and he was sure that even if he died deep in the dark wood, history would note his sacrifice. Many of his friends did in fact die and others were deported to the Soviet Union. At eighteen, the writer, today so much admired for his surreal imagination, was tracking down, facing, and shooting to death neighbors whom the underground had condemned for their collaboration.

At the time I was visiting Konwicki, I had been in Poland for several months. I was progressively coming to view the conspiratorial details of ordinary life as impressive but hardly rare aspects of the social landscape, like sand dunes in the Sahara or ice crags in the Arctic. I had some time earlier established contact with a former steelworker, whose real name I never learned though we were to meet regularly for three years. To call him something, I called him Maciej. He would telephone me in the style of a drunken Pole to praise President Reagan and ask me to convey his thanks to the White House in the name of the entire Polish nation. That would be my signal to meet him two days later. I would drive around a large housing project until I saw him. He was my *kolporter*, a term that meant bootlegger of illicit publications. When I first heard people telling me that they were waiting for their *kolporter*, I imagined that the expression referred to Cole Porter and I playfully speculated whether there might be Polish cultists who revered the sophisticated songwriter as an avatar of enviable capitalist decadence in the way that some Asian hill tribes worship Victor Hugo. In fact, the word was simply imported from the French, in which it means hawker or peddler.

At our meetings, Maciej would deliver shopping bags of illegal publications that included factory newspapers, regional weeklies, literary monthlies, women's magazines, two different children's magazines, audiotapes, videocassettes, photo albums, posters, and books from a dozen underground publishers. In the beginning some of these materials were poorly produced, mimeographed and stapled together, but the quality improved considerably to rival that of official government-censored publications. In a police state where paper was rationed and printing

equipment monitored, the volume was remarkable. Unlike most of those involved in underground publishing, Maciej was a professional who made his living from the commissions he earned by distributing the materials. He said it was about as much money as he used to earn stoking a steel furnace.

One of the first items I bought from him was a pamphlet called "The Small Conspirator," a manual for clandestine activity that declared on its front page that it was prepared by "people who are at the moment free." The foreword added that if readers carefully studied the first section, entitled "How to Plot," they might find the subsequent section on how to deal with police and prosecutors to be superfluous. The booklet, which became an often reprinted best-seller, urged people to establish their own autonomous "firms" and to conspire in whatever ways they thought best. Some groups, it noted, were specializing in servicing printing equipment or securing apartments for fugitives or obtaining false identifications. Others were organizing clandestine unions at factories, sending radio bulletins from mobile transmitters, monitoring police radios, and trying to penetrate party and police circles.

The booklet offered concrete advice on how to select places for meetings, how to build and use networks of couriers, and how and where to establish "boxes," apartments or offices where messages could be left safely in the event that normal links of communication were cut by arrests. Novice conspirators were advised to keep things simple. Tricky codes should be avoided and people should not carry address books with them. The instructions noted that the pressures of secrecy can be punishing but it urged people to resist confessional temptations. If, however, people simply had to boast or unburden themselves, that should be done only with the most trusted friends in the safest surroundings. The booklet cautioned people to be constantly wary, keep phone conversations to a minimum, look out for shadowing agents and maintain vigilance even in churches. "Remember, the church is an open house, which means that it is also open to the police."

The final chapter consisted of mock interrogations to be used to prepare people for the eventuality of arrest. The authors suggested that people should refuse to make any statement, or to simply deny all charges and cling to that denial. "The Small Conspirator" also gave advice about how best to serve time in prison. "As with everything, sitting in prison has to be learned," wrote the authors. "There are people who are wonderful comrades in struggle, work, and play, but who are terribly tiresome as cellmates. To endure in the closed world of the cell, people have to lower their emotional register, become calmer and less ardent. You need to show more tact and less emotion than do people at liberty. As inmates we have to carefully plan our day. We have to force ourselves into a corset of our own making so that we are not strangled by the corset of prison regulations or by social pressure from fellow prisoners who we can never fully trust. In letters to your family you should never write what or who you are worried about since, remember, the letters are being read by prosecutors."

The pamphlet was intended to both inform and inspire. It was being read by high school students as well as workers and for the young readers warnings of hardships such as this one were also implied tests of courage. "People are most frightened of pain and isolation. Physical pain can be imagined. All of us have had experiences such as broken bones or visits to the dentist, but in these cases the pain is not of our choosing and all we can do is simply to bear our lots. But whether to accept the isolation of prison and torture involves matters of choice and raises questions that each one must answer on his own. Still, we should remember that sympathy for the weak and compassion for the suffering should not serve as a blanket exoneration for capitulation with the excuse that none of us know how we would act when they tear out our fingernails. There are many people who never had their fingernails extracted, but who poured everything out during a single police interview because as they later explained to themselves, they had a wife and children. Well, we should always

recall that we are in solidarity with people who also have wives and children."

Though the booklet carried no authors' names, it had, in fact, been compiled mostly by an outspoken and combative architect named Czesław Bielecki. Despite a height of six feet five inches and a personality that even his friends regard as belligerently provocative, Bielecki was able to thrive unobtrusively while the police searched for Maciej Poleski, the pseudonym under which he wrote. He set up an underground publishing house called CDN, an abbreviation that stands for To Be Continued, which produced "The Small Conspirator," among other works. According to reports he will neither confirm nor deny, he even produced a clandestine Solidarity newspaper for the army. When he was finally captured while visiting his two young sons, he followed the advice of his own manual to set records for prison obstinacy. For eleven months he held to a hunger strike, forcing his captors to feed him daily by pouring gruel into a bit clamped in his mouth. Within a week of his release in the amnesty of 1986, Bielecki was telling concerned friends that they should not have worried about him. "I knew exactly what I was doing," said the man whose weight dropped to 120 pounds. "I am a political creature and I will always make politics with whatever tools are available. In prison the only thing I had with which to fight Communism was my alimentary canal. But it worked. I knew I had them when the nurses started taking electrocardiograms three times a day. I could see that the guards were worried I was going to die and that cheered me tremendously. 'Look,' I told them, 'there's only one thing you can do and that is cut off my head, otherwise you should know that I have a radio transmitter stuck up my ass and every night I am reporting my condition on the Voice of America. Face it. You are through.' "

His pamphlet and dozens of other similar materials evoked all the images and symbols of Polish valor, from the anti-czarist uprisings of the nineteenth century to the resistance of the Second World War. From childhood, Poles are nurtured on legends of