

Maryjane Osa.

Solidarity and Contention: Networks of Polish Opposition.

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Twenty five years ago, on July 9th 1980 the first day of a general strike took place in Lublin, an industrial city located in the southeastern provinces of Poland. The 'work stoppage' was an unprecedented phenomenon in Soviet Poland, and it was supported by the vast majority of the industrial and service sectors of the city. The general strike lasted from July 9th -20th 1980, and came to a dramatic climax when Lech Walesa said that "... railway workers found an effective way to disrupt international trade by welding an engine to the rails along the line leading to the Soviet Union". This political event was the cornerstone of the now famous August 1980 Lenin Shipyard strike in Gdansk, Poland, which sparked the creation of the expansive Solidarity movement, which sought social justice.

In *Solidarity and Contention: Networks of Polish Opposition* Maryjane Osa examines the nature of politics within a repressive non-democratic regime. Osa's data were derived from various sources that were unavailable until recently, which include: secret police documents, archival, government, group and individual publications. In this detailed and scholarly book, the author outlines the social, political and historical origins of the Polish Solidarity movement. By using a combination of master frame, network and protest cycle analyses she explains why collective mobilization in 1956, 1968, 1970 and 1976 *failed* while the political mobilization and social protest of 1980 resulted in the Solidarity social movement.

Through an intricate and well-documented network analysis Osa explains why student protests within university settings that were based on collective action frames arose in parallel to the Great Novena Roman Catholic religious social movement of the 1960s. According to Osa the political movements did not intersect until the mid-1970s when the secular intelligentsia and the Roman Catholic Church created a coalition during a period when censorship and surveillance had been relaxed and the Polish government had a more open economic policy towards the West. Osa argues that the structural changes in the oppositional networks and the development of cooperative and well coordinated political protests that included all Polish people under an *us versus them* master frame was the key to success for the 1980 political mobilization. In tandem with more relaxed government policies the Polish leaders of the Solidarity movement were symbolically and politically connected to the Roman Catholic Church, which enabled labour, intellectual and religious leaders to keep the public engaged in the process of political mobilization.

Osa applies Sidney Tarrow's cycle of protest model of periods of mobilization and demobilization to the Polish case. She suggests that social movement scholars who work on former Soviet or Eastern Bloc countries may need to use a revisionist approach while interpreting cycles of protest under regimes which do not have a functional civil society. In democratic capitalist societies political mobilization is usually based on social justice issues that address unionizing and nationalizing the private sectors of the economy. The Polish Solidarity movement was a social justice movement that protested the severe economic and human rights violations in the Polish state. In this social and historical context radical mobilization would be defined as a movement towards greater social

justice and privatization of the public economy. In 1980 the economic infrastructure of the Soviet regime was in serious decline and Polish workers in tandem with sectors of the Polish intelligentsia seized that moment in history to challenge the state. Thus, the leaders of the Solidarity movement were able, in spite of adversity, to sustain a political momentum that carried them through the 1980s to independence.

Osa's book is a well-organized discussion about the evolution of political protest under an authoritarian regime. On one hand Osa untangles the complicated web of Polish political and social history during a tumultuous period, and on the other she clearly outlines how each protest phase was an important step in the development of a national master action framework. This book is an interesting and thought-provoking historical analysis of a political system that no longer exists. The lessons that may be learned from this important case study will inform future studies on social movements.

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During the rise of the Polish Solidarity movement in 1980-1981, Valerie Zawilski was studying Polish Language and Literature at the Jagellonian University in Krakow, Poland. She has taught courses on social movements and has written articles on Russian Nationalism in Soviet and Post-Soviet Russia. In 2005, with Cynthia Levine-Rasky she co-edited *Inequality In Canada: A Reader on the Intersections of Gender, Race and Class* (Oxford University Press). She is presently preparing *New World Order* (Canadian Scholars' Press, spring 2007).

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