



**Teaching Negotiation:
The End of Communism and
the Polish Round Table of 1989**



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This guide can be found on the World Wide Web:
www.umich.edu/~iinet/PolishRoundTable/frame.html

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A Polish Pronunciation Guide

Polish Letter	English Equivalent
ą	Au
c	Ts
ć	Ch
cz	Ch
ę	En
j	Y
ł	W
ó	Oo
rz	Zh
ś	Sh
sz	Sh
w	V
ź	Zh
ż	Zh

The Polish Round Table of 1989

It is hard to know when to begin the story of the Polish Round Table of 1989. Some would have us start as far back as 1795, when Poland was partitioned by its three more powerful neighbors, Russia, Prussia, and Austria. For the next 123 years there would be no independent Poland on the map, and the resurrection of the country in 1918 would prove to be painfully brief. Nazi Germany and the USSR conquered the country once again in 1939, and after WWII Poland joined the rest of East-Central Europe within the Soviet Bloc, nominally autonomous but undeniably subordinate to Moscow's wishes. During all these many dark years, Polish national consciousness had remained strong, thanks mainly (it is said) to the unwavering leadership of the Catholic Church. The election of Karol Wojtyła in 1978 as Pope John Paul II began a process that ultimately led to the overthrow of communism in 1989, and the restoration of Polish independence.

That's one way to tell the story—a way popular among conservatives and nationalists—but there are many alternatives. Another tale begins in 1945, with the liberation of Poland from Nazi rule and the inauguration of a new order. The old, unjust social system, which had been characterized by an enormous gap between a narrow landowning elite and a desperately impoverished peasantry, was at last overthrown. The bold new future promised by the socialist revolution quickly turned sour, however, as the heavy-handed authoritarianism of Soviet-style communism perverted all the ambitions of the early post-war years. The death of Stalin in 1953 and the fall of his Polish minions in 1956 led to new hopes, but these too were soon dashed. By the early 1970s, repeated acts of state-sponsored violence and the deepening economic inefficiencies of the regime helped fuel the growth of both a vocal dissident community and a nascent labor movement. This united front of opposition exploded in 1980 with the birth of Solidarity, an independent trade union with as many as 10 million members. Martial law was declared in 1981 in an attempt to quash this display of resistance, but Solidarity just went underground. Finally, in 1989, the regime was compelled to enter into negotiations with the opposition, and the first significant crack in the iron curtain appeared.

And there is yet a third way to tell our story. This one draws a tighter timeline, beginning sometime in the late 1960s or early 1970s. It was evident by then that the communist system could not sustain the dynamic growth of its early decades, and that the inefficiencies and absurdities of the planned economy were leaving Poland (and the rest of the bloc) far behind the West. Two fundamental problems plagued the country, in the eyes of economists both within the communist apparatus and in American universities: 1) a growing gap between prices and the costs of production, leading to overconsumption and a disastrous balance of trade; 2) gross inefficiencies in production that led to the waste of scarce resources. Economists and political leaders tried to address these concerns, but every attempt to close an unproductive factory was blocked by some entrenched interest group, and every effort to raise domestic prices was met with social unrest. The deadlock became obvious in 1987, when a referendum on economic reform was soundly defeated. The only option after this was to turn the enactment of needed

reforms over to a government that enjoyed popular legitimacy—something the communists clearly did not have by the 1980s. This was accomplished in 1989, when the Round Table negotiations facilitated the rise of power of a new leadership rooted in the Solidarity movement. This new regime promptly enacted what came to be called the “shock therapy” package, an extraordinary leap towards liberal, free-market economics.

These three stories do not exhaust the possible narratives of Poland’s modern history, nor do they encompass the many nuances that could be elaborated within each of them. Nonetheless, most Poles will find the general outlines of their favorite version of history in one of the above paragraphs. One of the most striking elements of these stories is that they all culminate with the events of 1989: the Round Table Negotiations, the partially free elections that followed, and the selection of Poland’s first non-communist premier since WWII. There are many ways to evaluate 1989, but it is impossible to deny that it was one of the most important dates in modern Polish history. No matter how you map out Poland’s recent past, all roads must pass through the Round Table.

By the mid 1980s, it was clear to just about everyone in Poland that the status quo could not hold. Solidarity was gone—or so it seemed—but the regime’s legitimacy was gone with it. Back in 1980 and 1981 the country had been shaken to the foundations by the emergence of the largest mass movement the communist bloc had ever seen. Solidarity had many roots: in the intellectual dissent of the 1960s and 1970s, in an anti-communist labor movement that had long been boiling beneath the surface of the Polish People’s Republic, and in the Catholic Church. The phenomenon we call Solidarity can’t be easily defined or even described, because it encompassed all the voices of protest against the communist regime—and by 1980 those voices had risen to a cacophonous roar. That roar was silenced by a military crackdown in 1981, but force couldn’t resolve the problems that had generated so much unrest in the first place. General Wojciech Jaruzelski, the leader of Poland in the 1980s and the mastermind behind the suppression of Solidarity, wanted to find a way to domesticate the popular anger against the communist order and direct it towards some sort of modest reform, while reassuring Moscow that nothing was amiss. The latter task became easier with the rise of Mikhail Gorbachev as leader of the Soviet Union, but the former remained intractable—and by the mid-1980s Jaruzelski knew it. After the imposition of military rule, no one could believe the vapid slogans of the “workers’ state,” and no one would lift a finger to help build towards a better future under Jaruzelski’s leadership. The economy sank into a morass of bread lines, rationing, and half-empty shops, and the population grew ever more hopeless and apathetic. “Emigration” became the slogan of the decade, either literally (as the lines grew longer outside the US embassy), or figuratively (in the form of “internal emigration,” as people withdrew into their private lives and struggled to extract whatever they could from the decaying socio-economic order).

In this environment, the opposition faced almost as many hurdles as did the regime. The anger of 1980 had turned into the cynical despair of 1985. The underground leaders of Solidarity were finding it increasingly difficult to mount any sort of organized protest against anything. This was partially a product of fear, but perhaps even more important was the sense that

Solidarity had enjoyed its moment of opportunity, and had failed. Lech Wałęsa, the widely-recognized leader of the opposition, retained a certain amount of respect, but this rarely translated into a willingness to demonstrate or strike against the regime. Millions would turn out for Papal visits in 1983 and 1987, but the political content of these events was at best ambiguous. In any case, Wałęsa and the other leaders of the movement were not sure what they could do in the face of armed force. Although student groups and small clusters of political activists continued to play cat-and-mouse with the security police, it was clear to most observers by 1986 or 1987 that a stalemate had been reached.

Thus arose the impetus for negotiation. Early feelers from both the Jaruzelski regime and the Solidarity leadership were sent out quietly in late 1987 and early 1988, but a new sense of urgency came when wildcat strikes broke out in May 1988. These had not been planned by Wałęsa's team of advisors, who saw the strikes as random cries of frustrations rather than productive demonstrations of resistance. The local organizers of the protests, in turn, looked upon the Solidarity leadership as overly cautious, and perhaps incapable of addressing the deepening crisis that Poland faced. The strikers tended to be young, and many observers noted that a new generation was emerging—one disinclined to follow blindly the heroes of 1980. Already the fissures within the opposition were becoming clear, although the substantive issues behind these splits remained obscure.

The regime suppressed the strikes of May 1988, but the episode only highlighted the fact that Poland was becoming a tinderbox. Another wave of wildcat strikes in August provided the last push, leading to a series of meetings between Lech Wałęsa and General Czesław Kiszczak, the Minister of the Interior and a close aid to Jaruzelski. These preliminary talks led in turn to the formal convening of the Round Table negotiations in February 1989. Solidarity entered these talks with one unshakable demand: re-legalization. To their surprise, the government granted this almost immediately, and the talks quickly took on a momentum of their own. Jaruzelski's negotiators were searching for a way to bring Solidarity into the system, in the hope that doing so would give the regime some legitimacy and bring the social and political deadlock to an end. The Solidarity team was well aware of the danger of co-optation, and tried to ensure that the talks would lead to real, substantive changes in the political order. After a ceremonial opening at which all the leading delegates sat at an actual round table (see cover photo), the talks were broken down into a series of "sub-tables" focusing on unions, the media, political institutions, youth, various sectors of the economy, and more. Meanwhile, the voices opposed to the negotiations were starting to make themselves heard. "To Talk with the Commies is Treason," proclaimed banners carried outside the building where the talks were being held. More quietly, Jaruzelski and his supporters were feeling pressure from communist party members who feared that their hold on power was about to be compromised.

Despite these voices of dissent, the Round Table Accords were signed in April 1989. Solidarity was re-legalized; partially free elections were promised for June; freedom of speech and assembly were proclaimed. The formula for the upcoming elections was complicated: 2/3 of the seats in the parliament were reserved for the communists and their allies (there had always

existed a handful of docile puppet parties, designed to provide a façade of pluralism), but to compensate, a newly-created upper house, the senate, was to be entirely open to a free vote. Few expected Solidarity to do well in the elections. Freshly legalized and still lacking any sort of political apparatus, the movement had to organize a nation-wide campaign almost overnight. But when the vote was taken in June, the impossible happened: Solidarity won all but one of the senate seats, and all of the parliamentary seats that had been open to contestation. Many Poles today point to the elections—not the Round Table negotiations—as the real moment when communism fell in Poland. The drama did have another act, however. The defeat of the communists was undeniable, but technically they still had enough seats to govern (thanks to the provisions of the Round Table Accords). Only after a lengthy process of soul-searching by both the Solidarity delegates and Jaruzelski's supporters did a final compromise emerge: the General became the President of Poland (a new post that had been created by the Round Table just for him), and Tadeusz Mazowiecki, a prominent Catholic intellectual, became Premier.

Told in isolation, this is a dramatic story with a happy ending. But almost immediately, world events overshadowed Poland's accomplishments. Before 1989 was out, the communists would fall (with much less ambiguity) in every other East European country, and the opening of the Berlin Wall on November 9 would remain engrained in the memory of everyone who lived through those incredible months. Poland was left with a compromise that seemed entirely unnecessary, and many Poles felt that their revolution had been incomplete, unfulfilled. Perhaps worst of all, they lacked any evocative moment of liberation to commemorate. The Czechs had the demonstrations on Wenceslas Square in Prague, the Germans had the Wall, and even the Romanians had the execution of Ceaușescu. All the Poles got was a big table, occupied by the people who would turn out to be the country's new elite. Then again, the whole process had been entirely peaceful—and wasn't that worth something? Didn't it matter that the Poles had blazed the trail out of the communist era? Was the "negotiated revolution" a necessary step on the road to liberation, or a fatal compromise that allowed the communists to retain a prominent role in Polish politics? Perhaps most fundamentally, did the whole process of peaceful change lead to a better Poland? These are among the many questions about the Round Table that are still debated today.

The Rise and Fall of Communism in Poland A Selected Bibliography of Secondary and Primary Sources

Secondary Sources

The following works will provide a good background on recent Polish history, with a particular emphasis on the Solidarity movement and the years leading up to the Round Table negotiations of 1989. Unfortunately, none of these texts were specifically written for a high school audience, although excerpts from some of them might be appropriate for more advanced students (particularly the works by Timothy Garton Ash and Lawrence Weschler, both of whom are noted journalists). At the very least these will provide teachers with all they need to know—and more, if they read the whole list—to conduct a knowledgeable lesson on communism’s negotiated collapse.

- Bernhard, Michael H. *The Origins of Democratization in Poland: Workers, Intellectuals, and Oppositional Politics, 1976-1980*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1993.
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- Ost, David. *Solidarity and the Politics of Anti-Politics: Opposition and Reform in Poland since 1968*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990.
- Pelinka, Anton. *Politics of the Lesser Evil: Leadership, Democracy, and Jaruzelski's Poland*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 1999.
- Perdue, William D. *Paradox of Change: The Rise and Fall of Solidarity in the New Poland*. Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 1995.
- Tittenbrun, Jacek. *The Collapse of 'Real Socialism' in Poland*. London: Janus, 1993.
- Weschler, Lawrence. *The Passion of Poland: From Solidarity through the State of War*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1984.

Primary Sources

In 1999 the Copernicus Endowment for Polish Studies and the Center for Russian and East European Studies at the University of Michigan organized an exciting and important conference, "Communism's Negotiated Collapse: The Polish Round Table Ten Years Later." The conference brought together many of the leading participants of the Round Table to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the negotiations that led to the end of communism in Poland. The transcript of this memorable event, which includes presentations by leading figures from Solidarity, the communist regime, and the Catholic Church, is available on the web.¹ In addition to this resource, there exist a number of published primary texts related to recent Polish history. Excerpts from these make wonderful primary sources for students to use in the suggested classroom projects described in the next section.

- Bernhard, Michael and Henryk Szlajfer, eds. *From the Polish Underground: Selections from Krytyka, 1978-1993*. University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995.
- Jaruzelski, Wojciech. *Jaruzelski, Prime Minister of Poland: Selected Speeches*. Ed. Robert Maxwell. New York: Pergamon Press, 1985.
- Krauze, Andrzej. *A Year of Martial Law: Cartoons*. Paris: Kontakt, 1982.
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¹ The URL is <www.umich.edu/~iinet/PolishRoundTable/frame.html>.

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Teaching 1989: Suggested Classroom Activities

Project One: Turning Enemies into Opponents

These two words—“enemy” and “opponent”—are closely related, but different in vitally important ways. One’s desire to defeat an opponent is not so absolute as to preclude compromise and negotiation, but enemies can only be vanquished. In sports, the other team is an opponent, and even after a hard-fought game it is still possible to shake hands, and even go out together to celebrate a good contest. In parliamentary politics, sometimes awkward rules of address are imposed in an attempt (not always successful, but that’s another matter) to make delegates treat each other with respect (“the distinguished gentleman,” etc.). Here in the United States, the staff of the Democratic National Committee and the Republican National Committee play an annual softball game as a symbol of the fact that they may disagree on nearly every issue of public policy but they are still able to interact in a civil manner. Obviously, rhetorical excess can be heard from time to time, but generally American politics is marked by a mutual recognition of a shared humanity. It has often been observed that this is what makes parliamentary democracy work. We think our opponents are wrong, misguided, or defending interests we do not share, but few Democrats would consider it morally compromising to strike a political deal with a Republican, or visa versa.

Unfortunately, this is not always the case. In places like Northern Ireland, the Middle East, Rwanda, the former Yugoslavia, and elsewhere, opponents have been transformed into enemies. There is little room for compromise with an enemy. In a world divided between friends and enemies things appear in stark contrasts of black and white, and shades of moral ambiguity are not permitted. When one does negotiate with an enemy, the resulting deal is usually perceived as a truce, a tactical withdrawal from maximum demands necessitated by the exigencies of the moment. Even these sorts of deals are viewed by many as morally troublesome, because they imply to each camp’s most ardent supporters that negotiators are willing to strike a deal with evil. The phrases one uses to describe the battle with an enemy are “struggle for survival,” “unconditional surrender,” “destruction,” “fight to the death,” etc.

During the conference described in the bibliography above, we heard repeatedly that one of the biggest hurdles to overcome before negotiation was possible was to stop thinking about the communists as enemies, and start thinking of them as opponents. Adam Michnik, the famous dissident intellectual, had been jailed many times by the old regime, and he held the Minister of the Interior, Czesław Kiszczak, in particular contempt because of the latter’s role in directing martial law and suppressing Solidarity. But Michnik was able to come to the realization that Kiszczak was a human being and a Pole, and that for all their differences they could cooperate in the best interests of their country. Others were never able to make this leap. For many, a deal with someone like Kiszczak was a deal with the devil, ensuring that the new Poland would be inaugurated with moral ambiguity rather than triumphant righteousness. Many Polish-Americans were harshly critical of our conference in 1999 (we received more than 500 letters of protest),

because we wanted to invite General Kiszczak, General Jaruzelski, and other leaders of the communist era. Providing such people with a public forum, our critics argued, gave them legitimacy they did not deserve. The only appropriate way to treat the representatives of evil, it was said, was to silence them.

For those who have been studying the Polish situation and are familiar with some of the basic issues, the opponent/enemy duality could be introduced into the classroom simply by posing the following questions to the students for discussion:

- *Did the leaders of Solidarity go too far in negotiating with the communists?*
- *Were the crimes and human-rights violations of the PZPR (the communists—see the glossary) so egregious as to make them criminals, for whom the only appropriate tactic was a battle to the finish?*
- *Should the goal have been to defeat the communists, try them for their abuses, put them in prison, and shut them out of public life?*
- *Did the return to power of the SLD (see the glossary) signify a failure of the revolution of 1989?*

For those who have *not* been studying recent Polish history, and are not adequately familiar with the key players and disputes, a different approach will be necessary.

Step 1) Describe to your students the following scenario: Jan is an activist in the Polish opposition movement. His father, a famous professor, had been imprisoned and tortured when Jan was a young child, and the family had been forced out of its nice Warsaw apartment into a squalid workers' barracks on the edge of town. Jan himself had been arrested many times for distributing illegal newspapers and for trying to organize a union at the factory where he worked. He and his family are devout Roman Catholics, and because of this he has been repeatedly turned down for promotion. Elaborate or simplify this story based on the level and background of your students.

Step 2) Now it is 1986, and Jan has just been released from his most recent prison term because of a general amnesty (see the timeline below). Jan attends an opposition meeting where he learns that some of the leaders of the dissident movement have expressed a willingness to negotiate with the communists. Exactly what they are going to negotiate about is still unclear.

Step 3) Pose this question to the students: how do you think Jan would feel about this development? Would he support or oppose the attempt to negotiate?

Step 4) Ask the students whether they have ever faced similar issues in their own lives. Have they ever been required to work together with someone they hated or feared? How did they overcome their reluctance?

Step 5) Ask the students whether there are cases when negotiation and compromise would be immoral. Suggest, for example, the hypothetical counter-history of a settlement with Hitler during WWII.

Project Two: Elites and Constituencies in the Negotiating Process

A serious problem faced by the delegates to the Round Table talks was the very fact that they were acting as delegates, as representatives of particular constituencies. In circumstances of basic systemic change there usually cannot be any structured parliamentary legitimacy, so the participants in talks such as those in Poland in 1989 have to act *as if* they spoke for a broader base, and ensure that they do nothing to make anyone question this self-assumed status. Needless to say, this isn't easy. The participants in the Round Table talks believed that they were working in the best interest of the nation, and that they were paving the way for a better future without the dangers of mass public confrontation. At the University of Michigan conference, they repeatedly said that they felt proud because they had saved Poland from the fate of Romania, where violent—indeed, deadly—struggles between protestors and the old secret police broke out in December 1989. But even as the Polish negotiators strove to work out peaceful change, they had to contend with constituencies whose demands exceeded that which could be realistically expected.

This, of course, is a painfully familiar problem. In July 2000, Arab and Israeli negotiators met in Camp David with the lofty ambition of resolving the key issues that have kept the Middle East in turmoil for more than a generation. While most neutral observers believed that both Yasser Arafat and Ehud Barak sincerely wanted to reach a deal, each had to recognize that if they compromised on certain key issues, they would face a rebellion back home. Similar pressures are felt by negotiators in all such situations, creating one of the most serious obstacles to any settlement. The Polish story from 1989, in other words, provides us with an excellent example of a much broader phenomenon.

To bring this lesson home to your students, try the following role playing game.

Step 1) Present the students with a lesson or a reading assignment on the background to 1989 in Poland. Some understanding of the context will be required to make this project work.

Step 2) Divide the students into two teams, one representing the communist government and another representing Solidarity. You may wish to provide the students with “position papers” for each group, or have them develop these on their own in advance (you will probably want to check these before commencing the role playing game). Make sure the players on each side understand the basic objectives and ideals of each side, at least in general terms.

Step 3) Tell the students that it is February 1989, and they have just sat down to negotiate a resolution to the political impasse in Poland. Again, make sure they understand the nature of the problems before them (an economy that is in shambles; the government's inability to do anything in the face of social apathy and an underground opposition; Solidarity's inability to overthrow the government because of the strength of the police and army).

Step 4) As the students move forward in the negotiation, you play the role of each constituency. Whenever either side proposes to move towards a compromise, tell them

that an independent opposition demonstration has just taken place outside the negotiating hall, or that regional party officials are threatening to overthrow the party leadership if it moves forward, etc. The students will doubtlessly grow frustrated with your interventions, but as a result they will gain an increased appreciation for the difficulties of negotiated systemic change. Encourage the students to think of ways to explain their positions or otherwise pacify their base.

Project Three: 1989 and the Making of History

What was the significance of the Round Table negotiations of 1989? What did it all mean? How can we tell its story and fit that story into a broader framework of recent Polish and world history? These are far from settled questions (to say the least). One of the benefits of studying the Round Table is that it provides us with insights into the way history is written, even as it is being made. A challenge every history teacher faces—whether dealing with high school students, university undergraduates, museum goers, or the general public—is how to convey the uncertainties, complexities, and debates of our discipline. Many audiences expect history to provide them with facts about the past, as if those facts are just lying there, waiting to be discovered and revealed. An event like the Polish Round Table of 1989 gives us an excellent chance to see how memories get transformed into multiple histories, and how those histories compete with each other.

The transcript of the University of Michigan’s 1999 conference, “Communism’s Negotiated Collapse: The Polish Round Table Ten Years Later”² can be used in conjunction with other materials as a way to introduce students to the challenges of constructing a historical story. Most of our conference participants, like most Poles today, are proud of the accomplishments of the Round Table. They believe that by compromising with their opponents in the regime they paved the way for a smooth transition to democracy, avoided violence, and lit the spark that quickly brought down the communists all over Eastern Europe. They boast (fairly enough) that they were the first to overthrow the communists, and they are somewhat disgruntled that the fall of the Berlin Wall became the symbol of 1989’s transitions simply because it looked more dramatic on TV. But not all Poles think this way. At the start of our conference we heard Wiesław Chrzanowski, a conservative nationalist politician, criticize the Round Table as unnecessary, premature, and overly generous to the communists. He, and many others on the right in Poland today, would have preferred a more confrontational stance, on the conviction that the PZPR (the communists—see the glossary) would have collapsed anyway.

Even given the same facts about 1989, Poles today are constructing a variety of historical narratives about this event. These fall into two broad categories: 1) a story of how Poles overcame the conflicts of the communist era and recognized that it was in everyone’s interest to negotiate a peaceful transition to a new, more democratic, system; 2) a story of how a group of

² The URL is <www.umich.edu/~iinet/PolishRoundTable/frame.html>.

left-wing anti-communists conspired to shut out the nationalist right from the political process by striking a deal with the communist government, setting the foundation for a new political system in which those same leftists could dominate, and in which the former communists could escape with their wealth and even some of their political authority intact. The same event, in other words, looks very different depending on how you fit it into a variety of possible stories.

To convey this to one's students, consider this project:

Step 1) Present all the students with some "raw data" about 1989. Use the time-line and glossary below as a foundation, and add as much information as you consider appropriate (depending on the grade level and background of your students). Don't give them any reading assignment yet—we don't want an authoritative voice interfering with their own interpretations.

Step 2) Divide the students into two groups. Present each group with an interpretation of 1989 modeled along the two general approaches outlined above (simplify or elaborate, again based on the specific needs and skills of your students). You could offer this interpretation as a short written commentary, or (if your spatial arrangements make this possible) separate them into two rooms and offer them alternative oral presentations. If the students are sufficiently advanced, give them some of the primary sources listed in the bibliography.

Step 3) Have them summarize the history of 1989, based on the interpretation you have just summarized

Step 4): Bring the students together to discuss their alternative histories.

Step 5): Assign them a published account of 1989 (pick from the list below, based on the level of your students), and ask them to critique the author's assumptions and approach. Hopefully they will now be ready to see the hidden biases and presuppositions and values that lie behind all history writing.

Selected Accounts of 1989³

Bartoszewski Wladyslaw, "Speech by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland at the Millennium Session of the UN General Assembly" (September 15, 2000).

Available at <www.un.org/ga/webcast/statements/polandE.htm> and
<www.msz.gov.pl/english/polzagr/sesja_milen_ang.html>

Garton Ash, Timothy, "The Controversy about the Polish People's Republic," *The New York Review of Books* 45 (February 19, 1998): 35-40.

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Available at <www.time.com/time/europe50/jar.html>

³ All website addresses were valid as of January 1, 2001.

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Project Four: The Emergence of Solidarity and Imposition of Martial Law

It may be useful to contrast the events of 1989 with those of 1980-81, during which time the independent trade union Solidarity was created and then outlawed with the imposition of martial law. See these websites for information on relevant episodes of recent television documentaries and accompanying teaching materials:

- "Freeze: 1977-1981," Episode 19 from *Cold War*, a CNN series (1998-99).
<www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/cold.war/episodes/19/>
- "Poland 1980-81: We've Caught God by the Arm," from *A Force More Powerful: A Century of Nonviolent Conflict*, a co-production for PBS by York Zimmerman Inc. and WETA, Washington, D.C. (2000). <www.pbs.org/weta/forcemorepowerful/poland/>

The Fall of Communism in Poland: A Chronology

(for an explanation of names and terminology, see the glossary below)

1918	November	<i>Poland regains its independence after 123 years of foreign occupation</i>
1926	May	<i>Józef Piłsudski overthrows the parliamentary government in a military coup</i>
1939	September	<i>Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union invade Poland; the government goes into exile and the “Home Army” (AK) is formed to direct the resistance</i>
1941	June	<i>Nazi Germany invades the Soviet Union</i>
1943	January-May	<i>The Jewish Uprising in Warsaw</i>
1944	August-October	<i>The Polish Uprising in Warsaw</i>
1945	January	<i>Russian troops enter Warsaw</i>
	February	<i>Stalin, Churchill, and Roosevelt meet at Yalta, finalizing plans to divide Europe into separate spheres of influence</i>
	June	<i>“The Government of National Unity” is formed in Poland, dominated by communists but including Stanisław Mikołajczyk, the head of the exile government, as a Vice-Premier</i>
1947	January	<i>The communists win a rigged election</i>
	October	<i>Mikołajczyk flees the country</i>
1948	December	<i>The Polish Socialist Party and The Polish Workers’ Party (the communists) merge to form Polish United Workers’ Party (PZPR)</i>
1954	March	<i>Joseph Stalin dies</i>
1955	May	<i>The Warsaw Pact is signed</i>
1956	February	<i>Khrushchev gives his “secret speech” denouncing Stalin at the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in Moscow</i>
	June	<i>Strike breaks out in Poznań, protesting both working conditions and Soviet domination; fighting breaks out between police and demonstrators; tanks are called in to restore order; at least 74 people die, and several hundred are injured</i>
	October	<i>The 8th Plenum of the Central Committee of the PZPR names Władysław Gomułka as the new First Secretary; he is widely hailed as a reformer, with the slogan of “a Polish road to socialism”</i>
	October-November	<i>The Hungarian Revolution is crushed by a Soviet invasion</i>

1964	October	<i>The Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union replaces Nikita Khrushchev with Leonid Brezhnev</i>
	October	<i>The Polish Episcopate writes letter to German Episcopate expressing their wish for reconciliation; the famous phrase “we forgive, and we ask for forgiveness” provokes attacks from the regime</i>
1966		<i>Throughout the year, the Catholic Church and the regime produce competing commemorations of the 1000th anniversary of the baptism of the first historically documented Polish ruler, Mieszko I</i>
1968	March	<i>Student protests against censorship are met with police violence and repression; the regime responds with an “anti-Zionist” campaign directed at the protestors (some of whom were Jewish); thousands of Jews are pressured to emigrate</i>
	August	<i>Soviet, Polish, Hungarian, Bulgarian and East German forces invade Czechoslovakia, putting an end to the “Prague Spring”</i>
1970	December	<i>Price hikes lead to strikes in Gdańsk and other cities; police intervention leads to riots; the army is sent in to end the unrest; at least 45 people were killed, and thousands injured; Władysław Gomułka is replaced by Edward Gierek as First Secretary</i>
1975	August	<i>The Helsinki Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe commits all signatories (including Poland) to show “respect for human rights and basic freedoms, including freedom of thought, conscience, religion and convictions for every individual”</i>
1976	June	<i>Price hikes lead to strikes in Radom, Warsaw, and elsewhere; police intervention leads to riots</i>
	September	<i>KOR (The Committee for the Defense of the Workers) is formed by Adam Michnik, Jacek Kuroń, and others, to aid those repressed in the wake of the June strikes</i>
1978	April	<i>Lech Wałęsa, Andrzej Gwiazda, and others create the “Committee for Free Trade Unions on the Coast”; later Zbigniew Bujak, Zbigniew Janas, and others create a parallel organization in Warsaw</i>
	October	<i>Cardinal Karol Wojtyła is chosen as Pope John Paul II</i>
1979	June	<i>Pope John Paul II visits Poland</i>
1980	July	<i>Price hikes lead to strikes throughout the country</i>

	August	<i>The “Interfactory Strike Committee” at the Gdańsk shipyards, under the leadership of Lech Wałęsa, emerges as a representative body for the national work-stoppage; the strikes force the government to accept the creation of a free trade union (“Solidarity”), to respect basic civil and human rights, and to raise wages</i>
	September	<i>Stanisław Kania replaces Edward Gierek as First Secretary</i>
1981	February	<i>General Wojciech Jaruzelski is named Premier</i>
	March	<i>Talks between Solidarity and the government reach a crisis; Solidarity organizes a four-hour national warning strike to force the regime to continue negotiating</i>
	April	<i>Ration cards are introduced for meat</i>
	May	<i>Rural Solidarity is legally registered; Primate Stefan Wyszyński dies and is replaced by Józef Glemp</i>
	October	<i>Wojciech Jaruzelski replaces Stanisław Kania as First Secretary</i>
	December	<i>Declaration of martial law; Solidarity is outlawed; approximately 10,000 people are arrested; 6,000-10,000 people emigrate; violence is limited, but 9 people are killed when police attack striking miners in Silesia</i>
1982	April	<i>Announcement of the creation of the Provisional Coordination Commission of Solidarity; leaders in hiding include Zbigniew Bujak, Władysław Frasyniuk, and Bogdan Lis</i>
	August	<i>On the anniversary of the signing of the Gdańsk Agreement that created Solidarity, demonstrations are held all over Poland; four people are killed, over 5,000 are detained</i>
	November	<i>Primate Glemp emphasizes the distance of the Church from the “struggles of social groups” and declares that “the Church will always stand on a position of peace” Solidarity announces an 8-hour warning strike, but their appeal is generally ignored; Leonid Brezhnev dies</i>
	December	<i>Most internees are released</i>
1983	May	<i>Grzegorz Przemyk, the 19-year-old son of a KOR activist, is murdered by police</i>
	June	<i>John Paul II visits Poland for the second time</i>
	July	<i>Martial Law is lifted; amnesty is declared for political crimes</i>
	October	<i>Lech Wałęsa is awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace</i>
1984	October	<i>Father Jerzy Popiełuszko, a Roman Catholic priest and opposition activist, is murdered by officers of the Security Service; the killers are arrested and imprisoned</i>

1985	March	<i>Mikhail Gorbachev is named as First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union</i>
	July	<i>Price hikes lead to a strike declaration by Solidarity, but the strikes fail to receive much support</i>
1986	June	<i>Poland becomes a member of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank</i>
	September	<i>A general amnesty is announced</i>
	December	<i>A report is released showing that 740,000 people had emigrated since 1980</i>
1987	June	<i>Pope John Paul II visits Poland for the third time</i>
	November	<i>The government holds a referendum on economic reform; the proposal fails to receive enough support to pass</i>
1988	April-May	<i>Wildcat strikes in several cities throughout Poland; some are broken up by police, others end without any resolution</i>
	August	<i>Meetings between Lech Wałęsa and the Minister of the Interior, General Czesław Kiszczak, begin the process of negotiation that will ultimately lead to the round table talks</i>
	September	<i>Mieczysław Rakowski becomes Premier</i>
	November	<i>Televised debate between Wałęsa and Alfred Miodowicz, leader of state-sponsored trade union group; widely seen as a major victory for Solidarity</i>
1989	February	<i>The Round Table negotiations begin</i>
	March	<i>Slobodan Milošević amends the Yugoslav constitution, rescinding autonomy for Kosovo; violent protests follow</i>
	April	<i>The Round Table Accords are signed; Solidarity is re-legalized, and elections are promised for June (with two-thirds of the seats reserved for the communists in the lower house, and all of the seats open for election in the upper house)</i>
	May	<i>Gazeta Wyborcza (The Electoral Gazette) is established as the first legal opposition newspaper in the Soviet bloc</i>
	June	<i>Elections are held; Solidarity candidates win all but one of the senate seats, and all of the parliamentary seats open for contestation</i>
		<i>On the same day elections are held in Poland, protesters are massacred in Tiananmen Square, China</i>
		<i>The Hungarian round table talks begin</i>
	July	<i>Wojciech Jaruzelski is elected President by the National Assembly</i>
		<i>Mikhail Gorbachev declares that the USSR will no longer interfere in the internal affairs of Eastern Europe</i>

August	<i>Tadeusz Mazowiecki, a prominent opposition intellectual, becomes the first non-communist premier in the Soviet bloc</i>
September	<i>Hungary opens its border to the West</i>
October	<i>Anticommunist protests begin in East Germany A new constitution proclaiming the virtues of democracy is adopted in Hungary</i>
November	<i>The Berlin Wall is opened Todor Zhivkov, the communist ruler of Bulgaria, is removed from power Protests begin in Prague against communist rule</i>
December	<i>The overthrow of Nicolae Ceaușescu is accompanied by bloodshed Václav Havel is elected President of Czechoslovakia</i>

Glossary of Key Names and Organizations in Recent Polish History

- AWS (*Akcja Wyborcza Solidarność*; Solidarity Electoral Action):** a conservative, Catholic political organization founded in 1996. It includes several dozen small political parties, including the Christian-National Union, the Center Alliance, the Conservative-Populist Party, the Christian Democrats of the III Republic, and more. Led by Marian Krzaklewski. In 1997 the AWS entered into an alliance with the Freedom Union to form a government.
- Balcerowicz, Leszek (1947-):** an economist who became Finance Minister in the first non-communist Polish government in 1989; today the leader of UW (see below); the author of the “shock therapy” plan to transform Poland’s economy by rapidly moving from a centrally planned system to a free market system; highly controversial figure in Poland today because of his sometimes ruthless advocacy of laissez faire policies regardless of the social cost.
- Bierut, Bolesław (1892-1956):** leader of the Polish communists during the Stalinist era (1948-56); responsible for the brutal imposition of communist rule, the arrest and torture of political opponents, and the elimination of many basic civil and political rights.
- Central Committee:** a relatively large institution within the communist party, charged with ultimate powers of appointment and policy-making; in practice usually subordinate to the Politburo (see below).
- Częstochowa:** the monastery here was the site of an important military victory in the 17th century, popularly attributed to the intervention of the Virgin Mary, whose icon hangs here; today millions of Poles each year make pilgrimages to Częstochowa.
- Dmowski, Roman (1864-1939):** founder and leader of the radical-right, anti-Semitic National Democratic movement before WWII.
- Episcopate:** an institution made up of all the Roman Catholic bishops in a given country.
- Geremek, Bronisław (1932-):** professor of history at the Polish Academy of Sciences since 1965; one of the key intelligentsia advisors to Solidarity from the union’s creation in 1980; the head negotiator for Solidarity in 1989; Foreign Minister of Poland, 1997-99.
- Gierek, Edward (1913-):** First Secretary of the PZPR (see below) from 1970-80.
- Glemp, Józef (1929-):** Roman Catholic Primate of Poland (see below) since 1981.
- Gomułka, Władysław (1905-82):** First Secretary of the PZPR (see below) from 1956-70; initially seen as a reformer, having come to power promising to end the abuses of the Bierut (see above) era; with time his administration stagnated and many of his early reforms were rolled back, but Poland never returned to the horrible abuses of the years before 1956.
- Jaruzelski, Wojciech (1923-):** Chief of the General Staff of the Polish Army, 1965-68; Minister of Defense, 1968-83; became both First Secretary and Premier in 1981; declared martial law and outlawed Solidarity in December 1981; led the PZPR during the Round Table

- negotiations of 1989; briefly President of Poland, 1989-90; reviled by many for his involvement in communist repression, but credited by many for peacefully surrendering power in 1989.
- Kiszczak, Czesław (1925-):** served in Polish army as an intelligence officer since 1945; as Minister of Internal Affairs from 1981-90, he directed the implementation of martial law; in 1989, he was responsible for initiating contact with Solidarity
- KOR (*Komitet Obrony Robotników*; **Committee for the Defense of Workers**):** created in 1976 by Adam Michnik, Jacek Kuroń, and others to provide aid to workers who suffered repression because of labor activism or political dissent; marked an important turning point by creating an alliance between the intelligentsia and the workers in the struggle against the communist regime.
- Kuroń, Jacek (1934-):** one of Poland's leading anti-communist dissidents since the 1960s; a co-founder of KOR (see above); a member of Solidarity since 1980 and a participant in the Round Table negotiations.
- Kwaśniewski, Aleksander (1954-):** a member of the PZPR (see below) since 1977 and a minor figure in the Polish government in the 1980s; a participant in the Round Table negotiations on the government side; in 1990 and 1991 he was among the founding leaders of the Social Democratic Party and the SLD (see below); his election as President of Poland in 1995 was denounced by some as a return of the communists, but his policies have differed little from those of his predecessor, Lech Wałęsa (see below).
- Lenin Shipyards:** the enormous facility in Gdańsk that was the focal point of labor unrest during the communist era; strikes here in 1970 led to a violent military crackdown; strikes here in 1980 led to the creation of Solidarity.
- Mazowiecki, Tadeusz (1927-):** a prominent Catholic intellectual during the communist era and an advisor to Solidarity in 1980; a participant in the Round Table negotiations; the first non-Communist Premier of Poland, 1989-90.
- Michnik, Adam (1946-):** one of Poland's leading anti-communist dissidents since the 1960s; a co-founder of KOR (see above); a member of Solidarity since 1980 and a participant in the Round Table negotiations; in 1989 he became editor-in-chief of *Gazeta Wyborcza* (The Electoral Gazette), Poland's first legally published independent newspaper since 1948, and today the country's largest-circulation daily.
- NSZZ “Solidarność” (Niezależny Samorządny Związek Zawodowy “Solidarność”;** **The Independent Self-Governing Trade Union, “Solidarity”):** the full official name of Solidarity (see below).
- Piłsudski, Józef (1867-1935):** a military hero who helped restore Polish independence in 1918 and dominated Polish politics in the years between WWI and WWII; in 1926 he led a military coup and established an authoritarian government; his regime used a variety of techniques to stifle democratic life, but never entirely abolished parliament or the free press.

- Politburo:** the day-to-day governing body of the PZPR (see below); technically (though not usually in practice) subordinate to the decisions of the larger Central Committee.
- Popieluszko, Jerzy (1947-84):** Roman Catholic priest and a member of Solidarity since 1980; murdered by security police for his dissident activities in 1984, one of the worst abuses of the martial law regime of the 1980s.
- Primate:** the highest official of the Roman Catholic church in a particular country.
- PZPR (*Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza*; **Polish United Workers' Party**):** the official name for Poland's communist party from 1948-89; created by the forced merger of Poland's leading social democratic party with the communist party.
- Rakowski, Mieczysław (1926-):** editor-in-chief of the weekly magazine *Polityka* from 1958-82; viewed as a leading moderate and reformer in the PZPR (see above); Poland's last communist Premier in 1989.
- Reykowski, Janusz (1929-):** Professor of social psychology at the University of Warsaw; Director of the Institute of Psychology at the Polish Academy of Sciences; head of the government delegation at the round table negotiations.
- Rural Solidarity:** created in 1980 as a rural counterpart to the Solidarity movement.
- Sejm:** the Polish parliament
- SLD (*Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej*; **The Alliance of the Democratic Left**):** political organization created when the PZPR was dissolved in 1990; the largest party in the Sejm (see above) between 1994 and 1997, when it led a coalition government; viewed by opponents as a party for ex-communists, and viewed by supporters as a modern social democratic party.
- Solidarity:** a labor union and protest movement created in August 1980, as a result of a nationwide wave of strikes; at its peak in 1980 it had approximately ten million members; outlawed after declaration of martial law in December 1981, but continued to organize underground opposition to the communists throughout the 1980s; re-legalized as a result of the round table talks of 1989.
- UD (*Unia Demokratyczna*; **The Democratic Union**):** liberal party created in 1990 from the center-left wing of the Solidarity movement; leading members include Jacek Kuroń, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, and Adam Michnik; merged with The Liberal-Democratic Congress in 1994 to create the UW (see below).
- UW (*Unia Wolności*; **The Freedom Union**):** created in 1994 with union of UD and Liberal-Democratic Congress; a sometimes awkward amalgamation of moderate Catholics (such as Tadeusz Mazowiecki), social-welfare liberals (such as Jacek Kuroń and Adam Michnik), and free market liberals (such as Leszek Balcerowicz); since 1997, part of a coalition government with AWS.
- Wałęsa, Lech (1943-):** electrician and labor activist in Gdańsk in the 1970s; leader of the Lenin shipyard (see above) strikes of 1980; chair of Solidarity, 1980-90; winner of Nobel Peace Prize, 1983; participant in round table negotiations; President of Poland, 1990-95.
- Wyszyński, Cardinal Stefan (1901-81):** Roman Catholic Primate and Cardinal, 1952-80.