Starting the journal was part of overcoming an identity crisis. It was an act by which this group of émigrés would rebuild their sense of self—to return to a time before 1968 when their Polishness was not questioned. Jan Gross fell into a deep depression in the years after 1968. At the same time, he never allowed the so-called police nobility to have the last word about his identity: “Political emigration is—and people from the core of the March events, I think, all left with the conviction that they were political émigrés—an eternal Polish paradigm. The essence of patriotism in a way, isn’t it?” Irena Grudzińska recalls:

We were a team armed with pens. We believed that our role was to publicize the wrongs happening in Poland. We promoted the work of our friends to build a cocoon of international interest around the most vulnerable… we made and distributed translations, we created our own magazines, such as Aneks, we nurtured contacts with journalists, trade unions and politicians. I got involved in Italy, it helped me mentally.ii

After 1968 this group of émigrés was separated from both friends and home, but connected through the events that they had experienced—events that were traumatic for their sense of self. In another recent interview, Grudzińska asks: "Who am I then? In the case of us, the 1968 émigrés, the question of identity is a very important element of our biography.... I belong to a historical current from which I simply cannot exit. It pushes me just as it pushes others like me."iii Aleksander Smolar says that he had made up his mind about taking action during his first year abroad, a time during which felt utterly alone: “it was a time of reflection on what to do next, what I can do alone, what the new emigration can do... [M]y decision was less influenced by political calculations, and more by a sense of duty towards my friends... active and brave people in [Poland].”iv Eugeniusz Smolar describes overcoming a shock of loneliness, lack of prospects, and being labeled a Jew rather than a Pole. Elsewhere Aleksander Smolar paraphrases the Romanian-born writer and Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel: “‘my friends are my real homeland.’ My point of reference were my friends and my responsibility towards them.”v

The decision to send a political quarterly into Poland was a result of personal motivations combining with political interests, just as their pre-1968 discussion clubs were. It was for their friends, for the community that formed around the Warsaw discussion clubs—and even for a broader Polish intelligentsia community of opposition to the order that they were jailed for trying to improve—that they started Aneks. The phenomenon of personal and political collapsing into each other was responsible both for attacking their sense of self and making politics an act that could and did destroy lives—the simultaneous power and fragility of authoritarian government.