



Fight clerical reaction! For proletarian political revolution! Polish workers move

Everyone predicted it was coming. A restive, combative working class, peasant strikes, massive foreign debt, chronic and widespread food shortages, a powerful and increasingly assertive Catholic church, the burgeoning of social-democratic and clerical-nationalist oppositional groupings. All the elements were there. Poland in the late 1970s was locked in a deepening crisis heading towards explosion, an explosion which could bring either proletarian political revolution against the Stalinist bureaucracy or capitalist counterrevolution led by Pope Wojtyla's church.

And when it came it gripped world attention for two solid weeks. The Baltic coast general strike was the most powerful mobilisation of the power of the working class since France May 1968. But was it a mobilisation for working-class power? That is the decisive question.

Now there is a settlement on paper. The Polish workers have forced the bureaucracy to agree to 'new self-governing trade unions' with the pledge that these recognise 'the leading role' of the Communist party and do not engage in political activities. Insofar as the settlement enhances the Polish workers' power to struggle against the Stalinist bureaucracy, revolutionaries can support the strike and its outcome. But only a blind man could fail to see the gross influence of the Catholic church and also pro-Western sentiments among the striking workers. If the settlement strengthens the working class organisationally, it also strengthens the forces of reaction. Poland stands today on a razor's edge.

The compromise creates an impossible situation economically and politically; it cannot last. In a country facing international bankruptcy, heavily subsidised by the Soviet Union, the strikers are demanding the biggest free lunch the world has ever seen. The Poles demand that they live like West Germans. There's a joke in Poland: we pretend to work and the government pretends to pay us. In West Germany one works. Even the social-democratic dissidents recognise that the big wage increases will only fuel the inflation.

Politically the Stalinist bureaucracy cannot live with this kind of independent working-class organisation, a form of cold dual power. The bureaucracy is not a ruling class, whose social power is derived from ownership of the means of production, but a caste based on the monopolisation of governmental power.

But it's a good thing someone in the Kremlin has a sense of humour. If Gierek in Warsaw is pushed to the wall, Brezhnev in Moscow stands behind him. The settlement was conditioned, on both sides, by the presence of forty Soviet divisions in East Germany. The Kremlin has already made disapproving noises about that settlement and Soviet military intervention cannot be ruled out. The end of the strike is only the beginning of the crisis of Stalinist Poland.

Workers democracy or clerical-nationalist reaction?

The present crisis was triggered once again by increases in the price of meat. On July 1 the Gierek regime took a gamble and it lost. To

continue the price freeze was economically intolerable, especially to Poland's Western bankers (the food subsidy absorbed fully 8 per cent of total national income!). To raise the price of food without a wage increase was to invite an immediate, nationwide mass strike/protest like in December 1970 and June 1976. The regime figured it could minimise the financial cost and social disruption by granting wage rises only to those groups of workers who made trouble. The government indicated its willingness to negotiate with unofficial shopfloor spokesmen, not just representatives of the state-run trade unions. In this sense the Gierek regime encouraged small wage strikes as a lesser evil.

July saw a flurry of slowdowns and strikes -- tractor builders near Warsaw, railwaymen in Lublin, steel workers near Krakow -- which were quickly settled with significant wage rises. Predictably, the strikes had a cascade effect. Other workers went out demanding more. In early August there were stubborn strikes by Warsaw dustmen and public transport workers; one of the leaders was arrested.

But on August 14 when 17,000 workers seized the Lenin Shipyard in Gdansk, the Stalinist regime was faced with a fundamentally different order of challenge. It was the Baltic shipbuilders who in 1970 toppled Gomulka and forced his successor Gierek to accept an independent workers committee for a time. One of the strikers' first demands was to build a monument to the workers killed when Gomulka called in tanks to restore order a decade ago. The regime quickly agreed to this.

Within a week 150,000 had downed tools, 200 factories were shut and the Baltic ports -- Gdynia, Sopot, Szczecin, Elblag as well as Gdansk -- were paralysed. And it seemed as if every time the Interfactory Strike Committee (MKS) met, it raised five more, and more political, demands -- 'free' trade unions, end all censorship, free all political prisoners (there were only six). What had begun as a series of quickly ended wage struggles had become a political general strike.

What is the political character of the strike and the consciousness of the workers? Certainly the workers are reacting against bureaucratic mismanagement, privilege and abuse. The Polish workers' grievances are real and they are just. The firing of an old militant, Anna Walentynowicz, a few months before her retirement, which reportedly sparked the Lenin Shipyard takeover, should infuriate every honest worker. The existence of special shops exclusive to party members and cops, which the strikers demanded be abolished, is an abomination, a rejection of the most basic principles of socialism.

But if we know what the Baltic workers are against in an immediate sense, what are their positive allegiances and general political outlook? Early in the strike there were reports of singing the Internationale, which indicates some element of socialist consciousness. Some of the strike committee members had been shopfloor leaders in the official trade-union apparatus who were victimised for trying to defend the workers' interests. They undoubtedly were and

continued on page 4



Strikers in Gdansk's Lenin Shipyard. Poland stands on a razor's edge -- the Stalinist bureaucracy must go, but a Pope's Poland means counterrevolution and exploitation.

Proletarian Poland or Pope's Poland?

Workers Power must draw the line

When the anti-Soviet Socialist Workers Party (SWP) organised a picket outside the Polish embassy in London on August 21 to enthusiastically hail the workers struggle against 'Poland's Margaret Thatcher', the physical line-up of the ostensibly Trotskyist groups who joined it said much of their political line-up. Snuggled up to the left of the SWP was the Mandelbrot International Marxist Group, with the vociferously Stalinophobic Workers Action tendency closely in tow. Standing off to the left, somewhat isolated but joining the lot, was a small contingent from Workers Power (WP). Characteristically, WP alone carried a placard reading 'No return to capitalism'; characteristically, none of the rest joined in the one time WP attempted a chant for political revolution.

But a revolutionary outcome in Poland demands an understanding of what these workers are struggling for and against. Political revolution is predicated on defence of the existing collectivised property forms. Particularly with the president's pope in the Vatican lusting to return 'his people' to the capitalist fold, the key to a proletarian political revolution in Poland is defeating the significant influence of the Catholic hierarchy among the population, including the working masses.

Yet, like most of the rest of the left, WP lauds such social-democratic dissidents as Jacek Kuron as 'courageous fighters for workers rights' and plays down the restorationist threat posed by the Catholic church, seeing it only as a prop for the conservative bureaucracy:

'The poison of the Catholic church hopes to use the struggles and sacrifices of the Polish workers to increase its bargaining position within society. It is not interested in breaking the political stranglehold of the Stalinists at present, only in proving its indispensability as a force for conservatism and stability in exchange for a greater licence to peddle their obscurantist and reactionary message.' (*Workers Power* no 16, September 1980)

WP's projection is dangerously shortsighted. The Catholic church may not be prepared at present to launch an open confrontation with the workers state. But it remains as reactionary as ever and will never waver in its commitment to capitalist restoration. Indeed it is an indictment of Stalinism that thirty years after the expropriation of the bourgeoisie, workers and youth are increasingly drawn to this neanderthal institution. In the long term it cannot co-exist with collectivised property forms. But WP sees only two possible outcomes in Poland. Writing about the Interfactory Strike Committee (MKS) centred in Gdansk, WP asserts:

'The MKS is, in embryo, a workers council, a soviet.... In the coming struggles it can either be emasculated and isolated or become the organising centre of the fight for political power by the Polish workers.'

Mullahs in Iran, pope in Poland

Even with Gierek's apparent dismissal -- and even in the event the regime secures another temporary stabilisation -- the crisis will

SPARTACIST BRITAIN

Monthly newspaper of the Spartacist League, British section of the international Spartacist tendency

EDITORIAL BOARD: Len Michelson (editor), John Masters, Sheila Hayward (production manager), Judith Hunter, Mark Hyde, David Strachan

CIRCULATION MANAGER: Rob Holt

Published monthly, except in January and September, by Spartacist Publications, 26 Harrison St, London WC1. Address all letters and subscription requests to: Spartacist Publications, PO Box 185, London WC1H 8JE. Subscriptions 10 issues for £1.50; international air mail rates: Europe £2.10 outside Europe £3.00. Printed by Anvil Printers Ltd, London (TU).

Opinions expressed in signed articles or letters do not necessarily express the editorial viewpoint.

continue. Bodies like the MKS do indeed carry the germs of workers soviets. But not all soviets are revolutionary. The Catholic church is not now hegemonic over the workers struggles, but an MKS under the domination of confirmed Catholics like Lech Walesa and Anna Walentynowicz and a 'Council of Experts' which includes a leading Catholic intellectual can become an instrument for clerical-inspired counter-revolution.

The St Petersburg Soviet during the 'July days' hounded and persecuted the revolutionary wing of the proletariat in defence of the bourgeois Kerensky government. The German soviets in 1918 under the SPD helped to establish a bourgeois parliamentary republic over the corpses of the martyred Luxemburg and Liebknecht. Pointing to these examples in *Lessons of October*, Trotsky emphasised:

'Without a party, apart from a party, over the heads of a party, or with a substitute for a party, the proletarian revolution cannot conquer....

'Consciousness, premeditation and planning played a far smaller part in bourgeois revolutions than they are destined to play, and already do play in proletarian revolutions.' The central task for a Trotskyist vanguard in Poland is to split the workers from the counter-revolutionary influence of the Catholic hierarchy through hard combat against backward consciousness, permitting no illusions that a movement under the sway of the clergy can be anything but a threat to the social gains of the collectivised economy. Workers Power assuredly warns of 'diversions' to the workers struggles, but fails to tackle this central question head on. Two years ago in Iran, Workers Power also supported the 'masses in struggle'. It should learn the lesson: the failure to break the masses from the mullahs' grip by sharply posing an independent proletarian alternative against both the shah and the mullahs spelled disaster for the Iranian workers and oppressed.

WP's current position on Poland is symptomatic of its dilemma: it has rejected 'third campism' and formally embraced the Trotskyist position on the Russian question, yet it remains saddled with the methodological baggage of its political past. But a set of skeletal orthodox Trotskyist positions in the absence of a coherent Marxist analysis and world view does not a Trotskyist programme make.

Thus, WP denies a progressive role to the Red Army in Afghanistan, and indicts the overturn of capitalism in Poland carried out through the post-war Soviet occupation because, it claims, it 'ran counter to the immediate pattern and rhythms of the class struggle, and served to isolate and demobilise the most class conscious sections of Poland's working class'. Workers Power retains the methodology of viewing the Stalinist bureaucracy not as a fragile and contradictory caste but as a historically stable and thoroughly counterrevolutionary social formation, implicit in its failure to pose the danger of a counterrevolutionary overthrow of the Stalinist bureaucracy in Poland today. Two decades before the Hungarian revolution was to forcefully confirm his prognosis, Trotsky replied to such arguments:

'A real civil war could develop not between the Stalinist bureaucracy and the resurgent proletariat but between the proletariat and the active forces of counterrevolution. In the event of an open clash between the two mass camps, there cannot even be talk of the bureaucracy playing an independent role. Its polar flanks would be flung to the different sides of the barricade.' ('The Class Nature of the Soviet State', *Writings* 1933-34)

Poland and Hungary

In any incipient political revolution, like Hungary 1956, there will initially be contradictory tendencies -- nationalism, obscurantism etc. All sorts of counterrevolutionaries will creep out of the woodwork. But Poland is not Hungary. In Hungary the overwhelming bulk of the workers stood clearly and explicitly on the terrain of proletarian socialism; counter-revolutionary elements were isolated and suppressed by the insurgent workers themselves.

The Stalinist bureaucracy fractured, as even members of the hard-line Stalinist secret police went over to the side of the workers. Indeed dissident elements from the Communist Party played a leading role in the revolution.

The situation in Poland is objectively more contradictory and confused. Symptomatic of the fact that the Polish upsurge, though fuelled by just grievances against the bureaucracy, is not at this point clearly defined -- either as revolutionary or counterrevolutionary -- is the absence thus far of any significant fracturing in the ruling caste. The strikers, far from clearly opposing or suppressing counterrevolutionary influences, were in many cases themselves influenced by them. Here are the views of Walentynowicz, a leading militant in the Lenin Shipyard whose sacking sparked the Gdansk strike:

'From the moment that Cardinal Wojtyla, a Pole, was chosen to be pope, our nation felt a new faith, a new national dignity.... The pope showed the true face of the Polish nation. What he did lifted our spirits, rebuilt us as a people.... Everyone says that this is a second miracle by the Vistula.' (ITV interview, 4 September)

The first 'miracle' by the Vistula was the reversal of the Red Army's revolutionary offensive in 1920!

Contrast this with Pal Maleter -- a leading popular figure in the Hungarian uprising, a member of the CP and a colonel in the Hungarian army -- as described in *Hungary 1956* by syndicalist Bill Lomax:

'Throughout the revolution, he continued to wear a partisan red star on his uniform, and emphasised to all comers that he remained a committed communist. As he explained to one Western journalist, "If we get rid of the Russians don't think we're going back to the old days. And if there's people who do want to go back, we'll see!" To emphasise the last remark, he reached for his revolver holster and repeated, "We don't mean to go back to capitalism. We want socialism in Hungary." The collectivised property relations in Hungary were never threatened by the 1956 upsurge, only the rule of the bureaucratic caste. Seeing expressions of nationalist sentiment among the Hungarian workers and the absence of a Trotskyist party to lead them, a Stalinophilic tendency led by one Sam Marcy in the then Trotskyist US SWP labelled the uprising a counterrevolution and supported the Soviet suppression of the Hungarian workers, splitting shortly thereafter from the SWP. Workers Power, on the other hand, sees only an uprising against the Stalinist regime in Poland and ends up playing down the distinctly restorationist dangers present. The proletarian vanguard must succumb neither to Stalinism nor to reflexive, reactionary Stalinophobia, but advance at every point an independent policy to defend and extend the socialist gains in the struggle for international socialism.

Stalinism is truly the gravedigger of revolutions. In large part the current crisis facing Poland was prepared by the bureaucratic mismanagement endemic to a deformed workers state and the gross concessions to the peasantry and the church. But the proletariat must not be made to pay for the crimes of the bureaucracy. In writing of the possibility of counterrevolution in 'The Class Nature of the Soviet State', Trotsky warned:

'... the tragic possibility is not excluded that the first workers' state, weakened by its bureaucracy, will fall under the joint blows of its internal and external enemies. But in the event of this worst possible variant, a tremendous significance for the subsequent course of the revolutionary struggle will be borne by the question: where are those guilty for the catastrophe? Not the slightest taint of guilt must fall upon the revolutionary internationalists. In the hour of mortal danger, they must remain on the last barricade.'

Today Workers Power faces the classical dilemma of left centrism. Groping for a revolutionary position it has still to make the leap from the no man's land between the barricades. Resolution of this dilemma lies only in the Trotskyist programme of the Spartacist tendency. ■

Arm in arm with clerical reaction

All the pope's dissidents



The president's pope — Jimmy Carter and John Paul II, right: KOR leaders Jacek Kuron (top) and Adam Michnik (above)

'The strikes in Poland mark a significant turn in Eastern Europe because workers and dissident intellectuals have joined forces in a major conflict with the Government', noted a news analysis in the *New York Times* (23 August). As to the existence of the alliance there is no doubt. From the beginning of the Polish strike wave in early July and in the early stages of the shipyard occupations, dissident circles in Warsaw were the main source of information for the imperialist press. In addition, several of the key strike leaders have been publicly associated over the past several years with opposition defence groups, and they have drawn in prominent Catholic intellectuals as 'expert advisers'. So while the ruling bureaucracy has been reluctant to use force against workers in the Baltic ports, on August 20 police in the capital rounded up 14 well-known dissidents accused of illegal association.

Who are the Polish dissidents? Western commentators hail the appearance of a 'worker-intellectual alliance'. Yet the non-Stalinist left-wing press sounds the same theme. Thus we find favourable interviews with dissident leader Jacek Kuron being printed everywhere from the liberal *Le Monde* and *Der Spiegel* to publications of the ostensibly Trotskyist United Secretariat. Meanwhile, *New York Times* columnist Flora Lewis (a former official of the OSS, World War II predecessor of the CIA) praises Kuron as 'a responsible man, a moderate and a patriot'. Is this the 'new coalition' which sophisticated Western fomenters of counterrevolution in the Soviet bloc degenerated/deformed workers states have been looking for as their 'captive nations' relics fade into oblivion? Or does it portend a movement for 'socialist democracy', as some on the left would have us believe?

Certainly none of the prominent dissident groups and personalities has a good word to say about socialism, which is identified with the perversion of proletarian rule represented by the present Stalinist bureaucracy. The dissidents' role as a conduit to the capitalist media is nothing new -- Sakharov has been at it for years in the Soviet Union. Nor are appeals to the imperialists via the UN, the Helsinki Agreements, etc. What is particularly ominous about the Polish dissidents, who range from social democrats to openly Pilsudskite reactionary nationalists, is their active (and largely successful) effort to form an alliance with the Catholic hierarchy. For it is the church together with the land-holding peasantry which form the social basis for counterrevolution in Poland.

The best-publicised Polish dissident group in the West is the Committee for Social Self-Defence (KSS), better known by its original name Workers Defence Committee (KOR). The leading spokesman for KSS-KOR is Jacek Kuron, and its newsletter *Robotnik* includes among its correspondents Lech Walesa, the leader of the Inter-factory Strike Committee centred on the Lenin Shipyard in Gdansk. The KOR was formed after the suppression of the June 1976 strikes at Radom and Ursus, and originally centred its activities on raising funds for and demanding release/reinstatement of the hundreds of workers arrested

and fired at that time. After a general amnesty a year later it became the KSS and concentrated on building ties to key factories through *Robotnik*. Most of the pseudo-Trotskyist left in the West has come out in support of the KSS-KOR in varying degrees.

Because of its name and origins and the reputation of Kuron, KOR is sometimes referred to by superficial observers as 'Marxist in orientation'. Social-democratic is a far more accurate description, and even that does not do justice to some of the anti-Marxist elements around it. Of the original 24 founders of KOR, six are former members of the pre-war Polish Socialist Party (PSP), among them the prominent economist Edward Lipinski. (*Robotnik* was the name of the PSP paper as well.) The list also includes a former chairman of the Christian Democratic Party, a delegate of the World War II London exile government, various activists from the 1968 student movement (among them historian Adam Michnik), left Catholic writers (such as former party member Jerzy Andrzejewski, author of *Ashes and Diamonds*), several veterans of the 1944 Warsaw uprising and Reverend Jan Zieja, 'Polish Army Chaplain in the 1920 and 1939 campaigns' -- ie, a dyed-in-the-wool Pilsudskite priest who twice fought the Red Army.

Jacek Kuron was first known in the West for co-authoring (with Karol Modzelewski) an 'Open Letter to Communist Party Members' in 1964; for this he became a victim of bureaucratic repression, spending six years in jail. The United Secretariat (Usec) opportunistically hailed the Kuron-Modzelewski text with its syndicalist programme and fuzzy analysis (which called Poland a 'bureaucratic state') as the 'first revolutionary Marxist document' to come out of the post-war Soviet bloc. Since then, however, Kuron has moved far to the right, now posing the struggle in East Europe as one of 'pluralism vs totalitarianism'. In his 'Thoughts on an Action Programme' Kuron supports peasant struggles for private property, claims 'the Catholic movement is fighting to defend freedom of conscience and human dignity', and concludes with a call for the 'Finlandisation' of Poland:

'We must strive for a status similar to Fin-

land's: a parliamentary democracy with a limited independence in the field of foreign policy where it directly touches the interests of the USSR.'

The clerical opposition

Marxism it ain't. But this social-democratic programme for a peaceful restoration of capitalism represents the *left* wing of the dissident movement. The right wing is openly clerical-nationalist. There was a split in KOR in 1977 leading to the formation of ROPCIO, the Movement for the Defence of Human Rights. The latter is based on the founding declaration of the UN and the Helsinki accords and offers itself as an instrument to 'co-operate with all international organisations which defend human rights....' Where KOR publishes *Robotnik*, ROPCIO puts out *Gospodarz* (The Peasant) and appeals to the Catholic rural population. And this is not the Catholicism of Vatican II, either. The *Economist* (9 September 1978) refers to this outfit as 'the stronghold of more conservative, national and -- with some of its members -- traditional anti-semitic tendencies'. To get ROPCIO's number, one only has to note that the first signer of its platform is General Borutz-Spiechowicz, the highest commanding officer of pre-World War II Poland, and that it distributes Pilsudski calendars.

ROPCIO, in turn, gave rise to an even more reactionary group, the Confederation of Independent Poland (KPN) whose stated goal is to 'end Soviet domination by liquidating the power of the Polish United Workers Party'. Then there comes the Polish League for Independence (PPN), a clandestine group, and remnants of the pre-war ultra-rightist, anti-Semitic, fascist National Democratic Party. All of them, of course, cover themselves with rhetoric about 'democracy'. This gives rise to the Polish dissident joke: 'Question: What's a Polish nationalist? Answer: Someone who wants to drive the Jews out of Poland even though they aren't there any more.' More respectable than these would-be pogromists is the liberal Catholic ZNAK movement, which has several representatives in parliament. While ZNAK leaves clandestine bravado for the fringe groups, their aims are no less counterrevolutionary: they are merely waiting until an explosion when they will step in as the only mass-based opposition.

The core of the clerical opposition, of course, is the Catholic hierarchy, a disciplined army extending from the village priest right up to the Vatican. Stalin's famous remark, 'How many divisions does the pope have?' indicates military realism. But in Catholic Poland, probably the most religious European country today (even the men go to mass!), the church is a powerful political force. Unlike Hungary's Cardinal Myndszenty, who was discredited by co-operation with the Horthy dictatorship, the Polish pope (who brags he once was a worker) could be an effective rallying point for counterrevolution. A revealing article by the former editor of the CIA's house organ, *Problems of Communism*, Abraham Brumberg, makes this crystal

continued on page 7

Subscribe!

SPARTACIST
BRITAIN

NAME _____
ADDRESS _____
POSTCODE _____

Spartacist Britain: £1.50 for 10 issues

Joint Subscription: £5 for 24 issues WORKERS VANGUARD (fortnightly Marxist paper of SL/US) plus SPARTACIST BRITAIN for duration of subscription plus SPARTACIST (ist theoretical journal)

Introductory Offer: £1 for 3 months SPARTACIST BRITAIN (3 issues) plus WORKERS VANGUARD (6 issues)



Make payable/post to:
Spartacist Publications, PO Box 185, London WC1H 8JE

Polish workers...

(continued from page 1)

possibly still are members of the ruling Polish United Workers Party (PUWP, the official name of the Communist party). These advanced workers surely desire a real workers Poland and world socialism.

While the imperialist media always play up any support for anti-communist ideology in the Soviet bloc, there is no question that to a considerable degree the strikers identify with the powerful Catholic church opposition. It is not just the external signs -- the daily singing of the national hymn, 'Oh God, Who Has Defended Poland', the hundreds of strikers kneeling for mass, the ubiquitous pictures of Wojtyla-John Paul II (talk about 'the cult of personality'). The strike committee's outside advisers consist of a group of Catholic intellectuals headed up by Tadeusz Mazowiecki, editor of a leading Catholic journal.

The strike leaders flaunted their Catholic and Polish nationalist ideology. Anna Walentynowicz, asked if she were a socialist, replied that she was a believer. MKS leader Lech Walesa in the Gdansk shipyard started every day by 'rush[ing] into the courtyard and at a trot began tossing pictures of the Virgin Mary, Queen of Poland, into the air' (*New York Times*, 31 August). And at the signing of the strike settlement, Walesa ostentatiously wore a crucifix and used a foot-long red and white (the Polish national colours) ballpoint pen, a souvenir of Pope Wojtyla's visit to Poland last year. (To top it off, Walesa's father, who has emigrated to the US, posed with Ronald Reagan as the Republican reactionary officially kicked off his presidential campaign.)

Even more ominous was the demand for 'access by all religious groups [read Roman Catholic church] to the mass media', a prerogative for which the Polish episcopate has long campaigned. This is an anti-democratic demand which would legitimise the church in its present role as the recognised opposition to the Stalinist regime. Significantly, the strike committee did not even demand the right to such media access for itself or for the 'free trade unions' it was fighting to set up. In effect the Baltic shipbuilders were asking for a state church in a deformed workers state.

But the church is not loyal to the workers state. Far from it! The Polish church (virulently anti-Semitic) has been a bastion of reaction even within the framework of world Catholicism. A typical Polish parish priest would regard American Catholics, from the hierarchy to the laity, as a bunch of freethinking 'commies'. Especially since the 1976 crisis the Polish church has become increasingly open and aggressive in its anti-Communism. Early last year the *Wall Street Journal* (2 January 1979) observed:

'Thus, the priesthood has become in effect an opposition party. The number of priests is at an all-time high of 19,500 and many openly defy the Communist Party by building churches without government approval.'

This article also pointed out that a particular prelate was responsible for the greater oppositional stance of the church:

'In recent years, the church has taken a sharper anti-government turn under Krakow's Cardinal Wojtyla, who captured the allegiance

of university students by opening the city's churches to their anti-government discussion groups.'

Just a few months earlier this cardinal from Krakow had become the 'infallible' head of the Roman Catholic church, the first non-Italian successor to the throne of St Peter in four centuries. Karol Wojtyla is a dangerous reactionary working hand in glove with US imperialism (especially his fellow countryman Zbigniew Brzezinski) to roll back 'atheistic Communism', beginning in his homeland. As we wrote when this Polish anti-Communist was made pope: '... he now stands at the head of many millions of practising Catholics in East Europe, a tremendous force for counterrevolution' ('The President's Pope?', *Workers Vanguard* no 217, 20 October 1978).

The power and the danger of the Polish Catholic church are clearly revealed in the present crisis. The day after the Lenin Shipyard seizure Cardinal Stefan Wyszynski led 150,000 'pilgrims' in a commemoration of the bourgeois-nationalist Pilsudski's victory over the Soviet Red Army in 1920, reminding them how Poles acted when 'freedom of life was endangered' (UPI, 15 August). A week later Pope Wojtyla declared before 1000 Poles in the Vatican that 'we are united with our countrymen', a deliberately provocative act under the circumstances.

The Polish episcopate, fearing both Russian military intervention (the Warsaw Pact forces were manoeuvring nearby in East Germany) and its own inability to control a workers' uprising, has taken a different, more cautious tack. It waited until the regime made public the seriousness of the Baltic general strike and then, while expressing sympathy for the workers' aims, warned against 'prolonged stoppages'. When the strike started spreading to other areas, the regime put Wyszynski on television to call for the workers to settle. Then a few days later the church hierarchy backed off from so fulsomely supporting the government.

But whatever the present tactical calculations of the Polish episcopate, in a power vacuum the church, well organised and with a mass base, will be a potent agency for social counterrevolution. One can appreciate the plight of Gierek & Co. Short of a political revolution, it would take a J V Stalin to clean out the church, packing 18,000 priests off to forced labour camps. But then Poland would get a lot of new public libraries with spires on top of them.

'Free trade unions'?

Until a few days before the settlement the general strike was limited to the Baltic coast, a region whose modern history is very different from the rest of Poland. Before World War II the main Baltic cities -- Danzig (Gdansk), Stettin (Szczecin) -- were largely populated by Germans. With the consolidation of Stalinist Poland after the war, the Germans were driven out and the region resettled by Poles from the eastern territories annexed to the Soviet Ukraine. Thus, while the Baltic coast workers are highly volatile, they lack the socialist traditions common to the other main sections of the Polish proletariat -- the heavy-industrial workers around Warsaw and Krakow, the Lodz textile workers, the Silesian miners. Had the general strike spread throughout Poland, its political axis could quite possibly have shifted to the left and away from clericalism.

Gierek tried, but failed, to work the same deal to end the crisis that he did in 1970-71. Then he gave the rebellious workers Gomulka's head; now he gave them that of his chief lieutenant, Edward Babiuch, and three other Politburo members. In counter to their demand for a 'free trade union', he offered them free elections to the official union. But in 1971 he promised the Baltic workers the same thing and took it back when the crisis atmosphere died away. The strike committee leader Lech Walesa no doubt had this experience in mind when he said, 'We were promised that many times before.'

Now the workers' attitude is very different from, say, ten years ago. The 1970-71 strikes were clearly economic. None of the eleven demands of the Warski Shipyard strike committee in Szczecin (the leading workers organisation at the time) went beyond prices, wage compensation and no reprisals. Today leading elements of the Gdansk based Interfactory Strike Committee are associated with the Catholic church opposition and the social-democratic Committee for Social Self-Defence (KOR). With the authority of the bureaucracy greatly weakened, the unions will strongly tend to break the paper prohibition on political oppositional activity.

The particular slogan of 'free trade unions', pushed for years by the CIA-backed Radio Free Europe and the Catholic church, has acquired a definite anti-Communist and pro-Western connotation. Remember the 1921 Kronstadt mutiny's call for 'free Soviets' -- free from Communists, that is! An integral part of the Trotskyist programme for proletarian political revolution in the degenerated/deformed workers states is the struggle for trade unions independent of bureaucratic control. Trade unions and the right to strike would be necessary even in a democratically governed workers state to guard against abuses and mistakes by administrators and managers. But it is far from clear that the 'free trade unions' long envisaged by the dissidents would be free from the influence of the pro-Catholic, pro-NATO elements who represent a mortal danger to the working class. In any case, in the highly politicised situation in Poland today the 'new, self-governing' trade unions cannot and will not limit themselves to questions of wage rates, working conditions, job security as was the case, for example, with the Szczecin workers committee in 1971. They will either be drawn into the powerful orbit of the Catholic church or have to oppose it in the name of socialist principle.

And in determining that outcome the presence of a revolutionary vanguard party would be critical. A central task for a Trotskyist organisation in Poland would be to raise in these unions a series of demands that will split the clerical-nationalist forces from among the workers and separate them out. These unions must defend the socialised means of production and proletarian state power against Western imperialism. In Poland today the elementary democratic demand of the separation of church and state is a dividing line between the struggle for workers democracy and the deadly threat of capitalist restorationism.

The germs of a Leninist-Trotskyist opposition in Poland would have nothing to do with the present dissident groups. It would denounce them for trying to tie the strikers to imperialism, the pope and Pilsudskite anti-Soviet nationalism. But among the rebellious workers there must be elements that are fed up with the bureaucracy and look back to the traditions of Polish communism, while having no truck with bogus 'democracy' in priests' robes. It is among this layer above all that we must struggle to win the cadres to build a genuinely communist proletarian party that can defend and extend the collectivist economic gains, opening the road to socialism by ousting the Stalinist caste which falsely rules in the workers' name.

The bitter fruits of 1956

Poland presents the most combative working class in the Soviet bloc, with a history of struggling for independent organisations going back to the mid-1950s. It is also the one country in East Europe with a mass, potentially counterrevolutionary mobilisation around the Catholic church. Thus, unlike Hungary in 1956 or Czechoslovakia in 1968, the alternatives in the present crisis are not limited to proletarian political revolution or Stalinist restabilisation. At the same time, it is not Afghanistan where the Soviet Red Army is playing a progressive role in crushing an imperialist-backed clerical-reactionary uprising. In a sense Poland stands somewhere between Hungary 1956 and Afghanistan. How has this situation come about?

Key to understanding the exceptional insta-



Hungary 1956 -- a workers political revolution.



Soviet army liberates Poland, 1945. For the revolutionary unity of the Soviet and Polish working classes!

bility of Stalinist Poland is the compromise which staved off a workers revolution in 1956. As in other Eastern European countries the post-Stalin 'thaw' produced a deep crisis within the Polish bureaucracy which extended to other sections of Polish society. Promises of 'socialist legality' and higher living standards led in 1953-56 to a rising line of intellectual dissidence and working-class unrest.

In June 1956 workers from the ZIPSO locomotive works in Poznan marched into the centre of the city calling for higher wages and lower prices. When the militia failed to disperse them, they attacked the city hall, radio station and prison. The army and special security police were called in. Over 50 demonstrators were killed, hundreds wounded. Poland stood on the verge of civil war.

In August Wladyslaw Gomulka, with a reputation as a victimised 'national-liberal' Communist and honest workers leader was reinstated in the PUPP; in October he was made head of it. A former general secretary of the Polish Communist Party, he was purged by Stalin in 1948 as a 'Titoist' and placed under house arrest. Not sharing personal responsibility for the crimes of the Stalin years, Gomulka enjoyed considerable popular authority, especially among socialist workers.

In what would become the standard refrain of Polish Stalinism when under attack from below, Gomulka in an open letter 'to the workers and youth' assured them that:

'... only by marching along the path of democratization and eradicating all the evil from the past period can we succeed in building the best model of socialism... A decisive part on that road must be played by widening the workers' democracy, by increasing the direct participation of workers in the management of enterprises, by increasing the part played by the working masses in governing all sectors of the country's life.' (reproduced in Paul E Zinner, ed, *National Communism and Popular Revolt in Eastern Europe*, 1956)

Krushchev and his Kremlin colleagues still feared Gomulka as the Polish Tito and seriously considered military intervention to oust him. One of the main factors which forestalled them was that in large factories throughout the country workers councils organised resistance to any attempt by the Russian Stalinists and their local agents to overturn 'the Polish October revolution'. In the giant Zeran car factory in Warsaw, the Communists armed the workers. But it was not the Russians who overturned 'the Polish October' -- it was Gomulka. While granting large wage increases for a few years, Gomulka gradually bureaucratically strangled the workers councils, which had helped bring him to power. He also suppressed the dissident Marxist intellectuals. At the same time, his policies permanently strengthened the potential social bases of counterrevolution -- the peasants and the priests.

The abandonment in 1956 of agricultural collectivisation (never very extensive) has had a profound effect on Poland economically, socially and politically. It has saddled the country with a backward, smallholding rural economy grossly inefficient even by East European standards. In the mid-1970s farm output per worker in Poland was less than two-fifths that of collectivised Czechoslovakia, for example! Many peasants still worked divided-up strips, not even unitary farms. And the horse-drawn plough is a common sight in the Polish countryside to this day. The

rural population is increasingly aged as the peasants' sons and daughters migrate in droves to the cities, where the standard of living is appreciably higher.

Contrary to the imperialist propaganda line that 90 per cent of Poland is Catholic, the Polish workers movement since the 1890s has adhered to Marxian socialism. The strength of the Polish church is based on the social weight of the rural petty bourgeoisie. And today over a third of the labour force still toils in the fields, while 80 per cent of farmland is privately owned. Only by eliminating their hideous poverty and rural isolation can the hold of religious obscurantism on the masses be broken.

An immediate, key task for a revolutionary workers government in Poland would be to promote the collectivisation of agriculture. And this has nothing in common with Stalin's mass terror in the Russian countryside in 1929-31. Cheap credits and generous social services should be given to those peasants who pool their land and labour, while higher taxes would be imposed on those who remained petty agricultural capitalists.

Polish Stalinism has strengthened the church not only by perpetuating a landowning peasantry, but also in a more direct way. Since 1956 the Catholic ZNAK group in the Sejm (parliament) has been the only legally recognised opposition in any East European country. And that opposition has in general been anti-democratic. Church spokesmen have denounced the state schools' 'atheisation' of Poland's youth and have called for state financial support for religious instruction. The Polish medical system provides safe abortions for a nominal fee. (Women from West Europe travel to Poland to have their abortions in order to save money.) Committed to the patriarchal family and with it the age-old oppression of women, the church has singled out safe, cheap abortions as one of the great 'crimes' of the Communist government.

By the late 1960s the Gomulka regime had pretty much exhausted the moral capital of the 1956 'Polish October'. The economy was stagnant, real wages were rising more slowly than in any other East European country. The 1968 'Prague spring' in neighbouring Czechoslovakia panicked the Polish bureaucracy, which feared the unrest would spread to its own more volatile and combative people.

At this point a faction in the bureaucracy around secret police chief Mieczyslaw Moczar sought to channel popular discontent into traditional anti-Semitic Polish chauvinism. Under the rubric of 'anti-Zionism', the few tens of thousands of Jews who had survived Hitler's holocaust, many of them loyal PUPP cadre, were driven out of the country. (Almost none settled in Israel, but rather ended up teaching Slavic languages in Copenhagen or Stockholm.) Even Gomulka's Jewish wife wasn't safe from accusations of 'cosmopolitanism' and lack of 'Polish patriotism'. The present political atmosphere in Poland, especially the growing authority of the church, is conditioned by the purging of Jews, a traditionally socialist and internationalist cultural elite in East Europe.

Blood on the Baltic and Gierek's manoeuvre

In 1970 the Gomulka regime decided to raise the agricultural procurement price in order to stimulate greater production from the peasants. A few weeks before Christmas -- an unbelievably stupid piece of timing -- the government an-

nounced food prices would be increased on the average 30 per cent. The Baltic ports ignited. Led by the shipbuilders, thousands of workers, some singing the Internationale, attacked police and tried to burn down Party headquarters in Gdansk and Szczecin. Over the objections of the top generals, Gomulka ordered the army in, tanks and all. More than a hundred workers were reportedly killed, many times that number wounded. Once again Poland was seconds away from a revolutionary explosion.

And once again the bureaucracy presented to the workers a new face and a new deal. Edward Gierek, an ex-coal miner and party boss of the mining region of Silesia, had a reputation as unpretentious, pragmatic and competent. It is commonly believed that as soon as Gierek replaced Gomulka, he rescinded the price increase and the strikes ended. In fact, he did not and the strikes continued. While offering considerable economic concessions, Gierek insisted that returning to the old 1966 price level was impossible. He spent the first two months in power running from one strike committee to another trying to sell them this economic programme. But the workers were not buying it. In mid-February a strike of largely women textile workers in Lodz finally caused the new regime to give up; it agreed to freeze prices at the 1966 level.

In the course of his negotiations with the strike committees in early 1971, Gierek was forced to defend his role as head of a workers state and justify his policies as being in the specific interests of the working class. In turn, the strike committee delegates addressed Gierek not as the representative of a hostile, exploitative class but as a labour leader (possibly an untrustworthy bureaucrat) who was supposed to serve the workers' interests and do his best to meet their demands. The extraordinary nine-hour session in January 1971 between Gierek and the strike committee at the Warski shipyards in Szczecin is a dramatic empirical refutation of all 'new class' theories of the Sino-Soviet states. Interestingly, the present director of the Lenin Shipyard in Gdansk was a member of the strike committee which bargained with Gierek in 1970.

Whereas in 1956 Gomulka had promised the workers democratisation, in 1971 Gierek promised them prosperity. Judge me by the meat on your table, he told them. He promised huge wage increases for the workers, higher procurement prices and state pensions for the peasants plus the rapid modernisation of Polish industry. And how was this economic miracle (the term was actually used in official propaganda) to be achieved? Through massive loans from the West and also the Soviet Union. The Polish Stalinist bureaucracy rode out the crisis of 1970-71, but only by mortgaging the country to West German bankers.

For the militant Baltic shipbuilders the new regime's promise of an economic miracle was not enough. Gierek had to concede an independent workers committee arising out of the strike committee, and free elections to the official trade union. In a year or so the bureaucracy regained control in part through firing some committee leaders and co-opting others, but mainly because the exceptional increases in real wages (running about 8 per cent a year) quieted worker discontent and activism. A leader of the Szczecin workers committee, Edmund Baluka, now in exile, described the process in a 1977 interview:

'But, of course, Gierek did an about turn, and partly by bettering the material situation of the workers -- and in the process massively indebting Poland to the West and the Soviet Union -- the Party managed to rebuild its ranks and regain control. 'The rises in living standards gave the workers a false sense of security, but in the first 2 or 3 years of Gierek's rule people thought that things in Poland were really changing for the better.' (*Labour Focus on Eastern Europe*, May-June 1977)

Gierek runs out of economic miracles

Gierek's economists projected transforming Poland into something like an East European Japan. They maintained that the rapid modernisation of the country's industrial plant would enable Poland to flood world markets with cheap, quality goods and so repay the loans when they fell due. Whatever slim chance this economic manoeuvre had of working was dashed by the 1974-75 world depression. At a deeper level, Gierek's economic gamble failed because the Stalinist regime is incapable of mobilising the enthusiasm and sense of sacrifice of the Polish working people. This incompetence is endemic in a

continued on page 6

Polish workers...

(continued from page 5)

bureaucracy, more due to lack of an effective corrective feedback than to material privilege.

Between 1970 and 1975 the value of Poland's imports from the West increased an incredible 40 per cent a year (*East European Economics*, Fall 1979)! Exports could not possibly keep pace. By 1976 imports were twice exports, total foreign debt three times exports and debt service absorbed 25 per cent of hard currency earnings (US Congress, Joint Economic Committee, *East European Economics Post-Helsinki* [1977]). Moreover, things were bound to get worse as Poland's large loans came due in the late 1970s.

Gierek's Poland was heading toward the honour of being the first Communist country to declare international bankruptcy. In late 1975 the regime simultaneously tried to brake the economy and steer it into a U-turn. Wage increases were to be scaled back, new major investment projects practically frozen. The massive balance-of-payments deficit was to be reversed. The decision to raise food prices an average 60 per cent in June 1976 was in part designed to spur agricultural production, but mainly to soak up domestic purchasing power, allowing more to be exported. Superficially June 1976 appeared to be a replay of 1970-71. The regime announced food price increases, the workers reacted with mass strikes and protests, the regime rescinded the increases. Yet the differences are perhaps more important than the similarities.

Six years earlier the regime stood up to a two-month strike wave before relenting. Now Gierek cancelled the price increase within 24 hours, at the first sign of worker resistance. In December 1970 Gomulka had ordered a massacre. In 1976 Gierek forbade the use of firearms, and serious violence was limited to the mammoth Ursus tractor factory near Warsaw and the small industrial city of Radom. The Radom workers were driven into a fury when, on seizing the Party headquarters, they discovered a cache of top-quality ham and other luxury goods unavailable on the domestic market. By late 1977 all the workers imprisoned for participating in the June events were amnestied and most of those fired were reinstated.

The church played a clever double game. It supported the price increase, which benefited its peasant base and gave it a bargaining counter with the regime. At the same time Cardinal Wyszyński called for amnesty for the imprisoned workers, a universally popular demand.

The June events were a devastating and lasting blow to the moral authority of the regime. Gierek's earlier promises of unparalleled prosperity were thrown back in his face. The popular attitude was caught in the line: 'The party decided to stuff the people's mouth with sausage so they would not talk back, and now there is no sausage.' The government inspired neither fear nor respect. Corruption, black-marketeering and worker apathy became common, even normal. In a 1977 open letter to Gierek, a former head of state and PZP general secretary Edward Ochab wrote:

'The conviction is spreading amongst the people that one achieves nothing through honesty: the tendency to corruption, cliquism and the dishonest earning of money increases constantly.' (*Labour Focus on Eastern Europe*, March-April 1978)

The government promised to leave the people alone; in return, it asked only that the people leave it alone. But the world economy wouldn't leave Poland alone.

For workers control of production!

Although the government promised to freeze food prices, it couldn't meet market demand at those prices, especially since money wages continued to rise. Raising the procurement price for the peasantry didn't encourage nearly enough additional output. And the government food subsidy -- the difference between the prices paid to the peasant and paid by the urban consumer -- has been an enormous and increasing drain on the entire economy. In the past ten years the cost of food subsidies has multiplied twenty times (*Economist*, 12 January 1980).

The regime tried to get around the problem through an elaborate system of different classes of retail shops. The better class the shop, the higher the prices, the more likely the goods would actually be on the shelves. At the top of the line were the Pewex shops which sold luxury items for Western currency only.

Politically prevented from raising prices in line with market demand, the regime resorted to rationing by queueing up. And the queues kept

getting longer, especially after last year's bad harvest (in part caused by peasant strikes). Things have now reached such a pass it's reported even the Pewex shops have empty shelves. A typical Polish family spends a good part of its free time hunting for food and other consumer goods.

The present large wage increases now being granted will lead either to wild inflation or even longer queues. And Polish workers know this. One of the Baltic strike committee's demands is the temporary rationing of meat to replace the present system of multiple prices and the maddening resort to ever-longer queues. If Polish workers still strike for higher pay, it's because they have no control over economic policy and would suffer inflation and shortages in any case.

The social democrats of the Committee for Social Self-Defence (KOR) are opposing the present large wage rises on the grounds that they will simply fuel the inflationary spiral. Kuron, Michnik & Co, very full of themselves, are in effect offering the Stalinist regime the following deal (which, of course, they can't deliver on): You give us 'free trade unions', an end to censorship, etc; in return, we will convince the workers to accept a few years of austerity. In an article in a current *Der Spiegel* (18 August) Michnik appeals to Gierek's noted pragmatism, 'whether he [Gierek] understands that a dialogue with the people is indispensable to carry through necessary, but unpopular, economic reforms cannot today be answered'.

But the Polish workers must not pay for the gross mismanagement of Gierek's regime. Nor should they have the slightest confidence in the bureaucracy's 'economic reforms'. Egalitarian and rational socialist planning, capable of overcoming the mess the Stalinists have made of the Polish economy, is possible only under a government based on democratically elected workers councils (soviets). As a revolutionary, transitional step toward that, Polish workers must struggle against the bureaucracy for control over production, prices, distribution and foreign trade.

The Polish Stalinist bureaucracy's economic mismanagement is today glaring. Nonetheless, the *historical superiority* of collectivised property and centralised economic planning, even when saddled with a parasitic bureaucracy, remains indisputable. Any Polish worker who takes Radio Free Europe as good coin and thinks he would be better off under 'free enterprise' capitalism should consider these few statistics: between 1950 and 1976 the advanced capitalist economies grew at an average annual rate of 4.4 per cent, the backward capitalist economies at 5 per cent and the centrally planned East European economies at 7.7 per cent (*Scientific American*, September 1980).

The Poles have contradictory economic aspirations. There is an overwhelming demand to abolish the special shops -- an egalitarian socialist measure. Yet all those who get dollars from relatives in America would like to spend them on luxury goods imported from the West. For strike leaders who yearn for capitalism, we suggest a long vacation in Liverpool where they won't have to stand in line to buy anything. Of course, they will have a little difficulty finding a job, and even if they do their pay will be so low that they will have to cut back on their meat consumption. (The dissidents ought to be sent to Afghanistan where they can find out what Carter's 'human rights' are all about by seeing what happens to them if they try to teach young girls to read and write.)

Break the imperialist economic stranglehold!

In 1978 over 50 per cent of Poland's hard currency earnings were absorbed by debt service, in 1979 over 60 per cent and today over 90 per cent! Early last year Poland avoided becoming the world's biggest bankrupt only by a major re-scheduling of its debts. But Poland's Western bankers are, in an opposite way, just as fed up with Gierek's economic mismanagement as Poland's workers. They demanded and got the right to monitor all aspects of economic policy and to have their recommendations taken very seriously -- an unprecedented step for a deformed workers state. As an economist for Bankers Trust commented at the time: 'This marks the first time a Communist government has embraced austerity -- a purposeful cut in its planned rate of growth -- for balance-of-payments reasons' (*New York Times*, 26 January 1979). This is the same kind of programme the International Monetary Fund normally imposes on neo-colonial bankrupts like Turkey, Zaire and Peru.

But then Gierek's Poland has become a West German client-state economically, supplying it with substantial quantities of raw materials.

This was noted by the *New York Times* (20 August) during the present crisis:

'West German banks, which have played an important role in providing Poland with credits, have pointed out that its deposits of coal, copper, silver, platinum and vanadium make it an intrinsically more promising client than either Hungary or Czechoslovakia.'

One West German banker is now proposing that any new loans to Poland be secured by specific mines and factories.

Following the 1956 Polish crisis and Hungarian revolution Shane Mage, a founding leader of the Spartacist tendency (who has since abandoned Marxism), produced a theoretical consideration of the ways in which capitalism might be restored in East Europe. Should a petty-bourgeois clericalist party come to power in a 'democratic revolution', he posited, it could restore capitalism by eliminating the state monopoly of foreign trade and reintegrating the country into the world economy without significant denationalisation of the existing industrial plant:

'Another decisive aspect of the return to capitalism under petty-bourgeois democratic leadership would be the ties of Poland and Hungary with the capitalist world market... 'And what would become of the nationalized industries? Their fate would serve the interests of the peasants and petty-bourgeoisie and the needs for trade with the Western capitalists. Hungary and Poland can be capitalist without denationalizing a single large industrial plant; all that is necessary is to convert the industry ... into an appendage of the peasant economy and the world market.'

(Shane Mage, *The Hungarian Revolution*, 1959)

To a considerable degree Poland has become an appendage of the world capitalist economy not, as Mage projected, under a petty-bourgeois 'democratic' party, but under a shaky Stalinist bureaucracy which tried to buy off a combative working class and a backward, smallholding peasantry by mortgaging the country's wealth to the imperialists.

Thus, the response of the world, especially West German, bourgeoisie to the Polish crisis is divided between short-term financial interests and a historic appetite to overturn proletarian state power in the Soviet bloc. Most German bankers want Gierek to win the best terms he can get. After all, they've been pushing him for years to do away with the food subsidy and impose other austerity measures. But the right-winger Franz-Josef Strauss called for a moratorium on loans to Poland to blackmail the regime into granting all the strike committee's demands.

One cannot, however, consider Poland's relations with Western capitalism without taking the Soviet Union very much into account. To do so is truly to play *Hamlet* without the Danish prince. The experiences of 1970 and 1976 convinced the Kremlin that if the Polish masses were pushed too hard to pay the foreign debts, there would be a popular explosion which, whatever way it went, could only hurt them. So the Russians are paying a good part of Poland's debt both directly and by shipping the Warsaw regime agricultural produce. In one sense Poland has become the intermediary through which Western finance capital sucks surplus out of the Soviet workers and peasants (whose living standards are substantially lower than those of the Poles). If Polish workers don't appreciate this, Western bankers are very much aware of the fact. That house organ of the international financial community, the *Economist* (9 August), writes in the current crisis:

'In past Polish crises the Soviet Union has stepped in with cash and emergency grain sales. But the Poles may be wearing out their welcome on begging-bowl trips to Moscow. The Soviet Union has already lent Poland \$1 billion this spring to meet pressing debt-service requirements.'

One international banker, who chose to remain anonymous, remarked that Soviet military intervention would enhance Poland's creditworthiness (*New York Times*, 31 August)!

A key task facing the Polish proletariat is to break the imperialist economic stranglehold. The Baltic strike committee is demanding 'a full supply of food products for the domestic market, with exports limited to surpluses'. (It is not, however, demanding limitations on imports.) Economic autarky is not what Poland needs. On the contrary, socialist economic planning should maximally utilise the international division of labour, exporting and importing as much as possible.

What a revolutionary workers government in Poland would do is *cancel the foreign debt*. Well, not quite. The workers might export comrade Edward Gierek to West Germany, where he can

work off his obligations in some Ruhr coal mine. A very good idea, some Polish workers might say, but will the bankers of Frankfurt write off \$20 billion with a shrug? What of imperialist retaliation, economic or military? Polish workers can counter such retaliation only by mobilising the West European, centrally West German, working classes under the banner of a Socialist United States of Europe.

All organised forces in Polish political life -- the Stalinist bureaucracy, the church and all wings of the dissident movement -- inculcate hostility to Russia as the enemy of the Polish people. The Gomulka and Gierek regimes continually threatened that any mass struggles, even purely economic strikes, would bring in the Soviet Red Army. 'Our fraternal allies are concerned' is the stock phrase. And, of course, Pope Wojtyla's church and the dissident movement grouped around it have as their ultimate goal 'national independence' (like under Pilsudski?), though they differ amongst themselves how to achieve this.

A hallmark for a revolutionary party in Poland is a positive orientation to the Russian working class (which incidentally pays no small share of Poland's debt to the West). And this is not simply a matter of abstract proletarian internationalism. It is a matter of life and death.

Illusions about the good will of the Western capitalist powers common in East Europe do not extend to the Soviet Union. Having lost 20 million in fighting Nazi Germany, the Soviet people understand that NATO's nuclear arsenal is targeted at them. This understanding is now heightened by Washington's open threats of a nuclear first strike. The Soviet masses also know that the imperialist powers' war against their country, hot and cold, began with the Bolshevik Revolution of October 1917. Russian working people see pro-Western 'dissidents' like Sakharov for what they are -- traitors to the socialist revolution.

If the Kremlin believes that the Soviet conscript army can be depended on to suppress any mass upheaval in Poland or Czechoslovakia, it is not simply out of mechanical discipline or Great Russian chauvinism. The Soviet people fear the transformation of East Europe into hostile, imperialist-allied states extending NATO to their own border. The Kremlin bureaucrats exploit this legitimate fear to crush popular unrest and democratic aspirations in East Europe, as in Czechoslovakia in 1968. There were numerous reports that Soviet soldiers were shaken when on occupying Prague they encountered not a bloody fascistic counterrevolution as they had been told, but protests by Communist workers and left-wing students.

Revolutionary Polish workers cannot hope to appeal to Soviet soldiers unless they assure them that they will defend that part of the world against imperialist attack. A Polish workers government must be a military bastion against NATO. And a proletarian political revolution in Poland must extend itself to the Soviet Union or, one way or another, it will be crushed.

- For trade unions independent of bureaucratic control and based on a programme of defending socialised property!
- For the strict separation of church and state! Fight clerical-nationalist reaction! Guard against capitalist restorationism!
- Promote the collectivisation of agriculture!
- For workers control of production, prices, distribution and foreign trade!
- For proletarian political revolution against the Stalinist bureaucracy -- For a government based on democratically elected workers councils (soviets)!
- Break the imperialist economic stranglehold -- Cancel the foreign debt! Towards international socialist economic planning!
- For military defence of the USSR against imperialism! For the revolutionary unity of the Polish and Soviet working classes!
- For a Polish Trotskyist party, section of a reborn Fourth International!

Pope's dissidents...

(continued from page 3)

clear:

'The Catholic Church has been crucial in the growth of a political opposition in Poland. Had it not been for the support of the Church, even the new alliance between "the intelligentsia, village, and workers" to which Kuron refers would probably have failed to survive the hatred of the authorities.' (New York Review of Books, 8 February 1979)

Brumberg points out that the original KOR demands for amnestying workers arrested and fired in the June 1976 strikes were almost identical to those of the episcopate. 'Since then, the parallels between statements by the Church -- and especially by Cardinal Wyszynski, whom Michnik strongly, if not uncritically, admires -- and those of the opposition have become even more conspicuous.' He points out that supporters of the ZNAK group have participated in the 'flying university' circles sponsored by KOR, which in Krakowa used churches for its classes with the permission of then-Archbishop Wojtyla. Michnik described the new pope as one of the two 'co-founders of the anti-totalitarian policy of the Polish Episcopate' (Der Spiegel, 23 October 1978). Michnik, a Jew, is so enamoured of the new, 'enlightened' Catholic primate that he wrote of the pope's visit last year:

'It will be a powerful demonstration of the bond between the Polish people and the world of Christian culture, a demonstration of their solidarity with the Catholic Church, and a demonstration of their yearning for freedom, the champion of which they see as being their fellow countryman John Paul II, the defender of human rights.'

For Polish Trotskyism!

This paean to the standardbearer of capitalist restoration in Poland was printed without comment in *Labour Focus on Eastern Europe* (July-August 1979), a joint publication of supporters of the Usec and the 'state-capitalist' British SWP of Tony Cliff. But these pseudo-Trotskyists are not satisfied with such a tepid brew. A subsequent issue of *Labour Focus* reprints an interview (by the French Usec paper *Rouge*) with Leszek Moczulski, who was a member of the Moczar faction of the PUWP at the time it ran the 1968 anti-Semitic purge and now heads the KPN. The journal comments that Moczulski is more militantly anti-government than KOR, and hails the formation of his clerical-reactionary party as 'an event almost without precedent in the history of Eastern Europe since the late 1940s!' Meanwhile, Usec leader Ernest Mandel laments that the Stalinist bureaucracy in Poland has not 'permitted a democratic and intense political life, including a legal Catholic party...' ([US/SWP] *International Internal Discussion Bulletin*, October 1979).

This pandering to clerical reaction is a far cry from the revolutionary social democracy of a Rosa Luxemburg, who wrote in 1905:

'The clergy, no less than the capitalist class, lives on the backs of the people, profits from the degradation, the ignorance and the oppression of the people. The clergy and the parasitic capitalists hate the organised working class, conscious of its rights, which fights for the conquest of its liberties.' ('Socialism and the Churches')

In fact, in all the publications of the Polish dissidents which we have consulted, some hundreds of pages, there is not one reference to Luxemburg, Poland's greatest contribution to the Marxist movement. 'Naturally', because she was a Jew and hardly a Polish nationalist. But neither is there a reference to other authentic Polish Communists, such as Julian Marchlewski, Leo Jogiches and Felix Dzerzhinsky. One of the greatest crimes of the Polish Stalinist bureaucracy is that it has discredited the name of communism among thinking workers.

The present crop of Polish dissidents are overwhelmingly enemies of the cause of proletarian socialism. They act as direct conduits to the church and the West. Today we do not see 'dissident' Stalinists of the Titoist mould. On the contrary, the most left-wing are the East European equivalent of the 'Eurocommunists'. But where in the capitalist West this is but another variety of reformism, more closely tied to its 'own' bourgeoisie, in the Soviet bloc countries passing from Stalinist to Eurocommunist means joining the camp of counterrevolution. Authentic Trotskyism stands not for the bogus 'unity of all anti-Stalinist forces' -- including disciples of Wojtyla and Brzezinski -- but for a

class-conscious communist opposition to the parasitic bureaucracy. And those would-be leftists who today follow the Kurons and Michniks should realize that if they are successful in bringing off a national revolt together with the clerical reactionaries, Gierek & Co will be the first to go, but they will be next. ■

Litany...

(continued from page 8)

struggle where the fate of proletarian property forms is at stake, openly bourgeois tendencies should have the same right to organise as ostensibly socialist ones. Indeed in the face of sharp criticism from a Spartacist League (SL) spokesman at a September 8 IMG public meeting in London, *Labour Focus on Eastern Europe* editor Oliver Macdonald (whose views reflect those of the IMG) explicitly solidarised with the fight for 'pluralism' in Poland, asserting that 'radical democratic demands in Eastern Europe are communist demands'.

It is an ABC of Marxism that democracy is not classless. Bourgeois democracy in Eastern Europe is counterrevolutionary; workers democracy is predicated first and foremost on a defence of the existing collectivised property relations. The IMG's blurring of this fundamental class divide is not a theoretical innovation, but a capitulation to social-democratic anti-communism. Leninists stand for democratic rights for all parties committed to the defence of socialism. Would the IMG have argued against the Hungarian workers' suppression of reactionary and neo-fascist forces during the political revolution of 1956? The IMG/Usec thesis that 'political democracy plus nationalised property forms equals socialist democracy' denies the right and necessity for the iron dictatorship of the proletariat to suppress its class enemies when they are engaged in counterrevolutionary intrigues. The most expedient way to refute this thoroughly revisionist line is to refer interested readers to Lenin's *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*, written in 1918.

How far the IMG is prepared to go in pandering to such social-democratic illusions is revealed by the reprinting -- without comment -- of a letter to the Gdansk strikers from a clearly anti-socialist farmer (the heading above the letter is 'We are treated like slaves'). In a country where 80 per cent of agriculture is uncollectivised and workers are striking over high food prices, the IMG uncritically airs the views of a peasant whose complaint is that the bureaucrats have no concern for the farmers' profits! Likewise a 'declaration written by exiled Polish revolutionary Marxists' (*Socialist Challenge*, 3 September) is striking in its capitulation to reactionary anti-Russian nationalist sentiments. Its crowning demand is that the government must 'openly state its opposition to any Soviet interference', without even a hint of any perspective for unity between Polish and Russian workers through proletarian political revolution nor, naturally, of defence against imperialism and capitalist restoration.

The IMG's current position on Poland was grossly foreshadowed nearly a year ago, when it extended its indiscriminate fawning over dissidents to hailing the formation of the capitalist restorationist KPN as a 'major development' (*Socialist Challenge*, 27 September 1979). We said at the time:

'In its enthusiasm for "overthrowing the bureaucracy", the IMG appears not to care whether this is accomplished by the proletariat in a political revolution for soviet democracy or by counterrevolutionary forces seeking the restoration of capitalism.' (*Spartacist Britain* no 16, November 1979)

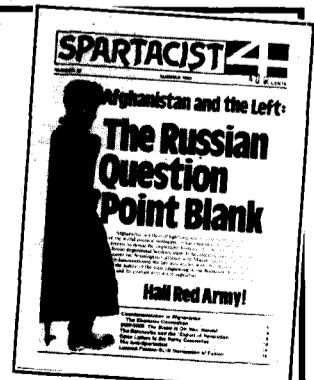
For IMGers intent on fighting for soviet power and not Vatican-style 'democracy', now is the time to stop and think. ■

Includes:

The Bolsheviks and the 'Export of Revolution'

Counterrevolution in Afghanistan: The Khomeini Connection

Price: 40p



Make payable/write to:
Spartacist Publications, PO Box 185, London WC1H 8JE

CONTACT THE SPARTACIST LEAGUE

Birmingham (021) 459 9748
London (01) 278 2232
Sheffield (0742) 686427

SPARTACIST BRITAIN

Fake-lefts bless 'human rights' democracy

Anti-communist litany

From reactionary neanderthals like Franz-Josef Strauss and Ronald Reagan to hidebound conservative trade-union bureaucrats like Frank Chapple and the cabal that runs the American AFL-CIO, concern for 'democracy' and 'free trade unions' has suddenly become a burning issue. Most of this bunch either cheer loudly for 'stability' or sit on their hands when trade-union militants are rounded up, tortured and massacred in Chile and other capitalist dictatorships or when strikes are broken, unions bashed and reactionary anti-strike measures promulgated in their own countries. But this is 'Communist' Poland they're all excited about, and now even the pope has become an advocate of 'militant unionism'.

Marxists stand for trade unions in Poland free from the stranglehold of the Stalinist bureaucracy -- and committed to the defence and extension of the social gains won through the expropriation of the bloodsucking exploiters represented by Reagan and Strauss. Likewise we are firmly committed to *soviet* democracy -- in order to promote a revolutionary internationalist programme aimed at eradicating capitalist exploitation and misery once and for all. But leftists who might think that it is a good idea that the pro-capitalist AFL-CIO bureaucracy has set up a special fund to aid the development of 'free trade unions' in Poland had better remember where that sort of 'fraternal' aid has gone in the past (usually as a conduit for CIA gold) -- to subverting genuine unions in Latin America and to aiding the anti-Communist offensive of the social democracy in Portugal!

The turmoil in Poland could indeed portend a proletarian political revolution to overthrow the parasitic Stalinist bureaucracy. At this point it could equally well be the germinal phase of a counterrevolutionary, clerical-inspired onslaught against a (deformed) proletarian dictatorship. The Socialist Workers Party (SWP), fresh from a campaign to starve Soviet soldiers in Afghanistan in order to aid Islamic 'freedom fighters', couldn't care less. For them the expropriation of the expropriators in Eastern Europe is not worth defending against capitalist restoration. For the SWP (and Frank Chapple, from whom they have a hard time differentiating themselves lately!), the workers' upsurge in Poland has given them a new *cause*



Polish 'expatriates' demonstrate in London. Under capitalist dictator Pilsudski, there were no trade unions in Poland.

celebre -- 'proof' that the deformed workers states really are 'totalitarian' regimes which would be no worse off if returned to the fold of 'democratic' imperialism.

And the ostensibly Trotskyist International Marxist Group (IMG) -- which *claims* to stand for defence of the collectivised property forms against imperialist and domestic counter-revolutionary threats -- has been second to none in echoing the euphoric appeals for 'socialist democracy' in Poland, even if the 'socialism' is a bit tainted by priest's robes. For these 'Marxists' we would paraphrase the Enlightenment rationalist Voltaire: socialism will come when the last capitalist is hung by the entrails of the last priest.

The enthusiastic and uncritical support for the Polish strike wave by the IMG and other fake-Trotskyists reflects much more upon their determination to distance themselves from the Soviet bloc under the heat of an imperialist anti-Soviet offensive than upon their commitment to workers' political revolution. Poland is for them a sequel to Afghanistan, with the special attraction that their current bout of Stalinophobia is more palatable -- at least

they are in a bloc with striking workers and not schoolteacher-shooting Islamic fanatics.

The centrist IMG's stance on Poland has been conditioned by years of rightward motion, in particular lately on the Russian question. Along with the rest of the European United Secretariat (Usec) sections, the IMG several years ago hopped on the Eurocommunist bandwagon, and has been tugged even further down the path by the pressure of the all-smothering social-democratic Labour Party milieu and its more recent 'unity offensive' with the Soviet-defeatist Cliffite SWP. Without the pressure of a large Stalinist party to accommodate to (as for example faces the IMG's sister section in France, the LCR), the IMG has been able to express the Usec's right-wing line on Poland most consistently.

Socialist Challenge coverage of the Polish strikes has been just as distorted as that of the bourgeois media: while the latter play up every clericalist, anti-communist element they can find, the IMG simply tries to pretend that they don't exist, or alternately that the church is nothing more than a 'symbol' for the Polish workers (just like chanting 'god is great' was really an expression of 'anti-imperialism' by Khomeini's followers). In the pages of *Socialist Challenge*, the IMG's formal difference with the 'state-capitalist' SWP on the class nature of the Polish state has been reduced to the level of a minor academic quibble. For IMGers justifiably repulsed by the prospect of unity with the anti-Soviet Cliffites, the virtual programmatic agreement on the question of 'socialist democracy' in Poland must be unnerving, especially given the SWP's vigorous offensive to validate its 'third camp' line around the Poland issue.

The theoretical rationale for the IMG's line is the draft Usec resolution 'Socialist Democracy and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat' which asserts virtually unfettered democracy for even openly capitalist-restorationist parties in a workers state, some of the worst extracts of which are reprinted in the 28 August *Socialist Challenge*. Elsewhere in the same issue there is an uncritical interview with Jacek ('just call me a democrat') Kuron and an article which appeals for 'more time' for Polish workers to 'test out all the contradictory political currents -- nationalist, religious, bureaucratic-reformist, "social-democratic", revolutionary Marxist -- which inevitably appear in the fresh air of democracy', as though in the midst of a

continued on page 7

Spartacist League Public Meetings

POLAND

**FOR PROLETARIAN POLITICAL REVOLUTION!
DOWN WITH CLERICAL REACTION!**

Speaker: Mark Hyde (SL Central Committee)

Birmingham

Thursday,
September 11, 7.30pm
The Foyer, Ground Floor,
Dr Johnson House, Bull St B4

London

Friday,
September 12, 7.30pm
Central Library,
68 Holloway Road N7
(tube: Highbury and Islington)

Sheffield

Wednesday,
September 10, 7.30pm
Station Hotel,
The Wicker

For more information contact the SPARTACIST LEAGUE at PO Box 185, London WC1H 8JE or ring London 01-278 2232; Birmingham 021-459 9748; Sheffield 0742 686427