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Conference: Values and social policy

Boston University Institute for Human Sciences

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Boston University
Jacek Kuron (March 3, 1934 - June 17, 2004) was one of the most important opposition leaders in Eastern Europe. Born in Lviv, into a Socialist family, he lived through World War II and the German occupation first in Lviv then in Warsaw. A historian and member of the communist party in his early years, he was one of the first intellectuals to openly criticize the communist regime. He was a co-founder of the Committee for the Defense of Workers in 1976 and was involved in the establishment of the Solidarity trade union in 1980. He served a total of nine years in prison before the collapse of communism in 1989. During 1989, he played a pivotal role in the Roundtable Accords and in the formation of the first democratic government, in which he served as Minister of Labor and Social Policy, taking upon himself, as usual, the most difficult and thankless task of reconciling market reforms with social protections. Gradually incapacitated by illness, he never stopped agitating for social justice and citizens' self-organization.