

Svenska stödkommittén för Solidaritet *The Swedish Solidarity Support Committee and Independent Polish Agency in Lund.*

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IN AUGUST 1980 an independent trade union and oppositional organisation called *Solidarność* (Solidarity) emerged in Poland. With the imposition of martial law on 13 December 1981 its legal existence was terminated, yet the organisation continued its activities underground and contributed substantially to the fall of the Communist system in Eastern Europe. Although the history of Solidarity is by now well-documented, less is known about the scale of support Solidarity received from many Swedish organisations in the years 1980-1989, among others the *Svenska stödkommittén för Solidaritet* (The Swedish Solidarity Support Committee) in the small university town of Lund. The Committee was founded just after the imposition of martial law and was formally abolished in 1995, although its activities had already almost totally ceased after the fall of Communism in Poland in 1989. The aim of this article is to describe and analyse the history and the activities of this organisation and its subdivision - the Independent Polish Agency. Hitherto nobody has researched this subject, in spite of the fact that, as will be shown, the Support Committee had a significant role in helping the underground structures of Solidarity. Swedish support in general for Polish democratic opposition during the Communist era is still a subject waiting to be investigated. However, 2006 marked a start with two publications: in Sweden, an issue (4/2006) of *Arbetarhistoria* with articles about Sweden *and the Polish democracy movement in the 1970s and 1980s*¹, and in Poland, an issue of the historic review *Karta*, with a selection of lengthy quotations from interviews with people from Sweden who

¹ This was the title of a symposium organised in Stockholm in 2005. Two of papers presented there were later published in the historical quarterly *Arbetarhistoria*.

had been involved in the support for the Polish democratic opposition.² The latter publication briefly mentions the Support Committee in Lund. The only published reports about the Committee's history can be found in Swedish local newspapers from the time when the Committee was active, and in two short presentations written by the Committee's first chairman, Jan Axel Stoltz, in connection with the celebration of Solidarity's anniversaries, one in 2000 and the other in 2005.³

Because of this scarcity of publications about the Committee, this article is mainly based on two kinds of sources: documents produced by the Committee and about the Committee in the years 1981-1989, now held by the Archives of the Polish Democratic Opposition (called *Karta*) in Warsaw, and interviews with several of the most prominent members of the Committee.⁴

The Committee's materials at the Karta archives⁵ contain correspondence between the Committee and different (mostly Swedish) organisations and individuals, applications for funds, invoices, balance sheets, minutes of meetings, press releases by the Committee, newspaper articles about the Committee and its members, flyers and posters informing about its various activities.

The interviews were conducted according to the rules and customs of oral history, a method which has been firmly estab-

² Puchalska Katarzyna, "Szwecja Polsce, Droga przez Bałtyk", *Kalia* 47/2005.

³ Jan Axel Stoltz, *Svenska stödskommittén för Solidaritet, YjtiiA, verksam 1981-1995*, introduction to the exhibition on the Swedish support to the Polish democratic opposition, shown in four southern Swedish towns in the early 2000s. Stoltz, Jan Axel, "Nyheterna om Solidaritet kom från Östra Mårtensgatan". *Svensk-Polsk Bulletin*, juni 2005. Material received from Jan Axel Stoltz.

⁴ The interviews were conducted by Maria Heino in the spring of 2006 and constituted the foundation for her BA-thesis entitled "Solidarity and the ones who felt it", supervised by Barbara Törnquist-Plewa. This article makes use of that thesis.

⁵ It is not put in any special order. Therefore, while referring to it in the following, we do not mention any files but write from now on: "SSSC-archive at Karta."

lished in historical research for the last thirty years.⁶ The interviews had a semi-structured character, i.e. a list of standard questions⁷ was put before the individuals interviewed (the informants), but more as guidelines allowing the informants to speak freely about their activities and feelings.

Telling about events that took place twenty years ago quite naturally results in a selection of facts based on their importance from today's perspective. Yet another problem is to what degree historians can trust people's memories and how they can proceed when people give an account of the same event but remember it in different ways. These are just some examples of classic methodological challenges that have to be faced by every researcher doing oral history research. In this study we deal with these questions by applying a technique that Trevor Lumis calls triangulation.⁸ By comparing different kinds of material one can find stronger evidence, and if three different sources tell the same story it is probably true. Consequently we used the method of triangulation by comparing different interviews as well as by comparing information from the interviews with the documents in the Committee's archives stored at Karta and with newspaper articles about the Committee.

Eight people were interviewed for the purpose of this study. They were chosen partly from a list provided by Jan Axel Stoltz, the Committee's first chairman and an active member for the whole period of the Committee's existence, and partly by asking all the interviewees to name active members of the Committee. All of them pointed to Józef Lebenbaum, the vice-chairman of the Committee for the whole period of its existence as "the man behind the group". When questioned, Lebenbaum estimated the

⁶ For a discussion of the methodology, see e.g. Perks, Robert & Thomson, Alistair, *The Oral History Reader*. Roudedge, London and New York 1998; Kvale, Steinar, *Interviews. An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing*, Thousand Oaks-London-New Delhi: Sage Publication 1996; Mishler, E.G. *Research Interviewing - Context and Narrative*, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press 1986.

⁷ For the list, see the appendix to this article.

⁸ Lummis, Trevor, 'Structure and validity in oral evidence'. In: Perks, Robert & Thomson, Alistair, *The Oral History Reader*. Roudedge, London and New York 1998.

active core of the Committee as being around twenty people.⁹ The eight informants interviewed for this study were mainly from the Committee's core. Apart from Józef Lebenbaum and Jan Axel Stoltz, they were: Mirosław Ancypo, a close associate of Józef Lebenbaum for the more secret part of the Committee's work; Paweł Chylicki, the Committee's first treasurer, Maria Paulsson, active in the cultural activities organised by the Committee; Bożena Werbart (Wyszomirska at that time), secretary of the Board of the Committee during the first years; Janina Ahlgren, secretary of the Board for a couple of years after Bożena Werbart, and Andrzej Koraszewski, who already in the 1970s had raised support in Lund for the PoMsh democratic opposition. During the 1980s he worked with the Committee and was a member of the Board.

There were certainly others who could have been interviewed, but because of time and space constraints we could not interview any more. Besides, we noticed after the eight interviews that further informants repeated things that we already knew. Consequently, we reached a point where we got a grasp of the group's main story¹⁰. Of the eight informants only one is Swedish (Jan Axel Stoltz), since the founders of the Committee were mainly Polish immigrants. He was also the only Swede on the Board of the Committee, though there were Swedish members and more Swedes who participated in the Committee's activities.¹¹ Three of the informants had emigrated from Poland after the anti-Semitic campaign of 1968. They were Józef Lebenbaum, Bożena

⁹ He stated at the same time that the total number of actual members was hard to estimate since people were coming and going and some were active but did not wish to figure on any list or account. Interview with Jozef Lebenbaum 30.5.2006.

¹⁰ However, there are two people who, because of their positions in the Committee, would perhaps have been able to deliver some new information but whom we were not able to reach: Marian Kaleta and Grzegorz Gauden. Marian Kaleta was the representative of Solidarity's Brussels office in Malmö and started working with the opposition already in the 1970s, together with Andrzej Koraszewski. He is often mentioned in newspaper articles as well as in other sources. Grzegorz Gauden, the Committee's chairman 1985 — 1989, was at the time of writing a busy editor-in-chief of a large Polish newspaper, *Rzeczpospolita*, and was unfortunately not available for an interview.

¹¹ Widing, Hans, op.cit.

Werbart and Andrzej Koraszewski, whose wife was Jewish. Two of the informants had married Swedish citizens: Maria Paulsson who had moved to Sweden in 1964 and Janina Ahlgren who came in 1972. Paweł Chyliński had independently taken himself to Sweden in 1966 to find a more rewarding job. The youngest in the group, Mirosław Ancypowicz, had been working in Sweden on a student visa when martial law was introduced in Poland and was granted refugee status in 1982. All of the informants have university degrees. They have different religious backgrounds: Jewish, Catholic and Protestant.

The Beginnings

Since the late 1970s there had been a small group of people in Lund, mostly Polish immigrants, involved in supporting the democratic opposition in Poland. For instance, they smuggled Polish literature published in exile to Eastern Europe and organised demonstrations¹². When the situation in Poland on 13 December suddenly took a dramatic turn with the imposition of martial law, they joined a demonstration organised in Lund by the Swedish worker movement in order to protest against the delegatisation of Solidarity and other actions of the Polish Communist regime. Immediately after this demonstration that took place on 18 December 1981 some half a dozen people, mainly young Polish immigrants, decided to go on a hunger strike¹³, in order to make the Swedish government, the Swedish Red Cross and the Swedish (Lutheran) Church intervene in the United Nations and protest against the Polish Communist regime's violation of human and citizens' rights.¹⁴ Most of the strikers already knew each other, either from other opposition activities or just socially.¹⁵

¹² Józef Lebenbaum quoted in Puchalska, Katarzyna, „Szwecja Polsce, Droga przez Bałtyk”, *Karta* 47/2005, p.124.

¹³ Interview with Jan Axel Stoltz. 21.3.2006.

¹⁴ See The Appeal to the public before the first hunger strike in Lund Cathedral, 18.12..1981. SSSC-archives at Karta.

¹⁵ Interview with Mirosław Ancypowicz 29.4.2006.

The first hunger strike, with ten participants, lasted forty-eight hours.¹⁶ Józef Lebenbaum stood in the wings organizing the practicalities.

I talked to the priest in the church so that we could have the strike in Lund Cathedral, I contacted the authorities and the political parties and together with others I formulated our demands. I even travelled to Stockholm to meet the Minister of Foreign Affairs. The Secretary of Foreign Affairs for the Social Democratic Party' called me and asked us to end the strike. I said we would do so when we had received the answer to our demands. I tried to explain to him that we weren't on strike against the Swedish government, only against Jaruzelski's regime, even if our demands were directed to the Swedish government.¹⁷

After two days the strikers had not actually received the answer they wanted, although Olof Palme wrote a short message to express his sympathy. Józef Lebenbaum explains: "*What we mshed for was Palme personally asking us to stop*".¹⁸

On 27 December, Bożena Werbart and Krzysztof Cierpisz wrote a new appeal. It was addressed to the Swedish Parliament, the government, the political parties, the trade unions, the Swedish Church and the Red Cross. They reiterated their previous demands and called for an international isolation of Poland. They stressed that they needed a concrete answer, otherwise a new strike would begin on 30 December at 5 p.m.¹⁹

And so it did. This time the eight participants did not set any time limit.²⁰ The Southern Swedish newspaper *Sydsvenska Dagbladet* published an open letter to the United Nations with the strikers' demands. After 121 hours of striking they finally decided on 4 January' 1982 at 6 p.m. to call it off. In their final communiqué of 4 January the strikers wrote that they had not received any answer

¹⁶ The participants in the first hunger strike were: Pawel Chylicki, Krzysztof Cierpisz, Maciej Wesołowski, Bożena wyszomirska, Marian Kaleta, Mikołaj Kostecki, Antoni Orzech, Danuta Żeromska, Jan Axel Stoltz, Mieczysław Saklak.

¹⁷ Interview with Józef Lebenbaum 25.4.2006.

¹⁸ Interview with Józef Lebenbaum 25.4.2006.

¹⁹ Appeal on 27th December 1981. SSSC-archives at Karta.

²⁰ The participants on the second hunger strike were: Mirosław Ancypo, Helena Dolyniuk, Percy Parstedt, Jan Plater, Mieczysław Saklak, Stanisław Tarkowski, Bożena Wyszomirska, Danuta Żeromska-Parstedt.

to their demands. *'We consider that our duty is now to take other action in order to achieve our goals.'*²¹

Actually this "other action" was already on its way. An organisation called *Stödkommittén för Solidaritet, södra Sverige* - the 'Solidarity Support Committee, Southern Sweden' was founded between the two strikes. It later changed its name to *Svenska Stödkommittén för Solidaritet* (The Swedish Solidarity Support Committee) as its activities in Sweden spread and regional branches were created in Helsingborg and Gothenburg. In the words of Józef Lebenbaum:

When we started our second strike, we got the idea that we had to build something more stable. Counting the ones who were on strike and the ones helping with the practicalities there were some twenty active people. We decided to found a committee. I called Jan Axel Stoltz whom I already knew socially and talked him into becoming the first chairman, since I thought it would be a good idea to have a Swede there, with regard to Swedish society. Then I persuaded Pawel Chylicki to take charge of the finances since he was involved in the Catholic Church. I was vice-chairman during the whole time. I have to admit that I prefer to stand as the leader but outside the spotlight.²²

The hunger strikes had given the new Committee considerable positive publicity. The very fact that the strike was held in the Cathedral was a small victory for the strikers, since it was not usual for the Cathedral to engage in this kind of political activities.

The strikers occupied the entrance hall of the Cathedral and had money boxes and lists to sign for their supporters. Lebenbaum recalls:

It was quite touching when there actually was a queue of people before the morning prayers on Sunday and I think 100 percent of them left something in our boxes.²³

On 4 January 1982 the strikers wrote in their final communiqué

.. .We, the participants in the hunger strike in Lund Cathedral feel that we have the complete support and enormous sympathy from all Swedes. We have collected 900 signatures and more than 3,000

²¹ Communiqué on 4 January 1982. SSSC-archives at Karta.

²² Interview with Józef Lebenbaum 25.4.2006.

²³ Interview with Józef Lebenbaum 25.4.2006

Swedish Crowns. During our first hunger strike lasting 48 hours we got 2000 signatures and 25,000 Crowns.²⁴

Mirosław Ancypa, participating in the second hunger strike, describes how the strikers were surrounded by interested people and the press.

Poland's borders were totally closed and the press from all over the world was gathered in southern Sweden waiting for the first ferry to come in from martial law Poland. Nobody knew when it would arrive and the journalists who were waiting had to find something to write about. So they wrote about us.²⁵

For example, the main Italian newspaper *Cortiere delta Sera* published a picture on its front page of the hunger strikers. Similarly, there were reports about the group in Swedish newspapers, on television and the radio.²⁶

With the money collected during the hunger strikes the newly founded Committee started to act immediately. According to the Statutes adopted by the Committee when it was founded, the organisation had three main goals:

- a) To help Solidarity in Poland and the oppressed Polish people.
- b) To give information and assistance to newly arrived refugees from Poland.
- c) To participate in shaping public opinion and disseminate information about the situation in Poland.²⁷

Assisting the Polish democratic opposition

We organised the first consignment to Poland already on 17 or 18 Januar)' 1982. It contained ink, paper, medicine etc. but first and foremost technical assistance. The money came from the first collection in the Cathedral.²⁸

²⁴ Communiqué on 4 January 1982, SSSC-archives at Karta.

²⁵ Interview with Mirosław Ancypa 29.4.2006.

²⁶ For example: Unknown, "Hungerstrejken i domkyrkan på femte dygnet" *Sydsvenska Dagbladet Snällposten*, 2.1.1982. SSSC-archives at Karta.

²⁷ See the Statute for the Solidarity Support Committee, Southern Sweden, SSSC-archives at Karta.

²⁸ Interview with Józef Lebenbaum 25.4.2006.

Consignments to Poland were a form of activity that the Committee maintained during the whole of its active existence until 1989. They consisted mainly of printed matter and technical equipment for the underground Solidarity movement, with the exception of the first six months of martial law, when the Committee dispatched some humanitarian help for the imprisoned activists and their families. Subsequently, the Committee members agreed that humanitarian help was already organised by other organisations like the Red Cross, the Swedish Church, and even the Swedish Post Office, as all packages were sent to Poland free of charge as a gesture of solidarity on behalf of the Swedish State²⁹. Therefore, the Committee was able to focus on direct assistance to the opposition.³⁰

The Committee's 1986 report about its activities in its application for funds to the American organisation *National Endowment for Democracy* gives an idea of the kind of materials the Committee sent to Poland:

During this period (January-September 1986) we purchased and dispatched to twelve resistance groups and underground publishing houses in Poland a very substantial amount of printing equipment, video equipment, microfiche equipment and complete microfiche sets, books and periodicals.³¹

The materials mainly contained items that were essential for the underground printing shops, e.g. ink, paper and printing equipment, but also cameras, film, and sometimes even money, in accordance with what the different branches of underground Solidarity were asking for.³² The Committee also sent substantial amounts of books, both in normal and miniature size, not only to Poland, but also to Ukraine, Lithuania, Hungary and even the Soviet Union. In the application mentioned above, the Committee reported that during the first eight months of 1986 they had sent 3,555 kilos of Polish books, 1,051 kg of periodicals, 117 kg of English books, 1,459 kg of Russian books and 4,000 kg of miniature books to Poland. One kilogram is, according to the

²⁹ Interview with Janina Ahlgren 3.5.2006.

³⁰ Interview with Mirosław Ancypo 29.4.2006.

³¹ Application to National Endowment for Democracy 1986. SSSC-archives at Karta.

³² Interview with Józef Lebenbaum 26.4.2006.

application, estimated to be four books - naturally more when it comes to miniatures that fit into a shoe.³³ Calculating with four books per kilogram, it means that 14,220 Polish books alone were sent!

Even self-defence aid and equipment for listening to the police radio was smuggled. Józef Lebenbaum says:

By self-defence aid I mean the kind of things that girls carry around in cities to avoid being attacked and to be able to escape if something happens, i.e. small gas-powered or electric weapons. I thought it was quite okay to send that kind of things. They were no real weapons, but they could give one that precious minute to get out of an underground printing shop if the police found it.³⁴

Consignments were often organised in cooperation with other organisations and institutions, such as Solidarity's Brussels office³⁵ or various Polish publishing houses in the West. According to Mirosław Ancypa, who was involved in the practicalities of smuggling, there were two important centres in Europe for smuggling to Poland, namely Paris and Lund.³⁶ A considerable amount of material reached Poland via Lund, and a small part of it was actually financed from the Committee's own limited resources. A look into the Committee's balance sheets reveals, for example, that in 1983 it sent self-financed material for 20.000 Swedish Crowns (SEK), and in 1984 for 15.000 SEK.³⁷ Most of the Committee's income came from collections, sales of photo albums, Solidarity t-shirts, tickets for its cultural activities, etc. The income from collections fell every year and in 1984 reached the

³³ Application to National Endowment for Democracy 1986. SSSC-archives at Karta.

³⁴ Interview with Józef Lebenbaum 26.4.2006.

³⁵ An institution created with the aim of supporting the Polish independent trade union "Solidarność", financed by the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU).

³⁶ Interview with Mirosław Ancypa 29.4.2006. This view was also expressed by the well-known former Polish dissident Bogdan Borusewicz at the seminar on Swedish assistance to the Polish democratic opposition, held in Warsaw in March 2004; recorded by Barbara Törnquist-Plewa.

³⁷ The Support Committee for Solidarity, Southern Sweden; Balance sheets 1983 and 1984. Material received from Jan Axel Stoltz.

low point of 1.500 SEK.³⁸ Therefore the Committee turned to different organisations with applications for funds. The significant support it received came from two sources. The Swedish State allocated employment subsidies to the Committee, enabling four people to work there, Lebenbaum for the whole period when the Committee was active and others for shorter periods. The other important source of support for the Committee was the National Endowment for Democracy, an independent American institution created in 1983 and still in existence, whose aim is to support democratic development around the world. This institution granted money to the Committee on several occasions: 30.000 USD in 1986, 51.000 USD in 1987, and 39.000 USD in 1988.³⁹

However, the amounts granted by the National Endowment for Democracy contribute only partially towards a picture of the value and size of the Committee's assistance to Poland. This is because the role of the Committee in Lund was primarily to channel assistance to the underground Solidarity movement coming from all over the world.⁴⁰ With its geographical proximity to Poland and its well-developed organisation (including own premises and technical equipment), the Committee was well suited for this purpose.

Thus the Committee did not buy all the material it dispatched, as a substantial quantity thereof was donated by different organisations, for example the Swedish trade unions. Moreover, a structure called the Independent Polish Agency (IPA), with its own finances, was created within the Committee in 1983. Its main tasks were dispatching and smuggling goods into Poland. Since the IPA's activities were secret and therefore are only partly documented, no exact figures concerning their activities are available. An indication of the scale of materials that transited through Lund can be found in an interview with Józef Lebenbaum in the *International Herald Tribune* in July 1988.⁴¹ Lebenbaum stated that

³⁸ Yearly balance sheets of the Support Committee for Solidarity, Southern Sweden from 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985. Material received from Jan Axel Stoltz.

³⁹ Interview with Józef Lebenbaum for the periodical *Obraz* published underground in Szczecin, 1988, SSSC-archives at Karta.

⁴⁰ Interview with Józef Lebenbaum 24.5.2006.

⁴¹ Pear Robert, "U.S. Assists Emigrés in Smuggling Illicit Material to Polish Dissidents", *International Herald Tribune*. 11.7.1988. SSSC-archives at Karta.

he had dispatched in 1987 a total of nearly 4,500 kg of various goods, financed both by the Committee and the IPA, as well as materials which were smuggled into Poland on behalf of others, mainly the Solidarity Office in Brussels. A representative of the Brussels office, Marian Kaleta was in continuous contact with the Committee in Lund and frequently benefited from its help while organising secret transportations of goods for Solidarity underground structures in Poland⁴²

The Independent Polish Agency

The need to create the Independent Polish Agency was due to two facts: firstly, the Committee had collected and had continuous access to so much information and visual material (photos, tapes and videotapes) from Poland that an independent press agency responding to the demand from Western media seemed like a good idea.⁴³ The second reason was that the Committee acted openly, but the part of activities connected to smuggling books and equipment to Poland had to be kept secret from the public and not even reported to all the members of the Committee. Józef Lebenbaum recalled: *"I knew quite well that there were agents around me. There were some I suspected and for sure many that I didn't have a clue about"*.⁴⁴

Jan Axel Stoltz, who was familiar with Swedish organisational culture, convinced the others that creating an Independent Polish Agency but keeping it as a structure inside the Committee was the most advantageous solution. He explains:

In Sweden so much work is done in organisations. The Independent Polish Agency (IPA) could have been an independent company, but we didn't really work in order to make a profit. We could have organised it as a foundation, but there are special rules for that as well. What we needed was a kind of an independent branch, a kind of another Committee, but still inside the Swedish Solidarity Support Committee.⁴⁵

⁴² Interview with Józef Lebenbaum 24.5.2006.

⁴³ Interview with Jan Axel Stoltz 21.3.2006.

⁴⁴ Interview with Józef Lebenbaum 25.4.2006.

⁴⁵ Interview with Jan Axel Stoltz 19.4.2006.

Thus it was decided that the IPA would remain as part of the Committee.⁴⁶ It had the benefit of working under the already established and appreciated name of the Solidarity Support Committee as well as using its own independent status and name when needed.

Over time, four people worked for the IPA and the Committee. One of the advantages of remaining an organisation was that it received support from the Swedish State, not for the Committee's general activities, but in the form of government subsidies to stimulate employment. Józef Lebenbaum became the IPA's full-time director. Mirosław Ancypo worked periodically during some two years, taking care of the huge archives already collected.⁴⁷ Even Joanna Winter and Andrzej Koraszewski worked periodically in the office, with salaries paid out of government subsidies, Joanna for more than two years and Andrzej for at least half a year. In April 1983, the Committee rented premises for the IPA and its own needs, for instance for meetings, at Östra Mårtensgatan in Lund.⁴⁸

The IPA was an agency for the distribution of pictures from Poland to the media and other organisations, but it also acted indirectly as a kind of cover for the Committee's more secret work. That the Committee sent consignments to Poland was known to everyone and could be read about in its minutes; however, the secret part was the answer to the questions of when and how they were sent, and by whom. It was only Lebenbaum who knew all the contacts and was in charge of them.⁴⁹ The rest of the Committee had only a limited knowledge of all the materials and sums that passed through Lund to Poland. Lebenbaum recollects:

One thing that was absolutely secret was the correspondence with Walesa and other underground key persons in Poland, which went through my hands. In Paris, London and Brussels people knew that I could fix couriers that got through.⁵⁰

Most of the Committee members knew only little about the details. What they knew was, for example, that the Committee

⁴⁶ The minutes of the annual meeting 1.3.1984. SSSC-archive at Karta.

⁴⁷ Interview with Mirosław Ancypo 29.4.2006.

⁴⁸ The minutes of the Board meeting 5.4.1983. SSSC-archive at Karta.

⁴⁹ Interview with Mirosław Ancypo 29.4.2006.

⁵⁰ Interview with Józef Lebenbaum 25.4.2006.

cooperated with Solidarity's Brussels office, but they had no detailed information about what kind of cooperation it was. Janina Ahlgren says: "*I acted as secretary for the Committee from 1983 or 1984, but mostly it was only a formality. They worked with sensitive things, I respected that and didn 't ask*".⁵¹

There were people whom Lebenbaum persuaded not to become visibly active in the Committee, but instead to stand aside and help in the wings. In that way they could continue travelling to Poland.⁵²

There was a whole network of contacts. The Committee transmitted material received from the Brussels office or Polish publishing houses in the West, as well as material they had bought, received as donations or, in the case of many books, printed themselves. Mirosław Ancypo relates:

We stored most of our things in my cellar, the books, printing machines etc...Then we had some more secret stockrooms, because relatively many people knew that there were things at my place. /.../ We rented the lorries that drove to Poland because you couldn't really send the same lorry many times. The Brussels office bought a small lorry, with a special fake wall behind the driving cab, we used that one several times but painted it in different colours between trips. We never did anything illegal in Sweden, the Swedish security police was always aware of what we did. That was a safety guarantee for us too, we wanted them to see that it was not drugs or similar things that we were smuggling. And these big lorries went through Swedish customs. If the Swedish customs had written in the documents that there was printing equipment inside they would have never gone through Polish customs. So it was called humanitarian help.⁵³

Books, money and correspondence would also be smuggled in by individuals. Janina Ahlgren for instance smuggled correspondence in the ditty nappies of her new-born baby.⁵⁴

We gave books to Poles who travelled to Poland and who wanted to take the risk. Certainly, some of those books were left in Sweden for family and friends and some were dropped into the sea before arriving in Poland, but I think many got into Poland as well. I

⁵¹ Interview with Janina Ahlgren 3.5.2006.

⁵² Interview with Józef Lebenbaum 26.4.2006.

⁵³ Interview with Mirosław Ancypo 29.4.2006.

⁵⁴ Interview with Janina Ahlgren 3.5.2006.

usually sent correspondence, letters and floppy discs with foreigners, but never many times with the same person. Sometimes they were sent from Copenhagen, sometimes from Lund, sometimes I bought airplane tickets for the couriers. The most important thing was not to get into routines.⁵⁵

It was useful to know when a friendly customs officer was on duty, the one that would not check the lorry or the passenger cars used for smuggling.⁵⁶ As far as Lebenbaum knew large loads were sent to one place and the material was later distributed from there, because it was viewed as more secure than driving around Poland with a big lorry.⁵⁷ There were naturally only limited possibilities of knowing if the transport had reached its destination, but there were some common tricks. A thank-you message in an underground publication for "Barbara" or another code name meant that the consignment had reached its destination.⁵⁸

Often the couriers were volunteers, and from time to time they got caught. In February 1986 Lennart Järn, a Swedish driver with a lorry full of material, worth some 300,000 US dollars, was caught in Świnoujście. It was one of the large transports that Lebenbaum's group made on behalf of the Solidarity office in Brussels. Järn was sentenced to two and a half years in prison, but was bailed out by the Committee for Lennart Järn, which was organised by the Swedish Solidarity Support Committee and the IPA in Lund.⁵⁹ At that time the Committee received considerably less flattering publicity. The press was questioning the Committee's way of putting common people at risk when they drove the lorries to Poland, and claimed that the Committee didn't show enough responsibility for the situation it had created.⁶⁰

The traffic did not go only one way. A periodical called *Niepodległość*, published underground in Poland, was smuggled from Poland to Sweden, where the Committee reprinted it because of its poor technical quality and distributed it later to Poles in the West.

⁶¹Photos, undeveloped films, poems etc. were transported

⁵⁵ Interview with Józef Lebenbaum 26.4.2006.

⁵⁶ Interview with Jan Axel Stoltz 21.3.2006.

⁵⁷ Interview with Józef Lebenbaum 26.4.2006.

⁵⁸ Interview with Mirosław Ancypio 29.4.2006.

⁵⁹ For more about Järn see interviews in Puchalska, K. 2006: pp. 144-145.

⁶⁰ Interview with Jan Axel Stoltz 21.3.2006.

⁶¹ Interview with Józef Lebenbaum 25.4.2006.

to Sweden with some friendly couriers and the Committee distributed them to the Western world.

Helping Polish refugees

In the very beginning the most urgent priority for the Committee was support for Polish refugees. There were considerable numbers of Poles in Sweden on 13 December 1981 when martial law was imposed overnight in their home country. Jan Axel Stoltz says: *"In our view all of them should be allowed to stay. Everybody was afraid to go back home in those circumstances. It didn't matter why they were in Sweden."*⁶²

In January 1982 the Committee sent a delegation to Stockholm to meet Immigration Minister Karin Andersson. They asked her to allow all the Poles in Sweden who did not want to return to their country to stay, and to set a special quota for Polish refugees and for family reunification.⁶³ A couple of *days* later the Swedish government granted asylum to all Poles in Sweden at that time, an unusual and, in comparison to other countries, very generous gesture.

We felt that we had probably had at least a little influence on that. After this the Swedish State actually organised most of the help needed. We also visited the new Immigration Minister after the elections in the autumn of 1982. It was quite probable that even more Poles would try to come to Sweden and we wanted to have a positive influence on the government's attitude towards them.⁶⁴

The cultural activities the Committee organised were one way by which the new refugees could stay in touch with the culture of their homeland. The Committee organised lectures and meetings with Polish intellectuals known for their resistance to the Polish Communist regime, for example Gustaw Herling Grudziński, Jan Nowak Jeziorański, Jan Strzelecki, Andrzej Drawicz and Dominik Morawski.⁶⁵ Otherwise, support to refugees mainly consisted of unofficial personal help in various difficult situations. The Com-

⁶² Interview with Jan Axel Stoltz 21.3.2006.

⁶³ An appeal to the Swedish government and immigration minister Karin Andersson 21.1.1982. SSSC-archives at Karta.

⁶⁴ Interview with Jan Axel Stoltz 24.5.2006.

⁶⁵ See report about it in SSSC-archives at Karta.

mittee occasionally wrote official statements to Swedish authorities, supporting opposition activists who had fled from Poland and applied for political refugee status in Sweden.⁶⁶

Information about the situation in Poland

Influencing public opinion in the West and especially in Sweden was as important for the Committee as sending material to underground Solidarity. During the first years of its existence the Committee concentrated on lobbying against martial law, and after the formal suspension of this in June 1983 strived to keep the Western public and politicians informed about the continuing oppression of the opposition in Poland. The Committee spread both news and photos from Poland, organised demonstrations against the Communist regime and organised exhibitions about Solidarity.

The Committee established good relations with the press already during the hunger strikes in Lund Cathedral. The group was soon discovered to be a reliable source about developments in Poland. On 20 April 1982 the Committee wrote an open letter to the editors-in-chief of the main Swedish newspapers stating:

The Solidarity Support Committee, Southern Sweden, has for some time now provided Swedish media and international news agencies with news and information from martial law Poland. We enclose our latest communiqué with this letter. Our information activities about the Polish situation are based on years of contact with the democratic opposition in Poland. We have been able to maintain the majority of these contacts even after the imposition of martial law.⁶⁷

In 1985 an article published in *Sydsvenska Dagbladet Snällposten* estimated the total amount of press communiqués delivered by the Committee and the IPA to be around thirty.⁶⁸ Most of them had been issued during the first spring (1982), and had contained breaking news as well as information about the situation in Poland. A press communiqué of 15 February 1982, for example,

⁶⁶ Interview with Jan Axel Stoltz 24.5.2006. See also several of these statements collected in the Karta archive.

⁶⁷ An open letter to the editors-in-chief 20.4.1982. SSSC-archives at Karta.

⁶⁸ Unknown, "Unika bilder från Polen i Lundaarkiv sprids till hela västvärld", *Sydsvenska Dagbladet Snällposten*. 7.1.1985. SSSC-archive at Karta.

had the following headlines: "*Gdansk totally isolated*", "*Radom besieged by the ndlitaiv*", "*Lists over inmates a state secret*", "*Camp for women inmates in Goldab*", "*Rationing cards for bread*"⁶⁹.

In May 1982 the Committee was able to disclose information that the Polish regime was planning to give one-way passports to a few hundred thousand people in order to diminish pressure from former Solidarity activists on the government. Since Sweden was the only Western country Poles could travel to without a visa, this was important news.⁷⁰ Józef Lebenbaum was interviewed for the main television news programme *Rapport* on the subject, which was also widely picked up by newspapers.⁷¹

Another piece of brealdng news was that the Pope had postponed but not cancelled his planned visit to Poland, as well as the fact that martial law would not be suspended on its first anniversary. In May 1982 the Committee informed that another wave of arrests of Solidarity activists was on its way.⁷²

When the arrests took place as we have announced, Tomas Ham-berg from TT [Tidningarnas telegrambyrå, the Swedish news agency] called me to congratulate us. Naturally, not on the arrests, but on the accurate information we had been able to deliver.⁷³

Journalists seemed to appreciate the information the Committee provided, since many of the articles written about the Committee during those years began by mentioning its ability to deliver reliable pieces of news.⁷⁴

Most of the news came via Józef Lebenbaum's remaining contacts in Poland.

When I left Poland I was 38, not 18. I was a well-known journalist, with many different contacts in government circles, among the police etc. I had never revealed a secret. So for different reasons, people who wanted to give information to the outside world contacted me in various ways, especially during the beginning of martial law when Poland was closed. But it wasn't closed for me.⁷⁵

⁶⁹ Press communiqué on 15.2.1982. SSSC-archives at Karta.

⁷⁰ Press communiqué on 4.5.1982. SSSC-archives at Karta.

⁷¹ For example: Widing, Hans, op.cit.

⁷² Interview with Jan Axel Stoltz, 21.3.2006. See also Brandone, Bodil, op.cit.

⁷³ Interview with Jan Axel Stoltz, 21.3.2006.

⁷⁴ For example: Widing, Hans.op.cit.Brandoné, Bodil, op.cit.

⁷⁵ Interview with Józef Lebenbaum 25.4.2006.

Information about the situation in Poland was also available via local radio in Malmö. The Committee co-operated with the local radio station by broadcasting a one-hour programme once a week. Being employed by the Committee, Andrzej Koraszewski began work with the broadcasts in 1982:

At that time there were many Poles in Malmö who had recently arrived in Sweden and there was a need for information. We mostly reported on the situation in Poland and broadcast local information.⁷⁶

Besides providing the public and the press around the world with news, the Committee started to collect and distribute photos from Poland. Józef Lebenbaum recalls:

Two English journalists came to me in the beginning of the martial law period. They asked for addresses to people who were active in the underground opposition. I told them that I could do them the favour and give them the addresses, if they would take some photos in Poland for me. That is how I got the first 80 photos and the whole idea. The driver of our first consignment also took pictures in Poland. In total we had over 20.000 photos relating to Solidarity which I handed over to the Karta archives in Poland in 2003.⁷⁷

The Committee smuggled cameras and film into Poland together with other material and got photos or undeveloped film smuggled back into Sweden.⁷⁸ Often the photos and the film rolls were in poor condition and pictures had to be reconstructed from pieces, but luckily the group received the help of a professional photographer, Wojciech Jasiński.⁷⁹ The photos the Committee then distributed to the world were more revealing about Jaruzelski's Poland than many written records. Today they constitute a valuable source material for the researchers dealing with this historical period.

As well as providing the Western press with photographic material, the Committee published photos in three large books. The first of them, with the Polish and English title: *Polska 13 grudden 1981 - Wojna z Narodem. Poland December 13th 1981 – The*

⁷⁶ Interview with Andrzej Koraszewski 22.5.2006.

⁷⁷ Interview with Józef Lebenbaum 25.4.2006.

⁷⁸ Interview with Jan Axel Stoltz 21.3.2006.

⁷⁹ Interview with Maria Paulsson 22.4.2006.

War against the Nation, was published on the first anniversary of the imposition of martial law in December 1982 and was greeted with considerable interest in the West.⁸⁰ A copy was sent to President Ronald Reagan, who acknowledged it with a letter.⁸¹ The Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the NATO countries who attended a meeting in Copenhagen found copies of the book on their desks with a note:

Any help or support for a regime, which has declared war against its own nation, is immoral. The Polish nation — and its Solidarity movement — deserves all humanitarian help and moral support. The destiny of European democracies is also dependent on its struggle. Do bear this in mind while discussing Polish issues. Please accept our album. *The Supporting Committees for "Solidarność" in Sweden and Denmark*⁸²

The International Literary Fund in New York, which dealt especially with the purchase of books for underground distribution in Eastern Europe, bought 300 copies of the book and the Committee smuggled them into Poland.⁸³ The second book of photos published by the IPA in 1984 with the title *Polska po 13 grudnia 1981. Pejzaż poetycki* ('Poland after 13 December 1981 - A poetic Landscape') also contained underground poetry smuggled out of Poland. The third book, on life in Warsaw between 1980 and 1986 with the title *Warszawa. Lata 1980-86. Impresje bez retuszu*, ('Warsaw in the Years 1980-1986. Without retouching') was published in 1987.

In January 1982 Józef Lebenbaum managed to smuggle the uniform of a *Zomo*, the widely hated Polish riot police, into Sweden. It could be viewed at an exhibition the Committee held to inform about the situation in Poland during the first months of martial law, first in Lund and then in Stockholm.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ Unknown, "Unika bilder från Polen i Lundaarkiv sprids till hela västvärlden", . Sydsvenska Dagbladet Snällposten 7.1.1985. SSSC-archives at Karta.

⁸¹ Interview with Jan Axel Stoltz 21.3.2006.

⁸² Press communiqué about the book *The War against the Nation* distributed to foreign ministers of NATO-countries 21.12.1982. SSSC-archives at Karta. See also Puchalska, op.cit. p. 139.

⁸³ Interview with Józef Lebenbaum 24.5.2006.

⁸⁴ Interview with Maria Paulsson 22.4.2006.

The Committee held several exhibitions during those years, both in Sweden and abroad. Usually these consisted of specimens from the enormous photo collection about Solidarity and examples of publications printed in underground printing houses in Poland. One of the exhibitions mounted by the Committee could be viewed in Oslo when Lech Wałęsa received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1983, and later that same year it travelled to Washington.⁸⁵

The Committee also organised demonstrations, mostly in Lund and Malmö. On 30 January 1982 it held a large demonstration in Lund together with all the political parties represented in Lund town council. The day had been proclaimed by underground Solidarity as an official protest day all over the world. The demonstrators were marching with placards such as *"For free and democratic Poland.¹"*, *"Humanitarian help —yes, credits - no"*, *"Isolate the militaiy regimet'*, *"Respect the Helsinki agreement?"*⁸⁶

Demonstrations were held until the end of the 1980s on the anniversaries of the Gdansk agreement between the government and Solidarity on 31 augusti 1980 and of the imposition of martial law on 13 December 1981.⁸⁷ Many Swedes joined the Poles in these demonstrations.⁸⁸

Attacks on the Committee

The IPA's and the Committee's work caused trouble for the Polish military regime. In an interview book from 1992, General Władysław Pożoga, head of Polish espionage and counterespionage during the 1980s, says about Marian Kaleta (a representative for Solidarity office in Sweden) and Lebenbaum's group in Lund:

You cannot imagine the mountains of material they transported. You could have equipped several big printing houses with it.⁸⁹

⁸⁵ Interview with Józef Lebenbaum 24.5.2006.

⁸⁶ A letter to the political parties and unions, 25.1.1982. SSSC-archives at Karta.

⁸⁷ Flyers for the demonstrations. SSSC-archives at Karta.

⁸⁸ Interview with Bożena Werbart 3.5.2006.

⁸⁹ Piecuch Henryk, *„Wojciech Janielski tego nigdy nie powie” mówi bjlj s^ef nymiadn i kon/niwiadii, pieiwsy następcza ministra spraw wewnqtr^iich generat dywizji Władysław Pożoga*, Agencja Reporter. Warszawa 1992.

One sign of the regime's irritation were the frequent attacks on Józef Lebenbaum in Polish media. He reported this in an interview for *Sydsvenska Dagbladet Snällposten* on 2 January 1983:

They claim that I escaped from Poland with lots of money which I supposedly invested in this luxurious villa. It is neither luxurious nor mine.... The Polish authorities know what I'm involved in and naturally it disturbs them. They can't operate in silence; on the contrary, the world constantly gets information about their activities.⁹⁰

In Lund there were Polish agents, who did their best to disturb the work of the Committee. Mirosław Ancypo describes this:

At our open meetings there was always somebody who started to question our work, insinuating that we were keeping the money for ourselves or something similar. Other attempts were more sophisticated. People came to our meetings and started to argue that we shouldn't help the opposition, but rather the common people by sending humanitarian help. But there were other organisations for that. I'm sure some of these people were inspired by the Polish security service.⁹¹

In the Committee's minutes there is a decision about excluding one of its members from the Committee for their "disloyalty".⁹²

Some attacks on the Committee came from the activists of other Polish organisations. For instance, Krzysztof Cierpisz and Stanisław Dyba wrote a letter to the Sweden-wide Polish immigrant organisation *Kongres Polaków w Svecji*, accusing the Committee of being anti-Polish, anti-Catholic and ruled by Jews and Trotskyists. They appealed to the Poles in Sweden not to have any contacts with the Committee⁹³. The anti-Semitic accusations were mostly targeted at Lebenbaum as the group's leader.⁹⁴ Jan Axel Stoltz explains, amazed:

⁹⁰ Brandone, Bodil, op.cit.

⁹¹ Interview with Mirosław Ancypo 29.4.2006.

⁹² See the minutes from the Committee's meeting on 21.1.1983, SSSC-archives at Karta.

⁹³ See the letter and the protocol of the Committee's meeting 24.4.1983. SSSC-archives at Karta.

⁹⁴ Interview with Maria Paulsson 22.4.2006.

It took me a while to understand that what they meant by calling us anti-Polish was that they accused us of having so many Polish Jews in the Committee.⁹⁵

Józef Lebenbaum's membership of the Polish Communist party prior to 1968 was an easy target for any critics. He explains:

It is difficult to understand for outsiders. If you wanted to be active in that society the party was the place you could try to have some influence. I was even then called a revisionist; my opinions didn't correspond to the official line.⁹⁶

Thus the Polish immigrant group in southern Sweden was divided in its reactions towards the Committee.

There was a large group of Poles in Sweden who had normal contacts with Poland and with the Polish consulate in Malmö. They travelled to Poland as ordinär' visitors and were scared of getting in touch with us.⁹⁷

The attacks on the Committee were made both in Polish newspapers and in letters to the editors of Swedish local newspapers. The Committee saw these attacks mostly as provocations inspired by the Polish Secret Police and responded to them by a statement published in *Sydsvenska Dagbladet Snällposten* on 15 January 1983. It ran as follows:

All the material and money collected for Solidarity has been and will be used as said during the collections. Not a penny has gone to France or to any other country than Poland. ... Claims that the Committee is distributing leaflets insulting Pope John Paul II, the Polish Catholic Church and Lech Walesa are also pure lies and besides, just nonsense. ... We interpret the letter sent to the editor as an intended provocation. The Committee's work has disturbed the Polish military regime. It is not surprising that ever since our Committee was founded it has been subjected to a constant campaign against it in Polish mass media, as well as to organised rumours and criticism in Sweden. These claims have only one goal both in Sweden and in Poland: To diminish the support for

⁹⁵ Interview with Józef Lebenbaum & Jan Axel Stoltz 30.5.2006.

⁹⁶ Interview with Józef Lebenbaum 24.5.2006.

⁹⁷ Interview with Józef Lebenbaum 26.4.2006.

Solidarity and to question the information the Committee is passing on from Poland.⁹⁸ But the propaganda and provocations were relatively innocent compared with the actions the military security service took. According to Mirosław Ancypo:

They rented an apartment right opposite ours at Östra Mårtensgatan and filmed the people coming in and out. This we got to know from the archives only after 1989. We never talked about important things in our office, only in the street, because we were quite sure that they were bugging our office.⁹⁹

Janina Ahlgren had always preferred to know as little as possible about the Committee's secret work. Still, she didn't feel secure in Lund.

Once when I was walking in the street in Lund someone just ran up, took a photo of me and ran away again. When I applied for a visa to Poland I was summoned to the Polish consulate here in Malmö. They compared me to the IRA and Hider. It was really unpleasant.¹⁰⁰

But Ahlgren was still able to travel to Poland, something which many of the more actively involved in the Committee didn't even dare to try. Józef Lebenbaum says:

Somewhere around 1982 or 1983 I got to know from contacts in Washington that there were plans to kill me. They told me to hide, but what could I do, live in a bunker? But I'm still alive so I suppose these plans never got the green light from the politicians, naturally it was a political burden when people got killed.¹⁰¹

Sleeping at night during those times was not easy, Lebenbaum admits.

⁹⁸ Answer to a Letter to the Editor: "Provokation möts med öppna möten," *Sydsvenska Dagbladet Siiä/lposten*. 15.1.1983. SSSC-archive at Karta.

⁹⁹ Interview with Mirosław Ancypo 29.4.2006.

¹⁰⁰ Interview with Janina Ahlgren 3.5.2006.

¹⁰¹ Interview with Józef Lebenbaum 25.4.2006.

Cooperation and independence

A characteristic trait of the Committee's activities was that it avoided being dependent on one source or one organisation, and that it wanted to support the whole spectrum of the democratic opposition in Poland without taking sides for rightists or leftists within the movement. The Committee's help went not only to the underground Solidarity structures, but also to other oppositional organisations that were more radical in their demands, for example the KPN (Confederation for Independent Poland) and *Solidarność Walcząca* (Fighting Solidarity). Sometimes the Committee was criticised for it¹⁰² but stubbornly avoided commitments inside the Polish democratic movement and was also prepared to act as an intermediary for the help coming from Solidarity supporters of different ideological hues; both from the trade unions and the National Endowment for Democracy. The Committee's primary goal was democracy and freedom — to create a free space to act for all ideologies. In Lebenbaum's words:

I always told people working with me: you can have your political opinions but if you want to build democracy in Poland, you have to help everybody. Hopefully, one day, it would be up to the Polish people to decide which of these groups would survive.¹⁰³

There were basically two kinds of networks supporting Solidarity from abroad. The first one was connected to the ICFTU (*Internationa/ Confederation of Free Trade Unions*). This was natural, since Solidarity was basically a trade union and could easily be seen as part of the worldwide trade union movement. The ICFTU financed an official representative Solidarity office in Brussels, which in turn had representative offices in Paris and in Stockholm, the latter generously supported by LO (*Landsorganisationen*, the Swedish Trade Union Confederation).¹⁰⁴ This structure sent considerable amounts of material and money to Poland, often via Lund. When the Independent Polish Agency was created in Lund

¹⁰² Jan Axel Stolz spoke about this in his presentation at the conference "Ostersjönationernas relationer och ömsesidiga kulturpåverkan; med fokus på Skandinavien och Polen", Lund, September 2005.

¹⁰³ Interview with Józef Lebenbaum 25.4.2006.

¹⁰⁴ Misgeld, Klaus, "Solidaritet med Solidaritet. Den svenska arbetarrörelsen och demokratirörelsen i Polen kring 1980", *Arbetarhistoria*, nr 4, 2006.

in 1983 and got its own office, the Brussels Solidarity office was, according to Józef Lebenbaum, interested in connecting the IPA to its own network by making Lund an official representative office like the ones in Stockholm and Paris. Lebenbaum refused because he did not want any formal commitments but at the same time he declared his readiness to cooperate with the office in Brussels.¹⁰⁵

The second kind of network supporting Solidarity abroad consisted of many independent support committees all around the world like the one in Lund, naturally cooperating with Brussels, but not part of its structure. They began to get together first in the USA, Canada and Europe, and around 1985 established a worldwide confederation.

I remember that in 1984 a man came from the USA to Lund. He was the leader of the American support committees. They were building a cooperative umbrella organisation in the United States and Canada and wanted to widen it to encompass Europe and other continents. He soon discovered that Lund was the best place in Europe to establish a secretariat for the Conference of Solidarity Supporting Organisations. We had contacts and an office with computers etc. We convinced our European colleagues to cooperate.¹⁰⁶

Lund thus came to host the secretariat for CSSO, the Conference of Solidarity Supporting Organisations, and the active people in the Committee began working for it. Józef Lebenbaum became the European coordinator, later world coordinator.¹⁰⁷ He was then one of the leaders of the CSSO, next to its world moderator Andre Blaszczyński from the USA.¹⁰⁸ But what made Lebenbaum suddenly decide on such a commitment when he always had avoided one?

CSSO was a coordinating committee. The member organisations were independent, they got together to help Solidarity, without directors or any unified policy. I don't remember if we even had any rules. That was something I could say "yes please" to.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵ Interview with Józef Lebenbaum 25.4.2006.

¹⁰⁶ Interview with Józef Lebenbaum 25.4.2006.

¹⁰⁷ Interview with Józef Lebenbaum & Jan Axel Stoltz 30.5.2006.

¹⁰⁸ Fore information about Blaszczyński and the CSSO see <http://library.ccsu.edu/about/departments/cpaa/personal/blaszczny.htm>

¹⁰⁹ Interview with Józef Lebenbaum 25.4.2006.

In an article in the Swedish newspaper *Arbetet* on 26 August 1986 Józef Lebenbaum also explained why there was a need to unite the committees and begin to coordinate their actions.

There is a tendency in the West to normalize relations with the military regime in Poland. Solidarity is beginning to be viewed as more of a symbol rather than an ongoing battle.¹¹⁰

In the mid-1980s nobody could see the developments of 1989 coming and the memory of Solidarity was beginning to fade into the same category of failed revolutions as Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968.

The decision to make Lund the secretariat for the Conference of Solidarity Supporting Organisations was taken at a meeting in New Jersey, USA in 1985.¹¹¹ The IPA office in Östra Mårtensgatan suddenly became the secretariat for an organisation with about 22 member organisations from four continents¹¹². Its main tasks were to provide a platform for the exchange of ideas and experience, facilitate cooperation on projects and coordinate the solidarity actions in different countries, thus giving them more limelight and political strength.¹¹³ The first secretary of CSSO was Jan Axel Stoltz, who within two years was succeeded by Mirosław Ancypo.

The new secretariat organised the CSSO's third annual conference in Lund on 22-25 August 1986. With some 50 participants it was the CSSO's largest conference up to then.¹¹⁴ Lech Wałęsa sent his greetings to the conference via an American support committee, saying he considered the CSSO's work important for

¹¹⁰ Hansson, Christer, "Lund centrum för kampen mot militärstyret i Polen", *Arbetet* 26.8.1986.

¹¹¹ Hedenbro, Marianne, "Internationellt möte för polskt motstånd.", *Sydsvenska Dagbladet Snällposten* 21.8.1986. SSSC-archive at Karta.

¹¹² This number is mentioned in the Committee's letter to Lech Walesa from 23.4.1986. However, the number of organisations connected to the CSSO varied over time. In an interview for the periodical *Obiata* published underground in Szczecin 1988, Lebenbaum said that CSSO represented about 40 Solidarity supporting organisations in the world. SSSC-archive at Karta.

¹¹³ CSSO "Materiały ogólne" 1985, SSSC-archive at Karta, see also the note "Lund blir säte för Solidaritet" in the local newspaper, *Skånska Dagbladet* 22.8.1986.

¹¹⁴ Interview with Józef Lebenbaum and Jan Axel Stoltz, 30.5.2006.

Solidarity. Jerzy Milewski from the Brussels office, Mirosław Cho-jecki, the director of the famous publishing house *Kontakt'm* Paris, and Jacek Kaczmarek, Solidarity's singer and songwriter, were among the guests.¹¹⁵

Józef Lebenbaum and Mirosław Ancypio had good relations with other similar committees even before the Conference of Solidarity Supporting Organisations was established in 1983. There were plenty of committees in the United States and Lebenbaum often travelled there. He also had good relations with Washington via different Solidarity activists, and was invited to lecture at the Department of State for the people responsible for Polish issues, as well as to meet different Congress representatives. Lebenbaum's most important contacts in Washington were Jan Nowak Jeziorański, a well-known publicist and former head of the Polish section of Radio Free Europe,¹¹⁶ and Zbigniew Brzeziński, President Carter's former security advisor.¹¹⁷ These contacts were helpful when the IPA and the Committee applied for funds from the American organisation National Endowment for Democracy.

Swedish Society's Attitudes to the Committee

Beginning with the queues of people wanting to put money in the hunger strikers' collection boxes, the Committee received very positive reactions from the Swedish public. Józef Lebenbaum said in a newspaper interview in 1986 during the CSSO conference: *'We get a lot of sympathy here, even though Lund is almost over-loaded with different international organisations'*.¹¹⁸

Some workers expressed their sympathy in an undated letter to the Committee and Solidarity, accompanying a money donation.

¹¹⁵ Hedenbro, Marianne, op.cit., Unknown, "Lund blir säte för Solidaritet", *Skånska Dagbladet* 22.8.1986. SSSC-archive at Karta.

¹¹⁶ See a letter from Jan Nowak Jeziorański to Józef Lebenbaum dated 22.10. 1985, SSSC-archives at Karta.

¹¹⁷ Interview with Józef Lebenbaum & Jan Axel Stoltz 30.5.2006.

¹¹⁸ Unknown, "Lund blir säte för Solidaritet", *Skånska Dagbladet* 22.8.1986. SSSC-archive at Karta.

We have followed the development in Poland with concern. ... What happens in Poland today is not politics, it is rape. This little gift is more of a moral support than financial help. With this we want to show our involvement with the Polish people, and we hope it will support you in your fight for democracy, justice and a more humane society. *Workgroup 6225, Sydkraft AB, Vellinge.*¹¹⁹

At the demonstration on 30 January 1982, Solidarity's official protest day, all the political parties represented in Lund town council marched side by side from S:t Petri Kyrkogata to Stortorget.¹²⁰ The Committee had good relations with the whole political spectrum.

The Committee received help from the Social Democratic party, and used their office for practicalities like photocopying and faxing at a time when they did not yet have their own premises. The Swedish trade union organisation LO gave it both materials for dispatching to Poland and assistance with practical matters, although it was the Stockholm Solidarity office that was officially connected to it.¹²¹ Lebenbaum was invited to talk at a meeting of the main left-wing party, Vänsterpartiet kommunisterna, which also occasionally attended the Committee's activities. Jan Axel Stoltz visited several local and regional trade unions and social democratic organisations for meetings, and Marek Werbart together with other Committee members visited the regional branch of young social-democrats.¹²²

At the same time Paweł Chylicki got some quite different reactions from members of the Swedish left-wing.

There was particularly one person at my workplace, who said that I was a reactionary, that I worked against my own country. He couldn't understand that the regime was lying. The fact that someone claims to be building a socialist society doesn't mean they are doing so. It was hard to come here and tell all the left-wing young people that what they believed in was built on sand.¹²³

¹¹⁹ Letter from workgroup 6225. SSSC-archives at Karta.

¹²⁰ Interview with Józef Lebenbaum 25.4.2006. See also Committee's letter to the political parties and unions, 25.1.1982. SSSC-archives at Karta.

¹²¹ Interview with Józef Lebenbaum 26.4.2006.

¹²² Interview with Józef Lebenbaum & Jan Axel Stoltz 30.5.2006. See also interview with Mirosław Ancypio 29.4.2006.

¹²³ Interview with Paweł Chylicki 20.4.2006.

The committee was even called Trotskyist by some left-wing groups.¹²⁴ But it was also criticised by right-wing sympathisers. Józef Lebenbaum remembers: *'There were people on the right that thought we were too liberal. They didn't know that we helped many organisations in Poland, even right-wing ones'*.¹²⁵

As to the attitudes of the Swedish state towards the Committee and Solidarity, it seems that the authorities indirectly supported both. The complexity of the situation emerged, for example, during the hunger strikes which the Committee held in the winter of 1982. The government never directly answered the strikers' demands for the Swedish government to take action in the United Nations. At the same time the Swedish Post Office sent all parcels to Poland free of charge and the state granted political refugee status to all Poles that were in Sweden at the moment when martial law was introduced in their country. All these gestures can be interpreted as acts of solidarity with the Polish opposition on the part of the Swedish state. However, as Ulf Eliasson shows in his article about Swedish diplomacy during the first Solidarity years of 1980-81 in Poland¹²⁶, the Swedish government tried to achieve a difficult balance between feelings of obligation to support the struggle for democracy and social justice that Solidarity stood for, and the will to avoid any security risk, especially a worsening of relations with the Soviet Union. Therefore the government was cautious about openly manifesting its support for Solidarity.

However, the Lund Committee often felt that the Swedish state was supporting it. Both the Swedish Security Police and the Customs cooperated with the Committee when it sent material to Poland. As stated previously the Committee also received state employment subsidies, which made it possible for Józef Lebenbaum and three others to work for it. This help took the Committee's capacity to a wholly new level. It could hardly go unnoticed by those approving the subsidies which kind of organisation they were supporting.

¹²⁴ Interview with Maria Paulsson 22.4.2006.

¹²⁵ Interview with Józef Lebenbaum and Jan Axel Stoltz 30.05.2006.

¹²⁶ See Eliasson, Ulf "Diplomatin utmanas? Svenska demokrati och säkerhetsintressen under den polska krisen (1980-1991)" *Arbetshistoria* nr 4, 2006.

The Committee also received support from the Swedish Lutheran Church. What probably was the first Catholic mass since the Reformation was celebrated in the 1000-year-old Lund Cathedral during the first hunger strike. The Committee consisting of people with different religious backgrounds (Jewish, Catholic and Lutheran) gathered in the crypt of the Cathedral along with other supporters.¹²⁷

It was obvious that the Committee had the sympathy of the Head of the Swedish Church, Archbishop Olof Sundby. On the first anniversary of martial law, crosses made of flowers appeared in front of Swedish churches. Józef Lebenbaum and Jan Axel Stoltz recall:

I received a picture from Poland, that is how I got the idea. There had been a big floral cross in one of the main Warsaw squares. When martial law was imposed the tanks crushed it. The Committee sent the picture to the archbishop and asked if similar crosses could be laid out in front of Swedish churches for the anniversary on 13 December 1982. He actually sent a letter to twelve other bishops in Sweden asking them to suggest to the priests in their dioceses that laying out floral crosses was a way to show solidarity with the Polish people.¹²⁸

How much did their actions matter? Summarising remarks

In this article we have endeavoured to reconstruct the history and activities of the Swedish Solidarity Support Committee in Lund, as much as it is possible 15 years after the Committee in 1991 had completed the main part of its activities. However, we are fully aware of the limitations of our study. There still remains more to find out and plenty of material to study in order to make the picture of the Committee more complete. For example, as already mentioned, it is difficult to evaluate the scale and significance of help to the opposition that went to Poland through Lund. The documents of the Committee in the Karta archives testify to the remarkable dynamic activity of the small group of people in Lund, as does the amount of newspaper articles written about the group and by members of it. However, in order to make the evaluation

¹²⁷ Interview with Maria Paulsson 22.4.2006.

¹²⁸ Interview with Józef Lebenbaum 25.4.2006.

more precise the researcher would need to interview recipients of the assistance, i.e. people from the underground organisation in Poland. One should also investigate the archives of the Polish Secret Police in order to find out their estimate of the results of the activities of the Committee in Lund and how they tried to counteract it.

Another question that could be investigated much deeper is the role of the Committee in the Conference of Solidarity Supporting Organisations network. For this purpose there is a need to interview people active in the organisation in different countries. Yet another research task would be to place the Committee in Lund in the context of the overall support for Solidarity given by Swedish society in the years 1980-1989, or in the context of the role of the Polish diaspora in the West in supporting and strengthening the opposition in Poland in those years. These are just a few suggestions for further research. Our hope is that the activities of the Swedish Solidarity Support Committee in Lund will not be forgotten and that the organisation becomes a subject studied by other researchers.

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APPENDIX: The questionnaire

When did you become active in the Support Committee? How did you find out about it?
What was your role in the group? Did you have a special responsibility?
How long were you active?
How much time did work for the Committee take in your everyday life?
How did your role change during the time you were active?
How many people were active in the Committee? Who were the most active ones?
What did the Committee do? Describe the Committee's work and how it developed.
What different responsibilities were there in the Committee?
Which projects were you active in?
What was the reaction the group got in Sweden from the public, etc.?
Did the Committee have a political colour? If not, what was it you were fighting for?
Why were you active in the Committee? What was your personal motivation?
Were you politically active when you worked in the Committee? What are your political opinions today?

Streszczenie

Szwedzki Komitet Poparcia Solidarności i agencja IPA (Independent Polish Agency) w Lund.

Artykuł zawiera historię i opis działalności Szwedzkiego Komitetu Poparcia Solidarności w Lund i będącej jego częścią Agencji IPA. Komitet został założony po wprowadzeniu stanu wojennego w Polsce 13 grudnia 1981 i roku i działał do upadku komunizmu w 1989, choć rozwiązany został formalnie dopiero w 1995. Jako materiały źródłowe posłużyły autorkom dokumenty Komitetu

złożone w archiwum „Karty” w Warszawie, notatki i artykuły) prasowe o Komitecie, a także osiem wywiadów przeprowadzonych z osobami, które wchodziły w skład trzonu grupy, z Józefem Lebenbaumem na czele. Grupa założycielska Komitetu liczyła dwadzieścia osób, ale liczba członków Komitetu dochodziła okresowo do stu osób. Komitet postawił sobie za cel następujące zadania: pomoc i wspieranie opozycji demokratycznej w Polsce, informowanie opinii publicznej na Zachodzie o prześladowaniach działaczy opozycyjnych i o sytuacji polityczno-ekonomicznej w Polsce, a także pomoc dla polskich uciekinierów, którzy znaleźli się w Szwecji po wprowadzeniu stanu wojennego. Od początku swej działalności Komitet postanowił być niezależny politycznie i udzielać pomocy wszystkim organizacjom opozycyjnym niezależnie od ich odcienia politycznego.

Komitet organizował przede wszystkim przerzuty materiałów koniecznych dla działalności podziemnych drukarni (sprzęt, farbę drukarską, papier itp) oraz przerzuty niezależnej literatury i czasopism (najczęściej w mikrofilmach i w miniaturowym formacie). Część tych materiałów zakupiona była z funduszy zdobytych przez Komitet, ale duża część pochodziła od innych organizacji z różnych krajów świata, przede wszystkim z Biura Solidarności w Brukseli. Komitet w Lund pełnił ważną rolę punktu przerzutowo-kontaktowego pomocy dla Solidarności idącej z wielu krajów. Pomocy Solidarności udzielała przede wszystkim Międzynarodowa Federacja Związków Zawodowych (ICFTU) poprzez Biuro Solidarności w Brukseli, ale aktywna była również polska diaspora na Zachodzie zakładająca społeczne komitety poparcia dla Solidarności. Komitety te działające na czterech kontynentach zrzeszyły się w 1985 roku tworząc forum konsultacyjno-kooperacyjne pod nazwą *Conference of Solidarity Support Organisations*. Biuro Komitetu w Lund stało się sekretariatem tej organizacji pełniąc ważną funkcję koordynacyjną.

Komitet miał również duże znaczenie w przekazywaniu prasie na Zachodzie materiałów i zdjęć informujących o sytuacji w Polsce. Specjalnie w tym celu utworzono w 1983 roku w ramach Komitetu tzw. Agencję IPA — *Independent Polish Agency*. Agencja zebrała imponujący materiał fotograficzny, z którego korzystała prasa i organizacje na całym świecie. Komitet przyczyniał się też do utrzymywania zainteresowania opinii publicznej sprawami

polisdmi organizując wystawy, demonstracje i akcje protestacyjne oraz wydając albumy fotograficzne o Polsce.

Co do pomocy dla uciekinierów, to Komitet w 1982 roku poprzez osobiste spotkanie z ówczesną szwedzką minister do spraw imigracji Karin Andersson, przyczynił się do jej decyzji o udzieleniu azylu politycznego wszystkim Polakom, którzy znaleźli się w Szwecji 13 grudnia 1981. Biuro Komitetu i Agencja w Lund stanowiły przez lata ważny punkt spotkań dla Polaków interesujących się sytuacją w kraju. Komitet udostępniał literaturę o sprawach polskich, a także organizował spotkania z ważnymi osobistościami intelektualnymi i politycznymi z diaspory polskiej i z kraju np. Janem Nowakiem Jeziorańskim, Jackiem Kaczmarem, Zygmuntem Herlingiem Gradzińskim czy Janem Strzeleckim. Skupiając wokół siebie wielu Polaków o różnych poglądach politycznych Komitet nie uniknął sporów i krytyki ze strony części polskiej diaspory. Komitet był też przedmiotem prób inwigilacji i prowokacji ze strony polskich tajnych służb.

Niniejszy artykuł jest pierwszą naukową próbą przedstawienia historii Szwedzkiego Komitetu Poparcia Solidarności w Lund. Autorki wyrażają nadzieję, że Komitet ten będzie przedmiotem dalszych badań i w zakończeniu artykułu wychodzą z propozycją paru tematów np. przedstawienia działalności Komitetu w Lund w kontekście roli polskiej diaspory dla rozwoju polskiej opozycji w latach 1980-1989.