TITLE: THE LANGUAGE OF DEMOCRACY AND THE ETHOS OF SOLIDARITY

PART II: THE ETHOS OF SOLIDARITY AS A DISCOURSE OF RESISTANCE

AUTHOR: JANINE HOLC, Loyola College

THE NATIONAL COUNCIL
FOR SOVIET AND EAST EUROPEAN RESEARCH

TITLE VIII PROGRAM

1755 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036
PROJECT INFORMATION:

CONTRACTOR: Loyola College

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Janine Holc

COUNCIL CONTRACT NUMBER: 808-22

DATE: January 6, 1995

COPYRIGHT INFORMATION

Individual researchers retain the copyright on work products derived from research funded by Council Contract. The Council and the U.S. Government have the right to duplicate written reports and other materials submitted under Council Contract and to distribute such copies within the Council and U.S. Government for their own use, and to draw upon such reports and materials for their own studies; but the Council and U.S. Government do not have the right to distribute, or make such reports and materials available, outside the Council or U.S. Government without the written consent of the authors, except as may be required under the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 5 U.S.C. 552, or other applicable law.

1 The work leading to this report was supported in part by contract funds provided by the National Council for Soviet and East European Research, made available by the U. S. Department of State under Title VIII (the Soviet-Eastern European Research and Training Act of 1983, as amended). The analysis and interpretations contained in the report are those of the author(s).
NATIONAL COUNCIL NOTE

This Report is an analysis of the political evolution of "reform" from opposition movement to fragmentation, rivalry and even reversion. It uses political 'discourse' as its analytic instrument, and Poland as its case study. Its relevance to Russia and other countries of the former Soviet bloc will be evident to the reader, and immediate. The Report is in four Parts, as described in the following Executive Summary, Part IV of which is perhaps misleadingly titled. That part opens with a penetrating critique of assumptions about the indigenous political "citizen", derived from Western culture. The de-legalization of abortion, a major political issue in Poland, is analyzed in illustration.

The Council is distributing the Report in four separate Parts, seriatim, on consecutive days beginning on January 5, 1995.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Janine P. Holc
"The Language of Democracy in Post-Communist Poland"

This Report is divided into four parts, as follows:

Part I: The Ethos of Solidarity as a Discourse of Resistance

In this paper, I introduce the idea that the movement called "Solidarity" in Poland, active legally in 1980-81 and illegally in 1982-89, represented itself publicly through a discourse about its guiding ethical principles, or its "ethos." This ethos (in Polish, ethos) provides a crucial way of understanding the movement, its power and its long-term significance. I criticize the mainstream scholarship on social movements as focusing too much on concrete "benefits" of protest and on measurable effects and behaviors; my research has indicated that the Solidarity movement provided not concrete benefits to members, but an alternative way of talking about politics and about political identity. In the paper I explore different approaches to studying political identity and also pose the question of what resistance means to those participating in it. I conclude that we should not evaluate acts of "resistance" according to whether they functioned to hinder the state, but rather according to how they provided alternative ways of creating meaning for a particular community.

Part II: The Content and Form of Ethos Discourse

In this section I examine the way this alternative discourse was constructed, how different people used it, and how it provided meaningful resistance to the Communist Party-ruled state. The ethos of Solidarity included several discrete elements that made sense only when bound together in a specific way and only in the context of opposition to state power. A careful interpretation of Solidarity documents and language shows that these elements were: self-determination, unity, moral guidelines for individual behavior, truth-telling, religiosity and nationalism. Furthermore, all these elements were mediated by gender, that is, they made sense when viewed from the standpoint of a male. Women were major participants in Solidarity, but were accommodated by the ethos discourse on different terms than were men. This point illustrates the manner in which the stated ideology or principles of a movement do not only constitute acts of resistance, but create ways of viewing subjects, or participants, in society at large. In other words, this discourse created identities through which individuals could act.
This section examines form of the ethos discourse as well as its content. Different people prioritized the discrete elements of Solidarity in different ways; for example, the Catholic Church privileged the religiosity of opposition activity. Thus, there were disagreements within Solidarity on this basis; but ethos also provided a range of different ways to invoke opposition values. One could de-emphasize religiosity and still participate fully as a resister. This fluidity gave Solidarity its power and was the reason so many people could join.

The flip side of the variable form of ethos was that there were indeed limits to the identities it could include. Indeed, if this were not so, the movement would have no meaning at all. Because of this, Solidarity was often as exclusionary as it was inclusive. The case of women participants, again, illustrates the boundaries within which resistance identities functioned.

Part III: The Lack of Ethos

This section should be of particular interest to government readers because it traces the influence of the ethos discourse on post-1989 politics. This discourse was indeed the dominant way of talking about political action and political community after the collapse of communism. However, competing elites began to argue over the proper interpretation—the proper hierarchy of the elements—of ethos to justify their differing economic and political programs. The argument over who had the authority to interpret ethos properly was transformed into an argument over the "lack of ethos." By 1991, elites were arguing that the principles of the Solidarity period had been lost: the right argued that the absence of moral values in public life was a negative phenomenon and should be corrected, while the neo-liberals argued that the absence of ethos was positive because it opened the way for "pragmatic" politics. Both sides, importantly, relied on the resonance of the ethos of Solidarity with the population at large to give their "lack of ethos" claims power.

Another important result of the shift of Solidarity discourse from the opposition in the 1980's to the government itself in the 1990's was the marginalization of the Solidarity labor union itself. While the labor union dimension of Solidarity had been the source of immense authority during resistance to the Communist Party regime, after 1989 the influence of the union diminished drastically. I explain this in part by the ability of other elites, such as those of the right and the neo-liberals mentioned above, to appropriate the authority of Solidarity's ethos for their own claims. Because ethos had been so porous and so fluid, it became available for a variety of interpretations once the opposition context had changed.
Part IV: Ethos Gendered: The Case of Abortion

In this final portion of the research report I pursue two issues. The first concerns the assumptions about the "citizen," specifically the democratic citizen with rights and interests, in elite discourse in post-communist Poland. To this end, I also critique Western, "elite-choice" democratization theories for their neglect of the characteristics of the citizen. The second issue I take up is the manner in which citizenship discourse affected the abortion debate in Poland. I find that a liberal, rights-oriented argument about political freedom did not guarantee that arguments for women's rights would be articulated and taken into account; rather, women themselves had to put into play a rights discourse that incorporated them into the polity as *women*, that is, as citizens who may become pregnant. I conclude by noting that "democratization" discourse, whether it be about resistance or about rights, is always part and parcel of the relationship between the governed and the governing.
PART II: THE CONTENT AND FORM OF ETHOS DISCOURSE

The construction of the "ethos of Solidarity."

Participants, observers and critics of the Solidarity social movement of 1980-81 seemed to agree that the movement articulated its goals and its identity in terms of a hierarchy of moral values that were put forth into public speech as a discourse counter to that of the state's. This hierarchy of values took the form of a self-conscious claim to a dynamic "essence" that guided action, in other words, an ethos (etos). Rather than an ideology that guides practice on the basis of externally-justified principles, etos was a non-materialist "spirit" that was claimed to originate within each self-contained individual. Its collective expression was the organization Solidarity.

Etos served different functions for different people, but was the place where the moral authority of organized resistance to the state was located for all. Participants in Solidarity used the etos of Solidarity as a reference point in describing, analyzing or criticizing political events or individuals. Over time, this notion of etos became the element of stability in the context of Solidarity's shifting fortunes and priorities. Indeed, the prominent Solidarity activists who took state power in 1989 were long after called "etoscow" (ethos-ers).

While etos was "non-materialist" in substance, its origins were rooted in the practice of resistance during the strikes and protests of 1980-81. The Polish journalist Ryszard Kapuscinski captures the complex relationship between the actions of the protestors, the effect on a larger community of Polish citizens and the moral, humanistic basis for the etos discourse:

Twelve August days spent on the coast, Szczecin, then Gdansk and Elblag. The atmosphere of the streets quiet, but also tense, a climate of gravity [powagi] and certainty engendered from the feeling of justification [racji]. Cities in which a new morality governed. No one drank, no one picked fights, no one found himself with a crushing, stupefying hangover. Crime fell to zero, mutual aggression died out, people became friendly, helpful and open. Completely estranged [obcy] people felt
suddenly that they were--one after the other--necessary. The model of this new type of relations, which everyone adopted, was created by the crews of the huge striking factories.¹

The behavior documented by Kapusczinski was simply quiet streets, which could have been quiet for any number of reasons: fear of arrest, fear of war, economic or political uncertainty. But Kapusczinski grafts a unifying moral position onto the community in Gdansk. Texts like this both reflected and contributed to the construction of the *etos* of Solidarity. This discourse linked the daily life of "common people" to a moral stance regarding the suppression of the strikers and unified everyone. It also extended the *action* of striking--the practices expressing resistance--to the realm of the everyday dignity of an individual who is part of a larger community but is not part of an oppressive state. The combination of the banal, everyday and personal with "higher" values and goals is also illustrated in a conversation I had in 1988 with a person who had been a student in Warsaw in 1980:

In those days there was a feeling among everyone that we had something in common. In the morning, during the transit strike, cars would pull over and give rides to people walking to work, people they did not know personally. The bus driver would wait for you if you were running to catch it. People had happy expressions on their faces, feelings like you would never see today, unless maybe you were in love.

It is clear, then, that *etos* was not a system of thought, separate from political action. Nor was it a set of ideals or programmatic goals "inspiring" action. The "ideational material," to use Tarrow's words, did not exist separately from more "concrete" political action, informing it through "frames of meaning." The dualism of ideas and action does not help us here. The habits of the average citizen, the strikes of the workers, the atmosphere of a city, the stopping of one bus on one day for one person, the common perception of a newly salient "morality" are quite diverse phenomena and for a social scientist they exist on quite different levels of analysis, not to be compared directly to each other. But in the context of 1980's Poland, they constituted a set of *practices* that were logically and coherently linked through a new discourse of politics, the *etos* of Solidarity.²


² Michael Kennedy also emphasizes practice, or "praxis" in his terminology, but his focus is on "workers' consciousness" rather than the construction of a resistance discourse. See his *Professionals, Power and Solidarity in Poland*, pp. 113-118.
This is not to say that the concepts and perceptions undergirding the idea of the ethos of Solidarity were themselves fixed or stable; rather, the ethos was treated as though it was a stable, grounded essence that would survive political dissension from within Solidarity and political repression from without. It was a form of ordering the experience of opposing a repressive state, and thus an institutionalized paradigm, "a reference point within the structure of consciousness, stable and durable enough to be used at more than one moment, and so by more than one actor in more than one way." Historian J.G.A. Pocock is speaking here of the paradigms that constitute historical traditions and that endow those traditions with certain authority for a particular community. If we treat the representation of Solidarity and its ethos as a shared historical text, even now in the process of becoming part and parcel of specific Polish historical traditions, we can see how ethos may have functioned as an authoritative "reference point" for a variety of Polish citizens, with a variety of perceptions of Solidarity and Polish identity.

Elements of ethos

In examining the forms in which Solidarity's ethos was represented in public discourse in both the legal (1980-81) and underground (1982-89) periods, I found several different strands of argument. These were self-determination, unity, moral guidelines for individual behavior, truth-telling, religiosity, nationalism and gender. Each element can be considered as logically coherent in itself, with its own sources and historical referents; however, these elements gained power as a resistance discourse only when they were interwoven as ethos. In turn, ethos only makes sense as a stable and durable discourse if each of these elements is included. Different speakers, however, emphasized or gave priority to different elements, at times changing the meaning of ethos without taking away from its cohesiveness or power.

One of the most common elements of ethos discourse of the 1980's was the idea of "self-determination" [samorząd]. Self-determination was a value in and of itself that linked the idea of the inherent dignity of the individual with economic autonomy through work or wage-earning. Through this language, strikers and other oppositionists logically connected the demand for greater wages with an argument against arbitrary management decisions, "bureaucratic" allocation decisions and the economic "system" as a whole. In addition to economic autonomy, this concept also included a defense of civil liberties at times, although central to both the economic and "rights" dimensions of self-determination was the moral

---

superiority of the ethical individual. Self-determination privileged the coherent, intact "self" who recovered agency and control from the state through participation in etos. "To understand 'Solidarity,' its genesis and function, is to understand a man in isolation, who stands face to face with a totalitarian monster." Indeed, etos was seen as residing within each person in a spiritual form, as opposed to constituting the outcome of a set of religious teachings, political ideals or class relationships.

A second element, one which may seem contradictory to the first, was the notion of unity. The value "unity" was based on the idea that individuals shared a common past experience and future fate just because they were citizens of Poland. Unity with striking shipbuilders, unity among factories, unity of "intellectuals" with "workers" all became ends in themselves and were imbued with a moral element. The unity aspect of etos functioned most importantly in negotiations with the state and to perpetuate the counterdiscourse under martial law. It allowed individual leaders of the Solidarity movement to claim that they spoke for "society" as a whole. Those who were seen as part of the state were simply called "them," a word that in itself communicated clearly the identity of the referent.

Moral guidelines for both the treatment of others within the community and for behavior in public activities was an important part of etos also. These guidelines were significant not for their content or the exact behavior that they limited, but for the relationship that they represented: moral limits should govern self-interested actions, even in a context of scarcity. One Solidarity activist noted, "Regardless of your political stance, however, the primacy of moral values means that there are certain things that are forbidden--for instance, no one should leave the underground in a manner that compromises Solidarity."

A fourth element constructing the ethos of Solidarity was a type of positivism or "truth-telling" as a value. This element was one of the most important in providing a position from

---


5 Throughout this paper I use "Polish citizen" as an alternative to "Pole" because I do not want to assume that every individual who participated in the practices I am describing saw herself or himself as an ethnic Pole. I am aware that the term "citizen" is also laden with assumptions, particularly gendered ones, but I have chosen it as the best alternative available to concisely refer to people who live within the borders of Poland.

6 For example, a book published as part of the underground press in Poland and later re-issued abroad is titled Them and is a collection of interviews with Communist Party leaders of the 1940's and 1950's. Teresa Toraniska, Oni (London: Aneks, 1985).

7 Testimony of Aleksander Hall in Konspira, p. 139.
which to critique the state. It was quite effective because it could reach back to historical "untruths," such as the coerced nature of the beginning of Communist Party rule in Poland; it provided a common way to talk about the economic "lies" of the types of wages, prices, jobs, supplies and quality of consumer goods that individuals encountered in their daily lives; and it enabled people to construct broad criticisms of censorship and of the role of ideology in the official language of the government.

An important dimension of truth-telling was the idea that Communist Party rulers had replaced "real" language with a much more ideological and "empty" one. In the 1980-81 period a number of books were published by non-state presses criticizing the "newspeak" of the Communist Party. George Orwell was frequently cited and excerpts of 1984 were published in collections. A common theme in etos discourse was a commitment to "reality" and "truth" in language. Kapusczinski puts it this way:

On the coast a battle over language took place as well, over our Polish language, over its purity and clarity, over the restoration to words of a univocal sense, over the cleansing of our speech of platitudes and drivel, over the emancipation of it from the scourge plaguing it--a scourge of insinuation.

Religion, religiosity and Catholic Church teachings constituted a very important element of etos. By "religiosity" I mean both the language of Catholic religious faith and the practice of Catholic rituals. Religious symbols and rituals were intertwined with the actions of strikers in the Lenin Shipyard in August 1980 and continued to play an important role throughout the underground (1982-89) period. Unlike self-determination and unity, "religiosity" had been put into play by an organized and powerful institution, the Catholic Church, which in the 1970's had publicly criticized the government's policies, created safe spaces for resistance practices and offered a coherent narrative of social life alternative to that of the Communist Party.

---


The Catholic Church itself was an intersection of discourses about moral values, Polish nationalism, religious faith and human rights. Ultimately, the language of Catholicism in Poland stabilized into own "ethos" discourse and became quite powerful in the late 1970's and throughout the 1980's. While the Church's ethos did not incorporate direct resistance to the state, many people interpreted it to do so. Indeed, the element of religiosity can be viewed as an appropriation of aspects of the Catholic Church's discursive forms for the Solidarity movement.

Yet another element of ethos was Polish nationalism. The history of the Polish nation is filled with resistance stories and mythologies, providing powerful narratives familiar to almost all Polish citizens around which the movement could organize actions. These narratives frequently took the form of defending the Polish nation against an incursion, either military, ideological or demographic. Indeed, the history of Communist Party government in Poland was represented as a Soviet occupation by many Solidarity activists and non-Solidarity opposition voices. The participation in Solidarity and in the discourse of ethos allowed Poles to "recover" a lost or suppressed Polish nation, which was viewed as essentially sovereign and ethnically Polish.

A final element of ethos is embedded within all the other elements but is perhaps least explicit in the ethos discourse: gender. Almost all the elements of ethos presumed a male subjectivity which allowed women to be included on an almost contingent basis.\(^{11}\) As will be discussed below, the ethos discourse excluded people as much as it included them. For example, it was anti-Semitic in that it was constructed from the standpoint of a Catholic, ethnic Pole. However, non-Polish or Polish-Jewish men had an easier time negotiating these categories than women did, in part because nationalism was not a value in and of itself. Nationalist values could easily function as secondary to ideals of unity and respect for individuals, and still make sense within the ethos discourse. In other words, while nationalist elements may have appeared dominant because they appeared so frequently (and were voiced so vehemently), they did not determine the identities of the Solidarity oppositionists because they were interwoven with other values. Gender, however, was embedded within all elements. For example, the moral guidelines were those that allowed trust and reliance among a fraternal community of resisters;

---

\(^{11}\) See, for example, Adam Michnik's quote below. I will treat anti-semitism in separate section because I believe it was more significant as an outcome of the appropriation of ethos by nationalists after 1989.
they did not include marital fidelity, and sexual conquest formed part of the larger narrative of resistance in which etos functioned.12

The Solidarity movement itself relied on a "traditional family structure" both in 1980-81 and during the martial law years in the 1980's for its success. Almost all leaders and striking workers were male and when these men were arrested, lost their jobs or were forced to go into hiding, their wives and mothers were expected to support them materially. Women provided food to strikers and shelter for fugitives from the government, in addition to maintaining their full-time public employment and home and child care work.13 Wladyslaw Frasyniuk, a well-known activist, testified in 1984:

In Wroclaw, it's almost always women--often single, living alone--who provide apartments for underground activists....They don't regard their activities as being prestigious, they want nothing for themselves, they aren't nosy. It doesn't matter whether a woman is a professor or a cleaning lady, she runs around like a messenger providing food or tea and doesn't ask questions. And she knows what she's risking. Anonymous heroines, that's what I'd call them....In my opinion, the underground relies to a large extent on the quiet and sacrificial activity of women, whereas men are good in work requiring leadership and organizational skills.

And Bogdan Boruszewicz, another activist:

Women in the underground are more amenable and less demanding the men. They don't have great personal ambitions, and they don't have to be part of the center. They're willing to clean up after the printers or deliver letters. Men, however, are against using women [for political activity]. Traditional views have an influence here, but also the fear that women are weaker and less stable. These fears are justified, however, because women are rarely so strong as to not spill everything during interrogation.

Aside from the issue of the representation of women in support roles, crucial here is that resistance itself depends on a particular female identity. Unlike the various roles of nationalist Pole, good Catholic, and moral defender of individual dignity available to the male Solidarity oppositionist, heroism is defined differently for women in Solidarity. The good woman is an "anonymous" messenger without ambitions or even curiosity. The justification here is complex, because this "heroism" often makes women likely to "spill" to the police. so

12 Wladyslaw Frasyniuk: "We move around a lot and we've noticed that the women we stay with usually admire us and would gladly give themselves to any activist." (Konspira, p. 158). Striking for me here was that "we" did not include any of the women activists of Solidarity.

13 Wladyslaw Frasyniuk in Konspira, p. 148.
their roles are really quite fixed as purely supportive and secondary to that of men. Women have little room to negotiate between the discourses of "traditional" subjugation based on gender and the new discourse of resistance, in which real heroes are men. While they may attempt to take on other identities, in the end the condition of their participation is the absence of identity, or the "anonymity" of the tea-brewing professor.

I would like to stress that there are few examples of women representing their experiences in Solidarity as negative, oppressive or constricting in any way. While in-depth scholarship on how Polish women categorize their experiences with resistance has yet to be done, it is clear that the "feminist" discourse familiar to women in other Western cultures is not available or perceived as resonant in Poland. In fact, many women resist being forced to talk about their identities in any way other than constituted by categories of family such as mother. The absence of Polish women's testimony within the social science literature, however, is not evidence of the absence of "gender" in the movement, nor does it make Solidarity's etos discourse less gendered.

In sum, the etos of Solidarity was constituted by various discrete elements that different actors could order and re-order into alternative hierarchies. There was no ideal Solidarity identity determined by participation in etos: a statement that Solidarity was made up of Catholic Polish workers, for example, would have been unintelligible in Poland. Studies that attempt to read particular "memberships" into the movement obscure the fluid nature of etos and the thorny issue of what exactly constitutes resistance for an individual. On the other hand,

---

14 As far as my research experience was concerned, I often was reading about apparently gender-neutral "strikers," "Solidarity members" or "Poles," when suddenly the story introduced a "wife" or "wives," forcing me to re-interpret the previous information as concerning male subjects only. In many resistance stories and testimonials, the figure of a "crying wife looking for her husband" is featured, perhaps to add an element of pathos.

15 In her study based on extensive interviews, Shana Penn has shown that women de facto took over the Solidarity organization after its male leaders were arrested or went into hiding when martial law was declared in 1981. These women had quite a difficult time acquiring recognition for their work and implementing their decisions because of their gender. One activist had to create a male "boss" whose decisions she "implemented" to justify her role to other oppositionists. Shana Penn, "The National Secret," *Journal of Women's History* 5 (Winter 1994), pp. 55-69.


17 This portion of my research findings, which I had not anticipated, points to the rich possibilities in exploring the ways women resisted during the 1980's compared to men. One woman told me about the practice of wearing earrings made out of small electronic resistors ("resisters") to signify protest, an avenue unavailable to Polish men in the 1980's.
the reconstruction of *etos* presented above illustrates the nature of the limits on the ways resistance could function in the Polish context and the on the ways an oppositionist could talk about resistance to the state.

**Inclusion and exclusion**

*Etos* discourse neither encompassed all of what Solidarity meant to people nor, as noted above, was it unambiguously positive, liberatory or empowering. The elements of unity, moral guidelines and religiosity were powerful forces creating and maintaining a very specific community, a community which functioned to exclude as well as include. There were many voices of dissent within and at the margins of the Solidarity organization 1980-81 and 1982-89, but I would argue that these were secondary to the resonance of Solidarity as a unifying experience for the citizenry at large.

An example is the testimony of Bogdan Boruszewicz describing some aspects of the social movement in late 1981:

...The movement began to acquire all the negative characteristics of the system [of state socialism]: intolerance toward people with different opinions, the stifling of criticism, primitive chauvinism. I can’t imagine a situation in which a guy could have stood up during elections to the Solidarity leadership and said, "I’m a nonbeliever." The candidates [for the Solidarity leadership] included various people, Catholics and atheists, but every one of them raised high the cross.

The cult of leadership flourished. First of all, the supreme leader--Walesa, whom one couldn’t criticize; then the leaders in every region and virtually every factory.

Intolerance went together with chauvinism. ...The "real Poles" from Solidarity represented a totalitarian ideology, but of a color other then red...On the other hand, the so-called liberal circles, whose core was made up of the old opposition, got squeezed out--by Party propaganda, by the "real Poles," and by the Church, which was much closer in ideological terms to the totalitarian group in Solidarity.18

I interpret Boruszewicz's criticism in two ways. First it attests to the real conflicts within Solidarity as an organization, analyzed in depth by David Ost.19 However, these

---


disagreements within the social movement, or more precisely, within the leadership of the
movement, did not necessarily translate directly into ruptures in the discourse of resistance at
this time. While this discourse was made up of contradictory elements, such as freedom of
opinion on the one hand, and unity above all else on the other, the position of opposition to the
state made this language sensible to Polish citizens. For Boruszewicz, of course, these
divisions were quite important, and a study such as Ost's that analyzes a social movement
based on interviews with its leaders and on observed behavior would conclude that one of the
most important things about Solidarity were these different tendencies within it.

However, Ost's approach overlooks the important role that a discourse of resistance
such as the etos of Solidarity can play in creating the appearance of a unified opposition
despite divided leadership. The various forms that resistance discourse took were accessible to
different people in different ways. To recall the quote from Pocock above, a discursive
paradigm may be a somewhat stable institution for a discrete period of time and space, yet may
function differently for each individual. In the context of Solidarity, this can be taken to mean
that conflicts within leadership groups did not necessarily become conflicts within the meaning
of Solidarity for Polish citizens or within the discourse of etos, even if each participant in that
discourse "read" it according to her own interpretation.

Boruszewicz's words also remind us of the exclusionary dynamic of the practices that
constituted the etos discourse. The value of unity often was constituted by intolerance of
dissenting views and a hierarchical leadership selection process. The value of religiosity left
little linguistic and conceptual space for articulations of religion alternative to those offered by
the Catholic Church. Indeed, these exclusionary elements of etos played a large role in the
debates after 1989 over the role of the Church in public and private life and over the treatment
of collaborators with the Communist Party government and police.

The voices and practices of authority

Where did the stability of etos come from? Key to the construction of a coherent
discourse from various public and private values and historical experiences were what I call
"voices of interpretive authority:" individual authors, texts or practices that already had
authority within Polish culture and that put parts of the etos discourse into play at crucial
points during the beginning of Solidarity's struggle. Of the many voices of opposition in
Poland during Communist Party rule, Adam Michnik was one of the most important in the
formation of etos. In articulating some elements of etos publicly time and time again, he gave
form to a wide assortment of threads of opposition language. Michnik was able to put etos into
play as a coherent narrative accessible to others in part because he was such a powerful and persistent voice of dissent. He wrote and spoke quite often, as an internal critic of the Communist Party in the mid-1960's, from the standpoint of a street protestor in 1968, as a Solidarity activist in the 1980's, as a jailed dissident, as the editor of the first legal non-Communist Party newspaper in the 1990's, as a political rival of Lech Walesa, and throughout as a scholar and commentator on Polish history and culture. While Michnik is still considered one the most important representatives of the Polish elite outside of Poland, his role has changed substantially within Poland and today has little of its former influence.

The significance of Michnik’s language lies the manner in which it linked the varied elements and practices of the opposition movement and created the appearance of a coherent, logical connection between them. The example below illustrates the way that Michnik’s language in 1984 conflated the different aspects of ethos outlined above:

What then is Solidarity? It is a movement of non-violence, a movement of a nation which in the face of totalitarian oppression recovers its identity, which overcomes the barriers of impossibility and fear, which reconstructs its internal bonds. "Solidarnosc" is a movement of all social strata, a movement of workers and of priests, farmers and intellectuals, catholics and non-believers, a movement which embraced the entire nation, withstood the repression of military dictatorship, built an independent press [obieg] circulating information and reflections. When I was released from prison after many months, I had the feeling of a communion with a miracle—that under police pressure, thanks to the establishment of underground "Solidarity" and the help of the Catholic Church, Poles had saved their internal sovereignty. I know this for certain—my nation lives!20

Striking here is the initial embrace of a diverse set of identities and the description of Solidarity as a movement that draws strength from its inclusion of different "social strata." A harmony of pluralistic positions undergird the commitment to the circulation of opinion free from censorship. Michnik then confronts this loose group with a (Catholic?) “miracle,” through which these strata suddenly become "Poles” and nationalists, and ends his discussion with an outright shout of possessive national pride.

While Michnik was one authoritative source of the elements of ethos, certainly the practices of the striking workers of 1980-81 were another. In his excellent study of the evolution of workers’ perceptions within Solidarity, Alain Touraine identifies three main forms

---

which dominated worker discourse in the 1980-81 period: "class, nation and democracy." By "class," Touraine means the arguments that "trade unions had to be protected to protect the interests of the workers against the employer and to obtain better pay and conditions, as well as freeing the workers from the arbitrary decisions, incompetence and corruption of their bosses" (p. 41). With the term "nation," Touraine includes demands for Polish sovereignty and for an increased role for the Catholic Church, which was seen by many strikers as the "guardian" of the "survival of the nation state" (p. 48). "Democracy" was represented as a "moral idea," the support of civil liberties but more importantly the "personal responsibility" each person was to feel toward the movement (p. 51). Touraine and his group of researchers developed these categories after in-depth interviews and even participation in Solidarity meetings. Their categories represent a reconstruction of the elements of etos that privilege the language of those working in factories and coal mines, and clearly the economic dimensions of self-determination, the role of moral guidelines and religiosity were the most important for these oppositionists.

Of course, the most authoritative text for the origins of etos and Solidarity itself was the list of demands of the strikers occupying the Gdansk Shipyard in August 1980, the place and time where Solidarity was formally created. The first three points of the Gdansk Agreement, as the final list of demands accepted by the Communist Party government was called, are:

1. To accept trade unions as free and independent of the party, as laid down in Convention No. 87 of the ILO and ratified by Poland, which refers to the matter of trade unions rights...These new unions are intended to defend the social and material interests of the workers, and not to play the role of a political party...Their aim is to ensure for the workers the necessary means for the determination, expression, and defense of their interests...The government will ensure that the new unions have every possibility of carrying out their function of defending the interests of the workers and of seeking the satisfaction of their material, social, and cultural needs...

2. To guarantee the right to strike, and the security of the strikers and those who help them....

3. To respect freedom of expression and publication, as upheld by the constitution of People's Poland, and to take no measures against independent publications, as well as to grant access to the mass media to representatives of all religions...The
government will ensure the transmission by radio of the Sunday mass through a specific agreement with the church hierarchy...

In the Gdansk Agreement the priority on issues of economic self-determination and "workers'" rights becomes even more pronounced than in Touraine's study. While the strikers viewed the non-economic issues of an increased role for the Catholic Church and for freedom of speech as crucial, the language of control over one's work environment and the process of working dominated the list of demands. While the concept of "worker" has become somewhat suspect in recent historical and social theory scholarship. In Poland in 1980 this identity took on an inclusive rather than exclusive dimension. The status of the "worker" became a significant marker for the status of all types of occupations and professions, and trade unions for almost every type of job were created as part of Solidarity. Even the Solidarity branch of the police claimed its right to strike against the state.

While the texts above have demonstrated the various ways that authoritative etos discourse was expressed in the early 1980's, the elements of unity, nationalism, and economic self-determination remained the most important within the etos hierarchy. The identity of "worker" was conflated with that of "Solidarity member," "striker" and, in December 1981 after the imposition of martial law by the government and the de-legalization of Solidarity, "detainee." This fluidity allowed for Solidarity to be more inclusive and more flexible than would have been the case if its ethos had defined only a "true Pole" or a "worker" as a proper resister. It gave etos its power.

The religiosity of etos

Jan Kubik is correct in calling the Polish Pope's discourse in his 1979 visit to Poland "transformative." John Paul II embodied a sudden increase of intensity of an already empowered Catholic Church discourse, re-legitimating and re-invigorating a pre-established context of resistance to the state. He was himself a "paradigm," to recall Pocock, an institution in which divergent subjectivities converged in one time and space, but which functioned

---

22 This version is drawn from Gale Stokes, From Stalinism to Pluralism: A Documentary History of Eastern Europe since 1945 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 205-208. I have edited it extensively for space considerations but these changes do not alter the basic style and substance of the document.

23 Kennedy, Professionals, Power and Solidarity in Poland.

24 Kubik, The Power of Symbols Against the Symbols of Power, pp. 129 ff. In contrast to Kubik, I emphasize the pope's second and third visits (in 1983 and 1987) and the manner in which his language changed the pre-existing etos discourse.
differently for different persons and groups. In addition to deepening the power of the church's discourse, he embodied elements of Polish nationalism by expressing an explicitly Polish national identity and thus representing an endowment of prestige or a recognition onto Poland as a (Catholic) nation by outsiders. Both the nationalism and the religiosity of his persona were counter to the narratives supported by the Communist Party state.

While Kubik finds the Pope's discourse transformative of consciousness, it was also transformative of the *etos* of Solidarity. The Pope often referred to repression by the state of Polish citizens and of Solidarity in his speeches, and the expression of this forbidden language by a persona above the state's reach, yet at the same time Polish and in Poland, gave his words remarkable resonance with his listeners in Poland, irrespective of personal religious beliefs. In his 1987 visit, he invested familiar elements of *etos* with greater religiosity, deepening the position of *etos* as a spiritual essence residing within individuals, and thus not subject to state intervention. In the following example he links the values of self-determination (both political and economic), unity, moral guidelines, truth-telling and religiosity with his visit and by the end of this excerpt claims Solidarity itself for the Catholic Church:

In the name of the future of man and mankind one must say out loud the word "solidarity." Today it flows as a wide wave through the world, which understands that we cannot live according to the principle, "all against all," but only according to the principle, "all with all, all for all."

...there cannot be talk about any progress if in the name of social solidarity the rights of every man are not ultimately respected. If in social life there is not enough space for his talents and initiative. And above all, for his work. Here, on the shores of the Baltic, I thus pronounce the word, the name "solidarity," because it belongs to the lasting dissemination of the social teaching of the church.25

The Pope's language during the 1987 visit was constituted almost exclusively as this version of *etos*, including the element of nationalism as well as those listed above. The consistent pattern to this form was the subordination of the various other elements to religiosity. For example:

Every day I pray for my Fatherland [Ojczyzna] and pray for the working people and pray for the particular legacy of Polish Solidarity [applause and shouts of "Solidarity!"] I pray for the people who are bound up with this legacy, specifically for those on whom it fell or it falls to make sacrifices for this reason...I ask of you

that you together with the Pope be joined [solidarni] in this prayer and in this long-term vision [dlugomyslnosc].

Here it is the act of prayer that unites the disparate values that make up resistance to the Communist Party-ruled state.

The Pope’s visit and the religious form of etos that he put into play gave weight to other voices seeking to emphasize religiosity and the authoritative role of the Catholic Church in defining that religiosity. In a journal named Ethos, Tadeusz Styczen offers a text typical of the time:

[The experience of Solidarity supports the idea that] one is free, in other words, one can depend on oneself and take care of oneself, that the individual is the only one who really determines his self, who binds himself with the truth and who only in that direction transcends himself...And that is why truth must be respected, if man—in his dignity freely ruling over himself—is supposed to be respected.

To defend man as man, and to liberate him as man, is to take up the uncompromised defense of his right to the truth in the name of self-determination, ...To be the defense of the right of man to the truth, and to be the defense of his right to freedom, is to be a defense of that which is indivisible in man and inseparable from man, to be simply with man because he is—a man. It is to be with him—as a man—in solidarity.

In this text, the elements of etos are integrated in such a way as to emphasize self-determination as necessarily entailing a militant "defense" of truth-telling and freedom. However, the style of the text, with its repetition of words like "man," "self" and "defense," imbues it with a quality that is not political or argumentative, but sermon-like or even poetic. The entire journal is itself an explicitly Catholic publication and presents clergymen’s interpretations of the meaning of etos and its renewal by the Pope’s visit. Here, then, the religiosity of the discourse lies in its form and narrative context rather than its explicit content.

The article by Styczen represents the popular discourse of etos. A more developed argument, indeed perhaps the most intellectually authoritative articulation of the ethos of Solidarity as an internalized spiritual condition of every person, is Jozef Tischner’s Etyka solidarnosci oraz Homo sovieticus. Tischner goes into great depth in justifying the roles of

---

26 Jan Pawel II at mass on 17 June 1987, in Zlote rogi, czapki z pior, p. 18.


the various elements of etos, in the process creating the ideal subject, a person with a particular ethics and consciousness. This very rich text both constructed and contributed to the construction of a powerful moral dynamic in which the standards of action provided by etos served as boundaries of the "good" community.

Etyka solidarnosci oraz Homo sovieticus is one text that combines two standpoints. The first half was written in 1980 and 1981, at the height of the Solidarity movement and at the time that etos became a coherent resistance narrative. The second half was written in 1989 and 1990, when Solidarity regained legal status as an organization and its activists began to occupy governing positions in Poland. In both parts, Tischner's book defined Solidarity not as a social movement or a set of practices, but as "conscience" [sumienie]. This conscience resided within the individualistic self, yet bound the self to others when it was "solidarny," a term that means having the quality of solidarity with another. It was this solidarny aspect of each person's conscience that generated and sustained the etos of Solidarity. The social movement had the capability to continue as long as individuals acted according to their solidarny conscience. In Tischner's terms, the etos of Solidarity depended on neither a specific program nor a concrete organization; moreover, its "membership" was never a finite group of people or a specific collective identity. To be a Solidarity oppositionist was to act according to one's conscience, a standpoint from which any Polish citizen could "join," or "defect," at any time.

The word "solidarity" is associated today with other, most Polish words, in order to grant a new form to our days. There are several such words: "freedom," "independence," "the dignity of man"--and today, "solidarity." Every one of us feels the great weight hidden in the content of this word...What does it mean to be solidarny? It means to carry the weight of another man. No one is an island alone. We are connected even when we do not know it.29

The ethic of solidarity wants to be an ethic of conscience. It consists in the fact that man is a subject endowed with a conscience. A conscience is the natural "ethical sense" of man, in considerable degree independent from various ethical systems. We have many ethical systems, but conscience is singular. It is prior to those systems. Conscience establishes in man a self-determined [samodzielny] reality, a bit like reason and will. Man may exercise reason and will, may also neglect the exercise of them, and similarly may listen to his conscience, may stifle it, perhaps lament it. Conscience is the voice that internally calls man... One cannot be solidarny with people without a conscience.... With people without a conscience one can ride together in a train, sit at a table during dinner, read books--that, however, is not solidarity. Not every "we," not every "together" is already solidarity. Authentic solidarity--we again repeat--is the

---

solidarity of conscience. This is understandable because to be solidarny with a man is to always be able to count on a man, and to count on a man is to believe that there is in him something lasting, that does not fall short.30

Like Adam Michnik and the striking workers in the Gdansk Shipyard, Tischner did not add any new elements to the etos discourse. He did, however, offer a configuration of etos that firmly rooted the meaning of opposition politics in a non-materialist, ethical standpoint of the individual that nonetheless linked that individual to a broader social community and shared historical experience.

In his book Tischner also discusses the "fate" of the etos of Solidarity in light of the events of 1989 and 1990. His interpretation illustrates the tension between the internalized, collectivist, ethical etos and the etos that constituted a justification for overthrowing the Communist Party-led state. In the etos discourse of the 1980-81 and the 1982-89 periods this tension was implicit and unproblematic; however, when candidates running as "Solidarity members" won almost all the seats open to them in the 1989 partially-free elections to the parliament, it became clear that the fluidity of etos that had been its strength as an opposition discourse would now allow for a myriad of competing visions of government.

30 Tischner, Etyka solidarnosci oraz Homo sovieticus, pp. 15-16.