

## **THE KNOWLEDGE IN OPPOSITION** **Jakob Jakobsen, Kuba Szreder and Agata Pyzik talk to Tadeusz Kowalik about The Flying University**

JAKOB JAKOBSEN: When did the Flying University start?

TADEUSZ KOWALIK: The Flying University started under Russian rule in the 19th century, and in the 20th century the institution became known as the Society of Scientific Courses. When we were starting off with the enterprise, Professor Edward Lipinski, who once belonged to the Society, suggested that we should make reference to the tradition. The difference was that we were not illegal like the first Flying University. We were rather like the KOR [Workers' Defense Committee]. We were trying to be publicly open, irrespective of the harassment and repressive measures, which were not all that drastic. Almost always we were followed by the members of the security department; we were interrogated by them. That is why, we had to change places as often as possible. But we were not involved in any illegal activities.

JJ: How did you get involved in the Flying University in 1978?

Andrzej Celiński - now an MP of the Social Democracy of Poland Party - was the main initiator and founder of the Society of Scientific Courses, and, at that time, he was a member of the KOR. In the summer of 1977, he visited me and talked me into the idea. He even suggested the subject of my lectures. It was because of him that I made a shift from my field of the history of economic thought to economic history and the history of postwar Poland. It was my idea to adopt, as the main theme, the postwar disputes dealing with the nature of the new political system and then with the nature of its reforms. It was all different from the official teaching method. Another member of the Flying University, Bohdan Cywiński, taught mainly about Poland's fight for independence. Jerzy Jedlicki tried to teach the history of liberalism, mainly social and political. Later on, Jan Strzelecki, an emblematic person for the non-communist social tradition, started to lecture there. As I remember, at the beginning, there were five or six of us, with Stefan Amsterdamski and some others. Then arose a problem of organizing lectures given by the most prominent members of the KOR, Jacek Kuroń and Adam Michnik. The issue was hotly debated. At first, all of us, the five founders, were against the idea. We were afraid that it could be considered a political statement, with them being known as radicals, labeled political extremists; as a result, it might have brought down repression on us, causing the breakdown of the Flying University. By the way, we happened to quarrel some more time: in the August of 1980 we submitted the Letter of 64 [a letter written by Polish intellectuals supporting the workers who were on strike in Gdańsk at that time; the intellectuals called on the authorities to hold talks with the Interfactory Strike Committee - editor's note]. I was among the people who initiated and signed the Letter. We were deliberating whether to accept the signatures of KOR members. So, there occurred a conflict within the organization. I remember a conversation in which one of the co-founders of the Flying University said to Michnik: "It is difficult to do things with you, but without you, it is difficult too."

JJ: You were employed at the University?

I never actually had a job at the University. There were two short episodes when I lectured at the University, but it was freelance work. For the first time, I taught Economics at the Faculty of Journalism of the University of Warsaw in the years 1952-1953 (Hanna Kraal and Jerzy Urban were studying there at the time.) The second time I had lectured there, it was at the beginnings of the 1970s. I offered to give a series of a kind of monographic lecture "Economy and Socialism," and the dean (which was really wise of him) protected the lectures under the name "Economy and Sociology" because it sounded more neutral. Since 1960, when I had to leave the party school, that is, the Higher School of Political Sciences, I had always worked at the Polish Academy of Sciences. Up to 1963, I had been employed at the Institute of Economics, and then I was transferred to the Institute for the History of Science, Education, and Technology. In 1992 I came back to the Institute of Economics.

But as for the Flying University, it should be stressed that it was not the first educational initiative, the first idea of giving a series of seminars beyond the official sphere. I heard about private seminars that took place in the EARLY 1950s. At that time they were kept entirely secret; probably even the secret police [The Służba Bezpieczeństwa, or the SB - the Security Service of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, was the secret police and internal intelligence agency, established in Poland in 1956, the task of which was to maintain the public order; infamous for the political repressions it enacted - translator's note] didn't know about them.

In the 1950s I co-organized and took part in the private seminars at the flat of Oskar Lange, a world-class economist; around the time he was the vice-president of the Council of State and a member of the Polish United Worker's Party's Central Committee. At that point Lange thought that it was necessary to prepare the new staff in such a way. He thought that we, radicals, were in danger of provincialism. We didn't know the West, its realities, the contemporary thoughts. At his flat seminars with a dozen or so people took place; the seminars attracted mainly young economists, gathered around the "Życie Gospodarcze" [Economic Life] weekly, but also the sociologist and the former editor of "Po Prostu" [Simply], Ryszard Turski, and the philosopher Henryk Holland.

The end was dramatic - the suicidal jump of Henryk Holland out of the window during the house search conducted by the secret police in 1961. A lot of people came to the funeral, which was treated as a demonstration against the government and against the politics of Władysław Gomułka. Lange participated in the funeral, for which he was scolded by the party. He was also the supervisor of Henryk Holland's thesis about Ludwik Krzywicki, a socialist thinker a sociologist and an economist. After the events Lange had to put an end to his half-legal seminars.

JJ: Had you taught economics before you actually started working for the Polish Academy of Sciences?

I mentioned it earlier. I had taught economics and the history of economic thought at the said party school (it was originally called the Institute of Social Sciences; I started there my PhD, which I defended at the University of Warsaw). After 1956 I belonged to the group of radical Marxists (we were called the "Marxist YOUNG-Turks"), the party's reformers; I was the editor-in-chief of the "Życie Gospodarcze" weekly, in which we demanded economic reforms - a slight marketization and the workers' participation (workers' councils). In 1957 the most radical, official weekly "Po Prostu" became the target for repression, along with many other magazines from outside Warsaw, and, as a result, 34 editors were thrown out of work, myself included. Paradoxically, I was still allowed to teach at the school for the party's staff, which is hard to explain to a foreigner.

JJ: But maybe you could try hard to explain it to the foreigner?

Of course, I faced political problems. The issue of expelling me from the party was debated for 12 years, starting from 1957. But some of the comrades defended me so effectively through all those years that I was gotten rid of as late as in 1968 for all my beliefs and, in particular, for the defense of the March demonstrations of students. But the comrade Zofia Gomułkowa, wife of the First Secretary, couldn't get over the fact that a person with that kind of background, whose mother was factory cleaner and father was a worker, was in league with the rotten intelligentsia. She felt sorry that she had to expel me from the party. [laughs] I kept telling them that my place was in the party because it was me who was a true socialist. Finally, I got convinced by the arguments of Jan Rychlewski [member of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Professor at the Institute of Fundamental Technological Research of the Polish Academy of Sciences - editor's note], who at one of the meetings of the Central Party Control Commission said: "Tadeusz, all your friends, such as Włodzimierz Brus, Leszek Kołakowski and Bronisław Baczko, are gone from the party. What will you be doing in the party?" I couldn't find the answer to that question. [laughs]

JJ: But going back to the self-organized education...

In the 1960s such unofficial seminars took place in an apartment, like this one, of Włodzimierz Brus [an outstanding economist; for a long time Brus was a lecturer at the University of Oxford - editor's note], ousted from the University of Warsaw in 1968. Brus went on unemployed or worked in fields quite different from what he specialized in, and in 1972 he emigrated to the Great Britain. A lot of eminent intellectuals participated in the seminars - Nina Asorodobraj, Witold Kula, Edward Lipiński, Władysław Bienkowski, Jerzy Tepicht and his wife, Jan Strzelecki, or Leszek Kołakowski. Even high-ranking party and government functionaries took part. In general, those functionaries tended to organize some private, secret meetings, to which people like me were sometimes invited. We called the functionaries' seminar the "red sofa."

JJ: So, as I understand, they were like closed seminars.

Sometimes they were slightly camouflaged. Interestingly, for a couple years we had seminars in my Institute for the History of Science, Education, and Technology. The camouflage was that we deliberately "academicized", or

"depoliticized", the subject of our meetings, so that the invitations could be sent out by the Secretary of the Institute of Social Sciences. The outstanding literary scholar Stefan Żółkiewski did the inviting part, but he never turned up at any seminar. The participants changed as the subjects of the seminars changed; but even those who were invited occasionally knew what the game the organizers played was all about. And everything was happening inside a elitist, closed academic institution.

JJ: Could you tell us about the Flying University itself? At the beginning there were only five lecturers...

Of course. I just made the digression to show that, in a way, the Flying University was as much a continuation of those meetings that took place in different times and places, as an expression of the enlarging of freedom in Poland. It was a margin, but it was growing, because we were able to gather in lots of ways and reach many different people. Also, after the repressions became even tougher, the Church helped us, so lots of lectures were in the churches. Sometimes it was really ironic. I wrote my post-doc thesis on Rosa Luxemburg and I was expected to have a lecture on her in a cathedral in Wrocław. [laughs] But this was prevented by the communist Militia. [laughs] And the Marxist Luxemburg was associated more with the communist tradition than the Christian one, much less the Catholic one.

In 1977 it was an informal, small-scale initiative. In the January of 1978 we formalized that informal organization, calling it the Society of Scientific Courses. And we also created a formal commission to run this. We then gathered many more lecturers and coordinators; we had around a hundred people. They were scholars, culture workers, writers – the list is very long. For the whole time, in the commission there were Celiński, Cywiński, Jedlicki, and me. And there were also Bronisław Geremek and Tadeusz Mazowiecki, who did not lecture, but were just included in the commission. The writer Marian Brandys was a member of the commission for some time.

The commission of the institution gathered in my flat, Cywiński's, or someone else's. Mostly the commission informed about the repression, or the protests against it, but we also did some other things...

JJ: How did you organize the courses?

As far as I remember, I planned the schedule of the meetings to be thirty hours, and I think that other lecturers did the same. Each seminar was devoted to a different subject. The information about the coming, or the following, seminar was distributed in the form of leaflets by younger people. We had assistants who were responsible for that. There are some funny stories from the period. One of the first seminars we held at a young mother's place; her surname was Michejda, and she lived at 1 Piługa Street. She was then interrogated by the Militia, and she just replied: "How could I refuse them the flat, if they asked me?" [laughs] – which I find very disarming. Although actually the Militia, or the secret police, did not manage to pacify her, we never met at her place again – we didn't want to cause her, being a young mother, any problems. So, I gave the next lectures at the flat of Andrzej Celiński's mother.

JJ: I'm also interested in the repression directed against the students of the Flying University.

Sometimes the students were stopped by the Militia and asked for an ID, their personal information taken down. But I can't really say whether there was any repression that was the result of them being part of the Flying University. We have to be aware of the fact that in Warsaw the margin of freedom was much wider than in other cities, where there were neither foreign correspondents, nor the KÖR that would send the information abroad. We, lecturers, were rather warned, or detained by the Militia or the secret police; in this way they prevented us from taking part in the lectures. Noisy groups of young activists were ordered inside and they attacked the lecturers verbally. It was not severe repression; its aim was to stop the lecture from being presented. When I had applied to the Institute of National Remembrance [is a Polish government-affiliated research institute with lustration prerogatives and prosecution powers. It specializes in recent history of Poland - editors notice] for the documents collected on me by the secret police, I found out that one of the very few documents left in the folder was the description of my relationship with the people from the Flying University in Poznań. Students were supposed to organize a meeting where I would lecture, but when I came to Poznań, I was immediately arrested by the Militia. They kept me detained for 12 hours in the Militia station, so that I couldn't give the lecture.

But that's not all. I had there an hours-long conversation with some high-ranking functionary from Warsaw, which, in my opinion, indicated some signs of decomposition in the authorities. He tried to convince me (I considered myself a non-communist socialist) that "they" held similar political views, but they couldn't implement them "straightaway." The end of my detention was really funny. When, late at night, I was escorted back to the train station, I felt hungry and I wanted to eat something. I came, with two functionaries breathing down my neck, into a restaurant where my would-be seminar group happened to be spending their time. They all just burst out laughing.

JJ: How secret were the meetings of the Flying University? What was their secrecy all about?

Right. My further cooperation with Poznań developed in a very interesting way. The details of the first meeting were distributed on a large scale among academics. Around like a hundred people learned about it. When I was invited to Poznań again by the students and the junior lecturers of the Poznań University [the present Adam Mickiewicz University - translator's note], they decided to keep the meeting secret; it took place at the flat of an actress who worked for the well-known, experimental Eighth Day Theatre (I still keep in touch with the Theatre). The meeting was planned for 10 people. However, from what I have read in the INR [Institute of National Remembrance] documents, it seems that the Militia, or the secret police, knew about the meeting from the very start, because one of the organizers was their agent. But since it was meant to be a meeting in a narrow circle, and its subject – the postwar economic transformations – seemed far away from the realities of the time, they let us have it. Otherwise, as it was stated in the report, they would have risked disclosing the identity of their agent. So the lecture was given, in a sense, by the consent of the authorities. [laughs]

KUBA SZREDER: How was the information distributed? Through some leaflets, or people just passed it on by word of mouth confidentially?

Mostly leaflets. They were not put on the wall, of course – they were disseminated among people. We avoided using the phone.

JJ: How were the meetings arranged? Were they more like lectures, political meetings, or discussions?

Me, I organized seminars. I would be talking for 30-40 minutes and after that we would be discussing things; then there would be some time for the questions. And I would wind it up with a half-hour summary of the meeting. It would usually go on for like two and a half, or three hours. The meeting my colleagues held looked probably the same.

JJ: How many people attended such a meeting?

At the beginning it was twenty to thirty people, but afterwards repressions started, and investigations were launched; the students who had been attending were interrogated. Other people managed to have around a hundred people come to the meetings, especially when they were held in the churches. My lectures were attended mainly by students; and I would invite other academics, such as the economist Czesław Bobrowski, who, let me remind you, was a living legend. Just right after the war, Bobrowski was the organizer and the president of the Central Planning Office, which was, at that point, in the hands of economists connected to the Polish Socialist Party. Soon he was removed from the office for revisionism and the "bourgeois inclinations." When he was appointed to the position of the ambassador of Sweden (which really shows the relatively soft nature of that regime), after a while he "chose freedom," and he left for Paris. Bobrowski came back to Poland in 1956; he became an active supporter of putting the socialist economy partly on market basis, as well as the Yugoslav model of economy, which was based on employee participation. He was a full-time vice-president of the Economic Committee of the Council of Ministers. At the beginning of the 1930s, Bobrowski happened to work in Moscow, so he had had the opportunity to get to know the economic model of the USSR and its misworkings from personal observation. At some point he cooperated with the deputy prime minister Eugeniusz Kwiatkowski, who authored the plan of industrialization of Poland towards the end of 1930s. So, he was one of the most interesting seminar participants, with whom WE would discuss the Polish way to industrialization. Then there was also the doyen of Polish economists, namely Edward Lipiński... As for the repressions against me, I only got detained by the Militia when they wanted to prevent me from presenting a given lecture.

Yet, there happened very unpleasant, even, I would put it, dangerous situations. Sometimes they were really surprising. For example, at one of

Adam Michnik's lectures there turned up a group of aggressive young men. Still, they didn't come to stop him from lecturing - just the opposite, they tried to force him onto the podium and have him talk. They might have been prepared to bring shame to him in front of the audience, and they didn't want to let go of the learnt lesson. But some time before that, a would-be listener of the lecture was beaten up on his way to us. We tried to defend Michnik. Because of how old we were and the fact that we worked in the academy as scholars we were safer. Elderly Maria Dziewicka, who was a lecturer at the Main School of Planning and Statistics (the present Warsaw School of Economics - translator's note), even got engaged in a scramble, standing in between the men and Michnik. The most dramatic thing has very often been cited by the press; it was the invading of a hit squad of Jacek Kuroń's flat when his son was battered unconscious and some other people were bitten. That was the most dramatic event. You could say: didn't we tell it? Of course, I'm saying this with considerable self-criticism and self-ridicule. After all, most of us were part of the academy. Nobody would have admitted to it in public, or in private, but I am sure that many of us must have happened to wonder why people outside the academy were allowed to teach. Yet, it was never the official stand of the Flying University or the Society of Scientific Courses. We would stand up for them. Intellectually independent people, who were also pedagogically gifted and held clear views, such as Jacek Kuroń or Adam Michnik, made very attractive lecturers. As a matter of fact, they have become rapidly eminent public intellectuals.

JJ: Did you organize a series of seminars related to the economic history of Poland? Could you tell us how the programme of the seminars was organized?

The seminars consisted of three parts, the first of which debated the Disputes over the socio-economic system in Poland in the years 1944-1948. Only this part, under this title, was published by the illegal publishing house called "NOWA." THE TYPESCRIPT AROSE A LOT OF DISCUSSIONS. The book was a hundred or so pages long and my folder with the comments of (a few dozen!) different people on the typed pages amounted to, more or less, the same number of pages. The second part of the lectures briefly discusses the Stalinist years, focusing on the so-called Polish October, that is, liberalization which happened after 1956 and which is considered a turning point in the history of Polish communism. The death of Stalin caused the wave of changes, and in the June of 1956 a workers' revolt was staged in Poznań (As I was the editor-in-chief of "Życie Gospodarcze," I went there just the following day and I came back completely depressed). After the revolt there came sudden liberalization and democratization mostly in the form of workers' councils, popping up like mushrooms, after two years of operation of partly state-owned work places. The Economic Committee was established, with Oskar Lange and his deputy Czesław Bobrowski, and thirty other economists; it was an advisory body to the government. They drew up the intellectual basis of the central planning system reform; the basis was never really put into practice. In the words of the Prime Minister of the time Józef Cyrankiewicz, it was neither adopted, nor rejected. [laughs] The festival of liberalization was short-lived; it took like two years. The economic thought as well as the culture in Poland flourished anyway. In economics Warsaw was called socialist Cambridge. It all, however, came to a dramatic end in 1968 when after the March anti-revisionist and anti-semitic campaign we lost the best economists emigrated. It was the same in social sciences and culture.

JJ: So this knowledge that you had gathered was repressed from the official late-1970s university program?

To a considerable extent, yes, it was. Keeping in touch with those who had been deported abroad turned out to be quite difficult. If I wanted to meet a friend who had emigrated to Canada, we had to arrange the meeting in Budapest. But even there, AT 5.00 in the morning, our hotel room was searched, and one of us was detained and interrogated at the Militia station. The times of the first Solidarity - The years 1980-81 - saw liberalization within the country and the opening up of Poland to the world. One could reestablish the contact with those abroad, and actually part of them came back to the country to stay for some short time. Another wave of liberalization swept across the country after the amnesty, that is, in 1986.

JJ: Your seminar was partly devoted to the reforms from the years 1956-58.

Yes, you could say that. Later on, Włodzimierz Brus, a prominent figure among the reformers, wrote an autobiographical essay entitled "The Bane of Reforming the Socialist Economic System." Even if some of the propositions put forth by the Economic Committee were accepted, they degenerated into their opposites, according to the logic of the bureaucratic machine. I will

brush up on what the disputes were all about at that time. Oskar Lange and Włodzimierz Brus didn't just clash over how the Stalinist model should be evaluated - they viewed the period from really different perspectives. Lange defined the Soviet economy and the Polish economic system of the first part of the 1950s as "half war economy." Still, he was an optimist. He thought that during the period there was a sharp jump into industrialization and urbanization, which was thought to be effective and practical only with a very low level of industrialization. Lange, above all, stressed the importance of emergence of the modern working class, and he believed that it was going to demand more participation, or, in a broader perspective, democratization; whereas Brus feared that what was constructed through the Stalinist mechanisms was going to badly affect any future reforms. According to him, the Stalinist years gave birth to the bureaucratic machine of the party and the state that was sure to prevent more radical reforms. This could be best seen in the year 1956 when the state was in need of reforms aimed at decentralization of the economic system, but it was impossible to get them through the resistance of the elaborate party and state bureaucracy.

JJ: I would like to go back to the programme of your seminar within the Flying University. Was the knowledge concerning decentralization in any way repressed during the 1970s?

If you are implying democratization when you are using the word "decentralization," then I would have to say: "Yes" - this knowledge was repressed; in a sense, pushed onto the margin, forced down into the so-called second circulation [underground publishing - translator's note]. You are asking me about the "knowledge about decentralization," but the point was then to embrace it, to widen the sphere of freedom, for, without it fully realized, there was going to falter also the production and the business activity, not to mention the wide sphere of culture stifled after the March of 1968, after - as we would call it - the "March, fierce, anti-Zionist battle." The 1970s fall into two distinctive periods. After the December revolt in the seaside cities and the coming into power of the strikingly technocratic government led by Edward Gierek, the ruling elites became euphoric about the easy loans of "petrodollars" as a source of a new jump into industrialization. Indeed, there was a certain jump, but production was not modernized enough to make the repayment of the debts possible. That was due to a lack of proper reforms and the tendency, different from the mid-50s, to recentralize economy. From the DDR came the cult of the so-called "Great Economic Organizations." The supporters of workers' participation, the enlarging of the market, and the autonomy of enterprises were on the defensive. I have already mentioned my own experiences lecturing at University of Warsaw.

I lectured to a small group of last-year students. I could probably have continued, but I was unreasonable enough to invite Edward Lipiński to one of the lectures. I wanted the students to meet that outstanding personality, connected with the socialist tradition. The vigilant secret police immediately had a cautionary conversation with the dean, who then felt forced to suspend my lectures.

JJ: That happened at a regular university...

Yes, the University of Warsaw. We are still talking about the first half of the 1970s, before the commotion caused by the KOR. Again, it's not easy to explain to a foreigner. Political repressions and the Militia's attention concentrated mainly on the members of the KOR and a small group of associates. Those people were considered dangerous. On the other hand, the activity of the KOR meant a larger sphere of freedom for the others. Before the Flying University started, the October reforms and the Soviet intervention in Hungary were somehow remembered, but presented to students in a very distorted way, within the limits set by the party's official line. When we started the Society of Scientific Courses, I heard that the official University also benefitted from that, because some alternative was noticed. To use a high-flown analogy, it could be said that counter-reformation was always some kind of absorption of the postulates of Reformation. That was our role, very important from a certain point of view: to exert indirect pressure. On the one hand, strong repressions were used against the KOR, milder ones against the Society of Scientific Courses, but at the same time the authorities tried to respond to our activities in a more positive way.

JJ: So the fact you had meetings and published your texts somehow encouraged the system's reform?

This would be an overstatement, since the reform was not a current issue. At that point it was more about fostering a kind of reformatory consciousness. Our activity was rather intended to influence public imagination towards that end. The main economic as well as political issue was the democratization

of the system, which, in our opinion, was a production factor of some sort. Without increasing social control and the autonomy of enterprises one could not expect a significant increase in the economy's efficiency. Earlier debates about Poland's particular way to socialism and the Polish economic model recalled and called for an amount of pluralism in the Soviet bloc. That may explain the popularity of my book, published with some primitive equipment, reportedly in 5000 copies. Mirosław Chojecki, director of the publishing house, told me later he had hidden 500 copies somewhere, but couldn't remember where. When I was offered a republication recently, an edition of 100 copies was suggested, to which I strongly objected and finally bargained 300 copies [laughs]. Soon afterwards Waldemar Kuczyński's book *Po wielkim skoku* [After the Big Jump], published in 1980, also gained a lot of popularity and was awarded a then considerable sum of money by Czesław Bobrowski. Generally speaking, publishing became an important part of our activity as early as in the second year of the Flying University. It was partly connected with the Colloquia we organized. Just in the academic year 1978-79 there were six such carefully prepared meetings, devoted to issues as disparate as: "The language of propaganda," "What history of literature do we need?," "The structure and dynamics of ideological systems," "The national hero - myth and reality," "Independent press and tradition," or "The national principle." Only the transcripts of the first two got published in book form. Another part of our activity was a scholarship fund, *Kasa Pomocy Naukowej*, which offered scholarships to young scholars.

JJ: You've been talking about the second part of the seminar, what about the third one?

There was hardly a third part. I have mentioned that in passing. Kuczyński had just written on the 1970s, and I think he lectured a little. But then the year 1980 came and one could talk about those things openly. Around 1980-81 the atmosphere changed thoroughly and political freedom flourished. Initiatives like the Flying University mushroomed all over the country, quite legally. They moved into official state or public institutions. In those circumstances the half-legal formula of the Society of Scientific Courses seemed inadequate and the association practically ended its activity. But before that happened, our initiative had developed remarkably, by then in a legal way. After the introduction of the Martial Law a return to earlier forms of lecturing were out of the question. Later, when the Martial Law was lifted, there was a mixture of freedom and repression. Publishing flourished. There was a multitude of scattered, clandestine discussion clubs, so much so that there was talk of an "alternative society." For example, in the 1980s it was becoming easier to travel abroad, from which I also benefited a few times.

JJ: Who really attended the lectures? Were they students, or also workers? What kind of meetings were those?

They were mostly students, young scholars, high school teachers. In the 1970s we had limited access to workers. Still, I did meet the Gdańsk leaders: Wałęsa, the Gwiazdas, Walentynowicz, Lis (but not the Kaczyński brothers nor Borusewicz, I think), at some clandestine meeting just a few months before the strike in the Gdańsk shipyard in the summer of 1980. If it hadn't been for that meeting, it probably wouldn't have occurred to me to persuade Geremek and Mazowiecki or others to go to Gdańsk so they (we) could help the strikers reach a compromise.

Let us recall that after 1968 it was almost a tradition that many scholars, PhD students or students who had been expelled from universities, but did not choose emigration, took up workers' jobs. Adam Michnik, for instance, worked in the Rosa Luxemburg factory, Ryszard Bugaj was a hand in a sawmill, as far as I remember, and Kuczyński worked in several places, including a laundry. But this was understood as a temporary exile to state firms, the obligatory struggle for survival.

Things changed in the 1980s. Under the Martial Law there was a different atmosphere; dissidents, not only students, were able to set up cooperatives, small firms and work for them. Jan Krzysztof Bielecki, who became Prime Minister in the early 1990s, started his career in this way. They say the present Prime Minister, Donald Tusk, worked in a similar cooperative as a high window-cleaner. That was a clear difference. In the 1980s the system started to gravitate towards, generally speaking, the private or non-state sector.

KS: Can any link be established between the Flying University, the Solidarity movement and the Polish transformation processes? Why did the neoliberal order win such a decisive victory after 1989? Earlier the elites consented to a socialism with a human face, or a third way.

It's time we admitted that in years of the Society of Scientific Courses most of us still believed we were living in a potentially superior system. Other

Polish economists, including the revisionists who lectured in the West, shared that view. For example, this held true for both Włodzimierz Brus (in Oxford) and his polemicist Stanisław Gomułka.

In the 1980s I still argued for a transition from communism to socialism (that was the title of one of my texts available in the "second circulation"). In 1989 I opted for a mixed economy, a diversification of property types, and I strongly opposed a sudden jump into capitalistic economy. I wasn't an exception then. In 1989 the Washington Post published an article which argued that only then, after the fall of communist regimes, which had monopolized socialist ideas, new vistas were opening for social democrats to create something new, at last. I have repeatedly cited Joseph Stiglitz, Noble Prize winner, who wrote an appeal to post-communist elites at the beginning of 1990: reject the present system, but don't forget socialism's main values. If you find your own way, you can change for the better not only your lives, but the lives of us all. This is what the (social-)liberal economist, later chief advisor to Bill Clinton and World Bank's chief vice-president was saying at the beginning of 1990! I have no doubt it was a real possibility.

I like to refer to those Americans from outside the International Monetary Fund circles, since we could find allies even among them, which shows the absurdity of the thesis that we were forced by the circumstances to take the neoliberal way.

Anyway, the crucial change took place as early as in the summer of 1989, between the June 4th election and September. I think the alliance between the intelligentsia and the workers turned out to be momentary. It paved the way for a peaceful transformation, as the communist system was crumbling in the whole Soviet bloc. It collapsed in Poland first, but that wasn't the only reason of its demise. Still, the Polish example had a double impact on the other countries: it was a lesson in reaching a compromise (the Polish Round Table and the election) and it became the testing ground for the shock therapy, more intense than usually applied by the IMF.

Everybody knows that the Flying University lecturers became Solidarity's main advisors. They became experts. They advised the strikers in the Gdańsk Shipyard in the August of 1980. Then they took high administrative and parliamentary offices: Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki, the leader of the parliamentary faction Bronisław Geremek, chief economic advisor Waldemar Kuczyński, President Lech Wałęsa. And then my dramatic parting from them, some of them my close friends. I described it many times, most recently in the strangely entitled book [www.polska.transformacja.pl](http://www.polska.transformacja.pl). But I hope you don't expect me to explain in this short interview the reasons of what puzzles me even today: how could it happen that a country which had experienced the greatest social movement in modern Europe brought onto itself one of the most unjust social systems of the second half of the 20th century, the worst version of capitalism. And the fact that this great transformation took place under the leadership of Tadeusz Mazowiecki, Bronisław Geremek, and Waldemar Kuczyński is a truly Shakespearean tragicomedy. Or the Hegelian craftiness of History. Or the "liquid postmodernity" which includes views and attitudes. That was when the popular saying was coined: "the point of view depends on the place of sitting." Merely a year earlier, in the November of 1988, Tadeusz Mazowiecki presented a paper in which he described the Solidarity movement as a synthesis of the struggle for state independence, Christian personalism and socialist economic ideals, rejecting, of course, ideas such as the dictatorship of the proletariat.

There are moment in history when small groups of people, or even individuals, change its course. The year 1989 was such a moment. During the Round Table talks the prevailing vision was of a leftist, social-democratic evolution. If only Wałęsa had been wiser and had not believed that we were destined to imitate the so-called "American Way of Business"... There was a disagreement among the Union's activists, many criticized him for not wanting to rebuild a strong Solidarity. His answer was simple: one cannot carry out a radical system reform with strong unions. He was already considering some move towards capitalism.

I still believe that if we had followed the Swedish model, for example, with its strong trade unions, we could have avoided the traps of a neoliberal transformation; that Poland had the greatest potential for the third way. I mentioned Stiglitz before. But even the author of the "jump into the market" concept, Jeffrey Sachs, wrote in one of his unpublished reports from that time that the goal of the Polish transformation should be something like the Swedish model. In the December of 1989 the financial tycoon and philanthropist George Soros still argued we should not change the whole system at once, but rather concentrate on reducing inflation and ensuring a long-term stabilization. Unfortunately, our local neophytes proved to be far more radical than their American mentors.