

Which Way Out for Pola

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This is the final part of a major article that appears in the forthcoming issue of The 80's, theoretical journal of the Communist Workers Party. It has been edited for the Workers Viewpoint. Part I printed last week traced the historical roots of the Polish workers' discontent, how the intolerable situation in the country today is the accumulated result of the revisionist lines and policies of the leadership of the Polish United Workers Party, and why Soviet intervention would be disastrous to the cause of strengthening socialism in Poland. The following deals with the significance of Solidarity and the question: Is there a structural guarantee for socialism?

Solidarity Necessary Counterweight To PUWP's Revisionism

The situation in Poland clearly shows that the workers are the driving force behind rectification of the PUWP. The bureaucratic line of the PUWP and its vast separation from the masses have come out full-bloom in the latest crisis.

It is clear that without Solidarity, workers would have no leverage to make the revisionists change. That's why we say that the new union must be supported and the right to strike guaranteed.

Precisely because of bureaucracy and corruption among the top officials of the government and the party, Lenin struggled against Trotsky's bureaucratic line on the trade unions under socialism. Lenin expanded on this later in his "Draft Theses on the Role and Functions of the Trade Unions Under the New Economic Policy":

"As long as classes exist, the class struggle is inevitable. In the period of transition from capitalism to socialism the existence of classes is inevitable; and the Programme of the Russian Communist Party definitely states that we are taking only the first steps in the transition from capitalism to socialism. Hence, the Communist Party, the Soviet government and the trade unions must frankly admit the existence of a class struggle and its inevitability until the electrification of industry and agriculture is completed—at least in the main—and until small production and the supremacy of the market are thereby cut off at the roots.

"From this it follows that at present we must on no account reject strikes and cannot, as a matter of principle, agree to a substituting obligatory state mediation for strikes.

"On the other hand, it is obvious that under capitalism the ultimate object of the strike movement is to break up the state machine and to overthrow the given class state power. Under the transitional type of proletarian state such as ours, however, the ultimate object of the strike movement can only be to fortify the proletarian state and the state power of the proletarian class by combating the bureaucratic distortions, mistakes and flaws in this state, and by curbing the class appetites of the capitalists who try to evade its control, etc. Hence, the Communist Party, the Soviet government and the trade unions must never forget and must never conceal from the workers and the mass of the working people that strikes in a state where the proletariat holds political power can be explained and justified only by the bureaucratic distortions of the proletarian state and by all sorts of survivals of the old capitalist system in the government offices on the one hand, and by the political immaturity and cultural backwardness of the mass of the working people on the other. For if the courts and all other state bodies are set up on a class basis by the working people themselves, and the bourgeoisie is excluded from the list of voters, then it will be to an increasing extent become normal for the working people to turn directly to the state bodies in order to settle disputes between labour and capital, and between employees and employers."

What Does Solidarity As An "Independent Union" Mean?

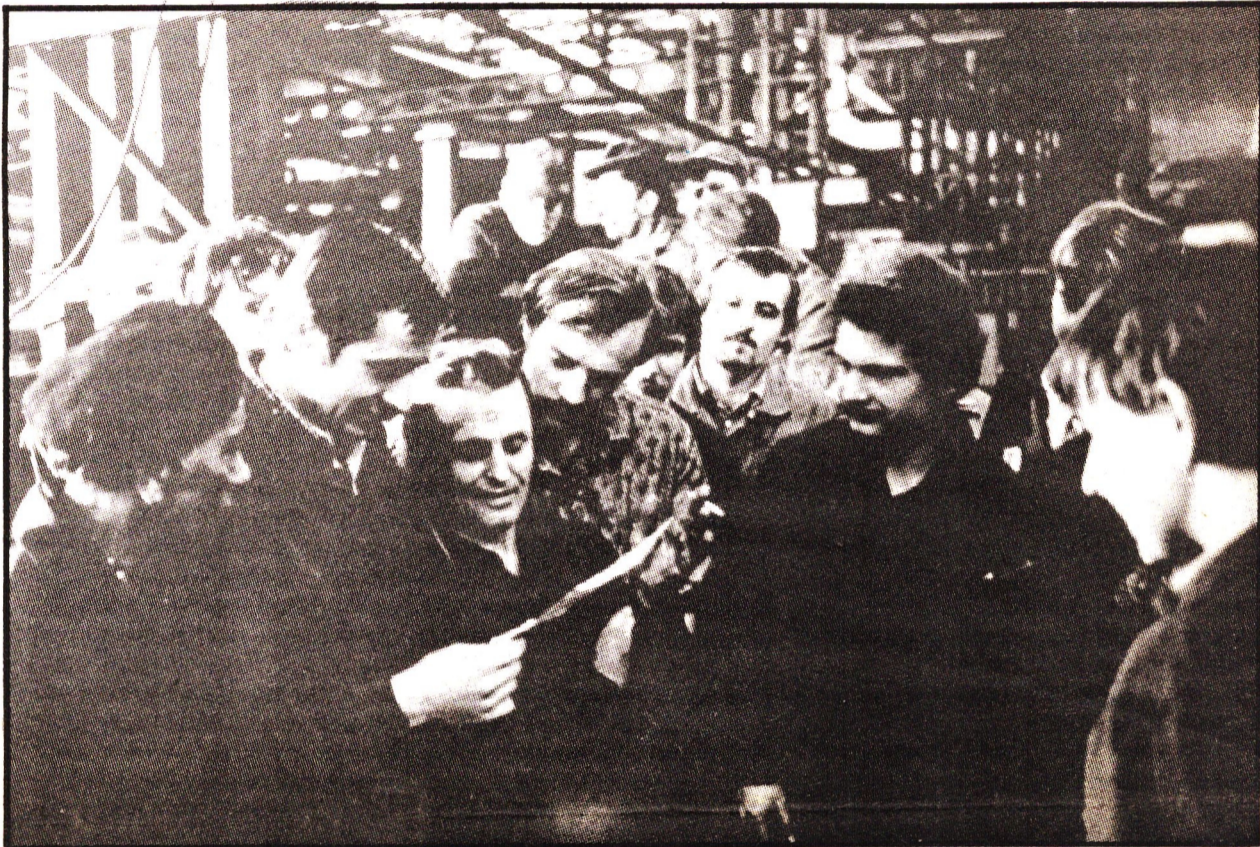
It would be one-sided and simplistic, however, to say that trade unions under socialism only have to protect its members' interests and fight bureaucracy. Lenin explained the contradictory role trade unions under socialism have to play:

"From all the foregoing it is evident that there are a number of contradictions in the various functions of the trade unions. On the one hand, their principal method of operation is that of persuasion and education; on the

other hand, as participants in the exercise of state power they cannot refuse to share in coercion. On the one hand, their main function is to protect the interests of the masses of the working people in the most direct and immediate sense of the term; on the other hand, as participants in the exercise of state power and builders of the economy as a whole they cannot refuse to resort to pressure. On the one hand, they must operate in a military fashion, for the dictatorship of the proletariat is the fiercest, most dogged and most desperate class war;

total. One study found that Poles with higher education were three times more likely to be party members than those with only elementary schooling. Party activists were even more likely to come from the ranks of white-collar experts; among technicians and engineers, one in 15 was a party activist, as against one in 75 skilled workers, and only one in 198 unskilled workers.¹⁵

It would be totally vulgar materialist, however, to look at these figures strictly from the point of view of class composition of the party. Whatever the composi-



Striking workers of URSUS tractor factory reading Solidarity newspaper, "Niezaleznosce" during 4-hour warning strike on March 27.

on the other hand, specifically military methods of operation are least of all applicable to the trade unions. On the one hand, they must be able to adapt themselves to the masses, to their level; on the other hand, they must never pander to the prejudices and backwardness of the masses, but steadily raise them to a higher and higher level, etc., etc.

"These contradictions are no accident, and they will persist for several decades. For, in the first place, these are contradictions peculiar to any school. And the trade unions are a school of communism. It cannot be expected that the majority of the working people will reach a higher stage of development and discard all traces of vestiges of the "school" for grown-ups, before several decades have passed. Secondly, for as long as survivals of capitalism and small production remain, contradictions between them and the young shoots of socialism are inevitable throughout the social system.

"Two practical conclusions must be drawn from this. First, for the successful conduct of trade unions' activities, it is not enough to understand their functions correctly, it is not enough to organize them properly. In addition, special tact is required, ability to approach the masses in a special way in each individual case for the purpose of raising these masses to a higher cultural, economic and political stage with the minimum of friction.

"Second, the afore-mentioned contradictions will inevitably give rise to disputes, disagreements, friction, etc. A higher body is required with sufficient authority to settle these at once. This higher body is the Communist Party and the international federation of the Communist Parties of all countries — the Communist International."

The problem is that because of its bureaucratic line, the PUWP has lost the authority to settle these "disputes, disagreements, friction." Solidarity is now independent of the party precisely because the party's incorrect lines have driven the workers away from its leadership.

One reason for the gap between the party and the workers is that the class composition of the PUWP has become increasingly non-worker. In 1945 non-manual employees accounted for less than 10% of the party membership; by 1961 they made up almost 43% of the

tion of a party, the main question is political line. From these figures, however, we can see some effect of the revisionist line of the PUWP.

It reflects the PUWP's increasing distance from the masses of workers. The workers, especially the advanced, most class conscious, are driven to oppose the party's revisionist line.

Agreement Between Solidarity and the Government a First Step

It would be anarcho-syndicalism to say that this state of affairs is preferable. The Polish workers, like all workers, need their vanguard party. The unions, which are mass organizations encompassing the majority of the proletariat and correctly not requiring its members to be communist, are incapable of running the state machinery today.

The fact remains, however, that the workers do want the ability to supervise the government and the party and to protect their interests against the bureaucracy.

This is the thrust and significance of the agreement reached between Solidarity and the government last August. The following appeared in the New York Times on Aug. 31, 1980:

"GDANSK, Poland, Aug. 30—Following, in unofficial translation, are excerpts from the draft agreement between the Polish government and the Interfactory Strike Committee:

"The activities of trade unions in Poland have not fulfilled the workers' expectations. Therefore, it is considered useful to set up new self-governing trade unions that would be genuine representatives of the working class.

"We do not dispute anyone's right to stay in the old union, and in the future there might even be cooperation between the two unions.

"In setting up the independent, self-governing trade unions, the Interfactory Strike Committee states that they will observe the Polish Constitution. The new unions will defend the social and material interests of working people, and they have no intention of playing the role of

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a political party.

"They accept the principle of nationalized means of production, which is the basis of Poland's social system.

Party's Leading Role Stressed

They recognize that the Polish Communist Party plays a leading role in the state and they do not challenge existing international alliances.

"They strike to give working people appropriate means of control, to express their opinions and defend their interests.

"The Government commission states that the Government will guarantee the freedom and independence of the new unions in both structure and organization.

"The existing strike committee will turn themselves into founding organs of the new trade unions. The new trade unions should have a real opportunity to publicly express an opinion on key decisions that determine the living conditions of working people, the principle under which the national income is divided into consumption and investment, how the social consumption fund (health, education, culture) is divided, the basic principles of income and wage policy, especially the principle of automatic wage indexation in conditions of inflation, long-term economic plans, and investment policy and price changes."

Study Center is Projected

"The Government guarantees that it will insure that the provisions are carried out.

"The workers' committee will set up a center for study of social affairs whose aim is to analyze objectively the situation of the workers, the living conditions of working people and the methods of representing the working people. It will carry out expert analyses on indexing prices and wages and will propose forms of compensation. It will publish the results of this finding and the new unions will have their own publications.

"The right to strike will be guaranteed in a law on trade unions that is being prepared. The law will determine the condition under which strikes are organized and proclaimed, methods for resolving conflicts and responsibility for infractions of the law."

Is There a Structural Guarantee for Socialism, For the Dictatorship of the Proletariat?

The agreement between Solidarity and the Polish government is a solid first step. Its implementation will certainly require vigilance and further struggle by the workers.

This brings us to a fundamental and important question facing socialist societies—is there a structural guarantee for socialism and the dictatorship of the proletariat? Can revolutionary committees, Soviets or independent unions as in Poland serve as such structural guarantees?

This question has been addressed recently by Jerry Tung, General Secretary of the Communist Workers Party and head of its Central Committee.

He said, "there is no structural guarantee, no organizational guarantee to socialism. Our party's experience shows that. There needs to be both ideological/political line and organization. Both are indispensable. Political line without organization to implement it, to spread it, to consolidate it, to clothe it, cannot be turned into a material force.

"On the other hand, organization without political line is useless. In fact, it will serve reactionary ends. There is no organizational structure that guarantees democracy, to maintain the dictatorship of the proletariat. You need both under socialism.

"There must be organizational guarantees such as ability to vote somebody out of power, and regularly scheduled congresses—in other words, the norm of democratic centralism. If there is no party congress, no Central Committee plenary scheduled on a regular basis, then questions drag on and on with no chance to vote on them. Organizational structure is a necessary condition for the implementation of the line.

"In China, that particular structure was abused after the Cultural Revolution. Basically a whole generation of cadres who held opposing views or had differences of opinion were purged. There was no way to have debate and democracy with the opposition. That's the result of

obsession with and uptightness over the ideological line—thinking that any shade in line leads to restoration of capitalism without considering the material enforcement of socialism, the workers' interest and building the organization to protect it. Not seeing the positive independent momentum of socialism and of the socialist state, leads to an abnormal internal life of the party. That's how democracy can be abused and was abused in China after the 9th Congress and that's why struggle has to be on a line basis.

"You can't prosecute people for holding a different line, a different opinion or a different belief under socialism unless they engage in active sabotage, carry out the other line in practice and violate democratic centralism. You cannot prosecute a different line. Line has to be debated on line-basis and everybody has the right to hold a different line under socialism. That's why we oppose the prosecution of the so-called Gang of Four — because it was based on their line and not on what they did. They are accused of individually executing different people, but those acts were based on the prevailing line of the Central Committee of the Political Bureau. The problem is that the majority of revisionists in power today did not dare raise differences. So it was the nominal majority view. Even though the line caused damage, under those conditions you should not prosecute people because that was the line. They are equally responsible for it. That's where the organizational structural guarantee comes in, though they do not guarantee the change in line itself. But there should be protection for people who hold different lines—physical protection, and then prosecution of people who practiced different lines. That's the only way to have genuine socialist democracy.

"There is a question as to whether they should remain in the party. But even if they're not allowed to stay in the party, their right to express different views and different lines must be insured. The only way the party can truly maintain itself as the vanguard party is if it can successfully combat their line and their influence without shutting somebody up, and by actually winning the masses over to its line instead of allowing them to be influenced by the incorrect line."

He continued by saying that the ideological/political guarantee is a true vanguard—i.e., the most advanced, most farsighted in the party, particularly in the Central Committee and in top leadership positions. To raise the political level of the people as a whole, you have to constantly raise the masses' theoretical and cultural level. That's what the campaign to study the Dictatorship of the Proletariat in China was about. The study classes on the job with pay are very necessary.

There is no concentric attack in China or the Soviet Union now because there are no theoretical/ideological/political components to the masses' lives. There is excessive concern for economic construction.

In the last few weeks, there were signs of change in China — emphasis on politics, curtailment of imports and undoing many of the effects of the revisionist line such as giving the law of value free rein (under which each unit would request and negotiate separately with foreign countries to import advanced technology to the point where they cannot pay for it anymore.) This method of doing things does not proceed from the concrete conditions in China. There are some signs of correction in China, but not in the Soviet Union, at least not up to now. Of course, the socialist material basis is stronger in the Soviet Union than in China. The public ownership (state ownership) of the means of production extends to greater realms and is more thoroughgoing than in China.

One aspect of the organizational guarantee is making sure that socialist legality is established—policies, and set procedures. All will be judged as equals by socialist legality. One problem of mass democracy during the Cultural Revolution was formulating new laws and new policies with a different set of values. It's one thing to overthrow and knock down, to drag down, demote, and purge but it's quite another to establish positive organizational policies and socialist legality. Without them there will inevitably be an arbitrary style of decision-making. That's another essential element in safeguarding democracy under socialism.

Conclusion

In the final analysis the PUWP still must repudiate its revisionist lines and take extreme measures to correct its mistakes. The party must win the advanced workers and through them the masses of the Polish workers by an all-rounded concentric attack in all spheres—political, economic, organizational, cultural, and ideological. Only thus can the situation be rectified and the party regain the moral authority and leadership of the workers upon which its political power depends.

For precisely these reasons Mao summed up the need for and then led the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in China. Though there were problems in implementing it, it opened up a great debate over the line of the Communist Party of China, mobilizing and educating hundreds of millions of the masses in the process. And it reinvigorated the communist movement worldwide, stultified by the revisionist line of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union led by Krushchev.

Given the situation in Poland, does the PUWP have any other choice? □

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