

Asganas responds to letter from unknown "whole"

Dear Editor:

This is the first time I have ever responded to an unsigned letter allegedly representing an unknown "whole". I am doing so now only because the issues raised in my interview and the unsigned response to it are important for the social movement in Poland and for me personally.

From the emotional tone of the unsigned it seems that we have common interests in the success of the Polish social movement. It also seems obvious that if we are to further these interests we need both cohesion and a common front. Yet the creation of such a front is possible only if we accept open discussion and base our views upon facts, not wishful thinking. In our discussion of Solidarity what are the facts?

First let us read The Gdansk Protocol as it was signed:

"In view of the establishment of new, independent and self-governing trade unions the interfactory committee declares that they will observe the principles laid down in the Constitution of the Polish People's Republic. The new trade unions will defend the social and material interests of employees and do not intend to play the role of a political party. They approve of the principle that production means are social property - a principle that is foundation of the socialist system in Poland. Recognizing that the Polish United Worker Party plays the leading role in the state and without undermining the actual system of international alliances, they seek to ensure for the working people suitable means of controls."

In short, the trade unions had agreed to work within the established socialist order. Once one signed such an agreement there seems to be only two options, either we abide by it or we renegotiate the agreement.

Second, "Solidarity" was not born at the shipyard in Gdansk. Gdansk was the last and most publically dramatic point in a long process of organizing social resistance.

As early as April 1977 one could identify at least nineteen "underground" publications with a total circulation estimated to be 20,000 copies. The most important of these to the movement were KOR's *Information Bulletin* and its newspaper *Robotnik*. The KOR publications reached a number of people in certain large plants, many of whom were not only disaffected Party members; but political activists as well. This led, in 1977, to the appearance of the first "free trade union" groups, usually connected to KOR through local supports of *Robotnik*, which called themselves the "solidarity movement". The publications also led to the formation of an informal alliance between the new opposition and Catholic Church - a development which would be decisive for the events of 1980.

Third, Lech Walesa did become the first officially elected leader of "Solidarity" but only 52% voted for him. Further, there were heavy losses among his close advisors. Many of them were not confirmed by the union congress and so were denied top positions in the Union. The union congress, in fact, was extremely combative and basically anti-inteleigencia because this "group" was seeking some acceptable compromise with the government. These were the reasons for a lack of clear policy after the first Solidarity Congress. This resulted in personal conflicts among top leaders, a situation which facilitated governmental intervention and the eventual destruction of the movement.

Fourth, it is absurd to thank Walesa and his associates for "not allowing martial law provocation to result in bloodshed", since they all (with the exception of 4 members of the National Council) were arrested when the military intervened. Rather, we should be thankful to the people of Poland for their restraint.

These are the facts. If anyone wishes to ignore them he is free to do so, if

anyone wishes to believe in miracles he may do that as well, but we all should remember that Polish

history is full of heroes, monuments and national tragedies. What we need is a victory of ideas not

another monument to wishful thinking. Therefore, I find it a pity that my interlocutors are so oblivious to that unpleasant

historical reality which happens to contradict what they would rather believe.

On a more personal note let me say that my interview was given in good faith. My intention was to outline those factors which made Solidarity both so strong and so weak at the same

time, to point out practices which were used against the union and brought defeat after all. It was not my intention whatsoever to discredit either Walesa or the movement. I was attempting only to put events

into a rational, if somewhat subjective perspective. Ending my reply I would like to recall a point from my interview:

Poland today does not enjoy freedom. It lives under a sort of legalized martial

law. International recognition of the movement despite weaknesses, prove that Solidarity was suc-

cessful. There are no forces which could stop the human desire for democracy.

Wiktor Asganas

Political advertising excessive

Dear Editor:

I am writing this letter as a protest against your paper's seemingly unrestricted advertising policy. In last week's issue,

the Brunswickan sold advertising space to presidential candidates in the upcoming SRC election. I see nothing wrong with a uniform length

of advertising space for all candidates but the idea of a candidate being able to buy unlimited advertising at fixed prices creates inequalities unacceptable at

election time. This unequal distribution of exposure allows the candidate who is willing to spend vast sums of money to get elected a decided advantage which I feel is unfair. I realize that advertising revenue is a

central concern for your paper but I feel in this instance you have a moral obligation to keep equitable exposure of candidates as a priority.

A truly free election should have restrictions on

campaign spending to allow all candidates an equal

chance to run on platforms and not just image exposure. At the same time as certain candidates enjoy overexposure other couldn't

even get their words printed properly. I think they are owed an apology by your paper. I would appreciate

in writing your stated advertising policy in terms of its limits and explain your decision to sell a political campaign to the students.

Sincerely,
Richard Hutchins

