

Register

Bronisław Kawecki

Polish dissident who campaigned for a memorial to the Radom workers' uprising that was brutally suppressed by the communists

Bronisław Kawecki spent much of his life campaigning for a memorial that was never built. Nevertheless, its beginning, as a simple granite block on a street corner in the Polish city of Radom, served as a lasting reminder of a defiant workers' uprising, the subsequent communist states brutal repression and the rise of the Solidarity union, in which Kawecki played a leading role.

In June 1976, Kawecki was working for a medical supply company when Radom became a central flashpoint in the burgeoning protests against the ruling regime. Thousands of demonstrators, including Kawecki, took to the streets after the announcement that food prices were to rise steeply. They marched on the local Communist Party headquarters, where they were met by riot police.

In the ensuing violence, the party offices were set alight, two protesters were killed and hundreds were injured and arrested. In the aftermath, further beatings and detentions ensued and many of those who had taken part lost their jobs.

Determined these events should not be forgotten, Kawecki began collecting testimonies from those who were assaulted, imprisoned and fired. His efforts cost him his own job and his freedom. Never did he consider abandoning his project — as time went on, he became ever more determined to preserve the memory of the oppression as a warning to future generations.

Even though it was never finished, the granite stone was highly symbolic and dangerous — just leaving flowers at the site was treated by the authorities as a political act. As Kawecki said, a stone that said nothing was still saying something, so long as somebody insisted on remembering what it stood for.

When the independent trade union Solidarity emerged in 1980, Kawecki helped to establish it in Radom. The following year he was the delegate for the Radom region at Solidarity's historic first national congress in Gdansk.

On December 13, 1981, the government banned Solidarity outright and

launched a nationwide crackdown. Kawecki was arrested and imprisoned. He and other Solidarity members were forced to endure harsh conditions and were regularly subjected to abuse — in detention they were required to run corridors of police bearing truncheons known as "health paths".

Born in Sandomierz in 1934, Bronisław Kawecki grew up in a state orphanage. His politics emerged early. During a school geography lesson, when he heard that Cuba had been liberated by the Soviet Union, he remarked that in the process it had also subordinated Cuba to itself. This angered the teachers and he was expelled.

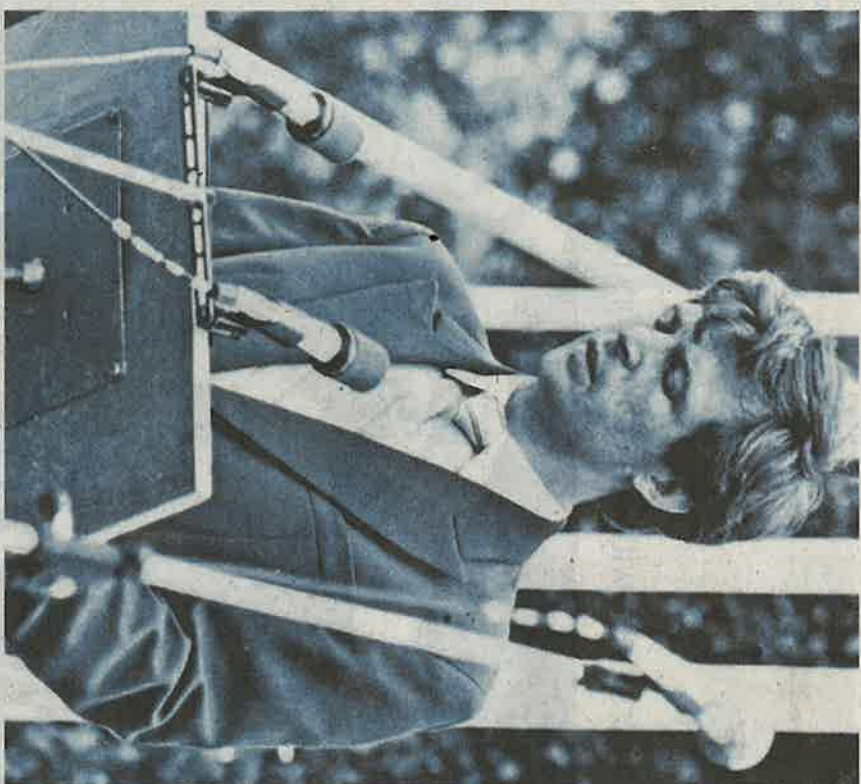
In 1973, a childhood friend fell from a tenth-floor window. "Sometime earlier the Citizens' Militia had beaten him after he suffered an epileptic seizure —

He and other Solidarity members were regularly subjected to abuse

the officers apparently assumed he was drunk. I saw the wounds covering his whole body at the hospital." Kawecki tried to organise a Catholic funeral but was told the official funeral notices needed state approval — "in the communist period these were subject to the same controls as the press," Kawecki said, and his friends wrote the notices themselves. "They were later torn down by the SB [security service]. We kept putting them back up anyway."

At the funeral, Kawecki gave the eulogy. As he was leaving, two security-service men approached and put him into a taxi. He was taken to a police station and held. Eventually he was let go but the episode cost him his job as a tutor at a state orphanage. He secured work for the medical supply company Cezal, where he subsequently started a branch of Solidarity.

It was in Kawecki's prison cell on Christmas Eve 1981 that the inmates lit a candle made from wax scraped off blocks of cheese. The wick was a boot



Kawecki helped establish the Solidarity union in Radom when it emerged in 1980

lace. With no communion water to share, they broke bread instead. They opened the window and sang a Polish carol. Cell after cell took up the carol, the guards pounding on doors trying to beat back the noise.

Kawecki was also instrumental in helping to organise a prisoners' revolt, a role that marked him out further to the security services who were already monitoring him. He was released in July 1982, only to lose his job. Undermined, over the next decade he helped to distribute underground newspapers, including *Wolny Robotnik*, which he co-edited, all the while being under

the watch of the security services. When communism finally gave way in 1989, Kawecki helped to found the Citizens' Committee of the Radom region and took part in the country's first free elections. But where many of his contemporaries went into formal politics, he stayed with the work he had always done, making sure the past was not quietly tidied away. He consulted on documentaries about the 1976 protests and about Father Roman Kotlarz, a priest whose death was widely linked to a beating by the security services. Kawecki was a central figure in *Kamien* (*The Stone*), a film about the unfinished

said in the Court of Appeal that such a document was "a wolf in sheep's clothing." "Did we say that?" asked the judge. The matter ended there and then.

Henry Andrew Cridland Densham was the eldest son of Mary Constance Densham (née Cridland) and Humphrey Ashley Densham, the owner of a leather tanning business in Bristol. After Tonbridge School and Bristol University, where he read law, Densham completed his legal training in Bristol and quickly moved to the offices of Burgess Salmon, where in due course he became senior partner. He sat, unusually, as a deputy recorder and circuit judge.

Densham's talent as a persuasive advocate was in full display at hearings in tribunals, arbitrations and the lower courts. They concerned a wide range of disputes between landlord and tenant, and had to grapple with the commercially significant consequences of production quotas imposed by Brussels. He had a commanding presence, spoke agreeably, knowledgeably and fluently, and was listened to with respect. But, despite encouragement, he never applied for the right as a solicitor-advocate to appear in the higher courts. One consequence of this was that it was left to members of the Bar to try to defend in the Court of Appeal some of the surprising decisions which lower tribunals, out

Andrew Densham

Respected solicitor in agricultural law who once had a run-in with Lord Denning over tea in the Royal Courts of Justice

In 1947 the Labour government, reflecting on the food shortages of the Second World War, determined to support and strengthen the domestic agricultural industry. Since the Agriculture Act of 1947, a steady stream of complex and at times contradictory legislation, domestic and European, has governed the sector. The solicitor Andrew Densham was the unrivalled legal expert in this field.

From 1969 until 2003, Densham was based in the offices of Burgess Salmon in Bristol but his reputation was nationwide. Equipped with a powerful car and a detailed knowledge of the road network, he was in demand from Cumbria to Cornwall and the western extremes of Wales. Much of his practice was conducted at the table in farmhouse kitchens or estate offices in remote locations.

Mentored in the practice by his predecessor Wilfred Scammell, he was the editor of the authoritative textbook on the law of agricultural holdings, Scammell and Densham, taking sole personal charge of the sixth edition in 1978. It is now in its 11th edition. Beyond his encyclopaedic command of the law, his appeal to clients lay in his great personal charm, a detailed technical knowledge of practical farming, a fearless commitment to his clients' interests and his skill as an advocate.



Densham's reputation was nationwide

An early demonstration of his mettle occurred in 1973 when an Invicta Airlines plane carrying 140 passengers, mainly women on a day's shopping outing from Bristol to Basel, crashed into a wooded hillside in Switzerland, killing 108 people. Acting for the families, Densham led a team which, after meticulous research, proved numerous shortcomings: the first pilot had no effective qualifications; the pilot and co-pilot committed many navigational errors; air traffic control at Basel neglected to give any warnings to the flight deck; and two of the beacons at Basel, which should have

of reverence or terror or a combination of the two, had reached in his favour. He felt that the pendulum had swung too far when parliament in 1976 and 1986 allowed two generations of the families of deceased or retiring tenant farmers to succeed to secure tenancies, and too far in the other direction when security of tenure was abolished altogether for tenants granted after 1995. Densham was a man of deep religious faith and for many years served as church warden in the parish of All Saints in the village of Wrington, Somerset, where he lived. In retirement he was chair of the Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution, and led the restructuring of the Bristol Cathedral Trust. He was appointed CBE in 2000 for services to the agricultural industry. He is survived by his wife Fiona and his three children: Edward (Ned), an accountant, Lucy, a mental health professional, and William, a solicitor. Densham retained a deep love for the countryside and an abiding admiration for the farming community. He became an expert in countless regional accents and variations in rural jargon and slang. But he never tackled Welsh.

Andrew Densham CBE, solicitor, was born on November 30, 1940. He died on July 10, 2026, aged 85

Bronisław Kawecki, Polish dissident, was born on April 29, 1934. He died of pneumonia and sepsis while being treated for a stroke on August 29, 2026, aged 72