

A Debate on Poland, the Future of Communism, and U.S. Policy Between Tom Kahn and Norman Podhoretz (March 30, 1981)

Introduction

On March 30, 1981, two usual allies on the issues of anti-communism and U.S. foreign policy engaged in one of the most fascinating intellectual exchanges of the Cold War. Tom Kahn, assistant to the president of the AFL-CIO, and Norman Podhoretz, editor-in-chief of Commentary magazine, debated the issue of “Poland, the future of communism, and U.S. foreign policy.” It took place during the height of the Solidarity trade union movement’s unprecedented challenge to Poland’s communist government. Solidarity, arising out of the workers’ strikes of August 1980 that led to the signing of the Gdansk Accords allowed for the first time the creation of an independent and free trade union in a communist country. Nearly the entire workforce immediately joined Solidarity — more than 10 million members. From the beginning, the Soviet Union and the Polish government created crises to undermine Solidarity, including threats of Soviet military intervention. Just before the debate, police had brutally attacked Solidarity leaders in the region of Bydgoszcz, sparking a threat of a national strike.

*Neoconservatives like Norman Podhoretz had joined with the traditionally anti-communist AFL-CIO in supporting Solidarity, however disagreements arose over whether U.S. foreign policy should be directed at offering incentives to the **Polish government** to keep Solidarity alive. The neoconservatives had fought to redirect American foreign policy away from the Nixon-Ford-Carter policies of détente and towards a hard-line anti-communist foreign policy, which they hoped would be adopted by newly inaugurated Ronald Reagan. They believed that offering aid to the Polish government was counterproductive to the redirected hard-line policy, especially given the unlikelihood that the Soviet Union would allow Solidarity to continue and that such aid would ultimately benefit a crackdown. The AFL-CIO was in agreement with neo-conservatives on adopting a hard-line towards the Soviet Union and increasing U.S. military expenditures to meet Soviet security threats. (AFL-CIO President Lane Kirkland and other labor leaders were members of the Committee on the Present Danger.) In the AFL-CIO’s view, however, Solidarity had changed the equation. By March 1981, it had adopted a policy of offering certain aid to the Polish government in exchange for Solidarity’s continued existence while also threatening harsh sanctions in the event the free trade union were suppressed. When General Jaruzelski imposed martial law in December 1981 attempting to crush Solidarity, it appeared that Podhoretz won the debate. Both the neoconservatives and the AFL-CIO decried the soft policies undertaken in response to the crisis by the Reagan Administration. Tom Kahn, however, put forth an argument as to how communism would be overthrown that ultimately proved prescient: in 1988, renewed strikes organized by an unbeaten Solidarity eventually led to the collapse of the regime and the subsequent downfall of communism throughout the region. On the night of the debate, the issue of who won was less important than the vital ideas being debated. The following is a full transcript of the recorded even as transcribed by Eric Chenoweth, Co-Director, Institute for Democracy in Eastern Europe.*

Debate Between:

Tom Kahn and Norman Podhoretz

Debate Question:

“Whether or not the United States, and by extension the democratic West, should provide economic assistance to the government of Poland at this moment of crisis.”

Date: March 30, 1981

Sponsored by:

Committee for the Free World and the League for Industrial Democracy
Hosted by the Polish Institute for Arts and Sciences, New York, New York

Midge Decter

I want to welcome you all here. I am the executive director of the Committee for the Free World. Arch Puddington of the League for Industrial Democracy is also here. We invited you here because we thought it would be a matter of some urgency for us at this point to discuss among ourselves — and by that I mean a group of people who have the same hopes, the same outlook, and the same sense of what is going on in the world — a matter about which there is in fact a disagreement among us. As everybody knows, the very best arguments are conducted between those who fundamentally agree. In fact, they are the only valuable arguments because you do not have situations in which people are scoring debaters' points against each other but actually trying to come to illumination and some, perhaps, consensus or mutual influence.

I will turn the meeting over now to Carl Gershman, whom I think needs no introduction to this audience, and he will explain the rules of the debate and moderate for the evening. But before doing that, I want to introduce you to some people in the audience. First, we have a founding member of the KOR here, Piotr Naimski; he is spending a year at NYU Medical Center. The other person I want to introduce is our host for this evening and to whom we are grateful for offering the hospitality of this room, Mr. Boleslaw Wierzbanski.

Boleslaw Wierzbanski

I would like to welcome you here and hope you will feel at home. You are in a center of Polish-American and Polish culture, which has existed for more than forty years. We are trying to make contacts between American and Polish institutions. But mostly we are an intellectual center of Polish Americans in New York and in the United States. The subject of this discussion is close to us and I hope it will be lively. I am pleased you are here.

Carl Gershman (Moderator)

Before I introduce the speakers, let me say that we can concentrate on the meeting without being too distracted by the events of the day, since the President is not gravely wounded and has passed

through the operation very well. The surgeon said he could be making decisions by tomorrow and probably be home within two weeks. . . .

The subject of the discussion tonight is whether or not the United States, and by extension the democratic West, should provide economic assistance to Poland at this moment of crisis. But the discussion involves a larger question having to do with the future of communism in the world today and how best to affect the struggle against communism and in fact to seek its undoing, its unraveling, which has not really happened to any country so far that has gone communist. It is the reason why the struggle in Poland is the most significant struggle taking place anywhere in the world today and hence the implications are of momentous importance.

Of course, we are watching the events there on a daily basis and it is conceivable that the fine points could conceivably be made moot if the worst — which we don't want to happen — happens in Poland, but the issues raised in this discussion and the two people who will be discussing them in an informal way — with a good deal of interchange both between themselves and among ourselves in the audience — have done as much thinking about this fundamental question of Poland and the future of communism as anyone in the United States. The first speaker, known to everyone here, is Tom Kahn, assistant to the president of the AFL-CIO and also heading up the Polish Workers Aid Fund. It gives me great pleasure to introduce Tom Kahn.

Tom Kahn

Don't be intimidated by all these pieces of paper; they are mainly desultory notes. I made the mistake of leaving about half of my notes and writing to this afternoon and found myself very much distracted by the events and I hope that I am not too muddled in my talk. I am glad that this has been described as a discussion and not a debate, for two reasons. First, whenever I debate a good friend, I inevitably lose. To succeed in debate requires a level of venom that I cannot summon forth against a friend, and certainly not against a man who has done more than any other writer to clarify the danger confronting the United States and the democratic cause. Because I am in basic agreement with Norman's analysis about the danger and because we share so many enemies in common, it is unthinkable that this dialogue be thought a debate.

Second, it seems to me foolish to harden lines of disagreement over an issue which practically speaking may soon be rendered moot or radically redefined by external forces beyond our hearing or by internal forces indifferent to our voices. I assume that a Soviet invasion of Poland would unite all of us in opposition to aid to Poland and in favor of the most stringent economic and other sanctions against the Soviet bloc.

When I say that a Soviet invasion beyond our control would unite us in opposition, the us means me and Norman and I assume most of the people in this room. But it would not unite everybody on a proposition that to us seems self-evident. For example, there is no reason to assume that the bankers would see things our way. A recent *Los Angeles Times* survey of leading bankers

concluded, and I quote, "The major threat to their loans, bankers say, does not come from a military takeover but from the economic chaos that is plaguing Poland." The *Times* quotes Leeland Prusher of the Bank of America as saying, "Disorder is an unhealthy situation. And if that is the present state of Poland, then anything that would restore order would be a positive step." The impression is ineradicable that this leader of the nation's largest bank and no doubt speaking for many of his colleagues here and in Europe would prefer a Soviet invasion and the order it would restore to the continuing uncertainty and confusion generated by the Polish workers' struggle for a free and independent union movement.

Because I have never been wholly convinced that what is good for bankers is good for workers, or for democracy, Mr. Prusher's statement is enough in itself to separate me from all those who secretly wish for a Soviet invasion, including the grounds that such an invasion would put an end to the present tension, quite probably stiffen the Europeans, revive the Atlantic Alliance, and do away with detente once and for all. I should like to believe that more would be exacted from the Soviets in consequence of any invasion, but I am not certain of that result and none of us can be. I need not detail before this group the economic stake that the West Germans have developed in East-West trade, one of the sadder products of detente. The only certain result of Soviet force in Poland would be the decapitation of Solidarity and the return of its dismembered parts, if any remained, to the party hacks and police agents formally disguised as trade union officials and accepted by almost everybody but the AFL-CIO. There may be those who are willing to witness the sacrifice of the most important workers movement to have appeared in half a century in the interests of making a larger point about the character of the enemy, a point which ought not need remaking, but the AFL-CIO, for reasons flowing from its very existence, cannot be among them.

To do all in our power to nourish and extend the life of Solidarity is the overriding compelling mission of the AFL-CIO in the present Polish situation. It is an obligation from which we could not shrink without doing damage to the *raison d'être* of the American labor movement itself. Discharging this obligation entails risks, of course, but it is up to Solidarity, the ones on the front line, who know better than we the opportunities and dangers before them, to define the aid they need. It was not for us to tell the workers of Poland what was good for them, how they should go about doing what no other workers in history had done. Solidarity made its needs known, with courage, with clarity, and publicly. As you know, the AFL-CIO responded by establishing a fund for the purchase of equipment requested by Solidarity and we have raised about a quarter of a million dollars for that fund.

This effort has elicited from the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, and Bulgaria the most massive and vicious propaganda assault on the AFL-CIO that we have seen in many, many years. The ominous tone of the most recent attacks leaves no doubt that if the Soviet Union invades, it shall cite the aid of the AFL-CIO as evidence of outside anti-Socialist intervention aimed at overthrowing the Polish state. I might add that much of this propaganda quotes extensively from American leftists, like those around *Counter-Spy* magazine, who attacked the AFL-CIO role in El Salvador and charged the AFL-CIO with being in cahoots with the ubiquitous CIA. Consciously or not, much of the leftist attack on our role in El Salvador serves

the Soviets' purpose of discrediting our aid of Solidarity and of laying the basis of charging Lech Walesa, like Anatoly Scharansky, with CIA connections. But lest you think that the AFL-CIO leadership, under vicious and dangerous attack from the left has won sympathy or succor from the right, I refer you to the current issue of *National Review*, where Arnold Beichman has an insulting article on Lane Kirkland because he finds the AFL-CIO's anti-communism incomplete.

Despite all these problems which the AFL-CIO has faced, it may well be that our task in Poland is clearer and simpler than that of the U.S. government or other private institutions. Our job is to strengthen Solidarity. We can only do that by responding to Solidarity's stated needs. The U.S. government obviously will be responding to other factors as well. And even those whose main concern is the survival of the Church may view matters differently. After all, the Church could survive by retreating into passivity. If Solidarity did that, it would cease to be Solidarity and become more like the fake institution it replaced.

All this is by way of introducing the AFL-CIO's position on economic aid to Poland. In formulating this position, our first concern was to consult our friends in Solidarity to find out what they thought from their vantage point about what position the AFL-CIO should take. We did consult with them in a lengthy discussion and their views are reflected in the statement unanimously adopted by the AFL-CIO Executive Council at its February meeting. I would like to read to you the relevant paragraphs of that statement:

The Polish economy is on the verge of bankruptcy, the result of mismanagement of the Polish government and the inefficiencies inherent in the Soviet-imposed economic system. Yet, Poland's economic troubles are cited to counter Solidarity's demands for a forty-hour week, better wages, and lower prices.

Because we share the aspirations of Polish workers for a better life and for an economic climate more conducive to Solidarity's success, the AFL-CIO is prepared to support an extension of Western credits to Poland, but only under conditions that safeguard the rights and interests of the workers. Poland's debts to the West already amount to more than \$20 billion, the largest of the East bloc countries' debt. To ensure repayment, the international banking community has in the past pressured the Polish government into policies of austerity, which have been borne by the workers by higher prices and longer work weeks. The extension of credits or rescheduling of Poland's debt could intensify the exploitation of Polish workers and threaten their hard won gains. The AFL-CIO will support additional aid to Poland only if it is conditioned on the adherence of the Polish government to the 21 points of the Gdansk Agreement. Only then could we be assured that the Polish workers will be in a position to defend their gains and to struggle for a fair share of the benefits of Western aid.

Earlier in the statement, we noted that the Polish government has not so far lived up to the Gdansk Agreement. We pointed out that,

Media censorship has not been eliminated. Solidarity has been denied the means of publishing a weekly magazine. Provincial chapters of Solidarity have been harassed by authorities. The government has refused to publish trade union legislation. Members of KOR are being persecuted. The government has dragged its feet in implementing the agreement on free Saturdays and a 40-hour work week.

Should the Polish government continue its violations of the Gdansk Agreement, this fact, no less than an outright Soviet invasion, would produce a complete convergence of policy between Norman and me. At the moment, the odds in favor of such a convergence are very large indeed. Nonetheless, I believe that the posture adopted by the AFL-CIO makes more tactical sense and helps to illuminate a long-term strategy which I think Norman and I share but which for many years now has been out of favor with official policy planners. That is to say, we do not accept the legitimacy of the communist party's rule in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe and elsewhere; we do not accept the permanence of the communist system and the corollary need to accommodate its interests for generations to come as the only alternative to nuclear war. Rather, we look to the transformation of the Soviet system, however long it takes, to its dismantling by non-nuclear means. The precise process by which such a coming apart would occur can be seen only dimly. We are all aware that the Soviet Union confronts enormous economic, demographic, energy, and institutional problems — the contradictions of communism, if you please — and that many of us have urged Western policies, which would prudently intensify those contradictions rather than ease the difficulties they pose for the Soviet leadership.

The AFL-CIO is historically opposed not only to the transfer of Western technology to the Soviets, but to any economic arrangement which would enable the Soviet leadership to escape the choice between guns and butter that bedevils Western democracies. We have adopted this policy despite arguments that its effects would be more harmful to Soviet consumers, than to Soviet generals. Why would we be willing to alter this historic policy in the case of Poland? The answer is that what has occurred in Poland is historically unique. What has occurred in Poland — and not occurred in any other part of the Eastern bloc — is a working class rebellion, well organized, which has institutionalized itself as an independent power center. That has happened nowhere else in the Soviet bloc. And thus, what in the Soviet Union and other communist countries we see as a potential challenge to the communist system has actually become manifest in Poland. That is an historic development.

Another factor is that Western financial involvement in Poland is an important part to the background to the economic conditions that gave rise to the August strikes. That is not true anywhere else in the Eastern bloc. If you trust *Fortune* magazine, they actually claim that it was the demand of Western bankers that the Polish government eliminate meat subsidies that gave rise to the strikes last August. Under those circumstances, the West has a clearer right to impose conditions on future credits to Poland than it might have to intervene in other countries in other periods. The alternative to credits with conditions of the kind I've indicated or with purely

financial conditions that encourage government austerity while leaving Solidarity helpless is a sterile policy in which we do not attempt to extend the life of Solidarity and to prolong the contradiction in communism which has opened up in Poland.

I want to sum up with a case in these terms. It is quite clear to everyone that the Polish economy and Polish society have been grossly mismanaged in the next decade and a half. A price will have to be paid for that mismanagement. An economic price will have to be paid and a political price will have to be paid. If one accepts the general perspective that I outlined earlier about adopting policies that look to the transformation of the Soviet system, then I believe we ought to look for an arrangement in which the West agrees to pay a good part of the economic price if the Soviet Union pays the political price. That is, if the West is to bail out Poland, is to reschedule the debt, it ought to exact from the Soviet Union its agreement to leave Solidarity alone and to accept the possibility, dangerous as it is, of some liberalization around its periphery in order to protect the Soviet heartland. That, it seems to me, is a compromise that could be struck in this situation that is not unreasonable.

As I see it, we have three alternatives. One is credits with no political conditions, only the conditions that may be imposed by the banking community in its own interests. Or, we have no credits at all, no aid to Poland period. That I think leads to a sterile policy in which we give up whatever leverage we would have to change that system from within. And the third possibility is credits with the kinds of political conditions that I have outlined, conditions that would give Solidarity at least a fighting chance so that workers would not be helpless in the face of the new austerities that Western credits are likely to generate.

[Applause]

Moderator

I think it is worth making the point when we are together tonight to say something about the AFL-CIO and the role it has played over the years in questions related to workers in the communist world. If we think back over the fights that the AFL-CIO has had in debates with the European trade unions, it was precisely over the question the AFL-CIO's refusal to recognize the legitimacy of the so-called trade unions in the communist world that led to its withdrawal from the ICFTU in 1969 and [there has been] a series of ongoing debates and if the emergence of Solidarity shows anything, it shows that this policy has been correct and that the so-called unions in the communist world are no different than the labor fronts under fascism and the AFL-CIO deserves great credit for having stood by this policy even under the most difficult circumstances during the height of detente.

Our next speaker is certainly one of the most distinguished intellectuals in American and is the editor of what can easily be described as the most influential journal in the country. Some might even say that it has become the intellectual headquarters of the new administration in

Washington, a point that evidently from what I am told has been discovered by the Secretary General of the United Nations. He's the author of a number of books and has been particularly prolific of late with *Breaking Ranks* and *The Present Danger*. He has a mammoth article that will appear in the April issue of *Commentary* called "The Future Danger," which really deals in a very large sense with the basic question we are dealing with tonight, which is the whole question of communism and our attitude toward it. It might be said that Norman's prolific productivity in the recent period may in some sense be related to the fact that having lost so many writers to the new administration he has to do all the writing himself.

Norman Podhoretz

Tom said in his opening remarks that he always loses debates with good friends. I know exactly what he means. But he's found a technique, perhaps inadvertently or perhaps cunningly, for winning them. That is, you say extraordinarily generous things about your friend when you begin, thereby disarming him from the outset. I felt like throwing in the towel right there. The only thing that has kept my resolve to pursue this discussion fairly stiff was the reflection as I listened to Tom's characteristically lucid and coherent analysis was that I find myself of not so much disagreeing with the AFL-CIO in its particular activities in this situation, as I have no quarrel whatever with the raising of funds by the AFL-CIO to send to Solidarity itself as it has done, but in listening to Tom justify the AFL-CIO's position on the larger question of economic credits from the West to Poland, I find myself in the position of defending the historic position of the AFL-CIO against the current position of the AFL-CIO. I think the historic position was right and the current position is wrong.

It's been my experience that one is rarely thanked for going before any congregation, whether secular or religious, which has departed from the tenets of the old-time religion and urging upon it a return to the original principles of the faith. I once had the experience of talking to the Council of Foreign Relations about five years ago, which all of you must know is the very cathedral in which the doctrine of containment was promulgated and out of which vast apostasies from that doctrine were then expressed, and preaching the doctrine of containment to the Council. The reception I got there was exactly what you might expect under the circumstances. I would not wish to go before the AFL-CIO itself to do something similar. Perhaps it is safer to do it before this audience.

Let me start with a few large elementary observations, banalities really, to set the framework in which I look at this situation. My perspective is exactly as the AFL-CIO's is and has been, an anticommunist one. We are reaching a point in our political culture where it becomes almost respectable to call yourself an anti-communist. I don't think we've passed over the threshold but we're getting there. Certainly, a year or two ago you would have been foolhardy to call yourself an anti-communist almost anywhere in this country, except perhaps in the AFL-CIO's headquarters. From that perspective and in the interests of that perspective, I tend to look at this situation.

The first thing that I think has to be said and understood and assimilated is that we were not directly involved in the events in Poland. Despite the fact that the banks did impose certain economic conditions in return for credits, which had something to do with the outbreak of the original demonstrations, I think it is nevertheless fair to say that, in contrast to the situation in Hungary in 1956, or at any rate to the myth of the situation in Hungary in 1956 since there is disagreement about that I know, the United States did not play an active role in instigating or encouraging a rebellion in that satellite country. However large our responsibility may or may not have been in the Hungarian events of 1956, there is no question that we did give the impression to a lot of Hungarians that we were in favor of such a move and that if they rose up against their communist masters we would help them in some unspecified way. I think a lot of them thought we would help militarily. And whether or not that expectation was justified and whether or not we were responsible, the fact is that we had some measure of implication in those events. As far as I can see, in Poland we had none. On the contrary, most of the noises that have come from this country and more so from Europe have been exactly in the opposite direction. Most of the noises have been to the effect of warning Solidarity and the Polish intellectuals to be easy, be moderate, for God's sake don't provoke the Russians, for God's sake be careful, there'll be an invasion — and we've sounded for all the world like a bunch of nervous Jewish parents with a frisky four-year-old trying to restrain him from hurting himself by taking too many chances in the world out there. There has been something unappetizing aesthetically and morally ignoble in the general tone of the response of this country and, to the extent I have been able to gauge it from afar, of many of the Western Europeans.

What we are dealing with here is indeed a unique historical event as Tom said. This is a wholly indigenous rebellion against the fundamental principle as I interpret it of a communist regime within the Soviet empire and in the largest and most important colony of that empire. And as Tom said — again I agree — this has vast implications for the future. It is very difficult to think of anything that has happened or could happen that has larger implications, political and I would daresay moral, than the events in Poland, the unpredicted, surprising, rising up of the workers of a communist country demanding not only improved material conditions but also a movement towards the democratization of that regime. As we all know, this is not what happened for example in Czechoslovakia in 1968, which was basically a movement of intellectuals or leaders of the party. Here, you have a unique collaboration between the masses, the workers, and the intellectuals where the leading role is evidently being played by the workers. So, it is an enormous event.

Where we all are in the dark and where we begin to disagree is on what it means both for the present and for the future. One possible interpretation is that we are witnessing the beginning of the emergence of what once upon a time was called communism with a human face. That given the right mix of prudence, pressure, tactical flexibility, Soviet inhibition brought about by other factors, this movement represented by Solidarity will take root and through peaceful means, perhaps with a good deal of strife but without serious military repression either by Polish

authorities or by Soviet troops, will begin to grow and will by itself peacefully transform the nature of the regime in Poland and inevitably therefore the nature of communist regimes throughout the Soviet empire, because obviously it would be impossible to quarantine any such development within Poland itself. Even if such a development occurred in a less important country than Poland, it would probably be impossible to quarantine it. It would be infectious, contagious — it is hard to think of words to use that don't have a derogatory connotation, but it would be catching in a good sense, it would be benignly infectious. But occurring in Poland, the most important of all those countries, it would set an irresistible example.

And we are expected to believe, according to this theory, this theory expects us to believe that such a development will be tolerated by the communist authorities in Poland and by the communist authorities in the Soviet Union. I simply don't believe that and I find myself surprised to put it mildly that the AFL-CIO seems to believe it. If it were anybody but the AFL CIO, I would assume that naivete were at work. The last thing in the world any informed person could accuse the AFL-CIO or anybody associated with it in the upper regions, anyway, is of naivete on the issue of communism. I frankly think what we have here is a case of wishful thinking or possibly thinking created by the sense of solidarity with Solidarity, solidarity of the workers of a labor movement in this country with a labor movement there. But in any case, without trying to explain or psychologize the position, it just seems to me on the face of it very difficult to accept, difficult on the basis of the historic experience of the Soviet empire and of communist regimes generally, even communist regimes not associated with the Soviet Union — because, as we know, as Jean-Francois Revel once said, de-Russification or de-Sovietization does not mean democratization and some communist regimes not under the thumb of Soviet power have been much more repressive than the Soviet Union itself. No communist regime that we know of in the 60 odd years since communism made its accursed appearance on the Earth has been willing or would be able to tolerate such a thing as a free and independent labor movement or workers organization. When we are asked to strike a deal, extend credits in exchange for concessions, pay the economic price in exchange for the political price as Tom very neatly put it, I think we're being offered a fantasy. I can well imagine that at some point the communist authorities in Poland and the Soviets would agree to certain political concessions in exchange for economic aid — 27 billion dollars is now the total package, I think.

Let me just digress for a minute to say that a Soviet invasion might occur any minute and render this entire discussion academic — although I believe it might well start up again six months after such an invasion — not only that might render the whole thing academic, this entire discussion might remain academic because it is conducted only among Americans, since a good deal of that money is controlled by Western Europeans, particularly Germans, and I don't have a lot of hope for a firm policy coming from those quarters, that is, the kind of policy that I myself would like to see followed. And I'm very conscious that I may be wasting my breath and your time on any such advocacy but there might be some useful analytic value to advocating even a position that doesn't have any realistic hope of being followed.

If I'm right in saying that no communist system can tolerate what Solidarity represents, and that even if concessions were to be made, we could expect that they would gradually be withdrawn or eroded, in which case the trouble would start again, and we would be back exactly where we started with the same discussion facing us: What happens now? Will there be a Soviet invasion? What can we do about it? What should we do about it? Nothing or should we help? Should we buy them more time?

The alternative possibility is one that is as I say seems to me unbelievable, namely that significant political concessions would be made and that they would be honored, which would seem to be me to be the beginning of the end of communism as we have known it historically. And it's just I find it hard to believe that communism will give up so easily without a greater struggle. Now if I 'm right, if there is no such possibility of a political price in exchange for economic aid, even aid on the kind of terms that Tom outlined and that themselves seem highly unrealistic from the economic point of view — I find it hard to imagine that the kinds of terms that he would like to see attached would be the ones that the bankers would be willing to agree to or ones that would have any effect at all on the Polish economy if they were accepted and put into practice — but in any case, if no such possibility exists, if concessions would not be honored and we would be back to where we started in the first place, only slightly dishonored in my view in having collaborated with the communists authorities to buy off or stabilize a rebellion within their heartland, we face another alternative and that alternative is to allow the Polish workers, that is Solidarity, the Polish people to determine the course and extent of their own revolt.

This means negatively doing nothing. That means not extending credits, not cooperating with the authorities, following the traditional AFL-CIO line of not helping the communist regimes to avoid the choice of guns or butter and in this case not helping the Soviet Union avoid the choice of repression, whether by military or merely internal police means, as against political concessions wrested from them from within. This involves negatively not extending credits at all. It would involve negatively to cease and desist from exhorting Solidarity, in the self-Finlandized way that so many American editorialists and columnists have adopted, to caution and moderation.

It would mean in effect refusing to follow what was once called the Sonnenfeld doctrine. Hal Sonnenfeld denies that he ever said what the Sonnenfeld doctrine was alleged to have been, but whether or not he really said it, there is such an idea in the world. And that idea is of course that we in the West have a common interest with the Soviet Union in the stabilization of the East European empire because the breakup of that empire, even if we had nothing to do with it, would be too dangerous to tolerate and would suck other people in including ourselves and would almost certainly lead to war. Therefore, it is in our interest to collaborate with the Soviet Union and with the communist authorities generally in either suppressing or, let's use a more euphemistic term, in stabilizing any troubles within the Eastern European empire.

I do not believe that the Sonnenfeld doctrine ought to guide our policy. And I don't believe it should for several reasons, the most important of which is that it represents a preemptive admission or act of defeat on the part of the West. It assumes, for reasons that escape me, that of all the empires in history only the Soviet empire must be regarded as eternal. The Roman empire is gone, the British empire is gone, all the great European empires are gone, but somehow the Soviet empire has to be the last great empire on earth that has to be regarded as eternal. Somehow, and it's an odd paradox, many of the same people who say this — not in so many words but who strongly imply it by the other things they say — are the very people who are constantly telling us that the age of imperialism is over and who are always attacking the neo-imperial behavior of the West, especially of the United States.

This seems to me both ludicrous and dishonorable. The Soviet empire is not eternal. As a matter of fact we may be standing at the threshold of the breakup of the Soviet empire. There are many signs of cracks and fissures within the empire. At the moment, the most significant is the great upheaval in Poland. But there is also the continual resistance in Afghanistan, there are the economic and political problems within the Soviet Union proper, the demographic problems, the change in the composition and the ethnic balance of that society, the fact that it remains dependent on Western help, in such realms as agriculture and high technology.

Thirty-five years ago, George F. Kennan, in outlining the principles of what would come to be called the policy of containment, said that if we held the line against further Soviet expansionism, we could within 10 or 15 years — people forget that he actually specified that limit — we could expect either the mellowing or the breakup of the Soviet power. Well, 15 years after the Mr. X article was written was 1962, which was the Cuban Missile Crisis and the beginning of serious American involvement in Vietnam. So, what actually happened was the beginning of the decline of American power rather than the breakup of Soviet power. Nevertheless, I think Kennan may have been right. His timing was off, but I think he may have been right. He saw, inverting the idea of the internal contradictions of capitalism, turning the tables, he saw the internal contradictions of communism and the Soviet empire already, as he put it, taking root and beginning to sprout. Well he was premature, but I think some of the buds of those roots that he already saw in evidence in 1947 have begun to show themselves.

And I think that by continuing or, once again, not continuing but reestablishing the kind of policy that we followed so successfully for a number of years in any case of trying to hold the line against further Soviet expansion, which would also mean refusing to collaborate in the stabilization of the empire that already exists, by following such a policy, especially when we can do so at minimum risk of direct confrontation with the Soviet Union, we might indeed be able to make a modest contribution not to the mellowing — because I do not believe as I said earlier that mellowing is a serious possibility — but precisely to the breakup of the Soviet empire. If such an opportunity is presenting itself and if the courage and imagination of the Polish people — legendary for their courage in history — is making such a possibility dramatically salient and vivid, who are we to be so ignoble as both to deny it and in some sense

to subvert it or cooperate with its enemies to subvert it. Because I think that is the unintended consequence of the benign policy of trying to use whatever economic or political leverage we may have to extract political concessions. I think we do have a chance to help Solidarity and what it represents. I think we could help it if it were possible to do so — since again, as I say, the West German bankers may make this entire discussion academic — but if we do have an opportunity to do so and to the extent that we do, I think we can help Solidarity to most effectively help the world, to help our children and our grandchildren, by refusing to use whatever power we have to dampen down the possibility which has now made itself so beautifully and wonderfully manifest, in which so many of us, not, I hasten to say the AFL-CIO or Tom Kahn, have been too base and ignoble to recognize and appreciate.

Moderator

Midge Decter instructed me to be flexible in running this meeting and I will inflexibly follow her instructions. I was about to open the floor to questions, but Tom felt he wanted to say a few words to sharpen the issue, so I'll give the floor to him for a few moments, and then if Norman feels he wants to reply, we shall let him, and then throw it open to questions.

Tom Kahn

I really don't want to sharpen the issue I want to change it. I assume later on we'll get a rebuttal or something that'll take up some of the points that Norman has raised. I wanted to tell you a story and Norman reminded me of it during his remarks. I think some of you know that I went to Rome at the time the Solidarity delegation was in Rome. I met with a distinguished representative of that delegation and we discussed the question of credits and many other questions, and in the course of the discussion he said to me, we are very worried about the election of Ronald Reagan as president, and I thought to myself, oh my, what kind of a left-winger am I dealing with here. I said, "What disturbs you?" And he said to me, "We are worried about the revival of the Kissinger-Sonnenfeld doctrine." (Laughter) I was absolutely astounded that he would even know the name of Sonnenfeld. And I must tell you this whole conversation was taking place from Polish to Italian to English through a translator and I said to him, "Do you mean by the Sonnenfeld doctrine the notion that Eastern Europe belongs to the Soviet Union, that that relationship is a stabilizing factor in world affairs, and that the United States should do nothing to undermine it?" And, cunning fellow that he was, he broke into English, "You understand me exactly."

That's my first story. Secondly, on the point about the exhortations to Solidarity to be more cautious, you couldn't be more right. There was a disgusting resolution passed unanimously by the U.S. Senate on Friday introduced by Senator Percy, not surprisingly. The language was modified a little bit by Pat Moynihan, I believe, and maybe one or two others. But the essence of the resolution after a mild warning to the Russians not to intervene in Poland was to commend the Polish workers in Poland for their great restraint. As if we have any business doing that.

Moderator

Why don't we just take some questions then, or some brief statements if you so wish. There can be statements which can easily be transformed into questions by saying upon the completion of your statement, "What do you think of that?" So why don't you begin.

Jiri Novak

I was a member of the Dubcek team and took part in the movement of socialism with a human face. At the very beginning, there were two streams. One stream within this movement put emphasis on socialism, they were the old Stalinists — Dubcek was one of the old Stalinists. The other was the emphasis on the human face, which was a growing majority not only of the intellectuals but also of the population at large. And it was at that time obvious that these two can't go together, there is no Marxism with a human face. So here I would very much endorse what Norman said. I would also agree with him that any help given to the Poles is not economic help for the Poles. This 26 or 27 billion of dollars is a tremendous amount for a small country like Poland. If it were used for the Polish economy, they would have at least sausages, but they don't even have sausages today because it went to the Warsaw Pact. It wasn't used to strengthen the Polish economy and whatever we would give, it would give just to strengthen Moscow. Further, we must know that it is not just the mismanagement of the Polish economy that could be replaced with a better management, it's a system that has been imposed upon the Poles by the Soviets that is inherently inefficient and whatever help you give, it will remain the most inefficient economy and you can't save it.

Further, we must take into consideration that something like 20 percent of the Polish Gross National Product is being used for the army, for the war effort. Poland doesn't need an army. It's not in any danger. Only once was the army used since the Warsaw Pact was created, when it occupied Czechoslovakia. There was no other use for the Polish army but still they have to pay 20 percent of their GNP. As long as these facts do exist, there is no help you could give to the Poles. It could only be help that you would give to the Soviet government. And all this help is given to a country or to an empire which is about to destroy our entire civilization. So this must be one point of departure that I would agree with Norman and Tom won't be surprised that I don't agree with him because we discussed this two days ago.

Perhaps, where I slightly disagree with Norman, it's just a question of emphasis. You see the Soviet Union is a communist and imperialist country. Where should we put the emphasis? Should we put the emphasis on the communist system? Or should we put emphasis on the imperial system? I think we should put great emphasis on the imperial system. The Soviets once made a pact with Hitler. The Soviets made a pact with another German called Kissinger and there could be pacts with different other non- or anti-socialist allies and still have conflict with communist countries like China or they are also in conflict with the many communists in Eastern Europe who for one reason or other, despite all the disappointment, still believe in Marxism or communism, but they don't accept Soviet imperialism.

What I think is so important and puts the whole Polish movement on a far higher level than the movement in Czechoslovakia under Dubcek was that it is first of all a nationalist movement and that it is very closely tied to a religious movement, and both the religious and nationalist oppression had a long history in Czarist Russia, in Czarist imperialism, and now in Russian imperialism. If you look at the Soviet Union as an imperialist country, then we must be clear about the fact that by being imperialist they are oppressing other nationalities. Not only some 100 million people in Eastern Europe but also another hundred million people or more — 51 percent of the population of the Soviet Union proper — they are all oppressed as nationalities, even the communists.

Now, how can we help? Norman saw the possibility that it will disintegrate. How can we contribute to the disintegration? The great danger of the West is that it gave up the principle of self-determination that has been accepted in of the Atlantic Charter and even signed by Stalin and accepted the very imperial concept of spheres of interest. If the United States would emphasize and could prove that the Soviets are an imperialist country, and that we have to appeal to the right of self-determination of all nations to mobilize forces which are very obvious, which we see in Poland but which exist all over the Soviet Union with the exception of Russia. So if we would emphasize for instance that the Soviets are an imperialist country and about to invade or Finlandize Europe — Western Europe — then we would be entitled to say to the Western allies of America, either you do realize that the Soviets are your enemy, and go along with us and fight your enemy, at least in economic ways and economic means — not to give any credits or any economic help — or if you want to support the Soviets who endanger your freedom, who occupy part of your territory, as our German friends did, then do it. But we can't guarantee freedom; you can't have it both ways. You can't have at the same time our protection and you make business with the East. And I'm sure I don't know France but I do know Germany, that in Germany there are enough forces that would immediately change the power relationship within Germany, but they won't change it as long as we are thinking and speaking in terms of detente or like Mr. Percy speaks still of stick and carrot. And once we have carrots, so there will competition who will offer the bigger carrot, and the Germans may win this competition.

So what I think is of crucial importance is to call a spade a spade, to call the Soviet Union an imperialist country. And even if Poland or for that matter Ukraine or whatever country is not any longer a member of the Soviet empire, even if it remains communist, there is no danger of war, there is no danger of further Soviet expansionism. And we should also see the Polish events as a very important issue in the fatal problem of peace or war. As long as the situation in the hinterland of the Soviet Union, and the Soviet army like the Polish army cannot wage a war — so we have to support the resistance of all oppressed nations. That is the duty of America as the leader of the free world, and the free world is lost without this help of America. We must put into the centerpiece of our foreign policy the issue of self-determination of nations, that the weakest part, the weakest link in the Soviet chain, and I think that is the most progressive policy. If we put emphasis only on communism, only to fight against communism, so we may do something which we have done, I have seen from the other end, in the period of the Cold War, where the

communists, the pro-Soviet and anti-Soviet communists, were seen in one and the same bag. We must see all the differences, all the conflicts, even in the Politburo and we have seen it now in Poland as well, where there are communists but against the Soviet Union. And that is the most important point. Let's concentrate on Soviet imperialism, and then America could be again the leader of the free world and I'm sure that quite a number of countries will join America's leadership.

Anne Green (Committee for the Free World)

I have a question for Norman. The most important question is how to keep the existence and the government in Poland negotiating with an independent institution going, because the moment you negotiate with it it's not totalitarianism anymore, the existence of an institution even with semi-recognition and - Poland is not a communist country today. It hasn't been since it recognized Solidarity, and if the longer that can be kept going — I suspect that you're right, that the Russians will not allow them to go on forever — but the longer it's kept going, the deeper the seeds that are sown outside Poland, the whatever information gets through, that the communist Soviet countries sitting down with a mass disciplined popular movement negotiating, that's not communism, and the longer it's seen, the more hold it can take on people's imaginations outside Poland, in Russia and other areas in Europe. The question is how to keep that process going on longer. I mean, the obvious answer is yes, but maybe you have another answer which says no, there ...it seems it would keep the process going longer, and that's a process that the longer it goes on, the better for Polish workers and that depends on how long they want to fight but you factor in the imagination of the people.

Podhoretz

Well, I think that people announced the death of communism in Poland a bit prematurely. It is true that something unprecedented is going on but, so far, the Party has not surrendered its authority, which is at issue as I understand it. I don't want to get into an argument about whether it has agreed to it or it hasn't, I think it hasn't, but even if you're right, I myself find it impossible to believe that communism is going to be such a pussycat and surrender so easily. It seems to me the minute this movement actually does cross over the line of destroying or truly undermining the authority of the party that either the Party will crack down — and I stress, this doesn't mean a Soviet invasion, it could be done by internal security forces, it could be done by the Poles themselves, which would make it an internal matter. In any case, the minute that happens, they actually have to crack down, or in effect commit political suicide. I don't care how long this process goes on, the issue will always have to be faced at some point. Perhaps I'm wrong, but this seems incredible on the face of it that the communist systems, given their historic record, given the doctrine, given the very principle that legitimizes the rule of the communist party, given the domination of the Soviet Union — given all of that, it seems to me impossible to believe that they would permit this kind of easy victory over them or allow themselves to be defeated this easily and I think they will have to use force. And it seems incredible to believe that a few million or billion dollars from the West is going to buy communism, which, to put it crudely, is what it seems they offer. That's not your question. But the spread of the imagination .

. . I don't think actually you need to spread the imagination of freedom, I think the imagination of freedom exists in Eastern Europe. What you need is the concrete example that it is possible to do something. Well it remains to be seen whether it's possible to do something. The Polish story is only beginning, it's not over. And I'm simply predicting that no matter what we do, unless Solidarity stops at a certain point, which it may or may not do, there will be a forcible repression. Because the alternative is political suicide.

Unidentified:

I disagree with both speakers on the grounds that they both are overly theoretical, logical and persuasive as they might be. The fact of the matter is that there is an enormous debt which is owed by the Polish authorities to the West and the likelihood is overwhelming or at least very very strong that the West, that is the Western Europeans, the Americans, and the banks are not going to permit a default. The consequences of a default would be very severe indeed for communism and the world financial system. [A default] is very unlikely to occur. Therefore, some aid in some form is going to be provided. The real question we need to be discussing tonight is on what terms. Should that be the extent. And I think the aid we are referring to is economic aid, we're not talking about military aid, and not some sort of vague political aid. We're talking about economics. And the normal way in which that question is put is should it be conditional or unconditional. And the sort of hard-liners, hard-thinkers, the Reaganites, seem to believe there should be very stringent conditions placed upon the Polish authorities that such aid would only be given if the economic system of Poland is reformed. I find that a convincing, logical, and persuasive position, but I'm afraid even that may be a little too theoretical for me because we have in Poland today not only a political crisis but also an economic crisis, it's well known that the economy is going down-hill and is deteriorating. In order perhaps to prevent that from precipitating some kind of violence, probably the West should provide aid unconditionally. So I invite your comment on my statement.

Podhoretz

My comment, as I said earlier, is that I agree, I think it's unlikely that the position I favor will be followed. I also think it's tragic that this is so unlikely, because whatever we do — and I'm not sure who "we" is here, I'm not sure who is speaking for whom in this situation — as I said earlier, to the extent that we do have power, we should use it in a certain way. Whether we have that power or not is a serious question. I doubt that we have very much, but to the extent that we do, and for the sake of understanding what's at issue, I think we should not use it in a way that consolidates the communist rule over Poland. Now that may be impossible, in which case we have been put into a really diabolical dilemma, in that we are being forced by linkage, if you like, in this case the financial links, to bail out both the economic crisis and the political crisis, which means that we are willy-nilly a party to something like the Sonnenfeld doctrine, which seems to me monstrous. If we are not free to at least choose not to do that, then we have become the collaborators in the spread of totalitarianism. That's my comment.

Kahn

I agree that Norman's position is probably not going to prevail. That's why I offer him to fall back on my position. It's also not likely to prevail, but if it should it would be better than what is likely to prevail if we are both ineffective in persuading those over whom we have no control that we are right.

Piotr Naimski
Member of KOR (Committee in Defense of Workers)

Excuse me for my English, I came from Poland two weeks ago. First, I want to add a few words to your question. I think that Poland is still a communist country. But we have to remember what [Polish Communist Party Secretary] Kania said in August, August 18, in Gdansk. He said that's it's a counterrevolution, but we should fight with it without force because we have not force and without violence. I hope that it is a revolution in Poland, and I hope that it will go by, as we named it, revolution by evolution, also without force, without violence. I hope it would be possible. And another thing, Mr. Kahn said what possibilities for Western countries and said all people are thinking whether countries can choose. I think that we have another point of view in Poland. In Poland, we have little or nothing to choose, it's my view, not Solidarity's, not KOR's, but I think we have the only way. This is the way ahead. We have to go on. I think that while we as a nation, not as a communist country, but as a nation we have about 30 billion dollars in debts; these debts are our debts, not the communist government of Poland's, and I think that we should pay it. But we will be able to pay it only when the country will be under our control. And I think, I agree with these people who say that it isn't necessary and that it is a mistake to give money to communist authorities in Poland.

I think that Poland has to ask for aid, but it must be under the control of Solidarity, because Solidarity is our chance. It isn't only a workers' movement. One can say that Solidarity is a state in a state. And I think that that's true. Of course, it is also a trade union, but there are many areas in social life which are governed now by Solidarity, Solidarity as an organized people, organized nation, not just a trade union. I think, is as I heard in Warsaw, that there exists up to now only one viable project, the project for Poland. So generally, Poland should ask Western countries for 10 years moratorium for debts. And ask for new credits for economical reforms, or something like that, but under the control of Solidarity, too. It's a project of Professor Stefan Kurowski. And I think it's a kind of an answer to your speech.

[applause]

Jeff Ballinger (union organizer)

I would like to thank both of you for drawing out the question so well. I would only like to offer that we missed one very important point, the newspapers missed it, except for *The Washington Post* on Saturday, which reported that President Reagan has now singled out the Polish authorities as well as the Soviet Union for their actions in the future as regards Solidarity, and I

think we should really applaud this step, because Solzhenitsyn has been pleading with the Western leaders for years to get involved in the internal affairs of other countries and I think this is implicitly, and he's demonstrated the desire on his part to scrutinize the affairs of Polish government. . . .

Moderator

Why don't we take about two more questions and then have a summation of both speakers.

Bernard Traub

I have the uneasy feeling that we have been concentrating on a secondary question and avoiding the central question. I think we agree on the question that's been debated, whether we should give credit, because it all depends on the conditions. If Solidarity continues to remain independent and to request aid under appropriate conditions, I think everybody would be in favor of it. If the Polish authorities requested aid in order to repress Solidarity I don't think anyone here would be in favor of it. What concerns me is the unspoken issue. I think Mr. Podhoretz is correct that an independent trade union is totally incompatible with Leninism, with the communist system. And we have to confront the possibility which is not inevitable but certainly likely, that the Russians will move, that at a certain point the conflict will take place. And Polish authorities I don't think would be able to cope with this situation, because it's just beyond them — the Russians would be drawn in. And now the question is what is the West prepared to do. You have to think about that. It's useful to think about that because it helps clarify our notions about policy in the immediate. But what is the West prepared to do? I'd like to hear our two speakers on this, what is the West prepared to do? What alternatives are available to the West? What could possibly be done in 1981 that could not be done or was not done in 1956? Is it simply going to be neutrality, moral outrage? Recognition of the rebellion? Military? There must be a range of policies that we better start thinking about now even with respect to the second question. And someone before mentioned that they did not know the situation in France, it's interesting that Mitterand, the socialist candidate, has taken a much harder line on these issues than Giscard, the recognition of the Afghan rebels, denouncing the Russians for their Polish policy, There might be a constituency out there that's ready for some kind of leadership, but we better decide now what the nature of that leadership is going to be or be taken by surprise when the event occurs.

Moderator

We have three hands up. Irene.

Irena Lasota (Committee in Support of Solidarity)

I just want to make a point. I do agree with Tom's proposal and for one more reason. On the one hand we have the Western countries, the Western European countries, saying more or less, that whatever you do, the Soviets, you invade or you don't invade, detente is going to continue. And you have the American stance, which is whatever you do or don't do, we are not going to have detente anyhow. I think that this is in a way blocking the situation and the proposition of the credits with conditions seems to be appealing at least from the point of view of giving a choice,

of giving the carrot. And it's not really a carrot, because I think there is one thing lacking in Tom's presentation, since if he had read out at least part of the 21 points of the Gdansk Agreement, then part of the discussion would be much different because these are not 21 points dealing with minor issues, but dealing with the most major issues that I think Mr. Podhoretz would like to see as a way of undermining of the regime by having a revolution. Those points among others include at least implicitly the sharing and the distribution of the economy. Now one more point: the communist government does have a lot of problems with what to do with the 27 or 29 billion dollars, but people in Poland are right now starving. There is nothing in the stores. It seems that if the conditions are met and the money, especially the credits in the form of food, are being sent to Poland with the conditions of the AFL-CIO, then we can almost be sure as far as food is concerned, not money, it would be distributed to the people, not to the Soviet Union, because it seems that Solidarity at this point, not in 7 weeks but today, it seems that they will be able to take care that the distribution is done right. It seems — and again these are gossips from Poland, we don't know how bad is the situation — that the regime is very much interested in starving people out. There are gossips saying that the peasants don't produce anything but that part of the food was stored in order to bring chaos, starvation, the disappointment that now we have Solidarity but we have nothing to eat. So this proposition seems to bring those elements that may at least prolong the life of Solidarity and then theoretically one would agree with you that communism cannot be reformed but on the other hand that Tom may be right.

Eric Chenoweth

It seems to me that Anne Green is right, that the clear victory of the Polish workers is that it has challenged the totalitarian control of the communist party and it has so effectively challenged it that totalitarianism as such really doesn't exist in Poland right now. It could be brought in very quickly by the Soviet Union again, but right now it doesn't exist, since the communist party doesn't have total control over the industrial workforce, on which totalitarianism depends.

Mr. Podhoretz's argument assumes that the Polish experiment is doomed to failure and that the Soviet Union will invade, but the obvious is that Solidarity is so strong, its position is so strong that the Soviet Union fears so far to invade Poland to crush it. And it seems to me that our hopes should rest on the hope that the Soviet Union won't invade, that Solidarity can continue, that the Polish experiment continues to evolve. If we assume that the Soviet Union is going to invade, and that by sacrificing Poland we're enhancing the contradictions within the Soviet Union itself, then you've given up one of the essential struggles against totalitarianism, so the question seems to me should be how to prolong Solidarity's existence.

Al Glotzer (former aide to Leon Trotsky and Max Shachtman, author of *Trotsky*)

This is a very difficult discussion. It's a very hard choice here of what to do in certain circumstances. When the Polish events broke out, I tended to have the view that Podhoretz has presented, that the Russians could not possibly permit the movement in Poland to develop without an invasion and a complete suppression of Solidarity. Yet it hasn't occurred as the weeks

and months have gone by. The reason that led me to believe this not only theoretically but also practically is that Solidarity was the first massive challenge to the nature of the Leninist state. It challenged the one party regime, which is something the party could not tolerate. My own political experience led me to believe that the Russians could not let this go on. Yet it goes on. And every week we expect the Russian invasion and it doesn't come. It doesn't mean it won't come. I still find it hard to believe that they haven't sent the troops in.

It raises the question: What forced the Solidarity movement into existence in the first place and what prevents the Russians from doing what they absolutely want to do — since there is no doubt in my mind that the Soviet Party leadership in the Kremlin wants to go into Poland and completely destroy the whole movement? It's not really Afghanistan in which the Russians are deeply involved but that in both Poland and the Soviet Union the economic conditions are so severe that it produced the Solidarity movement in Poland and makes the Russians hesitate. Sixty years after the Revolution, the country is in a deep economic crisis; its agriculture is in a permanent crisis. The only sense of strength, the only power, is its vast military force on which its whole economy is concentrated.

I would think therefore that the Solidarity movement must have a tremendous impact on the whole Eastern bloc. I find it hard to believe that it hasn't had some effect. I don't believe it necessarily has to win the struggle. I view it as the beginning of the upsurge in the Eastern bloc, as the sowing of seeds that will bring similar revolts in the communist bloc.

So, what do you do in respect to such a movement from the outside looking in to the communist bloc. You can't decide now. You have to leave your options open, whether to give them economic aid or not to give them economic aid. You have to judge it tactically as to what is most important for keeping this movement alive as long as possible and to prevent the intervention of the Soviet army.

Moderator

The first person to summarize — this actually violates the rules of debate, but since this is not a debate, I'll simply call on Tom Kahn.

Kahn

I will try to answer some of the questions that were directed to me in the context of responding to some of the things that Norman said. Two sentences in Norman's remarks stuck in my mind, because they seemed to be if not entirely contradictory then in a state of tension. One was that the Soviets will not tolerate this sort of thing, the other that there are signs of breakup in the Soviet empire. Now, those two things may not be in entirely logical contradiction, but there is a tension in at least the feeling that they convey. On the one hand the Soviets can exercise all their options to crush the movement in Poland; on the other hand they cannot easily withstand the breakup of their empire. I think that somewhere in that contradiction may lie a glimmer of the answer to our problem.

Now, Norman is right, of course, that we did not — in spite the claim of *Fortune* magazine — instigate the events in Poland. They were spontaneous. The question then is, what is the character of that spontaneous rebellion in Poland and what differentiates it from all the previous uprisings and rebellions which have occurred in the communist world, both those we know of and those we are probably doomed never to know about. And here I want to repeat some of the things that Al Glotzer said. It seems to me that the distinctive character of the Polish development is that here is a working class movement that has challenged the monopoly power of the Communist Party. And what are the implications of that fact? We keep saying over and over that's the character of it, but do we really understand the implications or do we circumscribe the implications by references to other events and other ideas that we have which grew out of other events? For example, the quotation from our friend Revel, de-Sovietization does not mean democratization. That is true. That has been true. That was true in the case of Yugoslavia. That was true in the case of China. That was true in the case of Czechoslovakia. That was true in the case of Hungary. It was true where de-Sovietization did take place and where efforts at de-Sovietization took place but did not succeed. In no case did democratization result.

It seems to me, however, that there is a fundamental difference between what is going on in Poland now and what has gone on in all these places. In the case of Yugoslavia and China, you had top down rebellions against Soviet domination. You had national revolutions if you will, in fact not revolutions, but rebellions, against the domination of the Soviet Union in the world communist movement. There was no popular uprising among the Chinese people that I know of, that said let us become independent of Stalin and instead go our own road. I don't recall any such popular rebellion in Yugoslavia that said let us de-Sovietize ourselves. And in Czechoslovakia and Hungary, the break with the Soviet Union, the attempted break with the Soviet Union, was also to a large extent from the top down. That is to say, a national communist party sought to separate itself in one respect or another from the Soviet Communist Party. The entire revolt in Czechoslovakia was led by the communist party which wanted to withdraw from the Warsaw Pact, wanted socialism with a human face, what have you. In Hungary, there was of course popular participation with what happened when the Soviet tanks rolled in, but I would suggest, I could be wrong on this, others of you who have a better memory may remember, the Hungarian revolt almost had the character of a mob action in the streets. In fact, the Communist Party in the United States was able to convince tons of people on the left, a far larger number than are sympathetic to the Soviet Union now in the case of Poland, that the Hungarian uprising was in fact a fascist and counterrevolutionary, undertaken by a mob, an unstructured mob.

In Poland you have something entirely different, you do not have a mob that takes to the streets but workers who take to the factories, conduct sit ins, and actually produce a movement, an institution, an organizational force, which has not existed in any of the other countries that we have talked about and which has no precedent in the history of the communist world since 1917 — that I know of. Now the question is whether the attempts by national communist parties to break with the Soviets provide a test for the present, that is countries where there was no

sustained working class organization. In Poland there is a split now occurring in the communist party, but that split was caused by Solidarity. It was not a case of Solidarity being created by a split in the communist party. This seems to me to offer an entirely new model.

Now, will the Soviets tolerate it? Well, not if they can help it. Al is quite right; they want very much to go in and clean up the whole situation. But the Soviets do not exercise their options in a vacuum any more than we do. I happen to think that there are contradictions in capitalism. There is no necessity to resolve overnight those contradictions. Some of them drag on for generations and generations. And they may never be resolved. Why do we assume that the Soviet Union has the power, no matter what the possible consequences, to resolve by force or violence overnight, a major contradiction which has arisen in the communist system. Are they ready to assume the Polish debt and the economic problems of Poland? Maybe. If they invade, how do they get the workers to go back to work? That problem did not exist in Czechoslovakia, it did not exist in Hungary, it didn't exist in China, it didn't exist in Yugoslavia. Here you have an organized working class movement with a membership that's three times that of the Party. And which represents a good chunk of the Party. And it's one thing to invade a country, it's another thing to get people to go to work, unless you want to turn the country into one vast labor camp, which is not as easy as it sounds. Those are two possible deterrents. And the third is if it is possible for the Western world to put together a package of negative pressures to make the Soviets decide that it will cost them more to exercise that option of resolving this contradiction of communism than it would to let the thing drag out a little bit longer, and to try other tactics, like political subversion of Solidarity, dividing the union, buying off people, and creating all kinds of other political trouble.

Now that gets to the point that was raised by the gentleman in the back, what is the West prepared to do? I am convinced that we could put together, if we had the will, a package that is so unattractive to them, a package of consequences should they invade Poland, that they might think it is not a wise thing to do. And that package could range from the complete cutting off of all trade credits to the whole Eastern bloc, to political pressures, and to military action about which I do not mean military action in Poland. There are other places in the world where military action could be usefully employed. One could take a new look at Cuba, one could look at Afghanistan again, one could look at Angola again. There are various parts of the world where the Russians could be faced with some problems that they would rather not have at this point.

Now will the West do this? Does this will exist in this country, does it exist in Europe? I don't know. But I want to try to get away from the mechanical application of certain theories, including theories which I believed for a long time. It's true, we all know it as a matter of catechism, that independent trade unionism is incompatible with Leninism and vice versa. But that's a theory and an idea, and theories sometimes get modified as a result of historical developments. And what is going on now in Poland could conceivably lead to some brand new social formations of a kind that we have never seen before in the world. It reminds me of the old debate about whether the Soviet Union was socialist or not, and many people said, well it has to

be socialist because it's obviously not capitalist, and we can only have either capitalism or socialism unless we're going back to feudalism. Of course, what we ended up with was a brand new type of society unlike anything predicted by anybody's theories. All the great thinkers never predicted it. We might conceivably see the creation of a brand new social formation. Not completely to the liking of the people in this room, not totally Western in its democratic values, but something uniquely Polish, that might happen.

I don't think it is useful to talk about socialism with a human face or socialism without a human face. Or whether it's possible to have a human face put on socialism or on communism. That, with all due respect to whoever brought it up, is the language of manifesto writers. . . . [What we have here that is different] is that it is a movement. What has appeared in Poland does not exist in the Soviet Union. Bukovsky never had one. Solzhenitsyn never had one. Klebanov doesn't have one. Borisov doesn't have one. But in Poland an actual movement has developed. And I believe that movements can sometimes develop a dynamic of their own, leading to places unforeseen by all of our theories. Movements can redefine social and economic relationships in ways that cannot be predicted. When a movement arises as opposed to a new set of ideas or a manifesto, there can be a brand new chemistry leading to things that we can't today imagine. I am not saying I know for sure that this is going to happen. I am not even saying that the odds are it's going to happen. I just think that we should leave our minds open to the possibility that there could be a result in Poland that confounds everybody's expectations.

The rebellion in Poland is not inchoate — it has a voice, it has a structure, it can define its own interests and its own demands. It has done so. And at least at the AFL-CIO we are going to accept their definition of their needs, of their limits, and of their demands. That is where we come down on the side of credits. I want to facilitate the breakup of the Soviet empire and that may mean use of carrots and sticks. Now that's not to be confused with the Brzezinski notion of swinging from cooperative modes into competitive modes, all designed to maintain pretty much the status quo or to limit Soviet encroachments on the status quo. I am for the use of carrots and sticks in ways that are aimed at the dissolution of the Soviet empire, if not right away then down the road. The credits could be a useful carrot.

I am not an expert on international finance — I'm not an expert on my own personal finances. And I'm not exactly sure what the mechanics are. I know there are people working on this. Some people at the World Without War Council who have contacts with bankers of all people are trying to put together a package that would include the AFL-CIO's insistence on the Polish government's adherence to the 21 Points plus some other complicated things about rescheduling and moratoriums and all that kind of stuff that I don't understand. But I don't for the life of me understand why it should be impossible for the financial community to say: We shall reschedule your debts in the following way provided that you live up to the 21 Points because that would bring stability to your country — and we're interested in stability as investors — and if you proceed to violate those points and demonstrate instability, your debt schedule goes back to where it was before we negotiated this deal. There may be some deep structural obstacles

to this common sense approach, but I can't for the life of me discern what they would be.

[applause]

Norman Podhoretz

[break in tape. . .] I think the answer is very simple. The Soviet Union would obviously rather not do this job if the cup can be passed from its lips. And they are giving the Polish authorities every chance to settle the matter internally. There are precedents for this policy — one of them as a matter of fact is Afghanistan. They only invaded Afghanistan after their own people, their own puppets, proved unable to stabilize the situation in Afghanistan. I think something similar happened before the invasion in Czechoslovakia. So it is within the historic pattern of Soviet relations to their colonies that they will give the local authorities the chance to take care of the problem of challenge to authority or a border before Soviet troops themselves have to move. That is an extreme measure which the Soviet Union understandably prefers not to take if it can get away with not taking it.

Now there's a funny confusion in this discussion which relates exactly to the question of the Soviet invasion, what exactly can we do to prevent one and what we should do if there is one. We all believe, I think, that the breakup of the Soviet empire would be desirable, but Tom very passionately and eloquently speaks of the unpredictable consequences of a movement in history and the possibility of a new kind of social formation coming into being. I think he's right. Where I disagree with him is in his — again, to me incredible — suggestion that all this is likely to happen without bloodshed, without force, without armed struggle. There is no precedent in history it seems to me for such a belief, there's no warrant for such a belief.

This is where the contradiction you think exists between my two statements can be if not resolved at least understood. I said that the Soviet Union cannot tolerate what Solidarity represents. I also said that we might be witnessing the beginning of the breakup of the Soviet empire. Now, the hidden term in that analysis is precisely the possibility of a Soviet invasion. I think there will be a Soviet invasion if the Soviet Union feels that the Polish Communist Party is unable to restore or maintain what it calls order. I don't think there's any question that there will be an invasion if that judgment should be reached. Whatever the case, there is no necessary deadline here, and in fact it's in the interest of the Soviet Union to give them a chance, because *they* know, as we do or should, that the difference between Poland in 1981, Hungary '56, and Czechoslovakia '68 is precisely that because there is a movement you have an unpredictable situation.

And it is by no means clear what the consequences of a Soviet invasion would be. I don't predict that the Ukrainians will rise up and stage a rebellion of their own, but it doesn't seem to me inconceivable today, as it would have been in '56 or '68. The Soviet Union doesn't know what will happen if it sends troops into Poland. It doesn't know what will happen in Poland and it doesn't know what will happen in its own rear [front]. Neither do we. And out of such a horrible

military conflict or force, we might indeed see the breakup of the Soviet empire. I don't know, but seems to me to be a possibility one has to imagine. I don't take responsibility for it one way or the other. I don't think any of us can do very much to influence that particular development one way or the other and we delude ourselves if we think can. The question of whether this movement is doomed to failure has been raised and I think again I have not suggested that this movement is doomed to failure. On the contrary, I have suggested that it may be the beginning of the end for the Soviet empire, but realistically speaking I find it impossible to believe that such a thing could happen without, well, without war of some kind, without resort to force.

What do we do if there is a Soviet invasion? Well, here Tom and I agree entirely, although he is — the package he suggests is posed as a threat or a deterrent to a Soviet invasion. I myself would certainly resort to it in response to a Soviet invasion. In fact, I would like to resort to it even if there isn't a Soviet invasion. I would like to see us do to the Soviet Union what the Soviet Union has done to us in the past. When the Soviet Union was much weaker than the United States militarily, it made a great deal of trouble for the United States in Vietnam, in Latin America, in Cuba. They did all kinds of things that were able to damage us very seriously from a position of military inferiority. Now that the situation is of military parity and probably net Soviet superiority, I think we ought to return the favor. We indeed ought to be arming the Afghan freedom fighters, we indeed ought to be helping Savimbi in Angola, we indeed ought to be taking another look at Nicaragua, and I see the policy I am recommending in relation to Poland as part of precisely such a strategy. It is a strategy that from our point of view involves minimal risk of direct confrontation with the Soviet Union. There is nothing in such a strategy that puts us in a position of a head to head confrontation in a Cuban missile crisis kind of thing. Sending arms to the Afghans doesn't involve us in a direct military confrontation, neither does helping Savimbi, neither does withholding credits from the Polish authorities. Neither does taking a strong stand on El Salvador, which I myself support very enthusiastically and would go even further than the Reagan administration has gone. So that not merely as a deterrent and not merely in response to a Soviet invasion but as a matter of sound policy I would recommend precisely such a package.

Let me end on a gloomy note. [laughter] Well, after spreading all this light and cheer it is only proper I end on a gloomy note. I said before that I think the consequences of a Soviet invasion are unpredictable for the Soviet Union, but I think we have to recognize that they are highly unpredictable for the West as well. Undoubtedly, there would be an enormous uproar and resolutions would be passed and pious expressions of outrage would be nauseatingly elicited from the tongues of people who have no right to express them. But I can well imagine that a Soviet invasion of Poland, far from galvanizing resistance to the Soviet Union, particularly in Europe, might simply fragment certain people and certain countries half to death. And that must play a part in the calculations of the Soviet Union. That is to say, it might be from their point of view a good idea and not a bad idea. I could well imagine the Germans collapsing entirely rather than coming to their senses, at least what I would regard as their senses. I could imagine a reversal of the rather astonishing and totally unpredictable anti-Soviet sentiment in France. I

could imagine that turning around again in the face of a really brutal Soviet move against Poland. I can see neutralists and Finlandizing forces activated and energized and after the first wave of pious expressions of outrage. Frankly, I don't think that would happen in the United States, however. I rather suspect that the sleeping giant who has been bestirring himself in this country might indeed finally awaken in response to a Soviet invasion of Poland, and we might find ourselves in a new crisis with our NATO allies exacerbated in this situation, in this crisis with our NATO allies, who would not only not support the kinds of measures that we, almost all of us here would agree on, but might rather violently oppose them. That's the prospects. For all I know we ourselves might be frightened by the brutal Soviet suppression in Poland, but I don't think so. I think there are healthier forces at work in this country these days and I don't think this country is quite ready to lie down and die.

So what we can hope for it seems to me is that whatever happens, whether the Soviets invade — well, let me tell you, let me be frank. It's been pretty difficult to be in a position of seeming to advocate something like the invasion of a country and I do not wish to be understood as trying to say that. I'm merely saying as a matter of prediction — I am predicting absolutely that force will be used against Solidarity and I don't think it will come necessarily from Soviet troops. It might come internally. I do not believe that Solidarity will be committed to establish a democratic regime in Poland without a fight. If there is a fight, I suppose Solidarity might win it, that's another possibility. We just don't know. I don't think we do ourselves any service by cultivating illusions of winning this Titanic historic struggle on the cheap with a few bucks from the bankers.

I'll answer your question about the bankers. I can't balance my checkbook either, but I understand international banking. The bankers do not agree with either the AFL-CIO or the Gdansk Agreements about how to establish an economy on a firm and solvent footing. You may think they should, and others may think that it's very nice thing for stability. But they don't buy that stuff. They do not believe that this is a good way to create a productive economy. That is not their economic theory and it is not their social theory. And there is no point in convincing yourself that you are going to convert them to the economics of Leon Keyserling. Not nowadays for sure. I don't see that as a realistic possibility at all. And I don't see that we do ourselves any service by cultivating such illusions. It's possible that our power in this situation is so limited as to be negligible and that mostly what we are is impotent bystanders and observers from the sidelines. And if that is the case which I think it is largely in the situation, the least we can do is report truthfully to ourselves what it is we're watching and what is likely to happen as a result.

[Applause]

Moderator

Well on that silver note, I'd like to thank both the LID and the Committee for the Free World for convening this discussion tonight and express the thanks of everyone here to Tom Kahn and Norman Podhoretz for doing such a good job in clarifying these questions.

[Applause]