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BOOK REVIEW

LETTERS FROM PRISON AND OTHER ESSAYS by Adam Michnik. Translated by Maya Latynski. Foreword by Czeslaw Milosz. Introduction by Jonathan Schell. Berkeley, Cal.: Univ. of California Press, 1986, Pp. xlii, 354.

Reviewed by Jeffrey Goldfarb*

I

The struggle for a free public domain, where citizens in their plurality as equals speak and act in the presence of others, is a fundamental component of the struggle for human dignity and rights in the twentieth century. Without citizens' rights, people have become nonentities. Without such rights, they have been subjected to systematic totalitarian terror. Hannah Arendt has cogently illuminated the "origins of totalitarianism" as a development of de-politicization—as a destruction of citizenship rights and responsibilities.¹ Her hope for the future, the postscript of totalitarianism, was for citizens to begin anew. Adam Michnik is a major author of this postscript.

Michnik began early. In a Warsaw high school where he was subjected to disciplinary action, he organized an informal discussion group among his fellow pupils. From there his political career began in earnest. As a university student in 1968, he was a leader of demonstrations demanding more freedom in Polish universities. Because of these activities, he was arrested and imprisoned for eight years out of the last seventeen. Out of prison, he has been one of the leading figures in the Polish democratic movement. His activity did not simply reflect the movement, but, in an important way, shaped the character of the movement.

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1. The phrase comes from the title of her book, H. ARENDT, *THE ORIGINS OF TOTALITARIANISM* (1966).

In the 1960s, Adam Michnik, student activist, started as a neo-Marxist of sorts: the child of Communist parents and a student of Leszek Kolakowski, among others. His political work was dedicated to making the existing socialist system more humane. In the 1970s, his understanding of politics and ethics shifted in significant ways. In his writing, he turned from the existing socialist order and explored means for fundamental social transformation. He investigated Spanish labor unions as possible models for Poles in their search for independent political means to resist tyranny. He inventively searched Polish history with one central pressing question in mind—what is to be done? As a Polish leftist, never abandoning the Polish socialist tradition, he challenged secular intellectuals to reconsider their attitudes toward the Catholic Church in *The Church, The Left: A Dialogue*. In his most politically creative work, an essay on “The New Evolutionism,”² he formulated the fundamental principles and strategy which animated the political action of KOR (The Committee to Defend Workers) and Solidarity.

Michnik was deeply engaged, as an activist, in the politics of the democratic opposition in the 1970s, but his pen, more than his specific organizational and political actions, was his most powerful political weapon. The volume under review indicates the full scope and strength of Adam Michnik as an author of the democratic postscript to totalitarianism. The essays were written over a period of a dozen years, presenting an alive, open, historical imagination centered on democratic political principle, coupled with intense ethical commitments. The man’s words reveal the persistence of his political creativity in the most trying of circumstances. Moreover, they constitute a textured, democratic political culture.

His letters from prison reveal this most directly.³ He expresses strong political conviction, animated with tolerance for those who disagree. He maintains absolute ethical values which guide his political actions and thoughts, as well as profound understanding for those who honorably hold different convictions based on divergent ethical judgments. He argues for his position

2. A. MICHNIK, *LETTERS FROM PRISON AND OTHER ESSAYS* 135-48 (1986) [hereinafter *LETTERS*].

3. *Id.*, at 3-99.

by turning away from ideological clichés and combining impassioned poetic insight with dispassionate political reason. In the seven letters from prison reprinted in this volume, Michnik became a major political force in opposition to martial law—a force that prevailed.

On December 13, 1981, a state of war was declared by the Polish authorities against the purportedly anti-socialist elements in the leadership of Solidarity. In fact, the Polish regime declared war against Polish society. All telephones were disconnected, except those required by the repressive force. Most of the official print and broadcast media were silenced. Public transportation and communication were severely limited. There was a real absence of “free speech.” Ten thousand people were arrested and interned, Adam Michnik included. In prison, he began to write. He offered his general view of the “Polish war.” He critically appraised efforts by the regime to co-opt the opposition. He commented on recent events, cognizant of centuries of Polish history.

Michnik explains his starting point: “[t]he entire body of experience of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century underground activities serves today as a book of knowledge about the values and methods of illegal resistance. This book must be re-read, so that we can adapt old examples to new situations.”⁴ When he wrote letters to friends, counseling them on emigration⁵ and signing letters promising to desist from anti-state activities,⁶ or when he wrote letters of denunciation of the Polish Minister of the Interior (the head of the secret police),⁷ he was actively engaged in such rereading of history, with poetic irony. Here is his account of the imposition of martial law, written in February 1982:

The war was declared on the Poles without a moment's notice. In the future, the historian will appreciate the precision of the strike, the excellent timing, the efficiency of the action. The historian will appreciate the consis-

4. *Id.*, at 51.

5. A. MICHNIK, *Why You Are Not Emigrating. . . : A Letter From Bialoleka*, in *LETTERS*, *supra* note 2, at 16-24.

6. A. MICHNIK, *Why You Are Not Signing. . . : A Letter From Bialoleka Internment Camp*, in *LETTERS*, *supra* note 2, at 3-15.

7. A. MICHNIK, *A Letter To General Kiszczak*, in *LETTERS*, *supra* note 2, at 64-70.

tency with which the enemy's resistance was overcome, and the poet will certainly sing the praises of the brilliant military victories that took place in the streets of Gdansk and in the yards of Warsaw factories—in the steelworks, mines, and shipyards. By capturing with an outflanking movement the Polish radio and television building, not to mention the telephone exchange, General Jaruzelski has covered the Polish armed forces with glory. Indeed, not since Jan Sobieski's siege of Vienna has any of our military leaders been able to claim such a success. Now musicians will compose symphonies, artists will design wreaths, and film directors will make patriotic films—all to honor the generals of that December night. The Council of State will certainly vote a new decoration for participation in the campaign of December, 1981⁸

Michnik starts by clearly characterizing the absurdity of the Polish situation and goes on to analyze its tragedy. With a cool analytical blade, he compares the events of 1956 in Poland and Hungary and the Prague Spring of 1968 with the Solidarity period, and sums up poetically, "One can hardly speak of 'socialism with a human face,' rather, one must speak of 'communism whose teeth have been knocked out,' communism that could no longer bite and no longer knew how to defend itself under attack from organized society."⁹ In these letters Michnik offers periodic appraisals of the recent and distant past as guides for future action. He counsels an understanding of mistakes and reappraisal of past strategies, without recrimination. He reviews a dark situation with optimism:

[I]n this struggle there are no final victories, but neither are there—and here is a slight reason for optimism—any final defeats . . . so I wish my good friends, especially those who are being pursued and who are fighting, much strength to allow them to cross the empty darkness that stretches between despair and hope. And much patience to allow them to learn the difficult art of forgiveness.¹⁰

8. LETTERS, *supra* note 2, at 25-26.

9. LETTERS, *supra* note 2, at 27-28.

10. LETTERS, *supra* note 2, at 40.

Michnik analyzes history and social structure with the sharpness of a professional social scientist. As a political writer, he counsels deliberation and reconciliation, using humor to cool hot heads, and metaphor to suggest rational action. Ethics, reason, deliberation, and reconciliation are his themes and are all necessary for the rule of the people to be attractive, in the words of our Founding Fathers, to be other than "rule of the rabble." Given the depth and longevity of political repression in Poland and the absence of successful modern democratic experience, that Michnik's writing form and explicit message embody these central democratic-republican virtues is of tremendous significance. But we should not forget that he is a passionate writer and man. His commitment to human dignity is absolute with intense hatred for those who attack it. The daily compromise of dignity under the totalitarian system contrasts sharply with the attraction of the Polish people to Michnik's subtle, ironic, and difficult moral message—"to learn the difficult art of forgiveness."¹¹

II

In late 1983, Michnik was imprisoned and charged with treason. General Czeslaw Kiszczak, the Minister of Internal Affairs, gave him a choice. As reported by Michnik, "either I spend next Christmas on the Cote d'Azur or else I will be facing trial and many years in jail."¹² In an open letter to the General, Michnik interpreted the significance of the offer:

I am writing this letter exclusively on my own behalf, but I have reason to believe that thousands of people in Poland would agree with me. I have reached the conclusion that your proposal to me means that: 1. You admit that I have done nothing that would entitle a law-abiding prosecutor's office to accuse me of "preparing to overthrow the government by force" or "weakening the defensive capacity of the state" or that would entitle a law-abiding court to declare me guilty. I agree with this.
2. You admit that my sentence has been decided long

11. *Id.*

12. LETTERS, *supra* note 2, at 65.

before the opening of my trial. I agree with this. 3. You admit that the indictment written by a compliant prosecutor and the sentence pronounced by a compliant jury will be so nonsensical that no one will be fooled and that they will only bring honor to the convicted and shame to the convicts. I agree with this. 4. You admit that the purpose of the legal proceedings is not to implement justice but to rid the authorities of embarrassing political adversaries. I agree with this. From here on, however, we begin to differ. For I believe that: 1. To admit one's disregard for the law so openly, one would have to be a fool. 2. To offer a man, who has been held in prison for two years, the Cote d'Azur in exchange for his moral suicide, one would have to be a swine. 3. To believe that I could accept such a proposal is to imagine that everyone is a police collaborator.¹³

Here is Michnik at his best: logical and ironic, working with common sense, but breaking out of cliché. In his four "agreements" with Kiszczak, Michnik unmaskes the logical implications of the General's offer of exile. He reveals the official lie. He shows what it means in truth. Everyone knew the charges of treason were trumped up. It took Michnik to illuminate its moral implications, bringing "honor to the convicted and shame to the convicts."¹⁴ In his "differences" Michnik's talents shine. To call your political opponent a fool and a swine is not particularly innovative, nor persuasive. But what does one do when it is the case? Michnik has an answer, and reveals the ethical blindness of his adversary. The mere epithet becomes a true description of character with his third disagreement.

When Michnik, along with Zbigniew Bujak, the leader of underground Solidarity, and Father Jerzy Popieluszko, the slain pro-Solidarity priest, won the 1986 Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights Award, the Polish poet and Nobel Laureate, Czeslaw Milosz accepted Michnik's prize in his absence. Milosz described his "friend Adam" as a miracle. In the darkness of the twentieth century, in a dark corner of the globe, Adam remains hopeful. He not only continues to write, in and out of prison, a remarka-

13. LETTERS, *supra* note 2, at 66-67.

14. LETTERS, *supra* note 2, at 67.

ble act of hope in itself. He even combines severe realism, concerning this century's horrors, with a hopeful intellectual and political exploration for a better society, if not the "Good Society."

Having a sufficiently dark view of human prospects, he can be optimistic. Thus, he writes in prison with hope and brilliance—not only the letters reproduced in this volume, but full-scale historical and literary studies. While he was writing to Kiszczak, he was also working on *From the History of Honor in Poland*, a companion volume to Milosz's *Captive Mind*. Where Milosz, in exile in the 1950s, sought to explain how and why specific intellectuals became enthusiastic supporters of Marxism-Leninism and Communism, Michnik, in prison in the 1980s, sought to explain how others maintained their cultural and ethical independence. Michnik's underlying intellectual theme is the search for hope, dignity, and reason in the darkest of circumstances.

III

The letters from prison make up one-third of the collection under review. Other essays written during the Solidarity period, during the period of democratic opposition—the late 1970s—and earlier, complete the volume. Since these other essays were written during a decade of spectacular social, cultural, and political change in Poland, one would expect inconsistencies among them. Remarkably, this is not the case. Though they are part of the social change, emanating from the twists and turns of Polish history and determining that history, they nonetheless present a consistent set of ethical and political positions and a creative approach to interpreting history.

The visit of Pope John Paul II to his native land in 1979 was a key factor in the emergence of Solidarity. Up to that time, in the post-war period, there had been three major uprisings of Polish workers, in 1956, 1970, and 1976, one separate intellectual revolt in 1968, a persistent and pervasive distrust and even hatred of the political, social, and economic system by the population throughout the period, and after 1976, the beginnings of the establishment of alternative social and cultural institutions—social welfare, publishing houses, alternative educational enterprises, newspapers. The development of the "democratic

opposition," as all these alternative activities were labelled, epitomized national social attitudes towards the existing order and the meaning of Polish resistance. Yet, the experience and practice of totalitarian rule kept the opposition within relatively confined social circles. John Paul's visit changed this, Michnik explains, first as a social observer:

It will be a long time before anyone fully comprehends the ramifications of his nine-day visit. The phrase of the writer Julian Strykowski—"Poland's second baptism"—keeps coming to mind. Indeed, something odd did happen. Those very people who are ordinarily frustrated and aggressive in the shop lines were metamorphosed into a cheerful and happy collectivity, a people filled with dignity. The police vanished from the main streets of Warsaw and exemplary order reigned everywhere. The people who had been repressed for so long suddenly regained an ability to determine their own fate.¹⁵

Then Michnik acts as a moral analyst:

The democratic opposition fully respected the religious character of the pope's visit and did not try to take advantage of it to further any political goals. This is not to say that the visit/pilgrimage did not also have a political dimension. For some time before the arrival, the Western European press occasionally compared the pope's upcoming pilgrimage to Khomeini's return to Iran and his struggle with the Shah. This analogy was intended to suggest a parallel sense of the conflict between a dictatorial power, with its modernizing tendencies, and a social movement of protest which articulated itself through anachronistic ideas and retrospective utopias. But one can hardly imagine a greater misconception. The body of values and attitudes represented by the papal homilies and speeches had nothing to do with the spirit of integrity, or a desire to return to an era when the Church had "means of wealth" at its disposal and used those more than anything else. The pope said clearly, "There is no imperialism in the Church. There is only public ser-

15. LETTERS, *supra* note 2, at 160.

vice." It was also clearly stated that the Church wants to pursue its goals through nonpolitical means. In the popular perception, the pope's pilgrimage gave Poles the opportunity to express their true aspirations and aims; it was a national plebiscite. But it was not simply a question of choosing between Catholicism and atheism. I saw Catholics grinding their teeth as they listened to the pope. I saw atheists, meanwhile, deeply touched by the pope's words. "What are you in favor of?" we were all asked. "Of conformist consent to totalitarian coercion or of the inviolable right in God's and man's order of things for human beings to live in freedom and dignity?" An overwhelming majority of Poles chose the latter.¹⁶

Here Michnik highlights the emergence of a new national democratic consensus for freedom of religion and human rights. He goes on to cite particular Polish historical precedents for this emerging autonomous (from the Party-state) consensus: the heroic struggles of nineteenth century political rebels Jaroslaw Dabrowski and Romuald Traugutt, the martyrdom of Maksymilian Kolbe and Janusz Korczak, the experience of the Holocaust and the Warsaw uprising.

Michnik concludes his reflections on the Pope's visit with a subtle question:

Am I allowed to reject . . . culture based on Christian values, on faith, love, and hope? Anyone's reply to this most important question of a man's life risks sounding a little false. Everyone should answer it for himself and to himself. Because I believe that this system of values is rejected not only by those who continually violate human rights because of their positions, or by those who permit them to do so by remaining silent and following in Pontius Pilate's footsteps, but also by those who declare solidarity with these values, but defend them by way of dishonorable methods. I will not here make a list of those methods. Let me just say that when I listen to John Paul's homily in Cracow, I had a strange feeling. When the pope asked the faithful Catholics "never to forsake

16. LETTERS, *supra* note 2, at 162-63.

Him," he was also addressing me: a pagan. He was urging me to avoid those dishonorable methods.¹⁷

Here Michnik is not only the talented writer, but the astute practical philosopher and political strategist. He strongly identifies with "Poland's second baptism," but he, as a moral, thinking, acting agent, wants to draw the most fully humane conclusions. He knows from personal experience (remember, his parents were Communists) how destructive social utopias can be; how dreams of absolute good can yield absolute evil. So he affirms his commitment to Christian values of human rights with his fellow citizens, but then cautions them that this is not enough. He did not invent the non-violent, tolerant, pragmatic character of Solidarity, but in this passage he is bringing it into being.

Michnik identifies himself with Christian values, but calls himself a pagan. More is involved than a writer's conceit. The dignity of the human individual is not only the end of his politics. The search for dignity is, as well, the method of his thought and action. Apparently, he seeks to maintain his autonomy and dignity at all costs. As a "man of the left," he has contributed immeasurably to Polish political culture by helping forge an alliance between "enlightened" Western-oriented intellectuals and the Church (indeed a conservative Church). In doing this, though, he did not give up his independent position. He warns against the sacralization of politics even when he observes this is not the significance of the Pope's visit and the position of the Polish Church.

Individual independence, dignity, and judgment may in theory be inalienable rights, but as a practical matter, they must be constituted and defended in concerted action. We can observe this in Poland as results of grand political events of 1956, 1968, 1970, 1976, and 1980-81. Slowly, an autonomous public life, opposed to repressive authority, emerges. Human rights become a human accomplishment.¹⁸ But human rights and democracy are also products of political imagination.

Michnik's appreciation of the Church argues for an alliance

17. LETTERS, *supra* note 2, at 167-68.

18. J. GOLDFARB, ON CULTURAL FREEDOM: AN EXPLORATION OF PUBLIC LIFE IN POLAND AND AMERICA 153-54 (1982).

between the Church and secular intellectuals as a practical matter, but it does more. It demands religious and political freedom, as means and ends. It challenges secularists to consider seriously the contribution of the religious to the quest for social justice. It cautions the religious against dogmatism. Michnik surveys Polish history and contemporary politics in a similar normatively critical frame of mind.

IV

In the early seventies, in "In Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors,"¹⁹ Michnik used a remembrance of Jozef Pilsudski as a means to address the problems of Polish political culture. The essay was written under a pseudonym and received first prize in an emigré writing competition.

Pilsudski tends to be remembered as a hero or as a villain, as a crypto-Fascist or as a great nationalist. For Adam Michnik, he is a man, who, at certain parts of his life, accomplished a great deal, whose ideas about the Polish nation had much to say to the present generation, even if he ultimately succumbed to authoritarianism. He remembers that Pilsudski, the great national hero of the Socialists at the beginning of the century, was accused of being a "Russian seed" and "Jewish tool" by the super-nationalists of his day. Reflecting on the man's deeds, Michnik forthrightly changes his position on the Polish-Russian War, confessing an appreciation for the inter-war regime's ability to sustain an independent political culture, albeit in flawed circumstances. He contrasts Pilsudski's struggles for an independent Poland as a confederation of nations, with national chauvinism ascendant today both within official circles and within the opposition. In the late 1970s, there was a reborn cult of Pilsudski nurtured by the super-nationalists in the opposition. Michnik warns against this in the conclusion of his essay on Pilsudski.

I did not write, and did not intend to write, a congratulatory scroll for Jozef Pilsudski. For my generation, which has heard so many lies, truth is of the utmost importance. I have tried to write the truth about the events

19. LETTERS, *supra* note 2, at 221-22 (1986).

that took place at the beginning of this century because I consider them to be of the utmost importance. It is from those experiences that independence rose. But I am writing my own, rather personal view of Pilsudski and his role, and I would not like to forget the dark side as well Pilsudski died in 1935. In his last years many former comrades distanced themselves from him, while an unsavory mob of "adulators and rascals" grew to surround him. And yet the leaders of the Polish Socialist Party, perhaps even recent prisoners of Brzesc marched in his funeral procession. Why did they take part in this farewell? No doubt they were saying goodbye to their youth, to a segment of their lives. But surely it was not this alone. They were bidding farewell to a man who had given Poland and the Poles a sense of dignity, which is as essential to the health of a nation as oxygen is to the human body.²⁰

V

Ten years after Michnik wrote his essay on Pilsudski, and the Polish socialist tradition, he wrote one of his most controversial essays, "Conversation in the Citadel."²¹ It is very much the political companion piece to "Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors."²² In the latter, Michnik takes a generally popular Polish national figure, vilified by the Communists and overly glorified by their opponents, and illuminates his accomplishments without overlooking his significant flaws. For the development of an independent political culture, the piece facilitates the re-invigoration of the Polish left. It distances the left from political cliches: the necessity of choosing between workers' rights and national independence, the mythology of the good Lenin and the bad Stalin, and automatic anti- and philo-Semitism. Michnik suggests that national independence and democracy are the primary political projects, when ideological irrationalism and cant are identified and rejected. These are themes he developed even

20. A. MICHNIK, *In Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors*, in LETTERS, *supra* note 2, at 221-22.

21. A. MICHNIK, *Conversation in the Citadel*, in LETTERS, *supra* note 2, at 275-333.

22. A. MICHNIK, *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors*, in LETTERS, *supra* note 2, at 201-22.

more forthrightly in subsequent writing. In "Conversation in the Citadel," he brings these commitments to their logical democratic conclusion. This essay is a lesson in democratic reasoning, most strikingly apparent when opposed to the official truth.

In the essay, Michnik presents an appreciative assessment of the politics of Roman Dmowski and the political movement of National Democracy. This movement, strongly implicated in a variety of national chauvinism and proto-fascism, was the alternative political current to Pilsudski's socialism at the turn of the century. Michnik is aware of Dmowski's faults, but wants to analyze his strengths as well. Here is his overall assessment:

Roman Dmowski was an excellent analyst, but he was a prisoner of his phobias. He was the co-founder of Polish pro-independence thought and the co-culprit of Polish narrowness. He sowed the seeds of rationality in political thinking, yet carried the germs of xenophobia which caused gangrene in wide areas of intellectual life. He shaped Polish minds and depraved Polish consciences. He shaped them by developing the idea of a politics of activism, teaching about geopolitics, injecting harsh realism; he degraded them by formulating a concept of nation and an idea of Polishness that led straight to totalitarian solutions.²³

The essay was controversial because Michnik seems to emphasize Dmowski's astute geopolitical observations, his understanding that in politics there is a radical difference between an ethic of ultimate ends and the ethics of responsibility, and his conviction that the struggle for national sovereignty requires both the independent Polish institutions of everyday life (in education, social welfare, economic life, etc.) and clear though distant goals of national independence.

In an epilogue to his critics, Michnik explained his intentions:

[t]he intention behind "Conversation in the Citadel" was somewhat perverse: I wanted to interpret anew—through the eyes of one who had been formed by leftist tradi-

23. LETTERS, *supra* note 2, at 306-07.

tion—the content in the political concepts of the National Democrats and to uncover the values hidden beneath the thick layers of insult, resentment, and falsehood. I naturally concentrated on those motifs that characterize the wisdom and shrewdness of the National Democrats' political thought. Ideological polemics—the logic of political disputes—always make people exaggerate their adversaries' flaws and whitewash their own mistakes. This may be why I applied the opposite method in this article: I saw my own tradition in the crooked mirror of its dangers and deformations, and the National Democratic tradition in the brightness of its virtues. But I also pointed out the shadows in the thinking of the National Democrats, although admittedly I tried to understand their origins instead of unmasking their symptoms.²⁴

Michnik recognizes virtue in his political adversary.

This is not only an historical problem; a significant portion of the opposition identifies with the tradition of National Democracy. Their supreme value is not democracy and political independence, but nationalism and sovereignty. They, like their predecessors, sometimes flirt with national chauvinism and anti-semitism. By emphasizing their political virtues, Michnik attempts to "civilize" Polish political culture. When one views one's opponent as having integrity, not only are political liberty and tolerance possible, but so is a pluralistic search for the common good.

When officialdom faces opposition, disagreement or even unconventionality, it naturally condemns, censors, and represses. Since it claims a monopoly on truth and uses state power to enforce the truth, alternative views and ways of life are seen not only as different but as "objectively" false. Political discourse is constituted by a series of declarations, not by discussion. Different "ways to socialism" and new more humane Marxism may serve the powers and, therefore, flourish at some points, but they are always suspect. They are easily declared heretical—in official Newspeak: "anti-socialist," "counter-revolutionary," "bourgeois liberal," and repressed. "Socialist marketeers" be-

24. LETTERS, *supra* note 2, at 330.

come "capitalist inroads"; "true internationalists" become "rootless cosmopolitans." Michnik opposes such certainty, not only as an anti-communist or nationalist or leftist, but also as a profound democrat, committed to the deliberative reason that democracy requires. Operating in a political world strikingly lacking in democratic culture, he acts and writes as if one existed and, ironically, by doing so, it may be born. Here is a variation on an earlier opposition theme.

VI

The primary operative principle of the democratic opposition in the 1970s and of Polish society during the Solidarity period was a relatively simple one: to act as if one lived in a free society. This led people to act freely and liberated Polish society.²⁵ In some remarkable ways, the fruits of this liberation persist in the post-Solidarity period. People not only remember their experience of freedom, but despite considerable risk, sustain alternative autonomous social, political, and cultural practices and institutions from underground Solidarity to collective protests, independent publishing houses and educational enterprises. Now, though, conspiracy is necessary. Openness, the primary asset of the democratic opposition of the 1970s and of the Solidarity period, is dangerous. Conspiracy is the rule of the day and undersides of the Polish political culture have revealed themselves: political moralism, blind anti-communism, and new forms of ultra-nationalism.

In his historical and social investigations, Michnik addresses these problems. In his essay "Maggots and Angels,"²⁶ written while in the opposition in the late 1970s, he cautions against political moralism and hatred of those who compromise with the existing political order by reviewing the compromises of earlier Polish heroes. In "A Year Has Passed,"²⁷ he analyzes the democratic strengths and weaknesses of Solidarity when political repression was on the horizon. Finally, in "On The Resistance,"²⁸ he explains the foolhardiness of ultra-nationalism and extreme

25. J. GOLDFARB, *supra* note 18, at 66-101.

26. A. MICHNIK, *Maggots and Angels*, in LETTERS, *supra* note 2, at 169-98.

27. A. MICHNIK, *A Year Has Passed*, in LETTERS, *supra* note 2, at 124-31.

28. A. MICHNIK, *On The Resistance*, in LETTERS, *supra* note 2, at 41-63.

anti-communism seeking "instant change." Rather, Poles must organize themselves for a "long march," Michnik maintains, preparing alternative social, political, and cultural arrangements, so that when an opportunity arises for social change, it will be effective and just.

In "A New Evolutionism,"²⁹ Michnik wrote what proved to be a kind of theoretical constitution of the Polish democratic opposition and Solidarity. He analyzed the strengths and weaknesses of post-war strategies of social reform. He revealed that the nineteenth century choice between reform or revolution no longer exists. He realistically considered the complexity of Polish-Soviet relations and draws the "neo-evolutionist" conclusion that "a program for evolution ought to be addressed to an independent public, not to totalitarian power."³⁰ Acting as if it were free, Polish society freed itself in line with Michnik's ideas.

In his later essays, Michnik plants the seeds of a democratic political culture. As of this writing in April 1987, the fruits of his labors again seem ripe for the picking. A combination of Western—especially American—pressure and the persistence of Polish social resistance has led to a relaxation of official repression. Alternative democratic institutions, kept alive during martial law, are available for societal democratic practice. Gorbachev's reforms in the Soviet Union suggest that Michnik's compatriots may get another chance in advancing their postscript to totalitarianism. If they do so, the quality of Michnik's political imagination may make it more likely that the postscript is democratic.

29. A. MICHNIK, *A New Evolutionism*, in LETTERS, *supra* note 2, at 135-48.

30. LETTERS, *supra* note 2, at 144.