



World Without War Council

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News from the Eastern Front

A Special Report from Holt Ruffin, Executive Director

The World Without War Council was invited last spring by two independent Polish organizations, Solidarity Intervention and Lawfulness Commission and Freedom and Peace, to attend an International Human Rights Conference in Krakow, Poland, between August 25 and 28, and I attended, representing both the regional and national WWWC.

Neither of the two sponsoring groups has legal status in Poland. But the fluid and uncertain situation in that nation today made it possible to hold a four-day conference, attended by close to 1,000 people, without interruption. News of the conference was even broadcast on Polish television (without naming the sponsoring organizations, however, or the size of the event).

After the conference ended in Krakow, I traveled to Warsaw and Prague for meetings with a variety of figures in each capital: academics, underground journalists, members of Czechoslovakia's Independent Peace Association and Charter 77 . . . even Dubcek's former foreign minister, Jiri Hayek.

An account of the conference and these other meetings is given in a 28-page report just published by the WWWC. If you would like to have the full version of the report, please use the form enclosed with this newsletter to order a copy. The

excerpts beginning on page 3 are from that part of the report dealing with Poland.

Inevitably, even in the full report, much is left out: for example, the exhilaration of arriving in Poland on the overnight ferry from Sweden, at first seeing only the flat Baltic coastline and then, gradually rising, the cranes and towers of the Lenin Shipyards in Gdansk, where Lech Walesa works and the Solidarity movement was born. Or the experience of visiting Auschwitz-Birkenau with a group of conference participants, among whom was an American woman who was a former inmate of the camp and was now seeing it for the first time since 1944. Or the details of the conversations I had with many very impressive people.

Suffice it to say that the interest in the nonviolent, democratic struggle of the Polish and Czech people that I conveyed on behalf of the World Without War Council and its supporters--along with some small gifts of a material nature--were deeply appreciated. Both Solidarity with a capital "S" and lower case solidarity are important.

A few conclusions I returned with:

1. The people of Poland and Czechoslovakia want the West to stop looking upon them as "on the other side," as if they were condemned to