

Lech Wałęsa: A Stalinist agent in the Solidarity movement

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Secret files documenting that the former Solidarity leader, Nobel peace prize winner and president of Poland Lech Wałęsa was a Stalinist informer, were released to the public by the Institute of National Remembrance (IPN), an investigative research institute established in 1998 to “document Nazi and Stalinist crimes against the Polish nation.”

The right-wing IPN serves as a political arm of the government to document activities of the former authorities of the Polish People’s Republic (PRL: 1945-1989) and propagate the nationalistic narrative of the ruling capitalist regime.

Wałęsa’s dossier consists of a personal file including 183 pages of documents and a file on a secret collaborator code-named “Bolek,” with 576 pages of records. The first docket, released to the public on February 22, 2016, consists of a handwritten commitment to cooperate with the security service (SB) signed: Lech Wałęsa, “Bolek,” as well as confirmations of receipt of money. The second batch of documents, released on February 24, 2016, includes numerous reports by “Bolek” and notes of secret service functionaries’ meetings with him.

The documents cover a period from 1970 to 1976, and an expert-archivist has certified their authenticity. They cover the situation at the Gdańsk Lenin shipyard, covering preparations for strikes, lockouts and demonstrations, their organizers and those leafleting the plant are named. They served as the basis for repression against several dozen individuals.

Wałęsa was recruited to cooperate with the intelligence services while under arrest during the shipyard workers’ rebellion in Gdańsk in December 1970. His handwritten undertaking to cooperate with the secret service dated December 21, 1970, reads:

“I, undersigned, Wałęsa Lech, son of Bolesław and Feliksa, born in Popowo, dist. Lipno in 1943, undertake to keep in strict confidence contents of the talks held between myself and the secret service officers. At the same time, I undertake to cooperate with the secret service in detecting and combating enemies of the PRL. The information I will pass on will be in writing, and it will be truthful. The fact of cooperating with the secret service I undertake to keep strictly confidential and to not disclose even to my family. The information provided will be signed with the pseudonym ‘Bolek.’”

The first receipt of money for the amount of 1 000 zł bears a date of January 5, 1971. Wałęsa was to receive a total of 13 100 zł for his services. According to one of the notes, “he was eager to take money.” Collaboration ended because “Bolek” thought he had not been properly rewarded for his services in denouncing coworkers.

Allegations in regard to Wałęsa’s collaboration with the Stalinist secret service are not new. Already in the late 1970s, several Solidarity members, including Anna Walentynowicz and Andrzej Gwiazda, claimed that Wałęsa was a spy implanted by the regime to derail the workers’ movement against the Stalinist bureaucracy. Their allegations were denounced as conspiracy theories by mainstream media and most politicians.

In 1992, Wałęsa’s name appeared on the “Macierewicz list” of former

Solidarity activist, now Defense Minister Antoni Macierewicz, that revealed the identity of then-government members and parliament delegates listed as collaborators with the secret service. The so-called “lustration law” proposed at the time to purge the government apparatus of ex-Stalinists was repealed by the Constitutional Tribunal in June 1992.

In 2000, Wałęsa was cleared of suspicion by the Appellate Lustration Court in Warsaw. The Court ruled in his favor because all documents that served as evidence of Wałęsa’s role as an informer were Xeroxes and their authentication was deemed “impossible.” During Wałęsa’s presidency in 1990-1995, original documents from the “Bolek” files were repeatedly stolen by top officials from his office, the interior ministry office (MSW), and the Office for State Protection (UOP).

A book by two historians, Piotr Gontarczyk and Sławomir Cenckiewicz, *SB and Lech Wałęsa* published in 2008, sparked a ferocious national debate. Several copies of the documents from the secret “Bolek” files were published, together with the transcript of Wałęsa’s conversation with two army colonels during his martial law internment. These exposed Wałęsa’s role as an agent who helped “clean Solidarity” of several leading members.

The files that recently came to light contain the authenticated originals from the official secret service archives very few knew still existed. The files were illegally hidden at the late General Czesław Kiszczak’s house and offered to the IPN for money by his widow. According to Maria Kiszczak, her husband had hidden the documents to protect Wałęsa’s status as a national hero.

The documents, seized on February 16 by the police and the IPN officials, were supposed to be published 5 years after Wałęsa’s death.

General Kiszczak was a high-ranking officer in the secret service and the interior ministry from the 1960s until 1990. Together with General Wojciech Jaruzelski, he was responsible for imposing martial law in December 1981, which crushed the Solidarity movement. He issued orders for the pacification of the Wujek coal miners’ strike in 1981 that killed 9 miners. He was also involved in the “Round Table” talks in 1989 that led to the restoration of capitalism in Poland. Kiszczak died in Warsaw on November 5, 2015.

The IPN also released video footage from the Magdalenka talks held prior to the “Round Table” agreement, showing Solidarity leaders—including Adam Michnik, Bronisław Geremek and Lech Wałęsa—drinking heavily and fraternizing with the Stalinist brass.

Wałęsa has denied all the allegations, asserting that the documents were forged. For years he affirmed that the code name “Bolek” referred to the SB case against him. Although admitting to signing “some papers” out of fear of persecution in 1970, he claimed it was an insignificant episode aiming at “fooling the system.” This version of events was presented in Andrzej Wajda’s latest movie *Wałęsa. Man of Hope* (2013). Through historical falsification, the film attempted to defend Wałęsa’s reputation as a working class hero from mounting critiques of his legacy.

The documents released by the IPN are only a small part of the records

exposing the decades-long legacy of Stalinist provocations and covert operations against the workers' movement in post-war Poland and internationally. Full details concerning the exact length and nature of the secret dealings Wa??sa entered into with the Stalinist and imperialist intelligence services are still hidden from the public for political reasons. However, even this small fraction of documents uncovered by the IPN helps to understand how it was possible for a mass workers movement that emerged in the Polish shipyards and factories in the 1970s and 1980s to be derailed and ultimately defeated.

According to a 1981 interior ministry report, the Stalinist secret service placed over 1,800 agents in Solidarity's ranks. Thirteen agents were members of the National Conciliation Committee, the union's leading body. Just in Gda??sk, the birthplace of Solidarity, there were 1,556 secret agents active in its ranks in 1981, and their number was growing. (G. Majchrzak *The beginnings of the "safeguarding" of Solidarity by the Secret Service [September 1980-April 1981]*) Wa??sa's role as a Stalinist agent did not end in 1976. It is still unclear how he entered the Lenin shipyard premises without a pass during the August 1980 strike (according to several witnesses he was brought in by the SB). His election as head of Solidarity in September 1981 was a key SB priority. "Wa??sa is needed ... he has already become an institution and a screen behind which we can manipulate Solidarity," declared Stanis??aw Kania, the first secretary of the Stalinist United People's Party in September 1980.

The aims of the group around Wa??sa included preventing strike actions by regional committees; campaigning against popular Solidarity members opposed to Wa??sa, such as Gwi??azda, Jurczyk, Rulewski or Walentynowicz; preventing "extreme" factions from influencing workers; and limiting union activity to non-political and reformist demands, as well as provoking petty regional, organizational and personal differences (including slander) to destroy Solidarity's unity. (S??awomir Cenckiwi??cz, *In the Eyes of Bezpieka, ?omianki* 2014, p. 436-447)

Despite Wa??sa's secret negotiations with the Stalinists, which resulted in the calling off the March 1981 general strike, "Bolek" was able to win the elections with 55.2 percent of the vote. This victory was possible only due to the support of Lech's fellow agents as well as activists like Jacek Kuro?, one of the founders of the Workers' Defense Committee (KOR) and a leading Pabloite within the Solidarity movement. Although aware of Wa??sa's prior connections with SB ("I have known about it forever," Kuro? wrote in *Cool! or Squaring the Circle*, 1992, p. 246), he supported Wa??sa's candidacy "in exchange for a guarantee of holding a position of high authority within the union." (IPN 0236/243)

After the defeat of Solidarity through the imposition of the martial law on December 13, 1981, Wa??sa was properly rewarded, living like a king in a "golden cage" of several government villas where waiters in tuxedos served him exquisite dinners, French wines, and cognacs. (Karol Modzelewski, *Let's Ruin the Jade of the Past*, Warszawa 2013, testimonies of the Government Protection Bureau (BOR) security officers). During his talks with the army colonels Boles??aw Kli? and Hipolit Starszak on November 14, 1982, he bragged of his record of "suppressing the opposition within Solidarity and getting rid off activists the authorities might not have liked." (Piotr Gontarczyk and S??awomir Cenckiewicz, *SB and Lech Wa??sa*, IPN Warszawa, 2008)

For former Wa??sa advisers like Kuro? or Michnik, Wa??sa's foul collaboration with the secret service was apparently no big deal. The entire liberal opposition to the PiS government around the Civic Platform (PO), Nowoczesna (Modern), the Committee for the Defense of Democracy (KOD) vehemently defended Wa??sa when the files became public. After all, he only anticipated their own collaboration with the Stalinists in implementing capitalist restoration.

The head of PiS and former Wa??sa adviser, Jaros??aw Kaczy??ski, used the files against Wa??sa strictly in the framework of PiS' recent political maneuvers aiming at further "decommunization" of the state apparatus to

save "good capitalism" from "bad, Stalinist influenced capitalism".

Earlier however, together with his late brother Lech, he had no problems grooming Wa??sa for the post of president in 1990, fighting all allegations against him (Kaczy??ski, in a verbal act of retribution, reportedly used his knowledge about Wa??sa's past to threaten Wa??sa with the prosecutor already in November 1991, when he realized he would not be appointed prime minister in the newly-formed government. [J. Kuro?, *Ib .*]). For all these political opportunists, cooperation with the highly-placed Stalinist agent guaranteed their own futures.

The vast majority of the petty bourgeois and academic advisers of the Solidarity trade union aspired to integrate Poland into the world and European capitalist economy and supported "shock therapy", austerity measures and Poland's accession to NATO and the EU. This, and not the defense of the working class, was the content of their call for "freedom" and "democracy."

Notwithstanding the imposition of martial law in 1981 and the imprisonment of many Solidarity leaders, this was also the perspective of the ruling Stalinist bureaucracy. Amid mounting economic crisis and the disintegration of the Stalinist regimes in the Soviet Union and all over Eastern Europe, they saw the restoration of capitalism and their own transformation into capitalist owners as the only chance to preserve their privileged positions.

This was the basis for the Round Table talks and the peaceful transition of power to members of Solidarity, culminating in the election of Lech Wa??sa as president in 1990.

During the 1990s, under rapidly changing governments, the heirs of Solidarity and former Stalinists cashed in on the new capitalist economy, privatizing and destroying most of the very factories from which Solidarity had emerged. The restoration of capitalism in Poland provided these layers with access to privileged positions and high-paying jobs in international corporations, state institutions and academia.

Twenty-six years after capitalist restoration, only a small bourgeois layer and sections of the upper middle class have profited from the integration into the European Union and privatization. Poverty is widespread, and wages are abysmally low.

Crimes connected with the Stalinist takeover of the Solidarity's leadership, conspiracies of the imperialist secret service (CIA, BND), as well as the filthy role of the Catholic Church and the Pabloites around the Mandel group need to be further examined in more detail to provide the truthful historical account of the events leading to the defeat of the biggest workers' movements in post-war Europe. Necessary lessons of these betrayals need to be drawn by the Polish and international working class. Such betrayals are only possible when spontaneous workers' actions lack the necessary leadership armed with the revolutionary perspective and the international program of the socialist Trotskyist party.

For further information about the Solidarity movement, please see "Solidarity in Poland 1980-1981," by Wolfgang Weber.



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