ABSTRACT

CHAMPIONING LABOR: LABOR DIPLOMACY, THE AFL-CIO, AND POLISH SOLIDARITY

by Danialle Mae Stebbins

This thesis explores the relationship between the AFL-CIO and the Polish Solidarity movement throughout the 1980s. It explores the evolving international policy of the AFL-CIO as it began to support Solidarity through financial and material aid, domestic and international campaigns, and personal friendships between Solidarity and American labor leaders. The discussion begins with Solidarity's founding in August 1980 and the immediate ways the AFL-CIO supported its fledgling period through a heavy public campaign that included the creation of the Polish Workers Aid Fund. The Federation then battled the Carter Administration over the United States role in supporting Solidarity, and would continue to battle the Reagan Administration as well. The battle to support Solidarity took a critical turn when martial law was declared in Poland in 1981, and Solidarity was outlawed. By continuing to conduct a public pressure campaign, smuggling operations into Poland to give aid to Underground Solidarity, and working with the international labor community, the AFL-CIO put itself in the forefront of Solidarity's struggle against communism. That is why this thesis argues that non-state actors like the AFL-CIO played a pivotal role in causing the collapse of the Polish Communist regime, and subsequently the Iron Curtain, in 1989.

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Dedications

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Introduction: Labor Diplomacy and the Attempt to Reach Every Corner of the World

On November 15, 1989, Lech Walesa became the first foreign private citizen to address a joint session of the United States Congress.[1] As the perceived "voice of Eastern Europe revolutions," Walesa was met with thunderous applause from members of Congress. For almost a decade, he had been the leader of Poland's revolutionary trade union, *Solidarność* (Solidarity). The union, born on the docks of Gdansk in 1980, had grown and flourished more than anyone thought possible despite being illegal between 1981-1989 and having to work underground. By the time he spoke to Congress, Walesa was not only a Noble Peace Prize winner, but the face of the first democratically elected government in Eastern Europe since the end of World War II.[2] In his speech, he proclaimed:

> I'm expressing words of gratitude to the American people. It is they who supported us in the difficult days of martial law and persecution. It is they who sent us aid, they protested against violence. Today, when I am able to freely address the whole world from this elevated spot, I would like to thank them with special warmth. It is thanks to them that the word "Solidarity" soared across borders and reached every corner of the world. Thanks to them, the people of Solidarity were never alone.[3]

Walesa's speech captured the entire world's attention as Eastern Europe rapidly democratized in 1989; for many, it seemed unimaginable. For those like Lane Kirkland, President of the American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organization (AFL-CIO), democracy in Eastern Europe was like a long-awaited friend. Throughout Solidarity's ten-year struggle, Kirkland and the members of the AFL-CIO never gave up hope for a democratic Poland. It is, in part, because of their effort that Solidarity survived its ten-year war to win Polish freedom.

The argument of this thesis is not that Solidarity would have failed without American labor's support, but that Solidarity represented a departure from the AFL-CIO's previous foreign policy decisions. By exploring the extent and methodology of aid given by the AFL-CIO to

[1] Nelson Mandela would become the second approximately eight months later. To this day, Mandela and Walesa remain the only two men to have addressed a Joint Session of Congress as private foreign citizens.
[2] According to Gale Stokes in *The Walls Came Tumbling Down: Collapse and Rebirth in Eastern Europe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), when Solidarity won elections in June of 1989, they elected Walesa's right-hand man, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, as prime minister. Although Walesa had been the one to negotiate with the communist regime, he believed Mazowiecki would serve Poland better.
[3] Gregory F. Domber, *Empowering Revolution: America, Poland, and the End of the Cold War*, (Chapel Hill, NC: the University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 2.

Solidarity, this thesis will determine the motivation and reasoning behind the AFL-CIO's foreign policy change. It will answer the following questions: was the effort to provide aide to Poland strictly from top Federation officials like Kirkland, or did it trickle down to everyday workers in America? How, and why did the AFL-CIO react differently to the Polish crisis than it had for previous foreign policy decisions?

To begin to answer these questions and understand the dynamic of the Federation, it is crucial to quickly examine the union's previous foreign policy decisions regarding communism and international labor. In a bizarre and almost inexplicable turn of events in the late nineteenth century, the AFL became the most powerful union in American history. Within twenty years of its founding in 1886 under Samuel Gompers, the AFL survived the government's targeted attacks against unions by building a "closed structure of largely white, male, skilled craftsmen," avoiding extensive political involvement with social reformers of the Era, and simply championing for better representation within the existing system.[4] These restrictions, especially compared to its competitors like the Knights of Labor, enabled it to survive into the Progressive Era and beyond. By 1921, the union had over four million members, and it added a further two million within the next decade.[5]

The AFL had always been staunchly anti-Marxist. Gompers, a British immigrant and firm anti-Marxist, brought the AFL into the government's persecution of anarchists and Marxists. He and the AFL had no desire to restructure society, government, or even the capitalist market. He viewed any such attempts as a waste of time, if not outright treason.[6] That is not to say that Gompers did not fight for change. The AFL wanted the capitalist system to be more inclusive of laborers, and they were willing to do almost anything to improve working conditions. Gompers believed the ultimate method of change was strikes, despite their lackluster success record in the early twentieth century. Gompers believed that strikes were the backbone of democracy, famously saying, "show me the country that has no strikes and I'll show you the country in which there is no liberty."[7] Gompers's impact and rhetoric carried the AFL long past his death in 1924, with anti-Marxism and the importance of strikes forming the AFL's foundational principles.

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[4] John HM. Laslett, "Establishing a Philosophy for American Labor," In *Men, Women and Issues in American History*, Vol 2, edited by Howard H. Quint and Milton Cantor, (Homewood, IL**:** Dorsey Press, Inc., 1975), 77.
[5] Laslett, "Establishing a Philosophy for American Labor," 79.
[6] Laslett, "Establishing a Philosophy for American Labor," 89-93.
[7] Samuel Gompers, John McBride, William Green, *The American Federationist*, Vol 8., 1901, 171.

The AFL's dominance came under fire in the 1930s by recruits who felt out of place within the AFL. These workers, mostly from industrial sectors, split from the AFL to form the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) in 1936. From the onset, the CIO enjoyed success in strikes, legal battles, and new legislation during the Great Depression.[8] However, the CIO's success was in no small part due to their affiliation with a dangerous ally: The Communist Party of the United States (CPUSA). From their creation, the CIO had used Communist Party members to organize and lead unions like the United Electrical Workers. By 1945, a quarter of the CIO's total membership was being organized or directed by the Communist Party, including the million-member United Auto Workers.[9,10] Until 1948, the pro-Communist and anti-Communist factions of the CIO held to a truce of sorts. Affiliation had not mattered, but as the hostilities towards the Soviet Union grew after 1945, the CIO had only two options: purge the CIO of all communist sympathizers or face extinction.

In 1949, after the success of the Berlin Airlift, the CIO expelled eleven affiliates with around one million members on the grounds that the Communist Party dominated them. The purge, a representation of a larger movement happening across the globe, was a symbol of the times to come. The CIO argued that it had no choice as the United States, and the world as a whole, began to politicize unions as mechanisms for foreign policy. Gone were the days of limited political involvement and ignorance of social and global policy. As the world moved to include unions in fundamental human rights, unions had to take up the responsibility and choose a side. The CIO chose pro-West, and thus anti-Marxist and anti-Soviet.[11]

The CIO's purging of communism became a source of pride for the union, as they actively spoke of the "great success" at conventions. What was once a tolerant and open atmosphere became hawkish and paranoid. The CIO supported the Korean War and containment and considered foreign policy central to their fight for workers' benefits.[12] Their actions were not enough to save the once-promising union, and by 1956 the CIO merged back into the AFL, thus

[8] Robert H. Zieger, *The CIO: 1935-1955*, (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 22-40.
[9] Most of what historians hypothesize about the CIO's ties to the Communist Party is due to the opening up of the Soviet Archives after 1991. The CPUSA rarely published a membership list, and most laborers did not disclose their allegiance by 1945. The CPUSA, however, did not hide this information from the Communist International. As is the case, the depth of these ties is still under review and may remain unknown.
[10] Harvey Klehr and John E. Haynes, "Communists and the CIO: From the Soviet Archives," *Labor History*, vol. 35, no 3, Summer (1994), 224.
[11] Robert H. Zieger, *The CIO: 1935-1955*, 253.
[12] Robert H. Zieger, *The CIO: 1935-1955*, 326-329.

creating one of the most powerful unions in the world: The American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations, or merely the AFL-CIO.

The newly formed AFL-CIO became a product of its ancestors. It valued strikes as the ultimate weapon, and believed in confronting the government over workers' conditions. It allied itself with those conducting covert operations and had a direct role in many CIA plots. The AFL-CIO carried on the staunch anti-Marxist attitudes of its predecessors, and due to the political environment of its birth, their stance became more extreme. When the unions merged in the mid-fifties the AFL-CIO inherited a profound anticommunism outlook rooted in McCarthyism and the Red Scare.[13] As the Cold War raged on, the AFL-CIO repeatedly found themselves alone in the world of international labor which they believed had Marxist leanings. This isolation was mostly of their own making as under then-President George Meany the AFL-CIO gradually left international unions and organizations.

As the leader of the AFL-CIO from 1956-1979, George Meany was responsible for much of the AFL-CIO's success during the Cold War. Yet, he was also responsible for many of its failures. The AFL-CIO supported the Vietnam War, opposed détente, and was hostile to *Ostpolitik* and other European overtures toward the Soviet Union. The hostility towards détente was especially problematic for the AFL-CIO as most European unions supported and encouraged détente.[14] On the homefront, Meany's leadership was controversial. Meany ran the AFL-CIO with strict guidelines. He allowed affiliates autonomy, but the Executive Council was the only one allowed to make legislative and policy decisions—with or without affiliate input. Membership fluctuated, more often than not decreased, due to the changing American economy that now included a white-collar working class. Corporations continuously attacked unions, costing the AFL-CIO millions. Lastly, Meany refused to consider any effort to reach out to African-Americans or women who were entering the workforce, strides they were making as part because of the Civil Rights Movement.[15] Meany, despite living in a very different world, seemed to be continuing the trend set out by Samuel Gompers. The AFL-CIO consequently continued its path towards isolation both at home and abroad.

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[13] Andrew Battista, "Unions and Cold War Foreign Policy in the 1980s: The National Labor Committee, the AFL-CIO, and Central America," *Diplomatic History,* vol 26, no. 3 (2002), 442-443.
[14] Andrew Battista, "Unions and Cold War Foreign Policy in the 1980s," 444.
[15] Timothy J. Minchin, *Labor Under Fire: A History of the AFL-CIO since 1979*, (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2017), 20-21.

By 1975 the United States found itself virtually alone at the annual International Labor Organization (ILO) conference. The ILO, created at the Paris Peace Conference following World War I, was chaired by the AFL President Samuel Gompers. In the beginning, the ILO only represented nine countries: Belgium, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, France, Italy, Japan, Poland, the United Kingdom, and the United States.[16] By 1975, the ILO, now under the United Nations, had reached over a hundred members.[17] The 1975 annual conference, however, was anything but peaceful. It took place in the backdrop of the CIA-assisted overthrow of Chile's Salvador Allende, the Yom Kippur War in the Middle East, and the declaration of an oil embargo by the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). International relations were already tense when the UN General Assembly announced a new set of reforms geared towards helping newly decolonized countries, a move perceived to be at the expense of Western developed countries. At the ILO conference, the ILO adopted legislation condemning Israel, while legislation condemning the Soviet Union failed to reach a vote. The United States irritated over the admission of the Soviet Union, divisions over North-South relations, and believing the ILO no longer suited the needs of Western unions, decided to leave the ILO shortly later.[18]

At the time, the AFL-CIO agreed with the White House decision. They were enraged at not only Soviet admission into the ILO, but ILO prevention from investigating violations of fundamental workers' rights in the Soviet Bloc. The AFL-CIO viewed ILO membership as a reward for countries that protected workers and labor autonomy and thus were disappointed with what they saw as hypocrisy.[19] However, many affiliates of the AFL-CIO were not eager to leave. The United Auto Workers (UAW), which had left the AFL-CIO in 1968, warned it would merely isolate the United States and weaken its allies' position in the ILO. The Amalgamated Meat Cutters and Butcher Workmen and the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers both joined the UAW in condemning the move to leave.[20]

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[16] "History of the ILO," *International Labor Organization*, https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/history/lang--en/index.htm. Accessed on December 3, 2019.

[17] Today the ILO has 187 member states, with the exceptions of Andorra, Bhutan, Liechtenstein, Micronesia, Monaco, Nauru, and North Korea.

[18] Richard A. Melanson, "Human Rights and the American Withdrawal from the ILO," *Universal Human Rights (1979)*, 46-54.

[19] Richard A. Melanson, "Human Rights and the American Withdrawal from the ILO," 49.

[20] Paul E. Masters, "The International Labor Organization: America's Withdrawal and Reentry," *International Social Science Review*, vol. 71, no. 3/4 (1996), 21.

In 1979, after a decade of controversial foreign policy decisions, Lane Kirkland stepped into the fire as the newly elected head of the AFL-CIO. While remaining anti-Marxist, Kirkland was more thoughtful than his predecessor. He was looking for an opportunity to prove that the AFL-CIO was no longer going to wage coups, promote war, or assist the CIA, but instead remain anti-communist through assistance to those struggling against communism. Kirkland was interested in a "soft" approach to labor diplomacy, one that focused on financial aid and public support of workers of the world who were not part of Communist unions. He was especially interested in assisting workers who struggled against authoritarian control. He found an opportunity to change the AFL-CIO's policies and image on August 30, 1980, in Gdansk, Poland.

The term "labor diplomacy" originates from the State Department in the latter half of the twentieth century to refer to the work performed by labor officers, specifically regarding the "advocacy and promotion of core labor standards within the context of US human rights and international trade policy."[21] These core labor standards, under the ILO, are freedom of association, the right of collective bargaining, and the elimination of forced labor, child labor, and discrimination in employment. The scholarship around labor diplomacy began to grow during the Vietnam War. Its importance in academia reached a peak in the 1970s before enjoying a rebirth around the turn of the century.

Scholars of AFL-CIO history have been plagued with agendas and biases. According to Timothy J. Minchin, who has written one of the most recent works regarding the AFL-CIO, most scholars of the AFL-CIO's foreign labor policy have concluded that the AFL-CIO was merely a tool at the United States government's disposal.[22] Some, like Kim Scipes, pointed to the Latin American coups as an example of the AFL-CIO's "imperialist" interests and "reactionary" policy.[23] Ronald Radosh, in his work *American Labor and United States Foreign Policy*, written during the Vietnam War, argued that American labor had always been nothing short of "corporate unionism," and it failed to offer "socialist alternatives to American workers."[24] As Timothy Minchin argued, scholars like Scipes and Radosh are representative of the almost

[21] Nicholas A. Stigliani, "Labor Diplomacy: A Revitalized Aspect of US Foreign Policy in the Era of Globalization," *International Studies Perspectives* (2000), 177.
[22] Timothy J. Minchin, *Labor Under Fire*, 5.
[23] See Kim Scipes, *The AFL-CIO's Secret War Against Developing Country Workers: Solidarity or Sabotage?*, (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2010).
[24] See Ronald Radosh, *American Labor and United States Foreign Policy*, (New York: Random House, 1969).

exclusively critical scholarship of AFL-CIO foreign policy. One reason for this is that more often than not AFL-CIO scholarship was written by leftist scholars who claimed the AFL-CIO was simply a "business.[25]

Another and fairer reason AFL-CIO scholarship is almost exclusively critical is due to the policies carried out by the AFL-CIO regarding Latin America. The charge that the AFL-CIO was performing coups left and right in cahoots with the CIA in Latin America is mainly correct, but it should not lead scholars to assume that it was the *only* policy of the AFL-CIO. This assumption, carried out in almost all scholarship on the Federation, ignores cases in Eastern Europe, the fight against Apartheid South Africa, and operations for labor diplomacy in Africa.[26] While some of these events had not happened during labor historiographies peak in the 1970s, even scholars in the 1990s and 2000s, like Beth Sims, completely ignore these cases. Sims offers a mere sentence on the AFL-CIO's Polish operation in the 1980s, simply saying, "[their] actions will likely prove short-sighted."[27]

According to political scientist Andrew Battista, the AFL-CIO did work with the CIA in Latin America, but their anti-Marxism paranoia was in no way unique or exclusive. Western European unions also supported the Cold War foreign policies of their respective states, but their policies may not have been as extreme. In the United States, scholars often ignore the fact that the AFL-CIO was not the sole voice of unionism either. Many unions, including affiliates of the AFL-CIO, dissented from the Vietnam War and the Latin American policies. Due to its Central American policies, sharp debate and division marred the AFL-CIO's 1985 convention. There was a large faction consisting of twenty-three unions from within the AFL-CIO, including some of the largest affiliates, that argued against Central American involvement.[28]

Furthermore, scholarship on the AFL-CIO focuses almost exclusively on the George Meany years. Upon merging to become the AFL-CIO, affiliates numbered one-hundred and forty and membership from American labor fifteen million. The Federation's net worth in 1956 was $4.7 million or about $44 million today.[29] This allowed for activities across the globe, and thus

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[25]." Timothy J. Minchin, *Labor Under Fire*, 5-7.
[26] One reason work on labor diplomacy addressing cases throughout the Cold War is *American Labor's Global Ambassadors: The International History of the AFL-CIO During the Cold War*, ed. by Robert Anthony Waters, Jr. and Geert Van Goethem (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).
[27] Beth Sims, *Workers of the World Undermined: American Labor's Role in US Foreign Policy*, (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1992), 8.
[28] Andrew Battista, "Unions and Cold War Foreign Policy in the 1980s," 419-423.
[29] Timothy J. Minchin, *Labor Under Fire*, 15-19.

there was, and still is, a significant gap in scholarship on the Kirkland Era and beyond. Timothy Minchin's 2017 work, *Labor Under Fire*, aimed to correct this bias by approaching the AFL-CIO with a more balanced stance. *Labor Under Fire* was the first general history to focus on the post-Meany years. However, it focused the majority of its attention on the AFL-CIO's domestic impact rather than its foreign policy.

Scholars have not focused on the connection between the AFL-CIO and Polish Solidarity. Historians tend to focus on official United States policies carried out by Presidents Carter, Reagan, and Bush regarding Poland. However, there are some exceptions in the historiography. Arch Puddington's biography on Lane Kirkland is the first discussion of the tie between the AFL-CIO and Poland. Puddington dedicates an entire chapter on Kirkland's involvement with the Polish crisis. Although the details of his involvement with Solidarity are the same ones later seen in Domber and Chenoweth's works, Puddington's biography serves as a definitive work on this topic. One of the most intriguing features of *Lane Kirkland: Champion of American Labor* is the inclusion of compelling anecdotes about Kirkland's personal feelings and dedication to the people of Solidarity such as his emotions upon first visiting Poland after the 1989 election.

The next attempt to establish this tie was Eric Chenoweth's 2011 conference paper entitled "AFL-CIO Support for Solidarity: Moral, Political, Financial." Chenoweth, a former member of the Committee to Support Solidarity, uses both personal memories and archival material from the Hoover Institute and George Meany Memorial Archives to shed light on how deep the support for Solidarity went.[30] His argument echoes Walesa's words as he agrees that without the AFL-CIO, Lane Kirkland, or other international trade unions, Solidarity would have never survived to become victorious in the 1989 elections. However, Chenoweth's exposé is short, and thus detail was surface level at best. His work on how the AFL-CIO operated with Ronald Reagan, Jimmy Carter, and international trade unions is cursory. Curiously, he also barely addresses the Committee to Support Solidarity, even though he was a founding member.

Gregory Domber's 2014 book, *Empowering Revolution: America, Poland, and the End of the Cold War,* is the most complete work on the relationship between the AFL-CIO and Solidarity. However, Domber's book was primarily concerned with the creation of the National

[30] The Committee to Support Solidarity was a group of American and Polish citizens who used their connections to support Solidarity during the underground period between 1981-1989. Poles who had were exiled due to martial law, and some from the 1968 persecutions, were the main members of the Committee. The Committee remained very small, but was important in the AFL-CIO's smuggling operations discussed in Chapter 2.

Endowment of Democracy in 1984 and its ties to the AFL-CIO, rather than the union's support during the Polish crisis and after martial law was declared in 1981.[31] Domber argues that Carter was much more calculating and informed about the Polish crisis than others have claimed, as the CIA under his administration had informants at the highest level of Polish politics that revealed when a possible Soviet invasion might happen. In terms of Reagan, Domber argues that Secretary of Defense Casper Weinberger wanted the United States to do nothing about the Polish Crisis, while others in the Reagan administration wanted to utilize limited measures like denying Polish membership into the International Monetary Fund until the Polish government released Walesa and other Solidarity members. However, even this last measure could not be agreed upon for some time as administration members like Secretary of Treasury Don Regan did not believe it would work.

Another important work is Idesbald Goddeeris's anthology *Solidarity with Solidarity: Western European Trade Unions and the Polish Crisis, 1980-1982.* The book argues that Western trade unions gave varying degrees of support to Solidarity that helped keep its momentum going. The support ranges from supplies like ink from Denmark, to monetary support over one-hundred-million dollars at the time from trade unions in the Federal Republic of Germany. Each chapter is based on original archival sources from Sweden, Austria, France, Italy, Germany, and others that show that support for Solidarity was a global effort.

Solidarity with Solidarity leaves out the AFL-CIO, although it does include a chapter written by Kim Christiaens on the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU). This thesis will argue that part of the AFL-CIO's "new" policy meant working with many international trade unions they had previously isolated themselves from. *Solidarity with Solidarity* will help show how the campaign allowed the Federation to re-enter the international labor arena, and how that effort allowed them to better support Solidarity.

The first chapter will examine how the AFL-CIO launched and maintained a campaign to support Solidarity through August 1980-December 1981. By examining this period before martial law, this chapter will explain how the AFL-CIO helped Solidarity find and strengthen its footing in the international labor union community. The chapter will utilize archival material

[31] The National Endowment for Democracy was a non-profit Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) which was created by Ronald Reagan and Congress in 1983. It is funded by Congress and private donors, and distributes grants to private NGO's promoting democracy abroad. Some people, including members of Congress, would use NED to funnel money to give to Solidarity.

from the George Meany Labor Archive located at the University of Maryland, College Park. Included in this archival material are statements by the AFL-CIO Executive Council, publications by the AFL-CIO, transcripts, and union pamphlets. In support of the campaign, this chapter will also look at the role of affiliates like Frontlash, the collegiate arm of the AFL-CIO, which ran the campaign, and the International Longshoremen, who started a boycott of Polish goods in order to draw attention to Solidarity. It will examine how the AFL-CIO began to enter back into the international labor community by working with international labor organizations to assist Solidarity. Finally, this chapter will also discuss the foreign policy of the AFL-CIO as it contested with the Carter and Reagan administration. The thesis will draw on archive material from the George Meany Archive, as well as secondary literature, and archival content from the Jimmy Carter Presidential Library in Atlanta, Georgia.

The second chapter begins with the implementation of martial law in Poland on December 13, 1981. It unravels the response of the AFL-CIO and Kirkland as new campaign measures like Solidarity Day, public demonstrations, press and smuggling operations, and hardline statements were introduced. It also follows the AFL-CIO fight with President Reagan regarding martial law response and Polish sanctions and debt relief. This chapter utilizes AFL-CIO publications and public newspapers such as *The New York Times*. It will close with the AFL-CIO's support of the Polish democratic election in June 1989.

This thesis does not inflate the role of the AFL-CIO in regards to the Polish Crisis and subsequent 1989 revolution. The credit for the 1989 revolution in Poland should go to Solidarity as a powerful force that rose with support from international unions like the AFL-CIO. The point of this thesis to give an honest review of the AFL-CIO foreign policy in the 1980s under Kirkland. Poland is merely one example of the changing policies of the AFL-CIO, and the changing attitudes of labor as a whole.

Additionally, this project will hopefully serve to showcase the unofficial policies that helped Solidarity during the 1980s. Cold War scholarship has mostly examined how official policies like those of Mikhail Gorbachev, Pope John Paul II, and President Ronald Reagan caused the fall of the Iron Curtain. However, there has been limited investment in understanding how unofficial actors like those in trade unions contributed to the fall. This project will demonstrate the importance of informal non-state actors in the Cold War in a way that most scholars have not studied. It is the preliminary hypothesis that the actions taken by these

characters are critical to our understanding of the democratization of Poland, and the subsequent fall of the Iron Curtain.

Chapter One: "Their Cause is Ours"

Poland underwent its fifth major post-World War II uprising in the fall of 1980. In time, it would prove to be very different than its predecessors. Unlike 1956, it did not spring from ultra-nationalism, nor was it led by students like in 1968. It did not take an anti-Semitic tone as in 1970, nor would it lead to a violent crackdown like in 1976. Instead, the central figures in the 1980 uprising contained and organized themselves into a well-functioning movement with clear leadership and distinct goals. The movement, calling on lessons from its predecessors, avoided overt nationalism or the condemnation of the Soviet Union, and did not speak about independence from communist rule. Instead, the 1980 movement centered around economic reform, working conditions, and the creation of an independent trade union: Solidarity.

In 1979, for the first time since World War II, the Polish economy shrank. Income growth had dropped, the economy had a zero-growth rate, and foreign debt reached a high of $18 billion by 1980.[32] The regime saw little option but to raise prices on everyday goods.[33] Price increases were not an uncommon policy of the communist regime. Still, the Polish leader Edward Gierek was hesitant to use them as the last time, in 1976, when price hikes had caused extreme unrest throughout Poland. Still, seeing little other option, Gierek raised the price of meat, bread, butter, and more on July 1, 1980. Strikes immediately overtook the nation, and Gierek hatched a new plan to stop them. Instead of violence, arrests, and other previous methods, Gierek began to appease the workers using salary advances. However, as soon as one strike ended, another began, and this continued throughout the month until Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev called Gierek to Crimea for two weeks on July 31.[34]

Gierek's visit to Crimea was part of the annual meetings Brezhnev hosted with every Eastern European leader. Hungarian leader Janos Kadar and Czechoslovakia's Gustav Husak also met individually with Brezhnev in early August to discuss the Warsaw Pact's foreign policy.[35] For Gierek, however, the discussion had to revolve around Poland's continued economic and social unrest. The details of the conversation are unknown, but Gierek had to go back to Poland early as another crisis unfolded. On August 18, 1980, Anna Walentynowicz, a

[32] Later estimates during the 1980s put the Polish debt anywhere from 12-18 billion dollars.
[33]. For more information on 1979-1982 economic conditions, see Jan Drewnowski's *The Polish Disease: Crisis in the East European Economy*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982).
[34] Andrzej Paczkowski and Malcolm Byrne, *From Solidarity to Martial Law*, (New York City: Central European University Press, 2007), xxix.
[35] Andrzej Paczkowski and Malcolm Byrne, *From Solidarity to Martial Law*, xxix.

worker at the Gdańsk shipyards was fired and brought up on false charges in connection with her effort to establish a memorial for the victims of the 1970 strikes. Walentynowicz, just weeks shy of retirement, was beloved by her fellow Gdańsk shipyard workers, and her firing caused massive strikes to erupt in Gdańsk.[36] On the first day of the strikes, a leader at the Lenin shipyard emerged in thirty-six-year-old Lech Walesa. His speeches during the protests vaulted him into the de facto leader of the Solidarity union, which he held until 1988.[37] Walesa, seeing the bigger picture, created the Inter-Factory Strike Committee (MKS). MKS was one of the first of its type in the Soviet bloc, and it quickly gained power and popularity. MKS was composed of two representatives from each striking enterprise in Gdańsk and nearby cities.[38] As its popularity and numbers grow, MKS presented the Polish regime with a list of twenty-one demands. The Twenty-One Demands challenged the fundamental nature of communism in Poland. Hung up on boards at the entrance of the Lenin Shipyard, the demands included the right to create free and independent trade unions; freedom of speech and assembly; public discussion on economic reform; increase pay adjusted for inflation and economic conditions; and work-free Saturdays.[39]

In the United States, one man watched with piqued interest. As President of the AFL-CIO from 1979-1995, Lane Kirkland was an avid believer in the power of the workers. Throughout the Cold War, he argued that "ordinary working people, and not diplomats, would bring about communism's demise."[40] Like his predecessor, George Meany, Kirkland was staunchly anti-communist. However, he was much more hesitant with the use of force supported by Meany. He did not view intelligence, coups, wars, or even threats as a valid way to champion labor rights.[41] Instead, Kirkland relied on using more of a "soft power" approach.[42] When the shipyards first

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[36] "Gdańsk Just Had to Explode," *The Globe and Mail*, August 19, 1980.

[37] In the fall of 1988, Walesa became the leader of the Solidarity Citizens Committee. Different inceptions of Solidarity continued into the 1990s, with Walesa becoming Poland's President in 1990. Ergo, the date of Walesa seizing leadership is vague.

[38] Tomasz Kozłowski, "The Birth of Solidarity: Dynamics of a Social Movement," *InterMarium* 14 (2011): 2-3.

[39] Douglas J. MacEachin, *US Intelligence and the Polish Crisis: 1980-1981*, (Washington, DC: Center for the Study of Intelligence, 2000), 5.

[40] Gregory F. Domber, "The AFL-CIO, The Reagan Administration and Solidarność," *The Polish Review*, vol. LII, no. 3 (2007), 278.

[41] That is not to say Kirkland never supported the use of coups or force in his tenure. As the President of the AFL-CIO, he did not support the AFL-CIO getting involved in coups in Latin America. Kirkland, as a private citizen, did serve and sit in on meetings where coups were planned. He did support the use of force against the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, and supported the use of force and covert operations in other places like El Salvador. These cases, however, have been extensively studied as "proof" of AFL-CIO "imperialism."

[42] The term "soft power" was coined by Joseph S. Nye Jr in the 1980s to mean any power carried out not based on force or coercion. Examples may include culture, values, and foreign policy. For information on "soft power," see Joseph S. Nye Jr.'s *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004).

erupted, Kirkland believed things were going to be different from previous Polish strikes. He watched MKS with interest as he noted the way the strikes had spread like wildfire, engulfing every sector of Poland's economy within a few weeks. In different industries and cities, the strikers were occupying factories, mobilizing communities, selecting leaders and representatives, and putting forward demands. To Kirkland, the people were working like a democratically supported Western trade union. When the regime buckled under the pressure and gave in to all twenty-one demands issued by MKS, Kirkland knew he had a winner.[43] Encouraged by the success of MKS, his beliefs in the freedom of association, Cold War anti-communism, and his own conclusions about the power of trade union workers, Lane Kirkland did not merely send well wishes to Poland but put the AFL-CIO straight into the forefront of Solidarity's battle.

At the beginning of September 1980, the AFL-CIO's Executive Council (EC) issued a brief statement on the strikes in Poland. In it, they argued that the developments in Poland were fundamental for "human rights, free trade unionism, and democracy in the Communist world." They praised the versatility of the workers who represented virtually every sector of the Polish economy from shipyards to transportation to bankers. The EC also commended the courage of the strikers despite historical trends of "imprisonment, dismissal from their jobs, and…exile."[44]

The AFL-CIO also reiterated that communism's promise of a workers' paradise was a myth. In the EC Statement, they pointed out:

> The Polish workers have demonstrated, once again, the myth that genuine workers' rights can exist in societies where trade unions are controlled by an all-powerful government and political party. Their valiant actions also stand as a powerful refutation of the official Communist view that human rights and democratic freedom are of concern only to a small group of intellectuals, and are of no concern to working people. Indeed, what we see in Poland is a whole people rising up to demand basic democratic liberties from an illegitimate leadership imposed on them from the outside.[45]

In the last paragraph of the September statement, the AFL-CIO made clear its intentions as they called upon international free trade unions "to declare solidarity with their Polish brothers and sisters." As unionists and members of the democratic world, it is the duty of international

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[43] Arch Puddington, "Surviving the Underground: How American Unions Helped Solidarity Win," https://www.aft.org/periodical/american-educator/summer-2005/surviving-underground. Accessed March 22, 2020.
[44] Statements Adopted by the AFL-CIO Executive Council. Box 5, Folder 5/15: Poland Research. Alan Kistler Papers- 1954-2000. American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations Records, George Meany Archive, Special Collections, University of Maryland, College Park.
[45] Statements Adopted by the AFL-CIO Executive Council.

trade unions to "sustain and nourish those who now take up the struggle for freedom."[46] This international and human rights stance became a fundamental staple of the AFL-CIO under Kirkland as they worked with labor unions around the world on perceived labor violations in Nicaragua, South Africa, and Poland. Using these actions, the AFL-CIO routinely coordinated monetary and material assistance for struggling unions like Solidarity. By the end of the 1980s, the world had donated millions to Solidarity, and the AFL-CIO had an important role in that assistance.

The EC Statement issued was a prelude to AFL-CIO actions as merely days later, the union released a press notice that the Board authorized the AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer to create the Polish Workers Aid Fund with an initial contribution of $25,000 from the AFL-CIO.[47] The press release called for support to be given via the Aid Fund and Treasure-Secretary by members and affiliate unions within the AFL-CIO.[48] The fund would eventually get a Task Force, which would be led for two years by the AFL-CIO's college affiliate—Frontlash.

The AFL-CIO left the most organized effort to raise money for the Polish Workers Aid Fund in the hands of the college affiliate—Frontlash. Composed of clubs in universities across the nation, Frontlash led the way in raising money for Solidarity through the use of the Frontlash Polish Workers Task Force (PWTF), which used campaigns and merchandise to raise over thousands for Solidarity. The Polish Workers Task Force was based out of New York City and composed of groups from over one-hundred campuses across the United States. It brought exiled Poles as speakers to discuss Solidarity and the Polish crisis, published an independent newspaper that tracked PWTF updates, and sold merchandise like t-shirts, buttons, and bumper stickers. [49] The amount raised within the first few months of the AFL-CIO push to support Poland through the sale of Solidarity merchandise was $14,000.[50]

Over the next six months, donations from far and wide came into the Aid Fund, and by March 2, 1981, it reached over $200,000 in monetary donations.[51] Donors included the Illinois

[46] Statements Adopted by the AFL-CIO Executive Council.
[47] Adjusted for inflation, this amount would be around $70, 560 as of October 2019.
[48] Free Trade Union News, September 1980. Box 5, Folder 5/15: Poland Research. Alan Kistler Papers- 1954-2000. American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations Records, George Meany Archive, Special Collections, University of Maryland, College Park.
[49] Frontlash National Office Report, 1981. Box 1, Folder: 34: BOD Meeting January to November, 1983. Frontlash Papers. American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations Records, George Meany Archive, Special Collections, University of Maryland, College Park.
[50] Within the first six months of PWTF merchandise sales, Frontlash raised around $40, 000 in today's rate.
[51] Adjusted for inflation, this amount would be around $565,000 as of October 2019.

State Department of Labor, which gave over two-thousand they collected at the Iron Workers Christmas Party; retired trade unionists who used clip-out coupons to send thousands of dollars; $5,000 from Seafarers; $500 from Pipeliners' Association in Tulsa, OK; $3,500 from the Beef Boners and Sausage Makers Union in Chicago; and more. Individual Americans also gave money to the Workers Aid Fund as the AFL-CIO thanked many citizens who had sent cash or checks to the task force, and even those who walked into the AFL-CIO headquarters in Washington DC. In a small anecdote from the "Polish Workers Aid Fund Update," the AFL-CIO thanked a man who walked into the DC headquarters and said he wanted to help Polish workers. The man handed a hundred dollars to the clerk and quickly left without giving a name or any information.[52]

By the end of 1981, between $37,000-$48,000 was raised for Solidarity by Frontlash and the PWTF.[53] Half of this money went straight into the Aid Fund, while around twelve-thousand went to getting promotional materials. The breakdown of these promotional materials is not given, but one can surmise they were buttons, t-shirts, flags, posters, and other items used to advertise Solidarity across college campuses.[54]

In December 1981, days before martial law was declared, Frontlash's Board of Directors voted unanimously to make the PWTF independent, citing it had "sufficient income to cover operating costs and provide money to the AFL-CIO Polish Workers Aid Fund." Another reason for the separation was the desire for Frontlash to focus on the 1982 midterm elections.[55] Despite this separation, colleges across the United States continued to raise money and awareness for the Aid Fund, Solidarity, and the PWTF. At Penn State University, students held screenings of "Robotnicky 80," which was a documentary about MKS, the 21 Demands, and the Gdańsk Agreement.[56] In 1983's annual report, Frontlash reported that they had continued the sale of

[52] AFL-CIO Polish Workers Aid Fund Update, March 2, 1981. Box 1, Folder 34: BOD Meeting January to November 1983. Frontlash Papers. American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations Records, George Meany Archive, Special Collections, University of Maryland, College Park. Adjusted for inflation these amounts would be: 2,000=$5,644; 5,000= $14,000; 500= $1,400; 3,500=$10,000 as of October 2019.
[53] Discrepancies between amounts vary depending on the Frontlash annual report writers. Adjusted for inflation, this would now be about $105,000 as of December 2019.
[54] Frontlash Board of Directors Meeting, 12/1/1981. Box 1, Folder 35: BOD Meeting December. Frontlash Papers. American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations Records, George Meany Archive, Special Collections, University of Maryland, College Park.
[55] Frontlash Board of Directors Meeting, 12/1/1981.
[56] Frontlash National Office Report, 1982. Box 1, Folder 34: BOD Meeting January to November 1983. Frontlash Papers. American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations Records, George Meany Archive, Special Collections, University of Maryland, College Park.

merchandise, conducted film series on Solidarity and black unions in Apartheid South Africa, and held two significant events in Washington, DC. One of these events was an art exhibition titled "Art of Solidarity," while the other was large-scale demonstrations held on the anniversary of martial law.[57] Frontlash continued activities throughout the 1980s and launched important campaigns in 1989.

From the beginning, the AFL-CIO made sure to state that money was not physically going into Poland. Instead, the money utilized bought supplies and equipment such as electric and manual typewriters, duplicating machines, office appliances, and even a small bus-like vehicle used by Solidarity. Solidarity was divided into seventeen regions with over ten million members; the large scale of Solidarity led to problems with communication and transportation—issues the AFL-CIO hoped to help with supplies from monetary donations. This caution was a result of Kirkland's communication with Walesa. Walesa wished for only material supplies in order to avoid talk of Solidarity being Western financed, and giving evidence to the regime that Solidarity was a puppet of the United States. If Solidarity took direct cash, it would have been easier for the regime to justify eliminating it immediately. With equipment, however, Solidarity maintained independence as they would be utilizing the equipment, writing their own messages and pamphlets, and conducting their own policy. In reality, the Polish Communist Party still accused Solidarity of being financed by the United States numerous times throughout the 1980s. However, the only record of money given directly to Solidarity members is for the 1989 elections. With Solidarity's wishes and perspective in mind, the AFL-CIO took careful measures throughout the 1980s to ensure that cash rarely hit the hands of Solidarity members. Instead, only a small inner-circle of smuggling operatives were allowed to buy equipment to send to Solidarity.[58]

The operation continued to grow to the point that by November, the AFL-CIO raised another $150,000.[59] Once again, the AFL-CIO made sure to point out it was not giving cash, but supplies. A printing press was now in Solidarity's hands to help with their domestic campaign, and the supplies continued to flow.

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[56] Frontlash Board of Directors Meeting, 12/1/1981.
[57] Frontlash Annual Report, 1983. Box 2, Folder 29: Report and Reviews, 1983. Frontlash Papers. American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations Records, George Meany Archive, Special Collections, University of Maryland, College Park.
[58] AFL-CIO Polish Workers Aid Fund Update, March 2, 1981.
[59] Adjusted for inflation, the growth was $425,000 as of October 2019.

Shortly before the implementation of martial law, Lech Walesa sent a taped message to Lane Kirkland and the AFL-CIO. While the tape was never saved, Kirkland published a portion of the message a day before the imposition of martial law. Walesa thanked Kirkland and the AFL-CIO for giving him the George Meany International Human Rights Award and apologized for being unable to receive it in person. He then devoted most of the tape to personally thanking the AFL-CIO for aid. "I thank you once again for your aid, and I hope that I will have an opportunity of doing this personally…if fate has it that I can meet with you…I will look forward to that opportunity."[60]

Almost a full decade passed before Kirkland and Walesa met again, and in the meantime, the AFL-CIO needed help from abroad for maintaining financial and public support for Solidarity. By bringing in other international unions, the AFL-CIO believed they could put more pressure on the Polish regime. They also needed to find European connections that could begin smuggling in equipment that the AFL-CIO was purchasing for Solidarity. While this may sound simple, there was a severe hurdle in the way: American unions had left most international labor alliances.

By 1977, the AFL-CIO left the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, the ILO, and most other international trade unions. However, by 1981, all of AFL-CIO's concerns regarding the ILO had been realized and addressed. The ILO had adopted secret ballots to protect unions from government anger should the unions vote against their government's wishes. They also started criticizing the Soviet bloc for the first time when they censured Czechoslovakia in 1978 for illegally firing dissidents. The ILO was also launching investigations against the Soviet Union and Poland for alleged "violations of trade union rights." Finally, harmony within the Third World was disintegrating, and thus they no longer had full control of the ILO. Thus, with all American concerns addressed, and with the promise of executive positions, the United States rejoined the ILO in February 1980.[61]

The ILO thus became a tool in the AFL-CIO's arsenal for condemning the Polish regime. The AFL-CIO used its partners to keep the pressure on the Polish government through ILO investigations and legislation. In September 1980, the AFL-CIO directly called out the Polish

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[60] Walesa Sends Thanks for AFL-CIO Aid December 12, 1981. Box 45, Folder: Poland: Labor, 1981. Vertical Files. American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations Records, George Meany Archive, Special Collections, University of Maryland, College Park.

[61] Paul Masters, "The International Labor Organization: America's Withdrawal and Reentry," 22-24.

regime for violating ILO law #87 which concerns the freedom of association, which is the right to create and join free and independent trade unions. The Polish regime, by forbidding Solidarity's creation, was violating this law. The Polish regime, having agreed to the 21 Demands, removed roadblocks and allowed Solidarity to become a free and independent legal trade union.[62] Later, the AFL-CIO also campaigned for the removal of the Polish regime from the ILO.

In January 1982, the AFL-CIO took another step toward rejoining the international labor unions. As the need for help to funnel material into Poland grew, the AFL-CIO decided to rejoin the ICFTU. Partnering with the ICFTU and ILO allowed the AFL-CIO to call on the Europeans for help supporting Solidarity. The ICFTU had been championing Solidarity since the strikes first began in July 1980, and they had given around $25,000 by November 1980. As an international body, the ICFTU enjoyed more acceptance and tolerance from the Polish government. The ICFTU was not perceived to be dominated by any single government, and thus they were able to increase these efforts to aid Solidarity by getting assistance from the AFL-CIO, which gave another $50,000 to jumpstart the international campaign. By January 1982, the ICFTU became the primary mechanism for funneling aide into Poland, and the AFL-CIO became the primary donor.[63]

One of Solidarity and the AFL-CIO's main allies was the British Trade Union Congress (TUC). Due to the conditions of détente, many European unions, including the TUC, were eager to work with Eastern European unions in the 1970s.[64] Members of the TUC, like the Iron and Steel Confederation, had been able to travel into Poland as late as July 1980, where they reported with rose-colored glasses how excellent the living conditions of Poland were.[65] Members of the TUC were supposed to be in Gdańsk in September 1980 but eventually decided to postpone their visit due to the creation of Solidarity. The British press met the TUC decision to only postpone, not cancel, the visit with extreme hostility. Outbursts and clashes over whether or not to support

[62] Free Trade Union News, September 1980.
[63] Kim Christiaens, "The ICFTU and the WCL," In *Solidarity with Solidarity: Western European Trade Unions and the Polish Crisis, 1980-1982*, ed. Idesbald Goddeeris, (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2010), 106-115.
[64] Stefan Berger and Norman LaPorte, "Between Avoiding Cold War and Supporting Free Trade Unionism," In *Solidarity with Solidarity: Western European Trade Unions and the Polish Crisis, 1980-1982,* ed. Idesbald Goddeeris, (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2010), 129-130.
[65] The TUC, like many European trade unions, had communist or at least communist sympathizers in them. As stated in the introduction, the AFL-CIO was one of only a handful of global trade unions to go through a Red Scare Purge.

Solidarity over the Polish state-sponsored union plagued the September TUC conference. At the conference, a delegate from the AFL-CIO gave a rousing speech supporting Solidarity, and calling for the British to do the same. Thunderous applause answered the AFL-CIO delegate's speech, and the TUC decided to cancel the visit after domestic and foreign pressure, and after the Polish communist government announced they would not be welcome anyway.[66]

The TUC remained divided between Solidarity supporters and those who denied its importance throughout the 1980s. The Scottish trade unions, part of the TUC and representative of Eurocommunists, were pro-Soviet and wrote about wanting Solidarity to be an important member of the international trade union communities, but hoped Solidarity would not meddle in government. A problem for all sides was that Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government, which unionists despised, was supporting Solidarity. Even after martial law, the TUC remained divided over Solidarity. Some felt it anti-feminist due to no females being in powerful positions, others were opposed to Solidarity's ties to Catholicism and anti-abortion.[67] Solidarity was "counter-revolutionary," and merely a CIA "puppet," others accused.[68] Still, the critics of Solidarity became a minority in the TUC as it began to help. The TUC housed exiled Poles, used London as a key smuggling route into continental Europe, worked with the Conservative government on how to handle the Polish crisis, and was instrumental in the creation of Underground Solidarity. Throughout the 1980s, the TUC played a delicate balancing act between its vocal communist sympathizers and its outspoken Cold Warriors.[69]

The AFL-CIO accused another European trade union, the Danish Confederation of Trade Unions (LO), of being too reserved in its assistance of Solidarity. As historian Bent Boel has argued, this criticism is unfounded. As a maritime neighbor to Poland, Denmark felt obliged to assist Solidarity. The LO was hostile to communism, but it also had informal relations with Eastern European trade unions and supported détente. It tended to side with the AFL-CIO but was not afraid to carry out its own policies regarding Eastern Europe, even if it meant clashing

[66] Stefan Berger and Norman LaPorte, "Between Avoiding Cold War and Supporting Free Trade Unionism," 131-133.
[67] Criticism of female participation is exaggerated. See Shana Penn's *Solidarity's Secret: The Woman Who Defeated Communism in Poland*, (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2005) for an excellent account of the woman who led Solidarity, especially through martial law.
[68] Stefan Berger and Norman LaPorte, "Between Avoiding Cold War and Supporting Free Trade Unionism," 137-139.
[69] Stefan Berger and Norman LaPorte, "Between Avoiding Cold War and Supporting Free Trade Unionism," 140-141.

with the AFL-CIO. For example, despite supporting Polish labor movements since 1976, the LO was hesitant for years to take actions that would support independent trade unions in the Soviet bloc. Instead, they took reports from their Scandinavian sister organizations the Swedish LO, but did not visit Poland or establish official connections until June 1981. Eventually, the Danes did join in the ICFTU and AFL-CIO coordinated effort, and their first donation was around $28,000 for video equipment.[7071] The LO primarily worked through international channels like the ICFTU and ILO, and it never held rallies in Denmark, although its affiliates often did. They gave thousands of dollars to Solidarity through indirect channels, and often asked that money specifically go to families of those in prison during martial law. There also have been claims that the LO helped smuggle equipment, but if they did, it was on a rare occasion and mostly done by affiliates.[72]

Not all European nations allied themselves with the AFL-CIO. The Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO) was openly hostile to them, and to the ICFTU cooperation with the AFL-CIO. The LO claimed that America did not have Solidarity's interest at heart, and was exploiting the situation. While there is some justification for this belief as Kirkland did indeed see Solidarity as an opportunity to end communism, the LO's claims that Solidarity did not want American help are unfounded. While Walesa did ask for American money not to reach Solidarity directly, he never outright refused the aid. Still, the LO refused to help the international effort and instead sent their assistance in the amount of $360,000.[73] Denmark and Sweden, despite only supporting seven percent of ICFTU membership, made up a third of the money given to the International Solidarity Fund.[74]

As the decade went on, the AFL-CIO routinely rejoined the international arena and used it to assist Solidarity. While most European nations were helping Solidarity individually, the AFL-CIO tried to unify their efforts via spearheading the ICFTU and ILO. In this, the AFL-CIO began to relax their ideological extremism while the Reagan administration intensified theirs.

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[70] Adjusted for inflation, approximately $80,000 as of December 2019.
[71] Bent Boel, "Denmark: International Solidarity and Trade Union Multilateralism," In *Solidarity with Solidarity: Western European Trade Unions and the Polish Crisis, 1980-1982*, ed. Idesbald Goddeeris, (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2010), 219-226.
[72] Bent Boel, "Denmark: International Solidarity and Trade Union Multilateralism," 230-232.
[73] Klaus Misgeld, "Sweden: Focus on Fundamental Trade Union Rights," In *Solidarity with Solidarity: Western European Trade Unions and the Polish Crisis, 1980-1982*, ed. Idesbald Goddeeris, (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2010), 24-29.
[74] Bent Boel, "Denmark: International Solidarity and Trade Union Multilateralism," 221.

Although disputes remained in both international organizations, the AFL-CIO began to work with their allies, who they earlier perceived as too sympathetic to communism and too left-leaning.

One of the reasons for the AFL-CIO overseas outreach is because they struggled to get support from the American government. Like previous Democratic presidents, President Jimmy Carter and his administration considered the AFL-CIO powerful and a close ally in domestic politics. Carter routinely addressed the AFL-CIO's Board and Executive Council meetings and took their advice on issues like the minimum wage. George Meany, the AFL-CIO President until 1979, considered Carter a close friend, but Kirkland was an unknown to Washington. Kirkland had been a behind-the-scenes man who had little public profile. Despite an initial honeymoon period, relations became frosty by 1980 after the 1973 oil crisis and Reagan's presidency.[75]

There were signs of increasing tension between labor and Carter long before Ronald Reagan rose through the Republican ranks. The Executive Board of the AFL-CIO had no real loyalties to Carter, and neither did affiliates or everyday workers. The 1978 labor law reforms had failed spectacularly, and workers blamed Carter for this perceived betrayal.[76] Carter's anti-inflation program was especially harmful to relations between the two, as the Executive Board openly blasted him in October 1978.[77] Most members across the AFL-CIO thought Carter was unrelatable, untrustworthy, and too weak.

In his Labor Day speech of 1980, President Jimmy Carter applauded Solidarity's predecessor, MKS, for their "peaceful determination." He went on to praise the Polish regime's cooperation to "show how a society which deals with its problems can strengthen itself in the process." [78] Although he praised MKS, he also used the same speech to emphasize how the unrest was strictly a "Polish problem" that the United States and USSR should not intervene. His administration, featuring two Polish-Americans, agreed with him. His Secretary of State, Edward

[75] Timothy J. Minchin, *Labor Under Fire: A History of the AFL-CIO Since 1979*, (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2017) 45-48.
[76] The Labor Reform Act of 1977/1978 was a piece of legislation that would have done many things to reform existing labor laws including: forced companies to pay double backpay for firing workers who had tried to unionize, increase the size of the National Labor Relations Board, and strengthen organized labor's bargaining power. Said to be one of the final nails towards organized labor's proverbial coffin, the Labor Reform Act was stalled for a year due to the Panama Canal treaty. It was overpowered by Fortune 500 lobbying and anti-union compulsion in 1978. See William B. Gould IV's *A Primer on American Labor Law*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013).
[77] Timothy J. Minchin, *Labor Under Fire*, 57-60.
[78] Labor Day Remarks from Dr. Zbigniew Brzezinski to President Jimmy Carter, September 1, 1980. Box 183: 9/1/80. Office of the Staff Secretary. President Jimmy Carter Archive, Atlanta, Georgia.

Muskie, was the son of a Polish father and a Polish-American mother. Carter's National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski was born in Poland but grew up in many countries as the son of an ambassador. He was more willing to help the AFL-CIO, and continued to help them with advice and Polish contacts after Reagan took over, but under Carter, he shared Muskie's concern that any United States involvement may spark a Soviet invasion of Poland.

In defense of Carter, Brzezinski, and Muskie, the AFL-CIO's affiliate, the International Longshoremen's Association (ILA), was already causing problems with the Soviet Union. On January 8, 1980, ILA President Thomas Gleason ordered ILA members to suspend "handling all Russian ships and all Russian cargo in ports from Main to Texas and Puerto Rico where ILA workers are employed."[79] This order was a reaction to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and caused several companies to file lawsuits. One of these companies was Allied International, who lost a substantial amount of money due to having to renegotiate its Soviet contracts. The ILA vs. Allied International case ended up going to the Supreme Court, where the ILA was forced in 1982 to end the boycott.[80] In the meantime, between 1980-1982, the ILA refusal to unload Soviet cargo was a reoccurring headache in Washington. Furthermore, in August 1980, the ILA began carrying out a boycott of Polish goods due to the Polish Crisis. This boycott targeted all cargo going to and from Poland, including grain, which was being subsidized by the US.[81]

Between the ILA boycotts and the AFL-CIO announcing financial support, both Muskie and Brzezinski warned Kirkland not to make any moves that may irritate the Soviet Union. Muskie met with Kirkland personally and followed the meeting with multiple letters begging Kirkland to not give financial assistance to Solidarity.[82] By this point, however, the AFL-CIO had already raised the initial Polish Aid Fund cash, and they had done so without telling the Carter administration. This led to Muskie calling the Soviet Union to say to them that the AFL-CIO was not representative of the United States.[83] Kirkland responded in turn by claiming the administration's approval or disproval meant nothing to the AFL-CIO. He never considered the Carter administration when making decisions regarding Poland, nor would he consider the

[79] Karen F. Edler, "Labor Law-Secondary Boycott—International Longshoremen Association's Boycott of Soviet Cargo Due to the Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan—International Longshoremen's Association v. Allied International, Inc." *New York Law School Journal of International and Comparative Law* 4.3 (1983), 637.
[80] Karen Edler, "International Longshoremen Association vs. Allied International, Inc.," 638.
[81] Dudley Clendinen, "US Unions Slip Money Into Poland," *New York Times* (September 1, 1980), A4.
[82] Philip Shabecoff, "AFL-CIO Planning to Aid New Polish Unions," *New York Times* (September 4, 1980), A5.
[83] Eric Chenoweth, "AFL-CIO Support for Solidarity: Moral, Political, Financial," (Presentation to the Conference on AFL-CIO Foreign Policy, Ghent, Belgium, October 6-8, 2011) 3.

Reagan administration. He told journalists in a press brief during February 1981 that it was never clear to him if the Carter administration disproved of their actions or not. "There was some timid and, I think, foolish effusions from the Department of State [Muskie], but I don't think that necessarily represented the view of the administration in general."[84]

Kirkland's intuition was correct as later press releases revealed that the division between Muskie and Brzezinski was stark. In his autobiography, *Power and Principle: Memories of the National Security Adviser, 1977-1981*, Brzezinski wrote that he had phoned Muskie and discouraged him from calling the Soviets. He told Muskie that not only should they not undermine the AFL-CIO, but that calling the Soviets rather than the Poles sent a signal that they did not consider the Polish government legitimate, but merely a vessel of the Soviets that did not decide its own fate. Brzezinski also claimed to have supported the boycott of exports being sent to the Soviet Union. Kirkland had talked with Brzezinski regarding the plan and convinced him that there would be an international boycott of shipments to the Soviet Union.[85]

Disagreement between the Carter administration and the AFL-CIO continued throughout 1980. While hosting a dinner for support of the Polish Workers Aid Fund, Kirkland took a shot at the administration by saying, "Free trade unionism does not advance and will not advance in this world on little cat feet. And I will not accept the proposition that we will pussyfoot about it all." Both administrations heard Kirkland's criticism and repeatedly responded to it. Brzezinski wrote to Kirkland that he was grateful of the AFL-CIO's lead on Poland, and told him "I am sure you are well aware that while there is a difference between what the government can do publicly to support the workers and what an independent organization such as yours can do." In contrast, Muskie met with the Soviet Ambassador to once again assure the separation between the AFL-CIO and the administration.[86]

The Carter administration had legitimate grounds for concern. The administration had been expecting an invasion since August when the strikes first began. They, along with France, Great Britain, and West Germany, had put the embassies on high alert as intelligence from all

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[84] Transcript of Press Conferences Held by President Lane Kirkland on February 16-20, 1981. Box 5, Folder 5/18: Press Releases, 1969-1982. Alan Kistler Papers- 1954-2000. American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations Records, George Meany Archive, Special Collections, University of Maryland, College Park.

[85] Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle: Memories of the National Security Adviser 1977-1981*, (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1983), 464-467.

[86] The AFL-CIO and Poland's Solidarity, November 6, 1981. Box 45, Folder: Poland: Labor, 1981. Vertical Files. American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations Records, George Meany Archive, Special Collections, University of Maryland, College Park.

four nations suggested a Warsaw Pact invasion was right around the corner.[87] Gierek, who had been First Secretary of Poland since 1970, had been replaced by Stanislaw Kania in early September following his acceptance of MKS's 21 Demands. Shortly after Gierek's removal, the Soviet Union and East Germany conducted public military drills on the Polish border. At the conclusion of these drills, the exercise was declared as a demonstration of the Warsaw Pact's readiness "to defend the revolutionary achievements of socialism and fulfill their international duty."[88] This statement was unsurprising for the administration as it was reflective of the Brezhnev Doctrine. The Doctrine, which had justified suppression of the Prague Spring in 1968, stated that a threat to communist rule in one Warsaw Pact nation was a threat to all of the Warsaw Pact. The Brezhnev Doctrine's promise and the knowledge that the creation of Solidarity may indeed be a threat caused the Carter administration to make contingency plans with Allies to defend Poland should the need arise. During the December Crisis, when American intelligence revealed East German and Soviet troops were militarizing the Polish border, an invasion seemed certain.[89] Brzezinski ordered the Department of Defense to prepare weapons for shipment from the United States to China. The weapons would aid Chinese forces fighting the Soviet Union on the border, thus intensifying that conflict and drawing Soviet attention away from Poland.[90]

While Kirkland was not privy to the intelligence coming in during the fall of 1980, he was aware that the Soviets might invade Poland. These fears continued throughout 1981. In March, Kirkland told the press that "[invasion] was a possibility on day one when Solidarity was organized. It would be a possibility on day 30,001." Kirkland went on to say that he did not believe it likely, however, as "it would cost [the Soviets] a heavy investment that they've made in the division of the West…the economic burdens on their strained economy would be magnified."[91] Instead, he predicted a crackdown was going to come from the inside of Poland.

Kirkland's first sign of serious trouble came at the end of September 1981, when the Polish government denied Kirkland's delegation visas to enter Poland. They had been invited by

[87] Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 463-470.
[88] Douglas MacEachin, *US Intelligence and the Polish Crisis*, 17.
[89]There are many theories as to why the Soviet Union did not invade Poland during this time, but no concrete answer has been given. Possible factors include the US threat to arm China, the fear of German troops in Poland trigging nationalism and memories of 1939, the Polish leader and Solidarity cooperating in public ceremonies to try to distinguish the crisis, and the Soviet-Afghan War.
[90] Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 467.
[91] Transcript of Press Conferences Held by President Lane Kirkland on February 16-20, 1981.

Walesa to attend Solidarity's second congress in Gdańsk, but the Polish regime refused to grant their visas. Despite the setback, Kirkland managed to have the speech he was going to give smuggled into Poland and into the hands of Solidarity. In it, Kirkland wrote that Solidarity had not only renewed Polish spirits but the spirit of workers across the world. The word "Solidarity" had transformed from "a slogan to a living moral force." It was not the first time the Poles had touched Americans, as Kirkland referred back to Thaddeus Kosciuszko, a hero of the American Revolution. He also told the story of Polish glassblowers, who created the first trade unions and led the first strikes in America. Kirkland concluded,

> Respect for workers' rights does not automatically flow from any economic system. It humanizes all economic systems…The delegates to this Congress confront many difficult, even momentous questions. The AFL-CIO would not presume to advice you on the direction you should take. You alone understand the needs of Poland's workers. You alone are their authentic voice.[92]

With these final words, Kirkland's recorded speech received thunderous applause from all the attendees of Solidarity's First National Congress. Solidarity continued to believe that it had the AFL-CIO's support. For the next three months this support was crucial for Solidarity's struggle because the union was getting too big to control. Radical members, who directly counteracted Walesa, were making drastic decisions. Up until the First Congress in September 1981, Walesa had maintained control of some of the more radical demands, such as calls for elections. He had managed to work with the regime to avoid violence, but by the First Congress, this control of the "self-limiting revolution" was unraveling.

At the September Congress, Solidarity issued the Message to the Working People of Eastern Europe. The Message, seen as a direct threat to the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet Union, read as follows:

> As the first independent labor union in Poland's postwar history, we deeply feel a sense of community [with you] …Our goal is to struggle for an improvement in life for all working people. We support those of you who have decided to enter the difficult road of struggle for a free and independent labor movement. We trust that our and your representatives will be able to meet soon to compare union experiences.[93]

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[92] AFL-CIO News September 25, 1981. Box 45, Folder: Poland: Labor, 1981. Vertical Files. American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations Records, George Meany Archive, Special Collections, University of Maryland, College Park.

[93] "Message to the Working People of Eastern Europe," September 9, 1981, Soviet History Digital Archive, Michigan State University.

The reactions were immediate and very public. The United States press, which had been closely following the Congress, was critical of what they deemed as a radical move. Nonetheless, the AFL-CIO extended an invitation for Walesa to visit the United States, a visit that had to be canceled as martial law seemed more likely. Some of this clarity was a result of a massive movement of Soviet forces on the Polish border at a level unseen since the 1940s.[94] The more significant immediate signal was Brezhnev's private dressing down of both Polish leaders, Stanislaw Kania and Wojciech Jaruzelski. In a private phone call, Brezhnev claimed Solidarity had just declared war by imposing its beliefs on other Soviet and Warsaw Pact states. Brezhnev believed Solidarity was infiltrating the military as well and thus completing control of Poland.[95]

Kania and Jaruzelski took Brezhnev's threats to heart. Despite his previous claims that he was trying to retire, Jaruzelski took control of Poland on October 18. Brezhnev called him three days later, although according to CIA operative Douglas MacEachin, the topic of the discussion is not known. Jaruzelski then began showing his strength by extending active duty service for all soldiers for two months, thus keeping the extension of forty-thousand conscripted troops on economic grounds. He allowed police to use force and tear gas to disperse protestors in Katowice. The crowd was protesting the arrest of Solidarity leaders who had been distributing anti-Soviet leaflets. Solidarity leaders in Wroclaw were also arrested the next day under the same charges, but police released all the activists within one day.[96]

A bluff was issued in November as Jaruzelski called Walesa to meet with him on November 17. Only a few days later, Jaruzelski met with the Soviet Politburo and invited them to Warsaw as a peace offering and apology for "not listening" to their advice. They came on the twenty-fourth, and by December 5 Jaruzelski was granted martial law power.[97] The CPSU met one more time on December 10 to contemplate invasion but ultimately decided against it. While they debated invasion, Walesa sat by helplessly as Solidarity called for free elections. He warned the rest of the Solidarity Congress that it was too radical, and in twenty-four hours, he seemed to be correct.

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[94] Patryk Pleskot, "Enthusiasm, Strategy, and Fear: US Reactions Towards Solidarity," The Phenomenon of Solidarity: Pictures from the History of Poland, 1980-1981, Colombia University's East Central European Center, October 4, 2011.

[95] Transcript of Brezhnev's Phone Conversation with Kania, September 15, 1981, Digital Archives, Woodrow Wilson Center.

[96] George Sanford, "The Polish Communist Leadership and the Onset of the State of War," *Soviet Studies* 36, no. 4 (1984): 494-512.

[97] Paczkowski and Byrne, *From Solidarity to Martial Law*.

The ax fell on December 13, 1981. After placing a call to Moscow only to learn Brezhnev was out, Jaruzelski cut communication between Poland and the West, closed the borders, and put thousands into custody. At 6:00 am on December 13 Jaruzelski took over the radio waves with the declaration that "Poland has not yet perished, so long as we still live!"[98]

[98] Henry Kamm, "Poles Awake to Bayonets and Despair," *New York Times*, December 14, 1981.

Chapter Two: Carrying on the "Spirit of Solidarity"

By the morning of December 14, 1981, the AFL-CIO Executive Council (EC) issued a statement condemning the crackdown against Solidarity, and calling on the ILO and Reagan administration to make "every effort to secure the immediate release of the detained Polish leaders and the restoration of trade union rights."[99] The EC statement echoed previous statements by accusing the Polish government of violating ILO Convention 87, which granted freedom of association. However, the AFL-CIO also echoed the former president, Jimmy Carter. Despite having been hostile to Carter's calls in August 1980 that Poland should remain a Polish problem, the AFL-CIO stated in their December 14 statement that "these problems must be solved by the Polish themselves, free of all outside interference."[100]

While at first glance it may seem to be a departure of previous AFL-CIO policy regarding Poland, the statement, much like Carter's, was no doubt aimed at Moscow. The immediate interpretation by both Kirkland and Reagan was that Moscow had orchestrated and conducted the implementation of martial law. The more compelling statement is found next in the EC declaration when the AFL-CIO argued that "solutions can be found when the Polish government halts its efforts to stifle dissent and begins to negotiate in a forthright manner with Solidarność." Here, the AFL-CIO tries both to limit overseas mediation, and acknowledge Solidarity as the rightful voice of the Polish people. Still, the December 14 statement was not a total departure from the past year as it also pledged that the AFL-CIO would support whatever Solidarity chose to do, and would continue to cooperate and work through the ILO and ICFTU.[101]

On the home front, the AFL-CIO began working with a large-scale United States effort to show public support for Poles who opposed the regime. Members were encouraged to attend candlelight vigils outside of the Polish Embassy in Washington, DC. The vigils, while not created by the AFL-CIO, were supported and sponsored by it through cooperation with the Polish American Congress. In Chicago, on December 16, a rally was held featuring speakers such as the governor of Illinois, the mayor of Chicago, the AFL-CIO Illinois President Robert G. Gibson, and other prominent labor leaders from Illinois and Chicago. Similar rallies were in San

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[99] AFL-CIO News, December 14, 1981. Box 45, Folder: Poland: Labor, 1981. Vertical Files. American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations Records, George Meany Archive, Special Collections, University of Maryland, College Park.
[100] AFL-CIO News, December 14, 1981.
[101] AFL-CIO News, December 14, 1981.

Francisco, Milwaukee, and Cleveland throughout December 1981.[102] At these rallies, a petition was circulated calling for the end of martial law, the release of prisoners, the legalization of Solidarity, and open communication. The petition was forwarded by the AFL-CIO headquarters to the Polish Embassy in Washington.[103]

Other methods of support in December included the Polish Workers Aid Fund, flags, and Catholic masses. By December 1981, the Aid Fund had reached over a quarter-million dollars.[104] In places like Connecticut, the AFL-CIO also allied itself with religious organizations, mainly the Catholic Church, which held a Mass for Peace. The AFL-CIO publicized these masses that featured Polish clergy.[105] Lastly, the AFL-CIO also displayed a massive five-story red and white banner (the colors of the Polish flag) at the front of its headquarters over the holiday season. In January, they announced that they were in the process of making large Solidarity flags that would fly over union headquarters throughout the United States.[106]

One of the most significant events held by the AFL-CIO came at the request of the ICFTU. Following the declaration of martial law, the ICFTU, in conjunction with the AFL-CIO and other international unions, declared January 30, 1982, as "Solidarity with Solidarność," or simply "Solidarity Day."[107] The event, mimicked across the globe, took place in international cities such as Brussels, London, Cardiff, many West German cities, and Vienna. In Tokyo, over twenty-four hundred unionists marched in support of Solidarity.[108] In the United States, Americans celebrated by hosting rallies and speaking engagements in all fifty states and twenty-seven major American cities such as Columbus, Washington, Boston, New York, Milwaukee, San Francisco, and Chicago.[109]

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[102] AFL-CIO News, December 15, 1981. Box 45, Folder: Poland: Labor, 1981. Vertical Files. American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations Records, George Meany Archive, Special Collections, University of Maryland, College Park.

[103] AFL-CIO News: Labor Launches Petition Campaign in Support of Polish Workers, January 7, 1982. Box 45, Folder: Poland: Labor, 1982-1987. Vertical Files. American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations Records, George Meany Archive, Special Collections, University of Maryland, College Park.

[104] AFL-CIO News: Labor Launches Petition Campaign in Support of Polish Workers, January 7, 1982.

[105] AFL-CIO News, December 15, 1981.

[106] AFL-CIO News: Labor Launches Petition Campaign in Support of Polish Workers, January 7, 1982.

[107] "Rally for Solidarity Scheduled," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, January 30, 1982.

[108] "Thousands Rally for Polish Union," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, January 31, 1982.

[109] AFL-CIO News: Outpouring of Free World Workers Shows Support for Polish Union, March 31, 1982. Box 45, Folder: Poland: Labor, 1982-1987. Vertical Files. American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations Records, George Meany Archive, Special Collections, University of Maryland, College Park.

Solidarity Day's main goal was to pressure the Polish regime into complying with the August 1980 Gdańsk agreement and ending martial law.[110] These demands were shared by nearly every Western government and most Western trade unions, especially those in the ICFTU. The call to comply with the Gdańsk agreement was brought up numerous times immediately following the martial law declaration, including by President Reagan in his 1981 Christmas address.[111] These calls were echoed on Solidarity Day in the United States as events were attended by influential speakers and usually had major displays of support visa vie banners and flags. Residents in one city painted the city water-tower with the Solidarity banner.[112] Buildings, including state capitol buildings like the one in Columbus, Ohio, were draped with both the Polish and the Solidarity banner. In Washington, DC, the day started with a Catholic mass before a march from St. Matthews Cathedral ended at Thaddeus Kosciuszko Memorial in Lafayette Park. At the Kosciuszko Memorial, Professor Jerzy Milewski, an exiled founding member of Solidarity, spoke to the crowd about the struggle in Poland.[113]

The largest rally took place in late January in Chicago, which had the largest Polish population outside of Warsaw at the time. The speakers included International Longshoremen's Association President Thomas W. Gleason, Msgr. George G. Higgins, and Kirkland, who all spoke to a crowd well over ten-thousand. Kirkland echoed previous statements made by the AFL-CIO by saying all they wanted for Solidarity was "no more and no less than we want for ourselves."[114] In a show of American unity, he welcomed Secretary of State Alexander Haig, who had not been announced to appear. Haig spoke on behalf of the Reagan administration by saying that "there is a spirit of solidarity abroad in the world today that no intimidation can crush…their cause is ours."[115]

The Reagan administration supported Solidarity Day, the rallies, petitions, EC statements, and other AFL-CIO efforts to quickly react to the declaration of martial law. In a policy letter that reflected his Christmas speech, President Reagan asked: "How can they [the Polish regime]

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[110] AFL-CIO News, January 27, 1982. Box 45, Folder: Poland: Labor, 1982-1987. Vertical Files. American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations Records, George Meany Archive, Special Collections, University of Maryland, College Park.
[111] Ronald Reagan, *Situation in Poland: December 23, 1981*. Current Policy: No. 357, US Department of State, Bureau of Public Affairs, Office of Public Communication, Editorial Division.
[112] Due to the archival material, the name of the town that had a water-tower painted is unknown.
[113] AFL-CIO News, January 26, 1982.
[114] AFL-CIO News, January 26, 1982.
[115] "Thousands Rally for Polish Union," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, January 31, 1982.

possibly justify using naked force to crush a people who ask for nothing more than the right to lead their own lives in freedom and dignity?" He called for Americans to show their support by lighting candles in their windows. This idea initially came from Romuald Spasowski, a former Polish Ambassador and a devoted communist who defected due to martial law. Spasowski, while seeking asylum, told President Reagan as well as members of Congress and the American public that Poles were showing support for Solidarity by lighting candles in their windows. He requested that on Christmas Eve, Americans echoed the small action, and President Reagan thus asked the nation to participate in the display. He even vowed candles would be lit in the White House windows as a reminder that "these blessings bring with them a solemn obligation" to support Poles in "their time of trouble."[116]

The candles for Poland remained lit through the New Year as envoys and defectors from Poland arrived in the United States. One of these was another ambassador, the former Polish Ambassador to Japan Zdzislaw Rurarz. Rurarz told Congress he had been overwhelmed with the support. Upon entering Dulles International, Rurarz and his wife and daughter had broken down after seeing windows across Washington DC with candles in them. It reassured him that not only was he right to seek United States asylum but that he had to speak out against the "puppet juntas" in Poland. Rurarz thus became a vocal advocate against the Polish regime by testifying to Congress during the Helsinki inquiries.[117]

The small action of the holiday candles was only part of the Reagan administration' initial response to the declaration of martial law. Following traditional Cold War rhetoric, Reagan accused the Soviets of forcing and participating in the proclamation of martial law. He claimed that:

> It is no coincidence that the Soviet Marshal Kulikov, chief of the Warsaw Pact forces, and other senior Red Army officers were in Poland while these outrages were being initiated. And it is no coincidence that the martial law proclamations imposed in December by the Polish Government was being printed in the Soviet Union in September."[118]

While one could brush off his claims as traditional Cold War rhetoric, they were backed up by CIA and other federal agents on the ground throughout 1981.[119] However, this evidence was not

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[116] Ronald Reagan, *Situation in Poland: December 23, 1981*.

[117] "Ex-Polish Envoy Asks End of Trade with Soviets, Poles," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, December 29, 1981.

[118] Ronald Reagan, *Situation in Poland: December 23, 1981*.

[119] See Douglas J. MacEachin's *US Intelligence and the Polish crisis: 1980-1981*.

enough to convince most of Western Europe that a confrontation with the Soviets was necessary.[120] While France, Italy, and Great Britain all agreed that it was likely Moscow had instructed the Polish authorities to implement martial law, West Germany was not as convinced. This made it difficult for Reagan to get European backing on policy decisions.[121]

The Reagan administration launched several policy decisions by Christmas Eve regarding the Polish situation. First on the agenda were Reagan's letters to both Leonid Brezhnev and General Wojciech Jaruzelski. Reagan wrote to Brezhnev that the US would take "concrete political and economic measures affecting our relationship" if martial law did not end. However, the limited policy response made many, including those in the AFL-CIO, believe Reagan was not serious about this threat. Even his letter to Jaruzelski, which was slightly more forceful by saying "make no mistake: their [the perceived perpetrators of martial law such as Jaruzelski] crimes will cost them dearly in their future dealings with America," was seen as inconsequential.[122]

That is not to say no policy decisions were made by the Reagan administration regarding the Polish Situation. One of the very first things done, perhaps even before the letters, was the suspension of U.S. food aid to Poland. The aid, which was critical for Poland as it suffered from severe food shortages, amounted to seven-hundred million dollars' worth of agriculture credit in 1981 alone. Poland was counting on almost seven-hundred and fifty million worth in 1982 before the United States decision to freeze the amount. Reagan did allow credit and food "already in the pipeline" to be delivered, but no agriculture credit or aid would go to the Polish government as it had been for years.[123]

The AFL-CIO agreed with the move to stop food aid to Poland and seized the opportunity to promote labor unity and enhance its global image. The AFL-CIO joined church leaders and officials of the National Farmers Union, as well as other charities, to urge President Reagan to release federally owned food stocks. [124] These food stocks, which had been given to the Polish government to distribute before the sanctions, were still available. The Polish government could be cut out of the equation by having international food assistance organizations and the Catholic Relief Services of Poland distribute the food directly to the

[120] Nicholas Ashford, "Reagan Gives Brezhnev Warning on Poland," *The Times*, December 24, 1981.
[121] David Cross, "West Europe Deeply Split on Reagan's Tactics," *The Times*, December 31, 1981.
[122] Nicholas Ashford, "Reagan Gives Brezhnev Warning on Poland," *The Times*, December 24, 1981.
[123] Nicholas Ashford, "US Suspends Food Shipments to Poland," *The Times*, December 15, 1981.
[124] AFL-CIO News: Labor Launches Petition Campaign in Support of Polish Workers, January 7, 1982.

people.[125] Additionally, the affiliated American Federation of Grain Millers (AFGM) took the lead on donating flour to charities such as the Church World Service. In Omaha, Nebraska, workers donated more than seven-hundred thousand pounds of flour in one day. The day was part of a more extensive campaign called "Wheat for Poland," declared by Nebraska Governor Charles Thone in conjunction with labor unions affiliated with the AFL-CIO like the AFGM. Around forty members of the local AFGM union dedicated a day of labor in order to mill the flour, pack it in one-hundred-pound bags with appropriate Polish labeling, and load it all onto rail cars where it was shipped from Baltimore to Gdańsk.[126] The Grain Millers Vice President Larry R. Jackson claimed that Polish bakers would be able to make one million one-pound loaves of bread from the flour shipment. Polish churches would distribute the bread, thus eliminating any involvement from the regime.[127]

On December 23, 1981, President Reagan announced his administration had reached additional policies regarding the Polish Crisis. In terms of aid, the United States started giving support to Austria, who was receiving an influx of Polish refugees. The other proposed measures were met with frustration by those inside and outside the United States. The administration halted the renewal of the Export-Import Bank's line of credit insurance, which had been working in conjunction with credit loans and aids sent to Poland for some years. The Reagan administration also targeted Polish business by suspending Polish civil aviation privileges and suspending fishery rights that granted Poles special privileges to United States waters. Lastly, the administration proposed consultation with its European allies about restricting high-technology exports to Poland.[128]

The sanctions, which were only announced to Western European leaders a few hours before the press conference on December 23, led to an emergency European Economic Community meeting. Chaired by Belgium, it saw a deeply divided European response. Germany displayed reluctance to do anything that would hurt its economic ties to Eastern Europe.

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[125] The Catholic Relief Services was founded in 1943 to help with humanitarian efforts during World War II. It ran several relief campaigns in Poland during the war and immediately after. Please see works such as Eileen Egan's *Catholic Relief Services: The Beginning Years; For the Life of the World*, (New York: Catholic Relief Services, 1988).

[126] Today, the American Federation of Grain Millers is part of the Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers (BCTGM) International Union. The BCTGM, formed in 1999, is still an AFL-CIO affiliate.

[127] AFL-CIO News: Grain Millers' Volunteer Work Key Ingredient in Flow for Poles, April 8, 1982. Box 44, Folder: Folder: Poland, 1982-1985. Vertical Files. American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations Records, George Meany Archive, Special Collections, University of Maryland, College Park.

[128] Ronald Reagan, *Situation in Poland.*

Germany had also been in personal contact with Jaruzelski's Deputy Prime Minister, who met with the German Foreign Minister in Bonn to discuss economic ties between the two nations. German labor unions supported this move, and the reluctance to implement sanctions, thus reflecting that unions in Europe fell more in step with their governments than the AFL-CIO did with the United States government.[129] Similarly, France, who accused Reagan of utilizing a reactionary policy which led to contradictions, was in line with its unions, who refused to even consider sanctions.[130]

As with most global crises, the initial outrage at the declaration of martial law had died down to quiet resignation by mid-1982. With European and American government policy moving slowly, the AFL-CIO was painstakingly aware that attention towards Poland was dwindling. Kirkland wrote in a June newsletter that "[we] are determined to do what we can to keep public attention focused on the suppression of Solidarity…we remember too well how quickly the free world forgot about the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia [in 1968] and Hungary [in 1956]."[131] On Monday, June 14, to mark the six-month-anniversary of martial law, the AFL-CIO displayed a twenty-four-foot sign at their DC headquarters. The sign represented the number of days Solidarity members were imprisoned—one-hundred eighty-three and counting.[132] At the same event, a young exiled Polish artist, Jan Sawka, distributed his Solidarność artwork.[133] Sawka, who had fled during the 1976 uprising, had been asked by the Solidarity Warsaw office in 1981 to make their Christmas posters, but the Polish regime destroyed them upon implementation of martial law. A year later, the AFL-CIO distributed Sawka's recreated works throughout the world as a show of continued support of Solidarity and as a gesture against the Polish government.[134]

It was not the AFL-CIO's first attempt to refocus attention on the Polish situation. In May, Eric Chenoweth, the national coordinator for the Committee in Support of Solidarity,

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[129] "Germany: Angry it Was Not Told," *The Times*, December 31, 1981.
[130] Charles Hargrove, "France: Baffled by US Approach," *The Times*, December 31, 1981.
[131] AFL-CIO News: American Labor Renews Support for Poland's Solidarity, June 17, 1982. Box 44, Folder: Poland, 1982-1985. Vertical Files. American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations Records, George Meany Archive, Special Collections, University of Maryland, College Park.
[132] The sign also showed the number of unemployed perceivably due to Reagan's economic policies. At this point, unemployment had reached almost ten percent.
[133] AFL-CIO News, June 14, 1982: Note to Editors, pg 30, Box 44, Folder: Poland, 1982-1985. Vertical Files. American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations Records, George Meany Archive, Special Collections, University of Maryland, College Park.
[134] AFL-CIO News: American Labor Renews Support for Poland's Solidarity, June 17, 1982.

penned an article in the AFL-CIO's *Free Trade Union News* regarding May Day in Warsaw. He wrote that the Committee knew that a crowd of fifty-thousand had gathered in Warsaw's Old Town to support Solidarity despite martial law. This spirit, he argued, was an obvious sign that martial law was not succeeding and that Solidarity continued to live on despite police brutality, tens of thousands of arrests, and elimination of Solidarity's leading figures like Walesa who were in jail. Kirkland responded with a short column, agreeing with Chenoweth: "What is happening in Poland proves that Solidarity is alive and speaks for the Polish people. It is further evidence of the depth of the human hunger for freedom."[135]

This was not the first nor the last time that Kirkland claimed that Solidarity, not Jaruzelski, spoke for Poland. Throughout the 1980s, the AFL-CIO and Kirkland made claims that Solidarity was not only the rightful voice of the Polish people but that it was alive and active despite its legal ban. In a CBS TV interview, Kirkland was asked, given the fact that Solidarity was outlawed, "Is there anything you're doing now to try to keep trade unions alive in Poland?"[136] Kirkland admitted the union was sending aid to families of imprisoned workers and working with Solidarity members who had been outside Poland when martial law was declared, as Solidarity requested. He went on:

> …We're doing everything that we possibly can in responding to [Solidarity's] requests. I do not believe that Solidarity is dead. The Government of Poland did not create Solidarity. It sprang from the courage and the will and the spirit of the Polish people, and it still lives in that courage will and spirit.[137]

The "Spirit of Solidarity" was a phrase the AFL-CIO used throughout the 1980s. In the fall of 1983, after the lifting of martial law, the college affiliate?? Frontlash co-hosted an art exhibit at the Russell Senate Office Building on Capitol Hill titled "Art of Solidarity." The event, which drew hundreds of additional people to the Senate building, was an exhibit of "graphics, photographs, and artifacts" that were created between Solidarity's creation and suppression. At the event, Kirkland gave a keynote to many attendees, including members of Congress. The

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[135] Eric Chenoweth, AFL-CIO Free Trade Union News: May Day in Warsaw, pgs. 1-3, Box 45, Folder: Poland: Labor, 1982-1987. Vertical Files. American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations Records, George Meany Archive, Special Collections, University of Maryland, College Park.
[136] Transcript of Face the Nation, October 10, 1982, pg. 11, Box 1, Folder 1: Transcripts. Lane Kirkland Papers. American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations Records, George Meany Archive, Special Collections, University of Maryland, College Park.
[137] Transcript of Face the Nation, October 10, 1982, pg. 11.

organizers of the exhibition conducted a two-year anniversary candlelight vigil and a demonstration in Washington DC against the perceived unfair trials of Solidarity leaders. Despite martial law ending, the trials were still taking place.[138]

Americans seemed to be responding to the AFL-CIO's public campaign. Monetary donations to Solidarity continued to flow throughout the 1980s. Lech Walesa testified to the outpouring of support from average Americans. In 1983, Harvard selected Walesa as their commencement speaker. Walesa, unable to attend for fear that he would not be allowed back into Poland, had his speech smuggled out of the country where it was read at Harvard commencement:

> Almost daily, I receive letters from unknown friends in your country, cards with wishes and expressions of good cheer. This solidarity is for me an unusual phenomenon. Many times I have pondered what could…link workers of the Gdańsk shipyard and the scholarly community of Harvard University...I have great hope that in more favorable conditions I shall be able to visit the United States and thank all Americans, whose sympathy and solidarity are so important to me and my compatriots.[139]

These letters and cards, as well as the attentive audience at Harvard, show that Americans were not only still paying attention to Solidarity, but also still wanting to help in any way they could. The credit for this publicity has to go in part to the AFL-CIO's unwavering support of the Polish people and pressure on the communist government.

In early 1983, the Polish state media announced the suspension of martial law. However, as journalist John Kifner reported, the suspension was nothing more than a grand gesture. The worst of martial law for Poles, the curfew and military checkpoints, were gone long before. Yet, Jaruzelski had managed to get most of the martial law aspects into the Polish legal code; thus, martial law continued in all but name.[140]

The AFL-CIO had to reflect on their unwavering support after the lifting of martial law. The union waited until the end of February to issue a formal statement, and agreed with Kifner's assessment of the "suspension." In an Executive Council statement, the AFL-CIO pointed out that Solidarity was still outlawed, workers did not have the right to strike, and due to the

[138] Frontlash Annual Report 1983, pg. 6.
[139] Lech Walesa, Harvard Commencement Speech, June 12, 1983, Box 45, Folder: Poland: Labor, 1981. Vertical Files. American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations Records, George Meany Archive, Special Collections, University of Maryland, College Park.
[140] John Kifner, "Poles Waiting, Not Dancing, in the Street," *New York Times*, January 1, 1983.

militarization of factories workers were now subject to military discipline and tried in military courts. Worse still, between five-thousand and ten-thousand political prisoners remained, and arrests continued. Suspension, they argued, was simply a "hollow gesture aimed at persuading world opinion that the Jaruzelski regime has relaxed its repression of the Polish people."[141]

On July 22, 1983, Jaruzelski formally lifted martial law in Poland. Once again, the formal spectacle had little effect on the ground. Changes to the legal code remained so that most of martial law stayed, and although some political prisoners received amnesty, it noticeably was not given to anyone associated with Solidarity.[142] Once again, the AFL-CIO response was delayed, but this time was because they were waiting to hear from members in the underground Solidarity network. They published the answer they received in another Executive Council statement, which read that the leadership of underground Solidarity called the lifting of martial law "a propaganda gesture…intended to insure the rescheduling of credits and the lifting of sanctions by the West."[143]

The Polish debt and sanctions were a point of contention between the Reagan administration and the AFL-CIO since martial law was declared. As stated earlier, Reagan's decision to implement sanctions after martial law was limited and unsupported by the European allies. Within six months, Reagan eased up on many of the sanctions, including ones he had levied at the Soviet Union pipeline project. The pipeline sanctions, which proved oil and gas to Western Europe, had led to explosive meetings between officials in the administration, and frosty relations with Western Europe. Reagan's hope of United States economic strength forcing the Europeans to "get in line" was dashed, and he chose to reconsider the sanctions less than a year after their implementation.[144]

The AFL-CIO, predictably, was not pleased with the new development. Before the pipeline fiasco even took place, Kirkland and Secretary of State Alexander Haig had been in a public fight over the sanctions. One sanction not taken up by the administration was a grain

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[141] Statement by the AFL-CIO Executive Council on Poland, February 22, 1983, Box 45, Folder: Poland: Labor, 1982-1987. Vertical Files. American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations Records, George Meany Archive, Special Collections, University of Maryland, College Park.
[142] John Kifner, "Poland Says It Lifts Martial Law; Curbs Now Put in the Legal Code," *New York Times*, July 22, 1983.
[143] Statement by the AFL-CIO Executive Council on Poland, August 9, 1983, Box 44, Folder: Poland, 1982-1985. Vertical Files. American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations Records, George Meany Archive, Special Collections, University of Maryland, College Park.
[144] Leslie H. Gelb, "Reagan is Seeking Ways to Moderate Poland Sanctions," *New York Times*, July 9, 1982.

embargo, which the AFL-CIO argued would have been much more impactful than fishery rights. Here the traditional division between labor and agriculture exposed cracks within the AFL-CIO. The Executive Council was seen as out of step with American farm organizations which did not support a grain embargo, but the EC championed and argued for the embargo anyway. Haig, on behalf of the administration, argued that without other grain exporting nations participating in the embargo, the measure "would be self-defeating." When asked if he understood the administration's stance, Kirkland responded with a simple "no."[145]

In the fall of 1983, Reagan formally began to lift some of the sanctions against Poland. He argued that the Polish government showed signs of progress by lifting martial law in July and allowing Pope John Paul II to visit Poland in June. The AFL-CIO, citing news from Underground Solidarity, strongly disagreed. At the "Art of Solidarity" Exhibit mentioned earlier, Kirkland argued against the rumor that sanctions were going to be relaxed. It seemed the crowd agreed with him as the administration decided to wait a few days to formally make the announcement.[146] Still, the AFL-CIO continued to argue that Reagan was not keeping his word: "When the President imposed the sanctions on Poland, he outlined three conditions for lifting them: the release of all political prisoners; the restoration of Solidarność; and the opening of dialogue among the government, Solidarność, and the church."[147] To the AFL-CIO, and other international unions like the ICFTU, these three conditions were not met; many Solidarity members were still in prison and Solidarity was still outlawed. Walesa had been released and the Pope had visited Poland, but the ultimate problem of Solidarity's outlaw status persisted. The "rightful voice of Poland" was still mute.

The AFL-CIO also fought with the Reagan administration over the Polish debt. The AFL-CIO favored calling in the estimated $1.7 billion owed to the United States and even having the European allies call in the approximately $11 billion Poland owed to them. The argument was that by calling in the debt, it would force the Polish regime to do whatever needed to appease the West. If they did not cooperate, the Polish economy would go bankrupt, and further still, the Soviet bloc would feel the shock. Reagan, however, and most of Western Europe, including the

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[145] Seth S. King, "Haig and Labor Unit at Odds On Sanctions Against Soviets," *New York Times*, February 20, 1982.
[146] Bernard Gwertzman, "US Intends to Ease Polish Curbs; AFL-CIO Voicing Opposition," *New York Times*, November 1, 1983.
[147] AFL-CIO News, August 3, 1984. Box 44, Folder: Poland, 1982-1985. Vertical Files. American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations Records, George Meany Archive, Special Collections, University of Maryland, College Park.

four-hundred and sixty banks involved in the negotiations, argued calling in the debt would hurt the West just as much as the East. Reagan believed that Poland could easily just get money from the Soviet Union instead, and the West would have a bill no one would pay. In January of 1982, Reagan did call the seventy-one-million-dollar loans in default, but then stated that the United States would pay back the bankers. Most of these bankers were West Germans, and the decision caused an outcry throughout the American workforce. In early February, Kirkland told the press that,

> In effect, President Reagan told the Soviets to disregard his tough talk. He announced that the United States would not use the most potent economic weapon at our disposal in defense of Solidarity…. The AFL-CIO does not believe that American foreign policy should be made by the bankers.[148]

The AFL-CIO, and some Western banks, further argued Poland was not paying the debt anyway. In 1981 alone, the Poles were supposed to pay $2.7 billion to the West, and it missed it by hundreds of millions of dollars.[149] As Kirkland put it in his *Face the Nation* interview, "if we're going to sell them the rope with which they're going to hang us, at least we ought to make them pay cash for it."[150]

Despite not succeeding in keeping the sanctions or calling in the debt, the AFL-CIO continued to argue for both until the beginning of 1987. By then the situation in Poland seemed to be at an uneasy calm. Economic conditions continued to decline, and Solidarity was still outlawed, but the country was not in the chaos it had been in the early 1980s. Solidarity continued to work underground, and the AFL-CIO supported that effort through financial assistance and smuggling operations. These operations, were part of a more significant international labor effort, were perhaps the most important measure taken by the AFL-CIO. As discussed earlier, it became quickly apparent to the AFL-CIO that the money they had collected needed to be converted into material equipment in order to better help Solidarity. Money, argued Walesa, could be seen as a direct attempt to influence Solidarity, but the equipment was merely aid. The AFL-CIO agreed and began switching to material equipment. When they did send

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[148] AFL-CIO Press Release, February 4, 1982. Box 48, Folder: AFL-CIO Press Releases 1937-1995. Information Department. American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations Records, George Meany Archive, Special Collections, University of Maryland, College Park.
[149] Robert A. Bennett, "Pact on the Polish Debt Delayed: Delay on Polish Debt Europeans Under Pressure," *New York Times*, July 3, 1981.
[150] Transcript of Face the Nation, October 10, 1982, pg. 10.

money, it was either smuggled or sent via multiple trace channels where it could not be traced back to either the United States or the union.[151]

Historians Gregory Domber are uncovering the complicated calculations and the manpower it took to smuggle equipment and money to the underground Solidarity network. Kirkland wanted the operation tight-lipped. He listened to Solidarity underground activists who argued that "if one person knows, only one knows. If two people know, then eleven know. And if three people know, then one hundred and eleven know."[152] Bearing this in mind, Kirkland chose a small number of people for his inner circle. His team included his assistant, Tom Kahn, who was perhaps the most trusted member and did most of the work between the AFL-CIO, the smugglers, and Solidarity. Also in the inner circle was Adrian Karatnycky, a Ukrainian-American working against the USSR; Irena Lasota, a Polish émigré who fled Poland in 1968 after learning she was under investigation for anti-regime propaganda; Eric Chenoweth; Jerry Milewski, a Polish scientist who had been at a United States conference when martial law was declared; and Miroslaw Dominczyk, a Solidarity activist who had been in exile all were in the smuggling team.[153] While Kahn ran interference, Dominczyk and Lasota initially did most of the smuggling via channels and contacts.

To stay ahead of the Polish regime, the group often changed their strategy. Lasota used money from the AFL-CIO budget to send his friends materials under the guise of care packages. She put censored books like George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, money, and Hershey syrup bottles secretly filled with printer ink into care packages.[154] She delivered receipts to Khan, who relayed them to Kirkland. On one occasion, Khan even received a Polish "internal" passport, and a letter asking him to have it duplicated.[155] Smugglers concealed cash in luggage or automobiles. On one occasion, one of the smugglers—Poland's future foreign minister Bronisław Geremek—brought back from the United States over $100,000 for the election campaign in 1989. Upon reaching customs in Warsaw, the money was discovered, laid out, and photographed. The regime wanted

[151] Gregory Domber, *Empowering Revolution*, 69.
[152] Adrian Karatnycky, "How We Helped Solidarity Win," *The Washington Post*, August 27, 1989.
[153] Arch Puddington, "Surviving the Underground: How American Unions Helped Solidarity Win," https://www.aft.org/periodical/american-educator/summer-2005/surviving-underground.
[154] Gregory Domber, *Empowering Revolution*, 73-76.
[155] Gregory Domber, "The AFL-CIO, the Reagan Administration and Solidarność," 287.

the media to talk about how foreign interests were influencing the Polish election, and thus they let him keep the money.[156]

While the money was necessary, it was the equipment that mattered the most to Solidarity's morale. Wiktor Kulerski, a member of Solidarity's national office, argued that the aid gave them the knowledge that they were not alone. The press created almost solely through the AFL-CIO's contributions, was vital in this morale. Kulerski compared it to machine guns in war. He argued that the underground press was the sole way for Solidarity to continue to garnish support, and thus the only way to keep it alive. Irena Lasota summed it up by saying:

> The press quite simply allowed Solidarity to survive during martial law. It kept people informed. It also gave Solidarity activists a sense of unity and comradeship and a purpose...For some in Poland the only sign that Solidarity was alive came through the press. And in some regions, it was the only source of real news.[157]

In addition to cash, the AFL-CIO sent printing presses, dozens of computers, hundreds of mimeograph machines, thousands of gallons of printer's ink, hundreds of thousands of stencils, video cameras, and radio broadcasting equipment.[158] Due to his first-hand knowledge of Poland, Miroslaw Dominczyk organized most of the smuggling of equipment. One time, he had a bus driver take elderly Poles from England to Poland. The driver left his keys at a prearranged spot, where underground activists grabbed the equipment, returned the keys, and left the investigators without any clues. The regime, although positive it had happened, thus had no proof as the keys were still there, the driver had no idea what they were talking about, and all equipment was gone. Another time, Dominczyk decided to bring the underground activists to London. He disguised them as tourists, taught them how to take apart and reassemble printing presses, and then sent each person back with a single part of the press.[159]

The underground was not always successful. The regime detained people, let others go while waving their smuggled goods in front of government TV cameras. Many times the smugglers could not make it into Poland. Most smuggled equipment had to be brought in via

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[156] Arch Puddington, "Surviving the Underground."
[157] Arch Puddington, *Lane Kirkland: Champion of American Labor*, (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2005), 185.
[158] Adrian Karatnycky, "How We Helped Solidarity Win."
[159] Arch Puddington, "Surviving the Underground."

Sweden, by the ICFTU or Swedish trade unions like the LO, who reluctantly agreed to work with the AFL-CIO after earlier hostilities.[160] The biggest disaster for Solidarity came in 1987 when authorities stopped three trucks in Gdańsk. The Polish authorities confiscated fourteen duplicating machines, five copying machines, 9,500 duplicating machine matrices, seventeen sets of light-sensitive matrices, a radiotelephone, and printing material. The equipment was unloaded, laid out in the sports stadium, and then shown on the television news as evidence of "subversive maneuverings of the enemies of Polish socialism."[161] Still, when the event became international news, Kirkland simply shook his head, shrugged, and said: "send more."

The importance of Solidarity's underground press cannot be understated. After the declaration of martial law, the Polish media went from one of the freest in the Eastern Bloc to one of the strictest. Under martial law, the authorities dissolved the Polish Journalists' Association, and charged it with "undertaking actions conducive to the dismantling of state and social institutions of public information." The Newspaper Guild, an affiliate of the AFL-CIO, immediately set up a fund for journalists forced out of their jobs, and for the some-odd sixty journalists now in prison. Guild President Charles A. Perlik, Jr. not only supported the Association, an affiliate of Solidarity, but argued that its replacement was "the voice of no one but the discredited government."[162] It was hard for Poles to find news they cared about, and Solidarity's Underground Press filled that void along with operations like Radio Free Europe. [163]

Despite the constant threats, the underground members utilized the resources given to them by the AFL-CIO to conduct a significant news campaign. By 1985 alone, there were over four-hundred underground periodicals, thousands of books and pamphlets each year, video documentaries seen by millions, and Radio Solidarity. Radio Solidarity, using AFL-CIO equipment, managed to hijack the government-controlled airways to scream out "Solidarity lives," thus continuing to give Poles hope even in the bleakest of times. The underground also

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[160] Eric Chenoweth, "AFL-CIO Support for Solidarity," 6.
[161] Arch Puddington, "Surviving the Underground."
[162] AFL-CIO News, April 1, 1982: Newspaper Guild Raising Funds for Polish Journalists. Box 44, Folder: Poland, 1982-1985. Vertical Files. American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations Records, George Meany Archive, Special Collections, University of Maryland, College Park.
[163] Additionally, the AFL-CIO worked with Radio Free Europe to thwart Polish censorship. The importance of Radio Free Europe has been studied extensively by scholars. See works such as Richard Cummings's *Cold War Radio: The Dangerous History of American Broadcasting in Europe, 1950-1989* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland &. CO, 2009), George R. Urban's *Radio Free Europe and the Pursuit of Democracy: My War Within the Cold War* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997), and Arch Puddington's *Broadcasting Freedom: The Cold War Triumph of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2000).

published comic books retelling Polish legends but changing the characters to resemble issues of the day. The villains were always adapted to resemble Jaruzelski, while Walesa was a knight carrying the Solidarność banner. The publications were so popular that they even managed to find their way into the jail cells where Solidarity activists read them. Even the jailed managed to write publications and smuggle them *out* of prison and into the public. In a bittersweet story, cellmates Adam Michnik and Czeslaw Bielecki argued and debated the identity of Poland's most popular underground writer—Maciej Poleski. Poleski wrote thunderous essays on workers' rights that thousands read. It would not be until nearly a decade later that Michnik would find out that his cellmate had been pulling his leg for years. As it turned out, Bielecki had been smuggling essays out under the pseudonym Maciej Poleski.[164]

By 1987, two years before the election that took down the regime, Solidarity was looking for ways to move above-ground. Although still outlawed, it was still popular enough to call the regime's bluff now that martial law was over. One example of this was Solidarity's public request for medical supplies and aid. During the 1980s, the Polish government had been unable to maintain public health and medical supplies for the country. Solidarity, well aware of this, publicly asked the United States for medical aid for Poland. The AFL-CIO met this request by channeling it through the International Rescue Committee to the union's still illegal Social Foundation. The assistance bought ambulances, diagnostic equipment, and medicine for the Poles. The idea worked as even the Polish police did not dare to stop the flow of medical aid to a country facing a health-care crisis. At public ceremonies in several cities, uncomfortable and infuriated local party leaders stood stone-faced alongside pro-Solidarity clergy and union leaders next to sparkling new ambulances adorned with the "Solidarność" logo.[165] It was no wonder when asked why the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) was not more involved in the fight, Director of Central Intelligence William Casey simply laughed and said that he thought the AFL-CIO and company were doing a first-rate job and that if the CIA got involved, they would probably just "screw it up."[166]

In 1987, Solidarity's leaders inadvertently derailed the AFL-CIO's well-oiled machine. On December 23, 1986, the AFL-CIO delegation were denied visas to Poland unless they met

[164] Adrian Karatnycky, "How We Helped Solidarity Win."
[165] Adrian Karatnycky, "How We Helped Solidarity Win."
[166] Gregory Domber, *Empowering Revolution*, 109-110. It should be noted, according to Domber, that the CIA did help with the smuggling after 1982, but Casey maintained that they let Kirkland lead the way and simply provided the channels via Sweden and other allies.

with the state-sponsored unions. Kirkland and his delegation were attempting to get into Poland so they could speak with Walesa and members of the Underground Solidarity council regarding sanctions. The remaining sanctions, which had been in place since 1981, were under review to be lifted entirely. Kirkland, having heard whispers that Solidarity was now in favor of their removal, waited for Walesa and Solidarity's signal before changing the AFL-CIO's stance on the matter. Walesa had his right-hand man, Jerzy Milewski, write Kirkland a personal letter shortly after Reagan announced he would lift sanctions. He told Kirkland that "because Polish official propaganda has been persistently using [sanctions] as an excuse for the imposition of repeated and drastic decreases in the standard of living of the Polish workers," he supported their repeal.[167] Kirkland, who would not meet Walesa face-to-face until an emotional embrace in 1989, simply agree to reverse the AFL-CIO's stance. On February 16, 1987, the Executive Council announced that because "the leadership of Solidarność now favors the removal of the sanctions…in the hope that this action will encourage the Polish government to enter on the road of positive change…the AFL-CIO withdraws its objections to the lifting of sanctions against Poland."[168]

Despite assurance they were following Solidarity's lead on the matter, the AFL-CIO did call upon the administration to "link the timing of lifting of the sanctions to concrete steps by the Polish authorities towards the goals expressed by Solidarność."[169] The AFL-CIO argued that the administration should wait for the remaining political prisoners to be released, and that any sort of democratic movement should not be proposed by the United States but come from within Poland. Here, the AFL-CIO once again gives sole agency to Solidarity rather than any outside force. Privately, Kirkland was still a little stunned by Solidarity's perceived change of tone, but months later, Walesa wrote a personal letter to Kirkland acknowledging that he had surprised Solidarity's supporters in regards to his stance on lifting sanctions. His motives, Walesa claims, were to outsmart the Polish regime who was going to "initiate a vast propaganda campaign

[167] Gregory Domber, "The AFL-CIO, the Reagan Administration and Solidarność," 291-293.
[168] Executive Council Statement, February 16, 1987. Box 45, Folder: Poland: Labor, 1982-1984. Vertical Files. American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations Records, George Meany Archive, Special Collections, University of Maryland, College Park.
[169] Executive Council Statement, February 16, 1987.

against me." [170] Walesa, in the same letter, then stated "I am counting on your understanding and I would very much like to meet you one day."[171]

The hard work of the Underground, Solidarity, the AFL-CIO, and the international labor community began to pay off in the fall of 1987. The Polish government had been in an unbreakable deadlock between reformists and traditionalists for years. As another attempt to reform the crumbling economy failed, General Jaruzelski agreed to democratize Poland. Pressure came from Solidarity, a divided Communist Party, the new Soviet policies of *glasnost* and *perestroika*, and the abandonment of the Brezhnev Doctrine. Jaruzelski had been afraid of political instability since 1981, and strikes broke out at the beginning of 1988 over the withering economic conditions. Jaruzelski's government offered Solidarity a deal: get the workers to stop striking, and Jaruzelski would legalize Solidarity. After these talks stalled, Jaruzelski, on the suggestion of his prime minister, took a disastrous gamble. The Polish authorities offered to hold an election to prove once and for all that Solidarity was not the authentic Polish voice.[172]

On April 6, 1989, Solidarity finally achieved the goal the world had been demanding since December 13, 1981: it was legalized. As a legitimate union, the press came above ground, members drew up economic plans, and the elections began after months of the Round Table negotiations. The negotiations resulted in sixty-five percent of the seats in the national legislature, the Sejm, being up for election, the creation of a Senate, which would have all one hundred seats up for election, and the two bodies would elect a president. Solidarity was cautious, if not pessimistic. They did not believe the communist government would allow fair elections. The Communist Party still had a monopoly on the official media. Yet, much to the shock of almost everyone involved, the election was a gamble that the Polish United Workers Party lost. Throughout the election, Frontlash had launched book drives, guest speakers, and events across college campuses to show moral support for Solidarity.[173] Monetary and material support continued to flood in, and the AFL-CIO kept a close watch on the events unfolding.

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[170] An interesting question is the language of the letter. Walesa never learned English, and to the writer's knowledge, Kirkland did not know Polish. No translator has ever been given. Also, the regime would frequently steal Walesa's mail, so it safe to assume that the letter was probably smuggled, perhaps being translated along the way.
[171] Gregory Domber, "The AFL-CIO, the Reagan Administration and Solidarność," 291-293.
[172] Gale Stokes, *The Walls Came Tumbling Down*, 138-144.
[173] Eastern Europe Youth and Democratic Revolutions Organization Kit. Box 9, Folder 8: Eastern Europe Action Items. Frontlash Papers. American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations Records, George Meany Archive, Special Collections, University of Maryland, College Park.

Instead, Solidarity swept away communism in a tidal wave of success. Solidarity won ninety-nine out of one-hundred seats in the Senate and all one-hundred sixty-one Sejm seats.[174]

With that, Solidarity's nearly decade long struggle came to a close. Shortly after the decisive win, Tom Khan, now the Director of the International Affairs Department for the AFL-CIO, gave a speech saying:

> In the years when Solidarność functioned underground, there were voices in our government and even some in the international free trade union movement who were prepared to write off Solidarność as a noble but failed experiment…The AFL-CIO rejected this course and not only maintained but substantially increased its assistance for Solidarność. We did so not out of certainty that they would succeed but out of the moral principle of trade union solidarity…Plainly put, we did what we had to do. We feel, of course, thoroughly vindicated.[175]

The AFL-CIO continued to support Solidarity through the transition and even extended their support to help democratization in Hungary and other former Warsaw Pact nations. In November 1989, Walesa finally came to the United States to speak to Congress and the AFL-CIO. A few months later, in April 1990, Kirkland finally went to Poland. Kirkland and his wife were greeted in Gdańsk with cheers as they stepped onto the shipyards that had captured their attention for a decade. During his visit, Kirkland stopped by the gravestone of Father Jerzy Popieluzko, a pastor who had been killed by the regime for his support of Solidarity. As he laid flowers down on Popieluzko's grave, the church caretaker approached him. The caretaker told him that "at each mass during martial law, Father Popieluzko included the name Lane Kirkland in his prayers." Kirkland, overcome with emotions, simply bowed his head and mourned.[176]

[174] Gale Stokes, *The Walls Came Tumbling Down*, 142-149.
[175] Tom Kahn Address, July 6, 1989. Box 9, Folder 8: Eastern Europe Action Items. Frontlash Papers. American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations Records, George Meany Archive, Special Collections, University of Maryland, College Park.
[176] Arch Puddington, *Lane Kirkland: Champion of American Labor*, 190.

Conclusion: The Role of Non-State Actors and Organized Labor in the Cold War

The story told in this thesis is ultimately about the power of non-state actors (NSA). The Cold War is traditionally told through the lens of larger than life figures like Ronald Reagan, Mikhail Gorbachev, and Pope John Paul II. Yet, as this thesis argues, 1989 was not simply their story. The revolutions of 1989 were the result of non-state actors like the AFL-CIO, who developed relationships and relentlessly pursued the end of communism. Without the work and dedication of NSA's, 1989 would have simply been another year of the Cold War.

Despite what some may argue, the AFL-CIO and organized labor are non-state actors. The AFL-CIO was not an agent of the United States government. In the case of Poland and Solidarity, the AFL-CIO conflicted with both the Carter and Reagan administrations over how to best handle the situation. Members of the AFL-CIO continued to donate money to the Polish Aid Fund and attend rallies that were sometimes at conflict with official government foreign policy. The Executive Council argued first with the Carter administration over recognizing and supporting Solidarity. With Reagan, the EC fought over sanctions, the Polish debt, and relations with Western Europe.

On the international scale, the AFL-CIO was one of many labor unions working both with and against their governments to support Solidarity. The Polish crisis demonstrates an international effort of which the AFL-CIO was involved in. It worked with organizations such as the ICFTU, the Danish LO, the British TUC, and the ILO to funnel equipment and donations into Poland. This bought of labor unity demonstrated that the AFL-CIO could work with international labor unions, and it did not conduct a strictly self-centered foreign policy.

Throughout the Cold War, NSA's like the AFL-CIO had to perform delicate balancing acts. The AFL-CIO had to take on many roles and policies without ever using a one-size-fits-all solution. Even if they were working with the Carter administration to pass domestic legislation, they had to work against them to support Solidarity. They had to find the balance between supporting Solidarity as a fellow trade union and appearing as its puppet master. This particular balancing act was the most important, and symbolic of the same balancing act many NSA's found themselves performing. It was vital that change in the Iron Curtain came from *within*, and it should not appear to come from outside. That is why the

AFL-CIO did not push Solidarity to do anything they didn't want to do. Instead, they championed whatever decisions Solidarity leaders made and supported it as a union before a democratic movement. Never did the AFL-CIO threaten Solidarity or act in their disinterest, even when they did not agree with Solidarity's plans. As Tim Khan pointed out, the AFL-CIO stood behind Solidarity no matter what.

One of the largest benefits of NSA's is the opportunity to develop close and personal relationships. These relationships were vital in bringing about the 1989 revolutions. Everyday people needed to have anchors to the world beyond the Iron Curtain, and in the case of Solidarity members, those anchors were with fellow trade unionists. Journalists in Poland and the United States formed bonds through the Newspaper Guild. Families were fed by those in agriculture like the Grain Millers. Press equipment was paid for by Frontlash and smuggled into Poland by networks of families and friends from the United States.

It was these relationships and the AFL-CIO's support that led Walesa to finally speak to the United States Congress and the AFL-CIO in November 1989. A few months later, in April 1990, Kirkland finally went to Poland. Kirkland and his wife were greeted in Gdańsk with cheers as they stepped onto the shipyards that had captured their attention for a decade. During his visit, Kirkland stopped by the gravestone of Father Jerzy Popieluzko, a pastor who had been killed by the regime for his support of Solidarity. As he laid flowers down on Popieluzko's grave, the church caretaker approached him. The caretaker told him that "at each mass during martial law, Father Popieluzko included the name Lane Kirkland in his prayers." Kirkland, overcome with emotions, simply bowed his head and mourned.[177]

[177] Arch Puddington, *Lane Kirkland: Champion of American Labor*, 190.

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Appendix

AFL: American Federation of Labor

AFL-CIO: American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations

CIO: Congress of Industrial Organizations

CPUSA: Communist Party of the United States

ICFTU: International Confederation of Free Trade Unions

ILO: International Labor Organization

LO: Danish Free Trade Unions
Swedish Free Trade Unions

MKS: InterFactory Strike Committee

TUC: British Trade Union Congress

UAW: United Auto Workers