub Świącickich, Karta Documentary Center A0III/2450:5, Warsaw. On the Liberal International see Anders Berge, "Bedräglig avspänning? Anteckningar om liberala internationalen och politiken mot Sovjetunionen 1947-1981", in *Studier i modern historia* (Stockholm, 1990), pp. 27-40.

⁶⁵ Letter from the General Secretary of the PTTI, Stefan Nedzinski, Geneva, 9 April 1981, to Rune Molin/LO, enclosing a critical article from the *Tribune de Genève* (7 April 1981), LO F26B:5, ARAB.

⁶⁶ Draft of the resolution, with handwritten notes, and report by Jan Hodann to T. Carlsson, 16 January 1981, LO F26B:4 ARAB. On Rebhan and the Swedish Metal Workers see Bert Lundin and Rolf Jansson, *Ett liv i Metall* (Stockholm, 2006), pp. 434-437, and Thörnqvist, "Metall och världen", pp. 946ff.; see MacShane, *Solidarity*, p. 121. MacShane was close to Rebhan. Lists in English on Swedish cooperation concerning Solidarity presented to the IMF in LO F26B:1-2, ARAB. See also copy T. Carlsson to Bert Lundin (President of the Union of Metal Workers) and J. Hodann (Metal Workers), 12 January 1981, LO F26B:4, ARAB. The President of the Swedish Metal Workers reported to the Nordic Metal Workers about Rebhan's trip to Stockholm "to inspect the office", Nordiska Metallarbetaresekretariatet, Board, Helsinki, 13 March 1981, § 5, Minutes, ARAB.

⁶⁷ Nordiska Metallarbetaresekretariatet, Board, Oslo, 9 September 1980, § 8, Minutes, ARAB. See articles in *IMF news/imf nytt* (International Metalworkers' Federation, Geneva), 12 (1980) and subsequent issues; no. 2 (1981) "Special Solidarity Issue".

⁶⁸ LS-prot. 12 January 1981 § 6c, LO archives.

viewed the cooperation in the same way as the LO is another question (as we will see), but such was the assessment within the LO. According to the *LO-tidningen* (10/1981), this understanding was confirmed when Solidarity “Deputy Chairman of Interfactory Founding Committee in Gdansk”, Bogdan Lis, visited Sweden with a delegation in February 1981, reportedly stating that “Solidarity in future will embark on cooperation with the Swedish LO”, as opposed, presumably, to other external union organizations.⁶⁹

The LO leadership was keen to continue the existing support activities in such a way that it, together with the ICFTU and ITS, were kept out of the limelight, with the main actors being the GF, local unions in Sweden, and the i-fonden. On 15 January 1981 the LO Secretary, Rune Molin, informed all union chairmen that the LO supported Solidarity, but that great care and circumspection were required when releasing information because of the sensitive situation in Poland. He also outlined plans to acquire badly needed communication equipment. Solidarity wanted “help in the first instance to come from Sweden, partly because of our neutrality and partly because of our connections with Poland in general”. He then emphasized the central role of the GF, along with local organizations, but insisted that the LO, however, “considers it inappropriate to embark on a full-scale collection at this point, given the political complications that might arise”. Central and local organizations were asked to make contributions to the i-fonden, specifically established to support unionism and democracy in the world.⁷⁰

In a later letter to the unions, the LO emphasized that contributions should be made in ways that could not be exploited by Solidarity’s enemies.⁷¹ Swedish contributions had already received attention in the Soviet press, and Sweden had been accused of being an extended arm of the CIA in relation to Poland.⁷² The LO emphasized that no other assistance should be offered except that “expressly requested through direct contact with Solidarity”. The LO was also keen that the existing amount available to support developments in Poland should appear as a “spontaneous donation”. But there was no longer any question, really, of keeping the LO’s involvement secret, at least during the remainder of 1981, when both the labour movement and other press wrote openly of how “the Swedish trade union movement was appealing through the LO for economic support for Solidarity”.⁷³

The support

The funds that the Swedish labour movement collected from the central LO, unions, local organizations, and later through direct street collections were channelled mainly through the i-

⁶⁹ Report *LO-tidningen*, 5 March 1981, p. 14, by Elisabeth Höglund, “‘Vi vill skydda oss från byråkratin’”. Telegrams and programme for the delegation in ARAB LO F26 B:2. See also the section “What is a union?” below.

⁷⁰ LO F26B:2, ARAB. The archives of the unions, those for example of the Grafiska fackförbundet, Metallindustriarbetareförbundet, and Gruvindustriarbetareförbundet, contain circular letters promoting the LO’s decision.

⁷¹ LO F26B:4, ARAB.

⁷² See *Kultura* (July/August 1981).

⁷³ *AIC-bulletinen*, 1981 (5), pp. 1, 9-11: “Första ‘svenska’ tryckeriet igång hos Solidaritet”; *LO-tidningen*, 5 March 1981, p. 14. In 1981 and subsequent years there were numerous reports and articles published in the *AIC-bulletinen* about the situation in Poland, Swedish support, and advertising campaigns. Even the Swedish union papers published reports about Poland and Solidarity. Those included *Grafia* (Graphic Workers’ Union/Union of Printmakers, Stockholm), *Gruvarbetaren* (Mining Industry Workers’ Union, Grängesberg), *Metallarbetaren* (Metal Workers’ Union, Stockholm), *Mål och medel* (Food Workers’ Union, Stockholm), and of course *LO-tidningen*. According to Ture Mattsson (1 September 2009) it was Solidarity that wanted the LO to inform the media about the support.

fonden towards purchases for Solidarity. The exact scale of these funds is difficult to establish because not everything was recorded in the central accounts. Here, the clearest picture emerges in relation to the amounts used mainly to pay for printing equipment, essential for communicating with both the membership and the outside world, up until the imposition of martial law on 13 December 1981. The lack of transparency regarding the total collected can be explained not only by the numerous organizations involved in collecting, but also by an element of secrecy, even though the LO had stressed, at least before December 1981, that all transactions should be open and above board.

For almost a year the LO used the services of the GF's technical ombudsman, Ture Mattsson – paying his wages, placing a Polish-speaking, local assistant at his disposal, and supporting administrative costs such as translation and interpretation. These arrangements were the LO's response to Wałęsa and the ICFTU's proposals for coordination. Mattsson compiled detailed lists of Solidarity's requirements, but there were often problems with many parts, and some equipment was obsolete by then and no longer available in the West.⁷⁴ That made it more important to establish continuity of contact between Solidarity and the LO/GF. According to an LO press report dated 14 December 1981, Ture Mattsson had “by the LO's reckoning, made more than twenty trips to Poland in connection with upgrading Solidarity's printing technology”.⁷⁵

As far as can be established, the total amount contributed within the Swedish labour movement up to December 1981 was more than two million kronor (500,000 US dollars at that time). These funds were transferred directly from the LO's own fund for international labour solidarity (through which it also contributed to the ICFTU) and from the unions to the i-fonden. In addition, about 1.3 million kronor for printing equipment came from other ICFTU organizations (ICFTU Finance and General Purposes Committee, TUC UK, Schweizerischer Gewerkschaftsbund, LO Norway, and Histadut Israel), and was channelled through the LO.⁷⁶ To put this into perspective, the LO's annual report for 1981 showed an income of 252 million kronor, of which 19 million was used to support its own daily press, 2 million went to the LO's “close-standing *international* organizations” (my emphasis), and 11.6 million to “close-standing Swedish organizations”, such as the Social Democratic Party.⁷⁷ Even so, it is clear that the Swedish LO and its unions were responsible for an important part of the funds forwarded to Solidarity during this period. The white collar TCO (Swedish Confederation of Professional Employees) also forwarded considerable sums, mostly through the LO. It seems that approximately half the amount gathered by the LO for international activities went to support Poland. The LO's and the ICFTU's contributions financed two complete printers (printing offices), with five printing machines in each office, costing about 2 million kronor, along with related supplies. A third was on its way, and already in Poland, but it would be stopped and taken back when martial law was imposed.⁷⁸ A

⁷⁴ LO F26B:2, ARAB; see GF FS-prot. 8 December 1980 § 19; 12 December 1980 § 16:2, GF archives.

⁷⁵ LO, Information to the press, 14 December 1981: “LOs kontakter med Solidaritet i Polen”, LO F09A:3, ARAB.

⁷⁶ Several statements of accounts in LO F26B:1-8. “Contribution from ICFTU and ICFTU members forwarded by LO Sweden to Solidarity in the Form of Printing Equipment, etc.”, specification 8 March 1982, LO F09:7, ARAB; ICFTU Finance and General Purposes Committee: SEK 1.025 million approx.; Schweizerischer Gewerkschaftsbund: SEK 30,639; TUC UK: SEK 200,000 approx.; Histadut Israel: SEK 10,000 approx.; LO Norway: SEK 40,985.

⁷⁷ See *Landssekretariatets berättelse för 1981*, p. 187.

⁷⁸ The printing equipment in Gdańsk was confiscated, the equipment in Wrocław destroyed. Documentation in LO F26B:1-3, 7, ARAB. Details mentioned also in a conversation between Bogdan Borsewicz, one of the secret leaders of Solidarity in Gdańsk, and Göran Söderlund (National

lot of practical problems had to be solved, which took time. It was the first of these printers, financed by the Swedes, which enabled Solidarity to provide the material for its 1981 Congress. Polish printmakers also received training in Sweden, and mutual links were established between other parts of the labour movement, for instance the *Metallarbetaren* (Metal Worker) newspaper and the Polish paper *Jednosc* in Szczecin. But events on 13 December of that year halted such cooperation, even that involving relatively mundane matters such as the workplace environment.⁷⁹

Nevertheless, even after this date donations from the i-fonden and the LO's International Solidarity Fund for Solidarity continued, and new collections were started in the movement. The humanitarian help was accepted by the Polish government as quite legal and above board.⁸⁰ The AIC Director, Bengt Säve-Söderbergh, reported in mid-January 1982 that the i-fonden's ongoing fund raising was up by 1.6 million kronor.⁸¹ In addition, in 1982 the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) contributed 2 million kronor, which paid for the aid organized by the AIC for Poland.⁸² Support activities also continued, albeit in new ways following martial law. At least twenty-five trucks with food supplies were sent by the AIC to Poland during the winter of 1983, with a total fifty trucks in 1982-1983.⁸³ The postage costs alone for packages to Polish families sponsored by the labour movement between 1982 and 1989 amounted to about 300,000 kronor annually.⁸⁴ Those costs were paid by the i-fonden, along with funds transferred from the LO and unions. After 1982, the LO also granted a considerable amount towards training and study activities within the now underground Solidarity. As Bengt Säve-Söderbergh suggests in several reports and articles, the support had to continue, even when "the initial fervour for Poland had subsided"

Secretary of the GF), 6 June 1985, near Sopot, Poland (report by Göran Söderlund and Ture Mattsson on a highly secret meeting with Solidarity in 1985; five copies of the report were made, two of which were sent to the LO, and one each to the GF, Olof Palme, and the Foreign Ministry; the original is with Ture Mattsson). The report and my comments were published in *Arbetshistoria*, 34:1 (2010), pp. 4-23. See Sture Björnqvist, "Solidarność lever i allra högsta grad", *Grafia*, 18 December 1985, pp. 2-5.

⁷⁹ See MacShane, *Solidarity*, pp. 108, 121; LO, Information to the press, 14 December 1981, LO F09A:3, ARAB; accounts by the i-fonden November 1981, LO F09C:16, ARAB; Metall ÖS-prot. 7 October 1981, report by Bert Lundin, A02:29; FS-prot. 22 December 1981 § 2, report by Veronika Nordberg, dated 15 December 1981, A03:213, Metall, ARAB. There are also other reports on planned cooperation projects detailed in the minutes of the union during 1981.

⁸⁰ Correspondence between the Swedish embassy in Warsaw and the Foreign Ministry in Stockholm, 1982ff., in AIC, box 40. But see below about "illegal" actions by the AIC.

⁸¹ Bengt Säve-Söderbergh/AIC to SIDA (copy to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs), 19 January 1982 (the letter was mistakenly dated 1981): "Ansökan om bidrag ...", AIC box 8, ARAB.

⁸² On 30 December 1981 the Swedish (centre-right-wing) government decided to support the humanitarian programmes of private organizations for Poland with a grant of ten million kronor. The AIC asked for three million, but received two million. These sums are not included in the results of the AIC's fundraising. See *ibid.* In October 1982 the AIC again requested three million kronor; Bengt Säve-Söderbergh/AIC to Utrikesminister (Minister of Foreign Affairs in the new social democratic government) Lennart Bodström, 20 October 1982. "Katastrofbistånd till Polen", *ibid.*, box 9.

⁸³ Bengt Säve-Söderbergh/AIC to Utrikesminister Lennart Bodström, 16 October 1983: "Katastrofbistånd till Polen"; Bengt Colling/AIC, December 1983, "till redaktionen" (to the media editors), *ibid.*, box 11. In its letter of 16 October 1983, the AIC again requested three million kronor, but this time the application was denied (SIDA to AIC 20 December 1983), *ibid.*

⁸⁴ Circular letter by Jan Hodann/AIC "Ang AICs Polenprojekt", December 1989, *ibid.*, box 43. In fact until 30 September 1982 the Swedish postal service sent all "humanitarian" packages to Poland free of charge. Ove Rainer (head of the Swedish postal service) to Bengt Säve-Söderbergh/AIC, 1982-10-07, AIC box 9, ARAB.

and other organizations were no longer involved. The Polish people should not feel that they have been forgotten.⁸⁵ Or, as the Graphic Workers' Union (Union of Printmakers), which had "followed with special interest attempts to create a free trade union in Poland" and "had taken a particular responsibility" "to provide their Polish comrades with support", summarized it: "For the moment Polish hope has been crushed, but the struggle must continue".⁸⁶

On 1 March 1989, Rune Molin, Vice-President since 1983, noted in the LO's Committee for International Questions that since 1980 the LO had contributed "a little over 1 million [kronor] per year", including the costs of financing Solidarity's information office which had been housed in Stockholm since 27 December 1981.⁸⁷ These figures do not include the i-fonden collections, nor those from other countries' organizations and the ICFTU which were channelled to Poland with the help of the LO.

The value of Swedish donations to Solidarity in comparison with those from other national and international trade union organizations is not easy to assess, though probably only a part of all the contributions from the international union movement was directed through the LO.⁸⁸ Nevertheless, it is clear that in the 1980s support for Solidarity from the Swedish labour movement was both considerable and substantial, at least in relation to the LO's disposable resources, and bearing in mind its continuing support for trade union organizations elsewhere – especially South Africa and Latin America.⁸⁹ Because of its very nature, the full extent of this support during the 1980s (especially from 1982), including that from individuals and cases where the unions acted as intermediaries for other organizations, is impossible to determine. Many parties were involved on the labour movement's side, and from 1982 arrangements were made between the LO and Solidarity's information office to forward goods such as printing equipment to Poland – often illegally using trucks and sailing boats – with dual accounts being used to disguise the contents and extent of the shipments. Evidence from the Polish side is likewise scant because of the local nature of the contacts, the secrecy of the operations, and losses through the actions taken by the authorities.⁹⁰

⁸⁵ Bengt Säve-Söderbergh/AIC to Utrikesminister Lennart Bodström, 16 October 1983, *ibid.*, box 11.

⁸⁶ Göran Söderlund, National Secretary for the Swedish Graphic Workers' Union (GF), at their Congress on 20 October 1982; Grafiska Fackförbundet (GF), *Kongressprotokoll. 3:e ordinarie kongress 17-22 oktober 1982* (Stockholm, 1983), pp. 375ff.

⁸⁷ International Committee 1 March 1989, § 5: Polen, LO A06:8, ARAB. Indirect costs such as those of administration by the LO are not included. The archives of the Information Office at the ARAB (c. 200 boxes). Most of the documents are in Polish. See also *Informationsbulletin* (Stockholm, 1982-1989), published by the office. More about this office will shortly be published by Paweł Jaworski.

⁸⁸ See MacShane, *Solidarity*, pp. 121ff.; Gawrich, *Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund und polnische Gewerkschaftsbewegung*, pp. 311-349; Gumbrell-McCormick, "Facing New Challenges", pp. 497ff.; Statement by the AFL-CIO Executive Council on Poland, 17 February 1981, Bal Harbour, LO F26B:4, ARAB; Arthur Rachwald, *In Search of Poland: The Superpowers' Response to Solidarity, 1980-1989* (Stanford, CA, 1990), p. 50.

⁸⁹ Summary of the engagement of the LO, at the request of the ICFTU, in the information by the LO to the press, 14 December 1981: "LOs kontakter med Solidaritet i Polen", LO F09A:3, ARAB.

⁹⁰ Conversations about these activities between Ture Mattsson (1 September 2009 and ongoing), Bengt Säve-Söderbergh (16 September and 10 November 2008), Sten Johansson (6 May 2009), Ryszard Szulkin (2 February 2009), Jakub Świącicki (10 March 2009, all of them in Stockholm), and the author; interviews with Marek Michalski (24 May 2009) and Zbigniew Bujak (26 May 2009) in Warsaw, and with Bogdan Lis (27 May 2009) in Gdańsk. The interviews with Michalski, who was in charge of Solidarity's information office in Stockholm from 1982/1983 to 1989, Bujak, and Lis by Klaus Misgeld, Karl Molin, and Stefan Ekecrantz. The interpreter was Paweł Jaworski (Bujak and Lis). Jaworski has informed me of the situation regarding the archives of Solidarity. These archives are in a state of disorder, and some documents have disappeared. It is not possible to get an overall picture of the documents available. Email 28 September 2009.

Nevertheless, written and oral statements by witnesses attach considerable significance to Swedish efforts on behalf of the Polish opposition, not least in comparison with those of other countries.⁹¹

As already noted, support continued after 13 December 1981, especially for the families of imprisoned union activists, as is clear from the publication *Breven från Polen*.⁹² But many established contacts had been broken and new, often high-risk, means had to be sought to replace them.⁹³ Small, portable printing equipment and equipment for wireless communication, financed by the AIC, was smuggled in to help with Solidarity's underground information work. At least two of the Swedish couriers recruited by the AIC were caught and imprisoned for several months in Poland.⁹⁴ In cooperation with the Catholic Church, third-party Polish addresses were set up so that local organizations could receive packages from individuals in Sweden. The AIC and the labour movement's i-fonden realized, in the new climate after 13 December, that the Catholic Church and its aid organization Caritas was now the best means through which to channel support.⁹⁵ Illegal equipment was received even by the Church, at least according to Swedish activists.⁹⁶

Swedish Standpoints

Of the many issues that could be highlighted in the relationship between the Swedish labour movement and the democratic movement in Poland, specifically in terms of Solidarity, those that can be singled out include ideology, international political ramifications, and the emergence of misunderstanding and conflict.

Ideological questions

There is no doubt that, despite their support for the new Polish movement, the Swedish trade unions had difficulties when it came to the Catholic overtones of Solidarity. Clearly manifest at the gates of the Lenin Wharf, those overtones became especially prominent at Solidarity's Congress in September/October 1981, where the seven Swedish guests were left bewildered in the wake of prayers, masses, and sermons.⁹⁷ However, behind this apparent "exoticism"

⁹¹ See below.

⁹² Bengt Ohlsson (ed.), *Breven från Polen* (Stockholm, 1983). There is a lot of material on these humanitarian activities in the archives of the AIC, box 29, 40-43, ARAB.

⁹³ Ture Mattsson's report to the board of the GF, FS-prot. 14 December 1981 § 20:6; GF archives.

⁹⁴ Göran Jacobsson, "De hittade lönnfacket: För Solidarnosc i polskt fängelse", *Arbetshistoria*, 30:4 (2006), pp. 18-23. The author was one of the drivers who smuggled AIC printing equipment into Poland. In 1983 he was imprisoned in Szczecin for some months. The Swedish Foreign Ministry sent messages to Swedish organizations, the Red Cross, the AIC, and others, warning that the Polish authorities were carefully observing transports coming from Sweden and all the support activities of the Swedish organizations; UD HP 1 EP 219 15 and 27 January 1982. Interview with Bengt Säve-Söderbergh 16 September 2008. He talked – in general terms – about secret operations and support. On other smuggling activities, partly US financed, see Heino and Törnquist-Plewa, "Svenska Stödskommittén för Solidaritet".

⁹⁵ On material concerning these contacts and the accounts of the i-fonden in the AIC material, see n. 73 and boxes 71, 74-80 and seven boxes with accounts of the i-fonden; notebook of Bengt Säve-Söderbergh, AIC, box 40, ARAB. Bengt Säve-Söderbergh, "Rapport från besök i Polen 17-24 febr 1982", 9 March 1982, LO F26B:8, ARAB. In the AIC material there are more reports from Bengt Säve-Söderbergh about the situation in Poland which he made after visiting the country in 1982 and 1983 (box 40).

⁹⁶ Jacobsson, "De hittade lönnfacket", pp. 18ff.

⁹⁷ Report by the Vice-President of the Swedish Metal Workers, Sivert Andersson, FS-prot. 14 October 1981, § 2, Annex 6 FS-beredningen 7 October 1981, Metall A03:212, ARAB. See also Thörnqvist, "Metall och världen", pp. 987ff.; George Sanford (ed.), *The Solidarity Congress, 1981: The Great*

(from the LO's point of view) lay also the social teachings of Catholicism, at this time largely unknown in Sweden, which emphasized the right of workers to organize themselves in unions.⁹⁸ Swedish reporting was sympathetic, more or less, towards the perceived inspirational, "patriotic" role of the Catholic Church in a country characterized by centuries of oppression, and where all other institutions were compromised.⁹⁹ There is no doubt, though, that reservations did exist inside the LO and the SAP towards Solidarity on the grounds of "Catholicism", but there is no evidence that they were significant or prevented the LO from supporting Solidarity. However, in general, "the Left and the Workers' Movement in the West" had obvious difficulties in making sense of Solidarity's ideology, not least with regard to its religious and nationalistic "overtones", as noted by Sten Johansson, who instead clearly wanted to interpret Polish developments as "a transition to democracy *under Communism*".¹⁰⁰

A central theme in this context is what, in Sweden, was referred to as "industrial democracy". From the mid-1970s and throughout the 1980s there was a vigorous debate – which received international attention – over the proposal by the trade union movement that it should, through "wage-earner funds", become part owner of at least the larger Swedish privately owned industries.¹⁰¹ It is hardly surprising, therefore, that Solidarity's demands were viewed in this light, and that in parts of the Swedish union press Solidarity came to be perceived as a socialist movement for "workers' self-management".¹⁰² However, this view played no part in the deliberations that continued within the LO, at least not according to the available material. Swedish reports merely show that there was great contention inside Solidarity in terms of how much power to take, the role of "workers' control", and the extent of decentralizing production.¹⁰³ On these matters the LO remained silent, although it was very forthright on the activities it thought Solidarity should *not* engage in.

Debate (Basingstoke, 1990); Maria Borowska (ed.), *Dokument från Solidaritets kongress* (Stockholm, 1981); Adam Michnik, *The Church and the Left* (Chicago, 1983); Barbara Törnquist-Plewa, *The Wheel of Polish Fortune: Myths in Polish Collective Consciousness During the First Years of Solidarity* (Lund, 1992).

⁹⁸ Johannes Paulus II, *Människans arbete/Laborem exercens* (Uppsala, 1982), No. 20; Sanford, *The Solidarity Congress, 1981*, p. 54. See Hector Dominguez, "Människans arbete – utopi och profetiskt ord", *Signum: Katolsk orientering om kyrka, kultur och samhälle*, 7 (1981), pp. 309-314; Józef Tischner, *Solidaritetens etik* (Hudiksvall, 1984 [in Polish, 1981]); Touraine *et al.*, *Solidarity*; John A. Moses, *Trade Union Theory from Marx to Walesa* (New York, 1990), pp. 165-226; Erwin Bischofberger and Maciej Zaremba, *Arbete före kapital: Den katolska kyrkans sociallära* (Stockholm, 1985).

⁹⁹ Interviews with Bengt Säve-Söderbergh 16 September and 10 November 2008; see Seweryn Blumsztajn, *Från röda scouterna till Solidarność* (Stockholm, 1986), pp. 111ff. Regarding Swedish union papers reporting on the "Catholic" elements of Solidarity, see Klaus Misgeld, "Svensk facklig press möter det 'katolska' Solidaritet", *Signum*, 34:8 (2008), pp. 16-23, and *idem*, "Från en annan värld", *Signum*, 35:9 (2009), pp. 14-19.

¹⁰⁰ Johansson, *Polens sak är vår*, p. 37, his italics; see MacShane, *Solidarity*, pp. 115ff.; see also Dieter Bingen, "Zur Frage der Anwendbarkeit des Revolutionsbegriffes auf die Entwicklung in Polen 1980-1981", in Hans Henning Hahn and Michael G. Müller (eds), *Gesellschaft und Staat in Polen: Historische Aspekte der polnischen Krise* (Berlin, 1988), pp. 95-118.

¹⁰¹ Gregg M. Olsen, *The Struggle for Economic Democracy in Sweden* (Aldershot, 1992), pp. 9ff., 66ff., 100ff.; Lars Ekdahl, *Mot en tredje väg: En biografi över Rudolf Meidner. II. Facklig expert och demokratisk socialist* (Lund, 2005).

¹⁰² Robert Egerot, "Polens sak är vår! Solidarnosc i svensk facklig press 1980-1983", *Arbetshistoria*, 30:4 (2006), pp. 38-43. The Trotskyite SP was especially interested in the ideas of "workers' self-management". Stefan Ekecrantz (Stockholm and Södertörn University) will be following up these aspects.

¹⁰³ Charles Kassman, "Rapport från en resa till Polen 27.10.-2.11.1981", LO F09A:3, ARAB.

What is a union?

Polish Solidarity had presented itself to, and been accepted by, the ICFTU and its member organizations as a trade union. But from 1980 onwards, it became apparent that the “union dimension” was only one of its many facets.¹⁰⁴ The Swedes believed themselves to have a clear understanding of the precise nature of a trade union and its appropriate concerns. In relation to Solidarity, the leading union representatives inside the LO not only wanted to limit support to purely union activities in Poland, but also considered that Solidarity should largely refrain from extra-union involvement in political matters.

By all accounts, this was the main reason why the LO remained unsympathetic towards closer cooperation with the KOR’s supporters and representatives in Sweden. As Rune Molin duly noted on 12 January 1981 at the LO’s committee meeting, “We should avoid contact with the KOR, which is a political organization, and could give rise to misunderstanding. The contacts ought to be organized directly between the union organizations.”¹⁰⁵ Similarly, he wrote on 15 January 1981 to the ICFTU that utilizing KOR contacts in Sweden would run “the risk for [sic] possible political complications”. Therefore, the LO did not want the KOR to be

involved in the trade union assistance actions for Solidarity. During the whole period of development of the present situation in Poland, it has been our definitive opinion that contacts with Solidarity and the assistance actions should be kept on a strict trade union level. This is still our opinion, due to the risk of political complications that otherwise might arise.¹⁰⁶

Rune Molin forcefully outlined the LO’s standpoint in a conversation in February 1981 with the Solidarity delegation to Sweden led by Bogdan Lis: the LO wanted no contact with the KOR and Swedish support was to be exclusively for union, not political activities. According to Molin, the LO and Stockholm had already been identified in Moscow as “central to anti-communist activities” and he wanted to avoid “political problems”.¹⁰⁷

The LO’s strict position did not, however, go unchallenged, not least by social democrats who had established contacts with the Polish democratic movement, in particular the editorial staff on the social democratic journal *Tiden*. One of them was Professor Sten Johansson who, with close links to the KOR, had studied them at first hand and had published

¹⁰⁴ See Georg W. Strobel, “NSZZ ‘Solidarnosc’. Beitrag zur Analyse der Organisation und politischen Wirkung einer sozialen Sammlungsbewegung”, in Dieter Bingen (ed.), *Polen 1980-1984: Dauerkrise oder Stabilisierung? Strukturen und Ereignisse in Politik, Gesellschaft und Wirtschaft* (Baden-Baden, 1985), pp. 47-100; Cyrus Ernesto Zirakzadeh, *Social Movements in Politics: A Comparative Study* (New York, 2006, expanded edition), pp. 75-130. Interviews with Sven Svensson, 5 September 2008, and Bengt Säve-Söderbergh, 16 September 2008.

¹⁰⁵ LO, LS-prot. 12 January 1981 § 6, LO archives.

¹⁰⁶ Rune Molin/LO to ICFTU, 15 January 1981, LO F26B:4, ARAB.

¹⁰⁷ Quotations from tapes of the conversation between Bogdan Lis and Rune Molin, 26 February 1981, at the LO building; LO F26B:2, ARAB Nr 2964:1. More about this conversation and all the misunderstandings between the LO and the Polish delegation can be found in Misgeld, “Samarbete och missförstånd: Anteckningar kring ett samtal mellan Landsorganisationen i Sverige och polska Solidaritet 1981”, in Solveig Halvorsen *et al.* (eds), *I politikens irrganger. Festskrift til Knut Einar Eriksen* (Oslo, 2009), pp. 208-223. Interview with Bogdan Lis, Gdańsk, 27 May 2009. Lis suggested that the Polish partners had a view different from that of the LO, but that they had to accept the Swedish opinion. According to Ture Mattsson (1 September 2009) Rune Molin’s statement concerning accusations in Moscow was exaggerated.

widely on developments in Poland. His report to the LO and SAP leadership (including party Chairman, Olof Palme) after a visit to Warsaw in March 1981 contained a number of critical passages concerning the LO.¹⁰⁸ An editorial in *Tiden* at the beginning of 1982 was likewise critical of the views of Rune Molin and the LO leadership: “The uprising in Poland had its own powerful dynamic, the Communist Party was broken and incapable of exercising leadership, there existed a semi-revolutionary situation [...] How could [...] Solidarity have escaped transformation into a political power?” The journal denounced criticism of Solidarity’s political role as little more than patronizing.¹⁰⁹

Nevertheless, the LO leadership held firm. A month after the imposition of martial law in Poland, Rune Molin, in the LO’s International Committee on 19 January 1982, outlined the new guiding principle and stressed “that we will only have union, not political, contacts with Poland”.¹¹⁰ On 1 March 1989 during the February-April “Roundtable” discussions, Molin reiterated in the International Committee his earlier position both to account for the previous nine years, and as a prognosis of possible developments to come: “it is union cooperation we want to develop, not political; *as soon as Solidarity began acting as a political party things began to go askew*” [my emphasis].¹¹¹

However, there was a problem with this opinion, which had been noted in *Tiden*, and this related to the conditional nature of a free and independent union organization in a communist country within the Soviet Bloc.¹¹² Party and State were linked symbiotically, and the larger companies – the union movement’s theoretical opposition – were state-owned and therefore controlled by the same Communist Party. Union organizations were recognized as instruments of the Party and the State, as “transmission belts” to the masses. They were “the regime’s extended arm in the workplace”, as it was put in a motion at the 1981 Swedish Metal Workers’ Congress, which called for increased support “for free and independent union organizations in Poland and elsewhere”.¹¹³ How, therefore, could such a free union hope to appear apolitical? The mere existence of an independent union movement posed a challenge to the political system, even if Solidarity’s leaders, not least Lech Wałęsa, especially in the beginning, emphasized that they were not out to change the system. In his conversation with Ture Mattsson on 12 November 1980, Wałęsa had accordingly stated further, “We don’t want to have some sort of capitalism or a copy of the system in the West. Certain private enterprises already exist in this country, for example, in agriculture. We neither can nor want to change the forms of ownership.”¹¹⁴ A similar story was told by many leading figures in Solidarity, in conversation with Swedish union representatives.¹¹⁵ But also, during these early

¹⁰⁸ Sten Johansson/Department of Social Research (University of Stockholm) to Rune Molin/LO (copies to Olof Palme/SAP, the International Secretary of the SAP Pierre Schori, Bengt Säv-Söderbergh/AIC and *Tiden*): “Rapport från resa till Warszawa 6-10 mars 1981”, 9 pp., LO F26B:4, ARAB, quotations pp. 1, 6, and 9. The report was discussed in the International Committee of the LO, 10 April 1981, LO A06:7, ARAB. Sten Johansson had already published several articles about Poland in *Tiden*. During the last few years of the 1970s he belonged to the editorial board of the periodical, but he did not have any official position in the party organization.

¹⁰⁹ *Tiden*, 74 (1982), pp. 74-77.

¹¹⁰ Minutes 19 January 1982 § 4a, LO A06:7, ARAB.

¹¹¹ Minutes 1 March 1989 § 5, LO A06:7, ARAB.

¹¹² *Tiden*, 74 (1982), p. 75.

¹¹³ *Svenska Metallindustriarbetareförbundets kongress 1981, protokoll*, Part 2, p. 807, motion no. 569 (section 12 Nörrköping *et al.*).

¹¹⁴ Lech Wałęsa, conversation with Ture Mattsson, 12 November 1980, report to the GF 24 November 1980 p. 3, LO F26B:1, ARAB. See *Metallarbetaren*, 10 October 1980, interview with Lech Wałęsa by Karl-Olov Larsson.

¹¹⁵ See Sven H. Svensson, report to the Metal Workers, 12 November 1980 § 2, Metall ÖS-prot. A03:208, ARAB; *Metallarbetaren*, 7 November 1980.

years, it has been claimed that Solidarity looked to Sweden as an example, at least politically.¹¹⁶ That was – at least – the case later, in 1988 and 1989, when leaders of Solidarity such as Zbigniew Bujak, Bronisław Geremek, and Jan Józef Lipski on the one side, and General Jaruzelski and some leading members of the Polish government on the other, told the Swedish social democratic government and the LO that the “Swedish model” was the most acceptable model to reform Poland.¹¹⁷ Sweden was, as Bujak formulated it later, even before 1980 “a somehow mysterious country” in the eyes of the Polish opposition.¹¹⁸

Wałęsa’s comments, however, are hardly surprising given that at the time (1980) there were many members of the Polish Communist Party in Solidarity, including in its leadership. Yet, at the same time, “Solidarity’s PR man, Stefan Trzeciński”, who in 1982 was the head of Solidarity’s Information Office in Sweden, was able to state that “Solidarity is a social organization with responsibility for dealing with many questions, because we are the only large organization that can negotiate with the government.”¹¹⁹ There were evidently powerful groups within Solidarity who saw the need for far-reaching changes. Swedish guests at Solidarity’s congresses came to realize that it was not simply a union event, but almost “an alternative parliament where people discussed questions of huge significance to the entire population”.¹²⁰

Of course, from a Polish perspective – both the Communist Party’s and Solidarity’s – questions could equally be asked about the nature of unionism and its political allegiances both in Sweden and in the West in general. Neither the LO nor the Swedish unions had actually renounced political ambitions. The political overlap between the Swedish trade union movement and the Social Democratic Party was clearly evident to outside observers, for instance, both the LO President and the President of the Metal Workers were included in the party’s presidency. Similarly, during these years the main body of party members was still affiliated through local unions (a policy termed *kollektivanslutning*/collective membership), and the LO and its unions financed to a great extent the party’s costs, especially during elections. Certainly, from Solidarity’s standpoint, they were regarded as closely connected, a situation that applied to many other union organizations in the West.¹²¹ The Swedish trade union movement represented “social democratic trade unionism *par excellence*”.¹²² The

¹¹⁶ According to Strobel, “NSZZ ‘Solidarnosc’”, p. 88.

¹¹⁷ Bujak and Geremek to Ture Mattsson when they met in October 1988 in Lublin at a seminar organized by Solidarity; draft “Rapport från ett fackligt seminarium i Lublin 7-9 oktober 1988”, by Ture Mattsson and Eiwor Andersson; Ture Mattsson’s collection/private. Bujak repeated his opinion when we met in Warsaw (26 May 2009). Reports from the Swedish ambassador in Warsaw and minutes of conversations between Wojciech Jaruzelski, Prime Minister Mieczysław F. Rakowski, CK-sekreteraren Józef Czyrek, Bujak, Geremek, Lipski, and others with leading Swedish politicians including the President of the Swedish Riksdag, Thage G. Peterson, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sten Andersson. Documents in the Archives of the Foreign Ministry, UD HP 1 EP:203-206; more in K. Misgeld, “En ‘svensk modell’ för Polen?”.

¹¹⁸ Interview in Warsaw, 26 May 2009. See Jenny Andersson, “Nordic Nostalgia and Nordic Light: The Swedish Model as Utopia 1930-2007”, *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 34 (2009), pp. 229-245.

¹¹⁹ According to *Der Spiegel*, quoted by Beijbom, “*Än är Polen ej förlorat.*”, p. 26.

¹²⁰ Maria Borowska, foreword to Borowska, *Dokument från Solidaritets kongress*, p. 5. See also Johansson, *Polens sak är vår*, pp. 60 ff., ch. “Den sociala demokratins ideologi”; Goodwyn, *Breaking the Barrier*, pp. XXVII, 453, and *passim*, with critical comments on some of the most frequently quoted books on Solidarity and Poland in the 1980s.

¹²¹ Klas Åmark, “Social Democracy and the Trade Union Movement: Solidarity and the Politics of Self-Interest”, in Misgeld *et al.*, *Creating Social Democracy*, pp. 67-96; see Richard Hyman, *Understanding European Trade Unionism: Between Market, Class and Society* (London, 2001).

¹²² Martin Upchurch, Graham Taylor, and Andrew Mathers, *The Crisis of Social Democratic Trade Unionism in Western Europe: The Search for Alternatives* (Farnham, 2009), p. 49.

Polish visitors to the LO in February 1981 were, according to an internal memorandum from the Swedish Foreign Ministry, aware of this problem and Bogdan Lis even talked with the Polish ambassador to Sweden about the Swedish “model”. Lis suggested – “between the lines” – that he was astonished at this close relationship between Swedish trade unions and a political party. The ambassador noticed some “confusion” on the side of the Solidarity delegates.¹²³

In fact, in this respect the relationship between the Swedish and the independent Polish union movements in the 1980s brings to the fore a double problematic. It could be said that Rune Molin’s forthright view gave voice to a fiction far from reality in both countries – a fiction necessary on both sides to avoid arousing any suspicion that Swedish support for Solidarity amounted to “meddling in the internal affairs of another state”.

The social democrats

Even though, as noted, the Swedish trade union movement had always been very close to the social democrats, relations between the LO and the SAP were at times “greatly strained”.¹²⁴ Yet it could not be taken for granted that the leadership of the SAP would unreservedly share the unions’ understanding of the democratic movement in Poland, and of Solidarity in particular. It is also important to remember that in this period, from 1976 to 1982, the Social Democratic Party unexpectedly found itself in opposition for the first time since the early 1930s. Swedish foreign policy initiatives now lay with a centre-right-wing government at a time when SAP Chairman Olof Palme’s standing in international affairs was riding high.

But Palme’s response was possibly limited by his chairmanship of the Independent Commission on Disarmament and Security Issues. Its work, which also involved the former Polish Prime Minister Josef Cyrankiewicz, resulted in the document *Common Security* (1982).¹²⁵ Furthermore, Palme and his close friends in the European social democracy movement, Willy Brandt and Bruno Kreisky, had for some time been participating in a dialogue aimed at achieving both rapprochement between the “blocs” and a positive, confident relationship with Polish party leaders and the government. Western European social democrats also maintained a critical stance over “the Polish Crisis” and cautioned Polish workers to guard against economic and social collapse. Such warnings were exploited by Solidarity’s opponents within the Polish press and played a part in the equally restrained reactions of many West European governments after the imposition of martial law on 13 December 1981.¹²⁶

¹²³ It is not inconceivable that the Swedish official at the Ministry, Göran Berg, wanted to hear more than Solidarity’s members were willing to express. Promemoria, Strictly confidential, 1981-03-04: “Conversation with the Polish ambassador”, UD HP 1 EP. But a cartoon in the leading liberal Swedish daily newspaper, *Dagens Nyheter*, 26 February 1981 (“Ströyers dagbok”) illustrates the situation very well: the President of the LO, Gunnar Nilsson, is sitting at his desk; opposite him are three members of Solidarity and their interpreter – all of them open-mouthed, saying “Kollektivanslutning?”. The underlined text is about the Solidarity delegation “studying free union activities”. Collective membership of the SAP by local trade union organizations was abolished after 1988. When I asked Bogdan Lis (27 May 2009) how he interpreted the situation, when he discussed it with the LO in February 1981, he answered that they had a good understanding of how things worked in Sweden (and in Britain – the delegation visited London after Stockholm).

¹²⁴ Åmark, “Social Democracy and the Trade Union Movement”, p. 93.

¹²⁵ *Common Security: A Programme for Disarmament. The Report of the Independent Commission on Disarmament and Security Issues* (London, 1982).

¹²⁶ See Johansson, *Polens sak är vår*, pp. 7ff.; Gawrich, *Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund und polnische Gewerkschaftsbewegung*, pp. 318, 330ff., 336ff.; Rachwald, *In Search of Poland*, pp. 50, 56; Paczkowski and Byrne, *From Solidarity to Martial Law*, pp. 38ff., 148, and 464 (documents). Wojciech Jaruzelski, *Mein Leben für Polen: Erinnerungen* (Munich, 1993), pp. 273, 334; *idem*, *Hinter*

When Solidarity was established, the SAP leadership naturally felt compelled to take a stand, not least because the party membership, mostly consisting of trade unionists, would hardly have sanctioned a policy of neutrality. In fact, on 22 August 1980 the presidium of the SAP under the chairmanship of Olof Palme had already declared its solidarity with the striking workers in Poland, even if their appeal to the Polish government had been formulated cautiously.¹²⁷ The situation in Poland was also discussed by Olof Palme on 16 December 1980 in the social democratic parliamentary group. There he suggested that the conservative group in the United States could use Soviet action in Poland to argue for rearmament and greater involvement in Latin America. He emphasized that both Europe and the USSR would be much safer if the regimes in Eastern Europe were less “hated by the people”.¹²⁸ That was an argument Palme had used many times in speeches and resolutions.

In March 1981, when nationwide “warning strikes” were being held in Poland, the board of the party reiterated in a special announcement its “deep solidarity with the Polish people”, but also insisted that the solution to the problem was “a matter for the Polish people themselves”.¹²⁹ Local action in Sweden, jointly organized by union and party organizations, reinforced the picture of support for democratic movements in Poland. But the events in Poland also played themselves out against the backdrop of other crises in the world – human rights, trade unionism, independence struggles – that attracted a range of moral and material support from the Swedish labour movement. Instances of this include the actions of the military junta in Turkey, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, dictatorial tyranny in Chile and Argentina, repression in South Africa, and persecutions in Central America combined with interventionism by the United States.¹³⁰ The latter certainly played a part when it came to taking a position on Poland.

The 28th Congress of the SAP in 1981 took place in the same month as Solidarity’s first Congress, and Palme’s speech on 26 September, on foreign policy and aid, struck what he saw as the necessary balance.¹³¹ Sweden’s tradition of neutrality was central, he claimed, but was in danger of being compromised by official government statements. He probably had in mind the Liberal Foreign Minister, Ola Ullsten who, two days earlier at the UN General Assembly, had criticized “the Soviet Union’s open and brutal insistence that developments in Poland should be reversed”.¹³² But Palme also made the point that neutrality should not “condemn us [...] to silence” when it came to the many violations of human rights, either tolerated or inflicted, not least “by the USA and the Soviet Union”. Referring to both Poland

den Türen der Macht: Der Anfang vom Ende einer Herrschaft (Leipzig, 1996), p. 403; Oliver Rathkolb, Johannes Kunz, and Margit Schmidt (eds), *Bruno Kreisky: Der Mensch im Mittelpunkt. Der Memoiren dritter Teil* (Vienna, 1996), p. 349, with a short note; Helmut Schmidt, *Menschen und Mächte* (Berlin, 1988), pp. 302-315; *idem*, *Die Deutschen und ihre Nachbarn: Menschen und Mächte II* (Berlin, 1990), pp. 73-80, 479-514, especially 503-506; Willy Brandt, *Über Europa hinaus: Dritte Welt und Sozialistische Internationale* (Bonn, 2006), pp. 40ff., 346-351 (documents). See also Peter Merseburger, *Willy Brandt 1913-1992: Visionär und Realist* (Stuttgart and Munich, 2002), pp. 807ff. On the relationship between Willy Brandt and Olof Palme see Klaus Misgeld, “Willy Brandt und Schweden – Schweden und Willy Brandt”, in Einhart Lorenz (ed.), *Perspektiven aus den Exiljahren* (Berlin, 2000) pp. 49-68.

¹²⁷ Minutes 22 August 1980 § 97, SAP-VU A3A:14, ARAB.

¹²⁸ Minutes 16 December 1980 § 4, Socialdemokratiska Riksdagsgruppen A2:24, ARAB.

¹²⁹ Minutes 27 March 1981 § 18, SAP-PS A2A:28, ARAB.

¹³⁰ Material on Swedish action in support of those countries can be found in the archives of the AIC (ARAB), in the *AIC-bulletinen*, union papers, and the annual reports of the SAP, the LO, and the unions.

¹³¹ Sveriges Socialdemokratiska Arbetareparti, *28:e ordinarie partikongress 26 September – 3 October 1981*, Protokoll, Vol. 1, Part A, 26 September 1981 (Stockholm, 1981), pp. 57-66, quotation pp. 57ff.

¹³² 24 September 1981. See *Documents on Swedish Foreign Policy 1981*, p. 41.

and Central America, he continued, “the easing of [Cold War] tensions provides increased security – and also the opportunity to strengthen human rights and widen democracy”. These persistent criticisms of US intervention in Central America and comparisons with the Soviet Union must naturally have irritated Washington. Indeed, the Swedish labour movement, including the trade union movement, was a strong supporter, including financial, of trade unions and popular resistance movements in Central and South America.

As for Poland, he continued, “after August 1980, Eastern Europe will never be the same again”. Moreover,

We can clearly and plainly state that this is a question that Polish citizens must deal with themselves without external interference. But we share the Polish people’s hope for a future in freedom and solidarity. And we feel a great sympathy for the Polish people’s struggle to establish fundamental trade union and political rights. The fact remains, as we know, that developments in Poland have an influence, ultimately, on the security situation in Europe.

Palme also pointed out – again – that the “democratization of Eastern Europe” would enhance the security needs of the Soviet Union.¹³³

There were, however, as mentioned, social democrats who wished for far less ambiguous language. From the beginning the social democratic periodical *Tiden* urged all social democrats to engage for democratic changes in Poland.¹³⁴ In his book *Polens sak är vår* [Poland’s Cause is Ours], Sten Johansson was highly critical of the negative attitude of Western social democrats towards Solidarity; he referred specifically to Danish politicians, but also to the SPD Chairman and Nobel Peace Prize winner Willy Brandt, the Austrian Chancellor Bruno Kreisky, and several Swedes, although without specifying their names.¹³⁵ He argued that there were many in Western social democratic parties who described Solidarity and the situation in Poland in a way they would never have done in the case of other dictatorships, such as Franco’s Spain, meaning, in effect, that they did not accept the right of the Polish people to freedom and democracy.¹³⁶ He drew attention to Polish understanding in this respect, described in his report to the LO and SAP leadership after his visit to Warsaw in March 1981: “the idea that the Swedish labour movement should tread carefully to avoid provoking the authorities or outside enemies meets with incomprehension from the Polish point of view”.¹³⁷ The fact that the communist regime in Poland is “exclusively supported by the Soviet Union in an almost perverse way acts towards its advantage”, and pure opportunism by the West has allowed a “relative tolerance” of the regime.¹³⁸

A similar critique emerged among Polish exiles. Two acrimonious articles by Andrzej Koraszewski in the July/August edition of the Paris-based Polish periodical *Kultura* criticized Sweden, the SAP leadership, and the LO. The articles, translated into Swedish for the LO, complained that the Swedes were alarmed over “Moscow’s accusations” that the “West” had

¹³³ Sveriges Socialdemokratiska Arbetareparti, 28:e ordinarie partikongress, 26 September 1981, p. 59.

¹³⁴ For example *Tiden*, 72 (1980), pp. 39ff.

¹³⁵ On Brandt *et al.* see above. On Denmark see Boel, “Så nær og dog så fjern”. Bujak remains critical about the SPD and Willy Brandt; interview 26 May 2009.

¹³⁶ Johansson, *Polens sak är vår*, pp. 7ff.; see for example both the social democratic *Aftonbladet* (AB), 5 September 1980, and the conservative *Svenska Dagbladet* (SvD), 21 November 1980, pleading for a “cautious” policy in relation to Solidarity.

¹³⁷ Johansson to Rune Molin, LO (copies to Olof Palme *et al.*), p. 1, see above.

¹³⁸ Johansson, *Polens sak är vår*, pp. 7ff., 40.

“meddled in Poland’s internal affairs”. Consequently, “Swedish party leaders had kept silent”. Despite Swedish people being sympathetic to the Polish cause, neither the trade union movement nor the social democrats had lived up to expectations. The Swedish Communist Party [the VPK] had taken a stand in advance of the social democrats, the paper wrote, and Olof Palme did not make his first pronouncement until 1 April 1981. The LO, moreover, was attacked for being too bureaucratic to be able to provide the necessary help. It was quite obvious that the author – a Polish journalist living in southern Sweden (Lund) since 1971 and engaged in winning support for the democratic movement in Poland – was well informed about the situation, even if his suggestions concerning, for example, Palme were incorrect. Probably, though, it was the LO’s insistence on trade union rather than political contacts, together with its disinclination to transfer funds from the US (see below), which had prompted the critique. Nevertheless, the article did express gratitude for the support that Sweden and the LO had already provided.¹³⁹

This help was clearly more than sufficient to irritate the Soviet Union. On 23 November 1981, three weeks before the imposition of martial law, a representative from the Soviet embassy delivered a sharp rebuke to Olof Palme. While noting Palme and the SAP’s positive contributions to peace and security, the document complained about trade union and social democratic political support for Solidarity, with “the Party-led Workers’ Movement International Centre” [i.e. the AIC] being expressly named. Solidarity, it said, had evolved from a union organization into “an oppositional political power” that was now receiving political support even from Sweden. “Comrade Palme”, it continued, could hardly be interested in destabilizing Europe or “undermining the existing military equilibrium on the continent” – possibly reminding Palme of his own words at the party congress two months earlier.

The document was conveyed by Palme to the Party’s Presidium, which met on 27 November 1981, but in the protocol there is no mention of any discussion.¹⁴⁰ On 17 December, a few days after martial law, Poland was again on the agenda. The protocol merely notes “the situation in Poland”, but adds, “the Russians have not done anything to indicate an attack on Poland”.¹⁴¹ This may betray a certain sense of relief – as was the case in many other West European countries – that the Polish general Wojciech Jaruzelski had finally taken command. This attitude among European social democrats was heavily criticized, for example by *Tiden*.¹⁴²

However, Swedish criticism of the situation in Poland intensified. Immediately, on 14 December, the LO and TCO protested against the imposition of martial law, and many other statements by parties and unions followed. The following day, the Social Democratic Parliamentary Group published a declaration opposing the military laws,¹⁴³ and on 22 December the LO and SAP issued a statement supporting Solidarity and criticizing the Polish

¹³⁹ Andrzej Koraszewski, “Szwedzi o Polakach i dla Polaków”, *Kultura*, July/August 1981, Swedish translation by Witold Maciejewski, Uppsala, LO F26B:2, ARAB. On Koraszewski, see Wikipedia, dated last accessed 17 August 2009. The collection of Elżbiety and Jakub Świącickich, Karta Documentary Center A0III/2450, includes documents showing that J. Świącicki had the same opinion as Koraszewski at that time. By the time I talked to J. Świącicki, he had mitigated his attitudes (10 March 2009).

¹⁴⁰ The document – “Handed over 23 November 1981 by A. Novikov, Embassy of the Soviet Union” – as appendix 74 to the minutes of the party presidium 27 November 1981, § 161, SAP-VU A3A:15, Appendices A3B:065, ARAB.

¹⁴¹ Minutes 17 December 1981, § 176, SAP-VU A3A:15, ARAB.

¹⁴² *Tiden*, 74 (1982), pp. 7ff. See above.

¹⁴³ Declaration of support for Solidarity, against the military laws, by the parliamentary group, Minutes 15 December 1981 § 3, Socialdemokratiska riksdagsgruppen A2:25, ARAB.

regime. On 23 December the leaders of the LO and TCO tried to leave a protest note at the Polish embassy, but they were turned away.¹⁴⁴

In the Riksdag's foreign policy debate on 17 March 1982, Poland was naturally an important topic. Palme again referred to the oppression in Poland and Central America and criticized the role of both superpowers. But in the case of Poland he was much more detailed, issuing a series of demands to the Polish government (and the Soviet Union), while simultaneously again stressing that it was not a question of "violating the Soviet Union's legitimate security concerns". He also spoke of the sense of solidarity with the Polish people among Swedes and their readiness to provide material support. Palme was also more forthright than he had been six months earlier at the party congress, concluding that, "Our solidarity will not cease. Poland lies close to us."¹⁴⁵

The AIC's work for Poland, with support from the Swedish trade union movement and the social democrats, continued throughout 1982 and the following years, as did the joint campaign of the SAP and LO for human rights and trade union rights in countries, such as Poland, experiencing repression.¹⁴⁶ The LO continued to support Solidarity, by financing courses and educational programmes, especially during the last years of the decade.¹⁴⁷

After the election in September 1982, Palme once again became Prime Minister and on 14 January 1983 he wrote to the Head of the Polish government, General Jaruzelski, linking "common security" with human rights and trade union rights. He regretted the oppression of democratic organizations, the loss of life, and "the introduction of martial law in December 1981, contrary to the spirit and aspirations of the Helsinki Final Act". Nevertheless, he recognized the efforts made to solve the crisis and the ongoing economic problems, and saw signs of progress in the fact that military laws were no longer in force and hoped for an amnesty and further compromises in the future. In conclusion, he added that Sweden sought good-neighbourly relations with Poland.¹⁴⁸

A related issue, beyond the scope of this article, is whether, from the autumn of 1982, the new government of Olof Palme was aware of the consignments of equipment destined for underground Solidarity which had been organized by Solidarity activists and financed partly by the US/CIA from Brussels through Swedish ports. The suggestion that the Swedish government may have participated in these activities remains purely speculative.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁴ *LO-tidningen*, 17 December 1981, p. 19: resolutions in the archives of AIC, box 40, LO and SAP, ARAB: telex 16 December, 1981 to ICFTU, LO F23, ARAB.

¹⁴⁵ *Riksdagens protokoll*, 1981/1982, Nos 99-100, 17 March 1982 (Stockholm, 1982), pp. 11-20, quotation p. 17.

¹⁴⁶ For example the rally "Alla folks frihet – hela världens fred: för mänskliga och fackliga rättigheter i Afghanistan, El Salvador, Polen och Turkiet" [Freedom of all Peoples and Peace in the Whole World], Stockholm, 13-14 March 1982. Documents in SAP F02 I:15, ARAB; LO, LS-prot. 22 February 1982 § 7c, LO archives.

¹⁴⁷ LO F 09A: 48f, 60, 65 and Accession 2008 08 12 (Thomas Fredén), ARAB.

¹⁴⁸ Olof Palme/Statsminister [Prime Minister] to His Excellency General Wojciech Jaruzelski, 14 January 1983; Archives of Olof Palme 3.2:378, ARAB. See Kjell Östberg, *När vinden vände. Olof Palme 1969-1986* (Stockholm, 2009), p. 347, which provides diffuse information about this period.

¹⁴⁹ See Peter Schweizer, *Victory: The Reagan Administration's Secret Strategy That Hastened the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (New York, 1994), pp. 162ff., 227ff., 256-267; Ola Tunander, *Hårsfjärden: Det hemliga ubåtskriget mot Sverige* (Stockholm, 2001), pp. 133ff.; Mike Winnerstig, "Ett västland även under Olof Palme", *Internationella studier*, 36:1 (2003), pp. 38-44; Olof Kronvall and Magnus Petersson, *Svensk säkerhetspolitik i supermakternas skugga 1945-1991* (Stockholm, 2005), p. 138. There is nothing in the Swedish sources I have seen, for example in the diaries of Olof Palme or the diaries of the Swedish Commander-in-Chief Lennart Ljung, which might confirm Schweizer's claims, which have been repeated by Swedish commentators (who combine the involvement of the CIA in this question with the ongoing hunt for submarines at the same time in the

A role for the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions?

Both the SAP's and the LO's approach to "the Polish Question" was influenced by international considerations. These also affected the LO's relationship with the ICFTU when it came to support for Solidarity. During the postwar period, the LO had participated in the ICFTU's endeavours to play an active role in defending union rights everywhere and in building up free and independent unions.¹⁵⁰ But in Eastern Europe, because of the proximity of many member organizations to particular parties and governments, the ICFTU was regarded as an instrument of Western policy against the countries of the Warsaw Pact. In the case of Solidarity, therefore, the LO felt that the ICFTU should take a backstage role to avoid politicizing and internationalizing the Polish conflict. This should be seen against the background of Swedish non-alignment, a policy accepted by the Swedish trade union movement, even though Sweden had always made it quite clear that the country belonged to the "Western" hemisphere. Nevertheless, the unions, like the social democrats, supported all possible efforts to minimize conflict between West and East. This was perhaps why the LO felt that the ICFTU should remain in the background.

The relationship between the ICFTU and the LO had been tense for a considerable time, owing to a number of contentious issues such as the organization of the ICFTU, the administration of its funds, policy towards South Africa, and, especially, the AFL-CIO's ongoing role in ICFTU (ORIT) activities in Latin America.¹⁵¹ That relationship deteriorated

Swedish archipelago). See Archives of Olof Palme, Calendar 1982, box 1.1:6; information by former Undersecretary Ulf Larsson, adviser to Olof Palme on security matters, April 2008; email from the former Prime Minister, in 1982 Deputy Prime Minister, Ingvar Carlsson to the author, 17 June 2008; interview with Bengt Säve-Söderbergh, the former Director of the AIC, 16 September 2008; diaries of Lennart Ljung, SE/KrH 0035:1018, box 2, Krigsarkivet; the diaries are scheduled to be published in 2010. Neither Schweizer nor his Swedish emulators are reliable. None mentions sources which can be verified. But one cannot deny the existence of transports arranged by Solidarity activists in Sweden and Brussels, using the Swedish harbour of Ystad, nor that those transports were financed partly by the US, through the National Endowment for Democracy (NED). Even Jaruzelski and Wałęsa mention them. Interview with Jaruzelski by the Swedish diplomat Rolf Ekéus, 18 September 2002, in Warsaw, in *Fred och säkerhet: Svensk säkerhetspolitik 1969-1989, Bilagedel* [Appendix] (Stockholm, 2002), p. 117; Lech Wałęsa, *The Struggle and the Triumph: An Autobiography* (New York, 1992), p. 110. On transports arranged by activists in Lund and by the NED see Heino and Törnquist-Plewa, "Svenska Stödkommittén för Solidaritet", pp. 25-61, especially pp. 35ff. On the NED, see Colin Shawn Cavell, "The National Endowment for Democracy and the Export of 'Made-in-America' Democracy" (Ph.D., University of Massachusetts, 2001). Concerning these questions, see Klaus Misgeld, "Olof Palme, CIA och Polen: Källkritiska funderingar kring en osannolik historia", *Arbetshistoria*, 33:1-2 (2009), pp. 29-33. In the English edition of his *Hårsfjärden: Det hemliga ubåtskriget mot Sverige* Tunander makes no mention of the secret transports to Poland: O. Tunander, *The Secret War Against Sweden: US and British Submarine Deception in the 1980s* (London and New York, 2004), pp. 161ff., 304ff. His sources are often anonymous. See also Victor Sebestyen, *Revolution 1989: The Fall of the Soviet Empire* (New York, 2009), p. 101, who also claims Olof Palme was "a Solidarity sympathizer", but without providing a reference or source.

¹⁵⁰ See [Erik Karlsson], *LO i världen. En beskrivning av LO's internationella verksamhet* (Stockholm, n.d. [1987]); Misgeld, *Den fackliga europavägen*.

¹⁵¹ There is a lot of material on these questions in the minutes of the LO, Landssekreteriatet, and the International Committee, both from the 1970s and 1980s. See for example the Minutes of the International Committee 20 January 1981, "Latinamerika", and Promemoria by Ulf Asp 12 January 1980 [1981, sic!], "Latinamerika, FFI och ORIT", 4 pp, LO A06:7, ARAB. Tensions inside the ICFTU, especially between Europeans and the AFL-CIO and concerning the Third World, were one of the main problems which the President of the LO, Arne Geijer, had to handle during his time as

rapidly at the end of 1980 and the beginning of 1981, primarily because of the Polish Question. Quite possibly as a result of lobbying from some of the ITS, the ICFTU planned to appoint a Polish intermediary in Stockholm, provoking a strong reaction from the LO. At a meeting on 11 December 1980 in Copenhagen the LO leadership had informed the ICFTU General Secretary, Otto Kersten, that it had no wish for the involvement of a politicized “assistant” connected, as suspected, to funding from the United States, and the LO wanted nothing to do with the proposal.¹⁵² The LO reiterated its position to the ICFTU Assistant General Secretary, John Vanderveken (described elsewhere in an LO report as “the Americans’ henchman”), on his visit to Stockholm, 9 January 1981, and in a blunt letter on 15 January from Rune Molin to Kersten.¹⁵³ The LO’s request was accepted and the role of Ture Mattsson’s (from the GF) was reconfirmed, with the General Secretary informing ICFTU member organizations that a “technical coordination unit [...] at the LO had been established”.¹⁵⁴

Even so, rumours and media reports persisted in Sweden to the effect that Solidarity (and the ICFTU) would have a Polish coordinator in Stockholm. Finally, on 17 February, the LO President, Gunnar Nilsson, sent a telex to Brussels sharply reprimanding the ICFTU. Nilsson reiterated yet again that they would not accept an intermediary and that the LO would make it absolutely clear “that it is not your contact in Stockholm who is responsible for relations between the Polish trade unions and the ICFTU members in Sweden”. The fault lay directly with the ICFTU, Nilsson clearly implied, and therefore “we are forced to conclude that you lack confidence in the LO in the matter of the coordination in Sweden of trade union assistance to Solidarity”.¹⁵⁵ The LO’s stern rebuke came in response, presumably, to suspicions about the LO from within sections of the ITS and interference from US unions. As a result, the ICFTU announced that the “contact’s” services were “no longer required”.¹⁵⁶

President of the International (1957-1965). See Ake Wedin (ed.), *International Trade Union Solidarity: ICFTU 1957-1965* (Stockholm, 1974).

¹⁵² See above, as well as the following section.

¹⁵³ Report “Samtal med Vanderveken den 9.1.1981...”, by T. Carlsson; letter from Rune Molin to ICFTU/Dear Colleagues, 15 January 1981, copy, LO F26B:5, ARAB. Ulf Asp to Gunnar Nilsson about Vanderveken, 30 April 1981: Questions to discuss with the Nordic union leaders at a meeting in Oslo, 3 or 4 May 1981, LO F23:92, ARAB. MacShane, *Solidarity*, p. 121, is critical about the attitude of the LO.

¹⁵⁴ Kersten/ICFTU to Molin/LO, 9 February 1981; Vanderveken/ICFTU to Mattsson/LO, 13 February 1981, with a copy of the letter from Kersten to all affiliated organizations, 17 February 1981, LO F26B:5, ARAB. See the letter from Jakub Świącicki (Täby/Stockholm) to the President of the LO Gunnar Nilsson. In this letter Świącicki calls himself a “representative of Solidarity”, perhaps unaware of the attitude of the LO; [21] January 1981, *ibid.* There are more documents concerning Świącicki and LO in the collection of Elżbiety and Jakub Świącickich, Karta Documentary Center A0III/2450, but – as far as I have been able to establish – the picture does not differ from the material in Stockholm, with one exception: in the Karta collection there is an authorization in Polish from Andrzej Kołodziej, “Prezydium MKZ NSZZ ‘Solidarność’”, Gdańsk, 9 January 1981, for Jakub Świącicki to represent the “Coordinating Interim Committee of the Independent Self-Governing Trade Union Solidarity in Gdansk”. Copies of the original in Polish and the translation in Swedish in A0III/2450:15C. When B. Lis and R. Molin discussed the matter it became clear that Lis did not really know about this authorization. However, Lis wanted to have a Polish-speaking person, already living in Stockholm and helping the LO, but without the right to make decisions. The LO refused (i.e. before 13 December 1981). J. Świącicki’s membership of Solidarity, Wielkopolska region, was confirmed on 30 May 1981, i.e. after these discussions; copy in ARAB LO 26B:6.

¹⁵⁵ More material about this conflict can be found in LO F26B:5, ARAB.

¹⁵⁶ J. Vanderveken to J. Świącicki and Świącicki to Vanderveken, both letters 7 April 1981; O. Kersten to G. Nilsson, 15 April 1981, ARAB LO F23:89, 92, ARAB. See also International Confederation of

Notwithstanding the LO's intransigent and somewhat controversial view – even in Sweden – of the KOR, and its insistence on union contacts between actual unions, free of outside intermediaries, there was nevertheless a crucial problem. To avoid political complications, the LO wanted the ICFTU to remain very much in the background, but the ICFTU had itself, according to Kersten at an Executive Board meeting on 27-28 November 1980, “decided that the ICFTU should maintain close contacts with ‘Solidarity’”. This was confirmed by the LO's own report on the meeting; obviously the two organizations had different interests.¹⁵⁷

However, the LO was confident that on the main issue – political restraint – it had the backing of the unions of the Nordic countries (NFS), which was made clear to the ICFTU and also at various meetings between the NFS Committee and the AFL-CIO, for example in Washington on 19-20 October 1981.¹⁵⁸ The Finnish members of the NFS in particular felt compelled to adopt a cautious line, a point which became clearer after 13 December 1981 when the Finnish confederation (SAK/FFC) was notably unsympathetic towards a common Nordic protest against the ban on Solidarity.¹⁵⁹ This exceptionalism reflects both the strong communist element inside the Finnish union movement and Finland's special relationship with the Soviet Union.

North Americans: “Keep Out!”

The complicated relationship in 1980-1981 between the Swedish union movement and the ICFTU over the issue of support for Solidarity was closely tied to the role of the North American AFL-CIO. At that time the AFL-CIO was not a member of the ICFTU, having left in 1969; it would not rejoin until 1982. Even so, its European representative in Paris, Irving Brown, well known in Scandinavia as a veteran of the Cold War, had sought contact with Solidarity from the very beginning.¹⁶⁰ Considerable sums of money were made available to be channelled into Poland in various ways – some of it through Sweden – along with items of equipment. There is conflicting information regarding the sums earmarked by the AFL-CIO to be channelled through the Paris office, but on paper at least the amount was significant.¹⁶¹ According to the Swedish LO's representative responsible for developing Polish publishing, Lech Wałęsa had realized, certainly by the spring of 1981, that American support could lead to complications, and that Solidarity should not ask the LO to act as “agents of American money”. This message was also conveyed to the other Nordic confederations.¹⁶² The aim was

Free Trade Unions, Executive Board, Brussels, 5-6 November 1981, Agenda Item 10b Poland: “In close collaboration with the Swedish LO, as we informed the last meeting, a coordinating machinery has been set up for channelling material assistance to Solidarnosc”, ICFTU 79EB/10(b), LO F23:93, ARAB.

¹⁵⁷ Ulf Asp confirms in his “Rapport till landssekreteriatet från FFIs styrelsemöte i Bryssel den 27-28 november 1980”: “The Board [of the ICFTU] decided that the ICFTU has to continue to keep in close touch with the independent Polish trade union and to coordinate the support of their member organizations.” LO F23:89, ARAB.

¹⁵⁸ NFS box 214, ARAB, material concerning this meeting.

¹⁵⁹ NFS boxes 214 and 235, ARAB. Regarding protest notes by the LO and TCO and demonstrations against the military laws, see above, and, for example, the telex to Johnny Vanderveken, 16 December 1981, LO F23:92, ARAB.

¹⁶⁰ On Brown see Misgeld, “Trade Union Neutrality?”, pp. 15ff. and *passim*. Jakub Świącicki met Brown in Paris, which was, as he told me, a mistake with unfavourable consequences. Conversation with the author, 10 March 2009.

¹⁶¹ Sune Ahlén, Swedish embassy in Washington DC, telex to LO and TCO, 8 January 1981, based on an article in the *New York Times*, 7 January 1981; Statement by the AFL-CIO Executive Council on Poland, 17 February 1981, Bal Harbour, Fla; in LO F26B:5, ARAB.

¹⁶² Ulf Asp to Gunnar Nilsson, 30 April 1981, LO F23:92, ARAB.

to avoid giving ammunition to Solidarity's enemies and therefore enabling the Soviet press to claim that it was being financed by the Americans, through the LO.¹⁶³ It was well known by the LO that subsidies from the AFL-CIO were in reality often ultimately sourced from government funds – and not just in the case of Poland.¹⁶⁴ At the end of 1980 and the beginning of 1981, reports from the Swedish embassy in Warsaw and the Polish ambassador in Stockholm indicating that Swedish (Finish and also Austrian) support to Solidarity was preferred were passed to the LO by the Swedish Foreign Ministry. According to a report from the Swedish ambassador in Washington, even the State Department in Washington at that time preferred Swedish (and Finnish) support and did not want the AFL-CIO to become engaged.¹⁶⁵

Charles Kassman, on a visit to Solidarity in October/November 1981, where he could observe developments at first hand, believed that contacts with the AFL-CIO were “frequent” (mainly by telephone) but “formal”. He also detected a certain irritation inside Solidarity with the way that the organization was being exploited in the United States. “What I have been able to discover is that, for a long time, there has been serious disagreement between Solidarity and the AFL-CIO, the former claiming the latter has ‘gangsterish’ [sic!] tendencies”. Solidarity's leadership felt that Wałęsa's planned visit to the United States risked being taken advantage of by political and business groups, with Polish exile organizations playing a key part. The leadership believed that Wałęsa should not, therefore, travel to the US, but instead to the NFS committee meeting in Stockholm on 3 December 1981 (the visit was later cancelled); “the focal point of international activities”, should be “contacts with certain

¹⁶³ Material illustrating that money from the US for Solidarity passed through Polish activists living in Sweden, in LO F26B and Metall E7a IMF 1980, ARAB. In his conversation with Ture Mattsson (10 April 1981) Lech Wałęsa said he regretted that the LO's problems originated from the contributions by the AFL-CIO and declared that the LO should not accept this money. Handwritten notes by Mattsson on meetings in Poland, 9-16 April 1981, LO F26B:1, ARAB. Interview with Mattsson 1983, ARAB. See also the report by Charles Kassman which referred as early as September 1980 to problems with money sent by AFL-CIO to Solidarity: “Rapport från besök i Warszawa och Gdansk 15/9-18/9 1980”, p. 9, LO F26B:1, ARAB. See Byrne and Paczkowski, *From Solidarity to Martial Law*, p. XXXII. In the LO archives there is more material, mostly press cuttings, on Soviet and Polish accusations that the LO had become an instrument of the CIA. An English translation of a partly well-informed Polish article about all these activities was sent by the Swedish ambassador to Poland, Knut Thyberg, to Bengt Säve-Söderbergh through the Foreign Ministry (22 September 1983): Alicja Bilska, “Recollection of a Recent Past: What did the West Pay For?”, *Trybuna Ludu*, 1 September 1983, AIC, box 40.

¹⁶⁴ Minutes of the International Committee 20 January 1981: “Latinamerika”, and Promemoria by Ulf Asp, 12 January 1980 [1981?], LO A06:7, ARAB; Sven Fockstedt, TCO, 29 October 1979, “Kommentar” (Comments concerning the ICFTU), pp. 5ff. concerning financing problems, *ibid.* For the earlier period see Anthony Carew, “The American Labor Movement in Fizzland: The Free Trade Union Committee and the CIA”, *Labor History*, 39 (1999), pp. 25-42; for the later period Cavell, “The National Endowment for Democracy”. Even the Carter administration was opposed to a (modest) donation by the AFL-CIO for Poland, in September 1980, as Secretary of State Muskie informed the Soviet embassy in Washington. See Kemp-Welch, *Poland under Communism*, pp. 273ff. On the strength of the “Polish-American lobby” in the US see Raymond Pearson, *The Rise and Fall of the Soviet Empire* (New York, 1998), p. 95.

¹⁶⁵ Conversation between the ambassador Pavel Cieslar and Rolf Gauffin, Stockholm, PM 11 November 1980, UD HP 1 EP; telegram Thyberg to Cabinet Stockholm 22 December 1980, *ibid.*, Dnr 330; telegram Wachtmeister, Washington, to Cabinet, 10 September 1980, *ibid.*, Dnr 458. Zbigniew Bujak told Ture Mattsson, when they met in October 1988 in Lublin, that US contributions, especially for the Solidarity office in Brussels, were really a problem. “Rapport från ett fackligt seminarium i Lublin 7-9 oktober 1988”. Bujak repeated this when we met in Warsaw (26 May 2009).

European national organizations, especially Swedish, Dutch, and Norwegian”.¹⁶⁶ Regardless of whether or not any of these comments represent a degree of wishful thinking on Kassman’s part, one assumes that Stockholm was nevertheless more than happy to hear them.

Events should also be seen against the background of boycott measures, which were discussed inside the North American trade union movement. Under both Carter and then during Reagan’s first presidency, the Polish state had received a degree of economic support in exchange for recognition of Solidarity. This was a situation not entirely approved of by the leadership of the US union movement.¹⁶⁷ After December 1981, the new US government introduced a partial boycott, a decision supported by the AFL-CIO. According to a Swedish report in Washington to the LO in October 1982, its President, Lane Kirkland, felt that the US ought to “force Poland into bankruptcy”.¹⁶⁸ The AIC Director Bengt Säve-Söderbergh, noted in a detailed report following a visit to Poland, 14-17 June 1982, that Reagan and his militants were “highly thought of”; the Poles often lacked “sensitivity” in fully appreciating what some in the West sought to achieve with their policies of détente. But there were those who realized that the politics of boycott would only harm Poland. “Many Poles have also become wary because Solidarity is the only trade union movement in the entire world which Reagan actively supports”, noted Säve-Söderbergh.¹⁶⁹ This was a point that emerged time and again, not least in Olof Palme’s speech.

The difference between union strategies towards Poland in Sweden and the Nordic countries, and in the US, is also clearly apparent. Policies that heightened conflict and destabilized the Polish regime won little sympathy with the Swedish LO (and the SAP). Rather, further reforms were sought in order to strengthen democratic rights and improve day-to-day life in Poland. The reaction inside the GF to the “Declaration on Poland” adopted at the ITS General Conference in Geneva on 12-13 January 1982 is illuminating in this respect. The GF Committee supported the declaration supporting Solidarity, but struck out a key sentence that held “that Western governments will refuse to continue economic and financial assistance to Poland until such time as the oppression [...] ceases.”¹⁷⁰

A Strenuous Effort

There were many complications, political and otherwise, associated with Swedish efforts in support of the new independent movement in Poland. But the most important question concerned the support itself, support that continued throughout the 1980s, often in concealed ways after 1982. The work for Solidarity and the democratic movement in Poland was one of the largest international undertakings in the history of the Swedish labour movement. Both the

¹⁶⁶ “Rapport från resa till Polen 27.10.-2.11.1981”, LO FO9A:3, ARAB.

¹⁶⁷ See Rachwald, *In Search of Poland*, pp. 47ff. See also Patoka, *Poland under Pressure 1980-81*, pp. 204ff.; Timothy Garton Ash, *The Polish Revolution: Solidarity* (2nd edn., London, 1991).

¹⁶⁸ Sune Ahlén, Swedish embassy in Washington DC, telex to LO, 13 October 1982, on statements by the President of the AFL-CIO Lane Kirkland, LO F26B:8, ARAB. See Rachwald, *In Search of Poland*, pp. 54ff., 60ff., 63ff.; Mastny, “The Soviet Non-Invasion of Poland”, pp. 93ff.; Andrzej Paczkowski, “Playground of Superpowers, Poland 1980-89: A View from Inside”, in Olav Njølstad (ed.), *The Last Decade of the Cold War: From Conflict Escalation to Conflict Transformation* (London and New York, 2004), p. 381; Patoka, *Poland under Pressure 1980-81*, pp. 180ff.; Gawrich, *Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund und polnische Gewerkschaftsbewegung*, pp. 334ff.

¹⁶⁹ Bengt Säve-Söderbergh/AIC, “Rapport om besök i Polen 14-17 juni 1982”, 23 June 1982, 12 pp., LO F26B:8, and Archives of Olof Palme 3.2:409, ARAB.

¹⁷⁰ I found no similar responses in the documents I have consulted relating to other Swedish unions. GF FS-prot. 9 February 1982 § 3:7 and appendix 1, GF Archives. The declaration was published also in *Grafia*, 29 January 1982, p. 32, without the deleted part. At the same meeting, the board also decided to prepare a “Declaration on the Suppression in El Salvador”.

material and moral support, however, was far more extensive than that mentioned above, but a great deal was never documented. Over the years, all this had “taken its toll”, as Gunnar understatedly put it in a statement on 29 April 1982 to the leaders of Sweden’s trade unions.¹⁷¹

There can be no doubt that Solidarity received significant backing from Sweden. The fact that this contribution has attracted less attention in Swedish and in international historical accounts than it deserves can, in part, be explained by the LO’s endeavours, at least in the beginning, to remain as inconspicuous as possible. Swedish cooperation with the independent Polish union movement was not only an expression of international workers’ solidarity, but also a response to Sweden’s own concerns about the consequences of developments in a neighbouring country. The LO refrained from stoking public opinion or seeking propaganda gains, although its own press carried some reports of its contributions and those of the international union movement.¹⁷² Yet, the uppermost consideration was to provide as much help as possible, with the intention of promoting the fundamental trade union right to self-determination, while at the same time avoiding international complications.¹⁷³

Some of the transnational factors in this respect came from external “impulses” – from Polish interests which sparked off the activities, and the ICFTU’s readiness, albeit reluctant, to encourage Swedish support for Solidarity. Others were internal: the Swedish union movement’s internationalist stance, its ideology, and a traditional social democratic policy of “bridge-building” between East and West as a key motive for engagement in order to prevent conflicts in surrounding areas.

Assessing the value of Swedish engagement from the Polish side, both on its own terms and in relation to support from other countries, is difficult, especially in any comprehensive way. Many individual testimonies give witness to the importance of Swedish trade union support for Solidarity, not least after 13 December 1981. But how representative these testimonies are and what grasp they had of the overall situation remains unclear and may be open to speculation. The international literature offers little help.¹⁷⁴ As Józef Lipski, one of the leaders of the KOR, told the Swedish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sten Andersson, in January 1989: “It was generally known that the most significant support to Poland after December 1981 came from Sweden.” Here, he was referring not only to supportive action by unions, but more generally to all kinds of support from Sweden.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷¹ LO, Representantskapets protokoll on 29 April 1982, § 8, LO archives.

¹⁷² Information to the press 14 December 1981, LO F09A:3, ARAB.

¹⁷³ It may be of interest to note that it was not only LO representatives such as the President of the Federation since 1983, Stig Malm, who visited Solidarity in 1989; even the Social Democratic Prime Minister Ingvar Carlsson visited the new, non-communist government in Poland in October 1989, probably the first prime minister from a “Western” country to do so. Stig Malm to the author 24 March 2009, Ulf Edström (International Secretary of the LO) 6 April 2009, Ingvar Carlsson 6 March 2009. Concerning Ingvar Carlsson in Poland see SAP, Partistyreliensens (Board) protokoll 17 November 1989, § 57, ARAB and UD HP 1 EP:214, Dnr 341ff.

¹⁷⁴ See Berger, “Solidarność, Western Solidarity and Détente”.

¹⁷⁵ Promemoria Utrikesdepartementet/Peter Tejler, 1989-01-31: “Utrikesminister Andersson tar emot Jan Jozef Lipski, PPS”; UD HP 1 Ep:206, Dnr 31/012. I do not know whether Lipski had a general overview or sources sufficient to support this conclusion. Perhaps he was just being polite to his Swedish host. But even Z. Bujak and B. Lis emphasized the importance of Swedish support, even while admitting that they did not have a real grasp of the whole situation. Paweł Jaworski’s forthcoming study will provide more information on other Swedish organizations, and the activities of the Red Cross for instance. Lech Wałęsa’s autobiographies say very little about Swedish support, in contrast to his declarations in the 1980s (see above). See Wałęsa, *The Struggle and the Triumph*; *idem*, *A Way of Hope* (New York, 1987) [in Swedish, Lech Wałęsa, *Hoppets väg* (Stockholm, 1987)]. However, staff at the Swedish embassy in Warsaw stressed that Wałęsa had often acknowledged

Nevertheless, it is clear that Sweden provided a substantial part of the international support for Solidarity, both materially and morally. Moral support was significant for the Polish democratic opposition in general and Solidarity in particular, who thereby knew that they had not been forgotten and that they had support in the West, without it escalating any global conflict, especially in the early years.¹⁷⁶ To this end, what began at the start of the 1980s as a transfer of material support and goods became at the end of the decade a general discussion concerning the transfer of the Swedish trade union and political models – an altogether different aspect of “transnationalism”. Ultimately, that failed, because events in Poland and throughout Eastern and Central Europe took quite a different turn in the 1990s.¹⁷⁷

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About the Author

Until his retirement at the end of 2006, the author, Prof. Klaus Misgeld, was research coordinator of the Labour Movement Archives and Library (ARAB) in Stockholm. He is currently senior research fellow at Södertörn University (Huddinge/Stockholm). This paper was written as part of the research project on “Sweden and the Polish Democratic Movement, 1980-1989”, which was launched on 1 January 2007. The project is financed by Östersjöstiftelsen [The Foundation for Baltic and European Studies] and based at Södertörn University. It is a collaborative project involving three historians. Klaus Misgeld is focusing on the Swedish trade union movement and its support for Solidarity. Prof. Karl Molin is examining Swedish foreign policy, using archive material from the Foreign Ministry. And Dr Stefan Ekecrantz is analysing the historical interpretation and studying the actors involved, focusing on the leaders and leadership. We are working closely with Dr Paweł Jaworski, University of Wrocław. My work would not have been possible without the considerable support of the ARAB, for which I am extremely grateful. I wish to thank my colleagues Stefan Ekecrantz, Paweł Jaworski, Karl Molin, Dr Silke Neunsinger, and my colleagues at Södertörn University for their valuable comments. I would also like to express my gratitude to Alan Smalley for translating this paper and to Chris Gordon for editing the final text.

Swedish support. Conversation with the ambassador Dag Hartelius and counsellor Gunnar Haglund, 25 May 2009, Warsaw. Two Swedish awards were presented to Wałęsa in the 1980s (in addition to the 1983 Nobel Peace Prize, awarded in Oslo): the “Låt-lewa-priset” awarded in 1981 by the social democratic newspaper *Arbetet* (Malmö), and the “Frihetspris” awarded in 1983 jointly by the Swedish *Dagens Nyheter* newspaper and the Danish *Politiken* newspaper (Stockholm; Wałęsa was unable to attend). See Geörgy Konrád *et al.*, *Polens frihet och vår* (Stockholm, 1983).

¹⁷⁶ Z. Bujak (26 May 2009) also talked about the value of this moral support. There are many documents in Swedish archives illustrating this opinion on the part of Poles, and last but not least many letters of gratitude from Poland in the archives of the AIC and the i-fonden (ARAB).

¹⁷⁷ After 1989 there are no more diplomatic reports on discussions between Polish and Swedish representatives concerning the so-called “Swedish model”. And there is very little information on Polish-Swedish relations in Roman Kuźniar, *Poland's Foreign Policy after 1989* (Warsaw, 2009). Very few Swedish politicians writing about this period mention Poland in their memoirs. More about this subject can be found in Misgeld, “En ‘svensk modell’ för Polen?”.

Abbreviations

ABF	Arbetarnas Bildningsförbund [Labour Movement's Educational Organization]
AFL-CIO	American Federation of Labor–Congress of Industrial Organizations
AIC	Arbetarrörelsens internationella centrum [Labour Movement's International Center, founded in 1978, since 1992 The Olof Palme International Center]
ARAB	Arbetarrörelsens arkiv och bibliotek [Labour Movement Archives and Library]
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CRZZ	Centralna Rada Związkow Zawodowych [Central Council of Trade Unions]
CSCE	Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe
DGB	Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund
GF	Grafiska fackförbundet (Graphic Workers' Union/Union of Printmakers)
i-fonden	Arbetarrörelsens internationella solidaritetsfond [Labour Movement's International Fond for Solidarity, founded in 1979]
ICFTU	International Confederation of Free Trade Unions
IMF	International Metal Workers' Federation
ITS	International Trade Secretariats
KF	Kooperativa Förbundet [Swedish Consumer Organization]
KOR	Komitet Obrony Robotników [Workers' Defence Committee]
LO	Landsorganisationen i Sverige [Trade Union Confederation]
Metall	Metallindustriarbetareförbundet [Metal Workers' Union]
NED	National Endowment for Democracy
NFS	Nordens fackliga samorganisation [Council of Nordic Trade Unions]
NSZZ	Niezależny Samorządny Związek Zawodowy "Solidarność" [Independent Self-Governing Trade Union "Solidarity"]
ORIT	Organización Regional Interamericana de Trabajadores
PTTI	Postal, Telegraph and Telephone International
PZPR	Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza [PUWP, Polish United Workers' Party/Polish Communist Party]
SACO	Sveriges Akademikers Centralorganisation [Swedish Confederation of Professional Associations]
SAK/FFC	Suomen Ammattiliittojen Keskusjärjestö / Finlands Fackförbunds Centralorganisation [Trade Union Confederation of Finland]
SAP	Sveriges Socialdemokratiska Arbetareparti [Swedish Social Democratic Party]
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency [Styrelsen för internationellt utvecklingsarbete]
SP	Socialistiska partiet [Socialist Party, Trotskyite; until 1982 KAF/Kommunistiska Arbetarförbundet]
SPD	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands [Social Democratic Party of Germany]
TCO	Tjänstemännens Centralorganisation [Swedish Confederation of Professional Employees]
TUC	Trades Union Congress
UD	Utrikesdepartementet [Foreign Ministry of the Swedish Government]
VPK	Vänsterpartiet kommunisterna [Left Party, the communists]

IISH Research Papers

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