

CLASS ★ STRUGGLE

Special Supplement



The imposition of military rule in Poland shows an attempt to resort to open dictatorial means to resolve certain contradictions. What are these? A national contradiction which is the servitude imposed upon Poland and the rest of eastern Europe by the USSR and the people's struggle against this; and a class contradiction, between the broad mass of working people and the ruling elite.

The Solidarity movement in Poland represents a great movement by all the healthy forces in society to disrupt these two forms of oppression: hence the reactionary forces, the protectors of the status quo, have used armed force against it. This comes as no particular surprise to Marxist-Leninists, because we recognise that the state is an instrument of violence and that the army is the principal component of state power. Similar methods have been used often in the US sphere of influence and may well be brought in in the big imperialist countries like Britain, as, indeed, they already have in northern Ireland. Our solidarity with Solidarity is founded in a shared class interest.

THE NEW BOURGEOISIE

In the Soviet Union and the east European countries, the group which holds power is in essence a bourgeoisie. They enjoy an extravagant life-style based on a wealth whose source can only be the surplus value produced by the labouring population which the ruling class collectively appropriates, shares and jealously protects. They are different in many ways from the old bourgeoisie. They are exceptionally

POLAND: MILITARY RULE EXPOSES SHAM 'SOCIALISM'

bureaucratic and parasitic - two characteristics of the era of imperialism developed to extremes in these once-socialist countries. In Poland's case the economic mismanagement was notorious; hence the way Solidarity was drawn into ~~making~~ initiatives (increasingly radical ones) in the sphere of economic planning and organisation, because it was the only force in society in which people had confidence. Hence the threat to established interests, hence the ruling-class reflex, the military option...

NATIONAL OPPRESSION IN SOVIET EMPIRE

But, in a sense, the wealth of the ruling class is held on sufferance from the overlord, the overall boss in the USSR. Politically, militarily and economically, the pattern of affairs is for Soviet interests to take first place.

Politically there are the frequent meetings of the Soviet Union and its vassals like the recent one to celebrate Brezhnev's birthday in best imperial Tsarist style, militarily there is the Warsaw Pact, economically there is COMECON which collectively plans the economies of all the Soviet-bloc countries and is responsible for much of the lopsidedness and penury suffered by countries producing commodities (as in Poland's case, coal and foodstuffs) which their own people cannot enjoy. We say that the Soviet Union is social-imperialist - it exploits other countries economically, uses them as pawns in its power-politics and completely denies and opposes the right of people to determine their own destiny. Today Soviet tentacles reach into Asia, Africa and Latin America, but nowhere is the social-imperialist system to be seen in

such a consistent and developed form as in that part of Europe which the Russians arrogantly believe (and which the western leaders usually concede, but which Solidarity denies, and we deny) to be their sphere of influence.

THE MAIN CONTRADICTION

In essence we could say that the main characteristic of the Polish ruling class is to be a comprador bourgeoisie. This means that the contradiction with the Soviet Union is in the last analysis the main one for Poland. Probably the vast majority of Poles see it in this way. This does not mean that the main immediate concern of the revolutionary movement is necessarily with opposing the Soviet Union. In fact, the demand to settle Poland's affairs, free from foreign interference is really a revolutionary national demand, because this is precisely the right which the Kiemlin rulers won't concede.

What the Russians fear and abhor most of all is independent working-class initiatives. So in a deeper sense the military option is a way of protecting Soviet interests as well as those of the Polish ruling class. However, although temporarily weakened, the Solidarity movement already marks certain significant victories over the revisionist system and, in a way, the imposition of martial law itself reflects this fact. After all, the bourgeoisie prefers to rule politically: to doff the velvet glove and expose the mailed fist is a confession of defeat politically.

REVISIONIST PARTY IN DISARRAY

Now the veneer of democracy has been removed. Not only Solidarity itself is suppressed but even the official organs of government have lost their power, such as the local councils, elected by a very falsified 'democratic' process, but still in certain cases (as in Lodz, for instance) having been drawn into co-operating with Solidarity to improve the people's livelihood. The revisionist party itself, which at its last congress had been the scene of unprecedentedly open debate

SEE BACK

SOCIALISM AND NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE

The leaders of the Soviet Union claim that the events in Poland are the internal affairs of the Polish people and that the Soviet Union is in no way involved.

Indeed, what happens in Poland should be solely the concern of the Polish people, but there is plenty of evidence to suggest that the Soviet Union is involved up to its neck, that it has effectively carried out, "an invasion by proxy".

The Soviet Union jealously guards its domination in Eastern Europe and above all it hates and fears any independent working class initiative. So, from the start it has been bitterly hostile to Solidarity and has repeatedly coerced the Polish leaders into cracking down. Last year, the Central Committee of the Soviet Party sent an insolent letter to the Central Committee of the Polish Party in which it attacked them for failing to crush the risen Polish working class. Singled out for thinly veiled threats were the then First Secretary, Kania, and General Jaruzelski. At the Congress of the Soviet Party last year, Brezhnev openly warned that the Soviet Union would not "desert" Poland. There have been persistent reports that before and during the imposition of martial law the Commander of the Warsaw Pact forces (a Russian, of course) and the head of the KGB were in Warsaw. Furthermore, it is believed that Russian troops are operating in Poland wearing Polish Army uniforms, and that Polish political prisoners have been taken to the Soviet Union.

The imposition of martial law by the Polish regime is doing the Soviet Union's dirty work for it. It was the last resort short of all-out intervention.

The threat of Soviet intervention is no idle threat! It sent its troops to invade and occupy Czechoslovakia in 1968, attacked China's Chenpao island in 1969 and invaded Afghanistan in 1979. It has incited and encouraged Cuba to commit aggression in Africa (such as in Angola and Eritrea) and mobilised Vietnam as the, "Cuba of the East" to attack and occupy Kampuchea and Laos and to attack China. This is the Soviet Union's fulfillment of the "Brezhnev Doctrine".

BREZHNEV DOCTRINE

The term "Brezhnev Doctrine" was coined after the invasion of Czechoslovakia. It was said that one "Socialist country" had the "right" to invade and occupy another if "Socialism" was allegedly threatened in that country. In other words, the national independence of countries became no more than a plaything in the hands of the Kremlin leadership. This chauvinist doctrine exposed the fact that the so-called "Socialist camp" was nothing other than a Russian Empire! No wonder the Soviet leaders laud the foreign policy of the old Tsars which was described by Marx as,

"Its method, its tactics, its manoeuvres may change, but the polar star of its policy - world domination - is a fixed star."

For example, Engels denounced Russia's "liberation" of Bulgaria as a "tsarist variety of liberation", and a "conquest under the cover of liberation". Yet the Soviet leaders of today stress that, "the Russians have shed much blood to help the Bulgarians

gain liberation from the Turkish yoke".

So, ever since the invasion of Czechoslovakia, Marxist-Leninists, with the Communist Party of China in the forefront, have described the Soviet Union as "Social-imperialist", that is, socialism in words but imperialism in deeds.

These imperialist actions, and denial of the right of nations to self-determination, have sullied the image of socialism, in particular in the eyes of the oppressed peoples and nations. No wonder many revolutionary nationalists have regarded Marxism with grave suspicion, for example the Provisional IRA and the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania in their early, formative days, although not today.

The Yugoslav news agency, Tanjug, summed this up well in a commentary for the second anniversary of the invasion of Afghanistan.

"Foreign tanks are unable to consolidate a regime which has no firm footing in the Afghan Party and does not enjoy even a minimum of popularity and trust among the people."

They said that the intervention had left a painful impression on Third World countries which were "hungry for socialism", but socialism based on social justice and national independence and not on alien power used in alien interests.

But is Soviet social imperialism, Socialism? Is this all that Socialism has to offer?

No, Soviet social imperialism is the opposite of Socialism! And genuine Socialists have a long history of struggle against chauvinist deviations.

The "father of revisionism", Eduard Bernstein, developed what he called a "Socialist colonial policy", which he described in his work, "Evolutionary Socialism" as follows,

"Moreover, only a conditional right of savages to use the land occupied by them can be recognised. The higher civilisation ultimately can claim a higher right."

This is in total contradiction with the stand taken by Marx who wrote, for example, that

"After occupying myself with the Irish question for many years I have come to the conclusion that the decisive blow against the English ruling classes ... cannot be delivered in England but only in Ireland."

Lenin raised the banner of struggle against revisionists such as Bernstein, and a fundamental part of this was to defend the right of nations to self-determination. This had acquired particular importance since capitalism had now developed to its highest stage, that of imperialism.

In his work, "Socialist Revolution and the right of nations to self-determination", Lenin wrote,

"Victorious Socialism must achieve complete democracy and, consequently not only bring about complete equality of nations, but also give effect to the right of oppressed nations to self-determination, i.e. the right of free political secession. Socialist parties which fail to prove by all their

activities now, as well as during the revolution and after its victory, that they will free the enslaved nations or establish relations with them on the basis of free union - and a free union is a lying phrase without right of secession - such parties would be committing treachery to Socialism."

Similarly, the great Irish Socialist James Connolly, who led the Easter Rising of 1916 said,

"Under a Socialist system, every nation will be the supreme arbiter of its own destinies, national and international; it will be forced into no alliance against its will, but will have its independence guaranteed and its freedom respected by the enlightened self-interest of the social democracy of the world."

And writing in the May/June 1911 edition of the Glasgow based paper "Forward" he wrote,

"The internationalism of the future will be based upon the free federation of free peoples and cannot be realised through the subjugation of the smaller by the larger political unit."

These words of the great revolutionary teachers, Lenin and Connolly, echo down to us today as a stinging rebuke to Soviet social imperialism.

ASIAN COMMUNISM

The stand of Lenin and Connolly has been carried forward and defended by the self-reliant revolutionary Asian Communists, such as those of China, Korea and Kampuchea. For example, Socialist Korea has raised independence and self-reliance into its basic programme, summed up in the Juche idea. At the sixth Congress of the Workers' Party of Korea, held in 1980, Comrade Kim Il Sung explicitly said,

"All the newly-emerging nations must maintain independence."

Probably the most graphic - and tragic - example of the conflict between the independent and dominationist "Schools of Socialism" can be seen in the conflict between Vietnam and Kampuchea.

The basis for this conflict lies in the line of "Indochina Federation" which has been held by the Vietnamese Party since its founding (as the Communist Party of Indochina) in 1930. This line held that because the Vietnamese were the most developed nation in Indochina, their struggle for socialism was more important than that waged by other peoples in the area. The line was that Vietnam would win its liberation and then come and liberate the Kampuchean, Laotian, etc. The Vietnamese demanded that class struggle not be developed in Kampuchea because they needed a secure rear base. The Kampuchean had other ideas. At every step - even when they were ostensible allies - the Kampuchean comrades have had to develop their revolution in the teeth of hostility from Vietnam. As they explained in 1978,

"The Communist Party of Kampuchea was born in an independent revolutionary movement, and it was only by relying on its own independent revolutionary movement that it has been able to have its own experiences, whether right or wrong, bitter or stimulating."

Today, the results of Vietnamese chauvinism are, that by means of warfare of indescribable brutality, including poison gas, famine and starvation, some three million Kampuchean have been butchered and the very survival of Kampuchea placed in jeopardy.

THE ANTI-REVISIONIST MOVEMENT

The Revolutionary Communist League of Britain, along with many other Marxist-Leninist parties and organisations around the world, has been formed in direct opposition to the revisionist parties such as those of Poland, Vietnam and the Soviet Union.

The brutal aggression of the Soviet Union, and its satellites like Vietnam, arises from, and is the logical consequence of, the national and social chauvinist errors made by these parties, which led them to ignore the right of nations to self determination. Defence of the national independence of all countries, of whatever social system, is a fundamental part of genuine communism. Revolution can be neither exported or imported. It can only be made by the people of the country in question, taking into account their concrete conditions and travelling down the road most suited to them.

CHILEAN REVOLUTIONARIES SUPPORT POLISH PEOPLE

Since 1973 the people of Chile have known exactly what it is like to live under a brutal military dictatorship. On September 11 of that year, the popular government of Dr Allende was overthrown by American-backed generals. Unleashing a reign of military and economic terror, the Chilean junta took away any and every democratic right enjoyed by the Chilean people.

One of the main revolutionary organisations leading the resistance is MAPU. Originally a left wing tendency in the Christian Democrats, it eventually became a Marxist-Leninist organisation. On December 21 the Belgian section of MAPU issued a statement on Poland.

It said that the Chileans know what it is like to suffer a military coup. "Santiago, El Salvador, Warsaw, it is the same struggle for liberty and socialism..."

The statement describes the Polish leaders as, "'Red' Generals, fascists disguised as socialists or communists." The comrades said that the left in the west and the third world must reflect profoundly on what has happened in Poland and must extend solidarity to the Polish people.

"The Chilean people who have received great and generous support from all peoples, against the Pinochet dictatorship and American imperialism cannot remain indifferent, and give full support to the struggle of Polish workers against repression and dictatorship..."

"The crisis in Poland is also a product of the imperialist domination exercised by the Soviet Union... The Polish coup helps ... Pinochet (Chile), Duarte (El Salvador), Mobutu (Zaire) and the fascist dictatorships in the world..."

"The forces who truly fight for socialism oppose equally the fascist repression of Pinochet or Duarte and the Polish fascists disguised as communists..."

"The workers and peoples of the world have no interest in exchanging a system of private capitalist exploitation for one of state capitalism..."

For those on the left who say that to oppose Soviet imperialism is to fall into the camp of American imperialism, the statement of the Chilean comrades comes as a fitting response.

Martial law draws critical comments

The imposition of brutal military rule on the Polish people by the Jaruzelski junta has drawn critical comment from wide sections of the international left, in particular from the Eurocommunist parties. Whilst they have not yet taken the step of formally severing Party-to-Party relations with the ruling parties of the Warsaw Pact, parties such as the Communist Party of Italy, are being forced fundamentally to re-think their views on the nature of these societies.

Shortly after the imposition of martial law, the Communist Party of Italy (PCI) held an emergency meeting of its leading body. They denounced the military takeover and reaffirmed their support to Solidarity. "The PCI demands that civil liberties and Trade Union freedoms be restored."

In a later, 17-point statement, the PCI targeted the Soviet Union.

"The negative weight which the attitude of the Soviet Union and other Warsaw Pact countries has had in the crisis has been great.

"There have been serious pressures, unwarranted interferences and a hammering political and ideological campaign.

"Any separation between socialism and democracy is unacceptable."

On television, Mr Berlinguer, the General Secretary of the PCI, made a potentially far-reaching statement.

"(What happened in Poland) leads us to believe that in effect the driving

force for renewal of society emanating from the Russian Revolution, or at least in some of the societies in Eastern Europe, is now exhausted."

The Secretariat of the Communist Party of Spain (PCE) condemned totally the military takeover and "any external intervention".

The head of the International Department of the Communist Party of Japan (which follows a line similar to the Eurocommunists) said:

"We cannot but feel pain and shock at the inexcusable measures taken in the name of socialism in socialist Poland."

He criticised "the interventionist attitude taken by the Soviet Union and other countries," which included "threats by suggesting military intervention as well as political interventionist actions and interventionist remarks in the press."

These developments amongst the Eurocommunist parties - which are bound to intensify - are welcomed by revolutionary communists. They are helping to unmask the Soviet Union in the eyes of the international working class and thus aid in isolating Soviet social imperialism, the most dangerous enemy of the peoples of the world. But this does not mean that the Eurocommunists (or at least their leaders) are joining the ranks of genuine communists. In fact, they are using the events in Poland to further their own brand of revisionism. Berlinguer summed this up himself when he said:

"It now seems clear that the road taken by Russia after 1917 is not practicable for bringing about a revolution in the centres of capitalism in the West today."

Communists unite with the Euro-revisionists when they criticise the Soviet Union and stand for national independence and democratic rights but we will not give up struggling against their own attacks on the revolutionary essence of Marxism.

IN EASTERN EUROPE

Within Eastern Europe, opposition to martial law has come from Yugoslavia which itself has a long history of struggle against Soviet hegemonism. After the murders of miners in Silesia, the Yugoslav News Agency, Tanjug, said:

"The crude logic of martial law has been confirmed in the Polish case, regardless of the motives used to explain its introduction."

The paper, Borba, said that Poland had once again suffered a national tragedy, and the Politika Express said:

"General Jaruzelski had promised a Polish soldier would never shoot a Polish worker and yet he did shoot and the blood of the workers was shed on behalf of the workers' state."

Scinteia, newspaper of the Communist Party of Romania, declared that Poland's problems, though of utmost complexity and gravity, could and should be solved by the people and the socio-political forces of that country.



The spirit of freedom



Poland's struggle is a struggle for national identity. Naturally this movement seeks continuity with past history. November 11th 1918 is the date Poland re-emerged as an independent state in modern times, but until the great changes of the last couple of years no-one was allowed to refer to it. Last November, just before the coup, a massive demonstration marked the date. The names of the martyrs were read, punctuated by a chorus of: "They have fallen on the field of honour."

The tone was overwhelmingly anti-Russian. Why is this so? The determinant reason is that Soviet social-imperialism oppresses the Polish nation today. Subsidiary reasons are: firstly that, while Poland was oppressed by other countries, notably Sweden and Prussia, the main force in dominating Poland during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was Russia. Secondly, although during the period when Russia was socialist the main anti-Polish force was undoubtedly Germany, the socialist USSR did make some quite big errors in handling Poland.

During the eighteenth century Russia aimed to keep Poland subservient, using it as a bridgehead to intervene in West Europe. It propped up a very reactionary social system, to keep Poland weak. Towards the end of the century, there were three successive partitions in the last of which Poland disappeared altogether. Russia took Byelorussia and Ukraine and the rest went to Prussia and Austria. The Poles fought back: in 1794, 1830, 1848 there were upsurges, linked with the revolutionary currents sweeping Europe at those times which combined social reform with demands for national independence.

THE COMMUNIST STANDPOINT

The Communist movement founded by Marx and Engels valued and supported the Polish struggle. Marx said, "the intensity and vitality of all revolutions since 1789 can be gauged pretty accurately by their attitude to Poland." Engels wrote: "the restoration of an independent, strong Poland is a matter which concerns not only the Poles but all of us."

Then came the imperialist world war. After Germany and Austria were defeated the victorious imperialists created a Polish state including some territory which the Germans had previously grabbed from Russia before beginning a concerted war against revolutionary Russia. The Polish regime joined in the attack and conquered further Russian territory in 1920.

Fighting overwhelmingly superior forces on many fronts, Russia definitely had justice on her side in fighting Poland defensively. Stalin wrote that the so-called independence of countries like Poland, "is only an illusion, and conceals the utter dependence of these apologies for states on one group of imperialists or another." This accurately characterises the situation at the time, but it also implies a rather contemptuous attitude to the just aspect in the Polish people's aspirations.

In 1926 Pilsudski carried out a military coup d'etat and established a fascistic regime, which attempted to realise its expansionist ambitions in concert with the German Nazis. This was appallingly short-sighted, since Hitler's strategy inevitably meant the destruction of Poland. Following the treacherous Munich agreement of 1938, Poland joined Hitler in dismembering Czechoslovakia. The USSR was desperately trying to unite all forces that could be united to combat the German menace. Concretely, they could only check Hitler by moving troops across Polish territory, but this Poland declined, while Britain and France obstinately refused to co-operate. At the end of its tether, the USSR had to conclude a non-aggression Pact with Germany in August 1939.

Correct in itself, the Pact however included an implied agreement on partitioning Poland in the event of war, the USSR to take the predominantly Russian territories to the east of the Niemen-Bug line. This is indeed what happened. Such a denial of another country's independence is a concession the Russians should not legitimately have made.

Poland paid dearly for its ruling class' mistakes. The Nazis deliberately killed at least five million Poles, over half of these being Jews.

An exile government was set up in London, with its own underground forces in Poland, the Home Army. This government fell into a trap laid by Hitler when it broke with the USSR over the issue of the Katyn graves, containing the bodies of numerous Polish officers allegedly massacred by the Russians, (The USSR argues that they were killed by the Germans, but by arrogantly declaring the matter closed Russia seems to have something to hide: this has become one of the major issues crystallising Polish grievances today). An alternative Polish leadership was then set up, based in the USSR.

In 1944 the great Soviet counter-offensive liberated eastern Europe. Aiming to anticipate this, the Home Army launched an insurrection in Warsaw which was crushed by the Germans; the Soviet Union, which had already made immense sacrifices, understandably shrank from the risk of supporting the rising, but many Poles now believe this to have been deliberate.

Russia, America and Britain agreed on the frontiers of the new Poland which in effect meant shifting the country westwards: it lost the territories in the east which Russia had occupied in 1939 and gained land from Germany in the west, including what had been East Prussia, up to the Oder-Neisse line.

POLAND TAKES THE SOCIALIST ROAD

After the war Poland took the road of socialism, but the USSR insisted on maintaining tight control especially over the army, where leading positions were occupied by Russians.

In the late '40s the US-inspired Cold War created great dangers for world peace, but the USSR reacted in a way which created grave contra-

ditions: particularly after the condemnation of Yugoslavia in 1948, purges were conducted throughout eastern Europe which in effect treated as enemies anyone who urged that socialism should conform to the specific conditions of each particular country. This damped down the development of vigorous socialist forces which could have resisted the spread of revisionism.

WORKING CLASS MUST LEAD STRUGGLE

1956 was a year of qualitative change when the Soviet leadership took the road of revisionism, and eastern Europe was thrown into confusion. In Poland, there was a great demand for change and Gomulka, who had been purged in 1948, seemed the person to lead Poland in building socialism according to national conditions. In fact his period laid the foundations of a Polish revisionist system which was moreover entirely dependent on the Soviet Union, now becoming social-imperialist.

Thus from the workers' uprisings of 1970 through to the heroic events of the 1980s it has become clear that Poland's national struggle against Soviet domination can't depend on the Polish revisionists but only on the strength of the workers. Earlier Polish national struggles were led by aristocrats or bourgeois. At the end of the nineteenth century Engels predicted that independence "can be gained only by the young Polish proletariat, and in its hands it is secure." Today we are seeing the truth of this.

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and struggle among different factions (some of them favourable to compromise with Solidarity) has in essence been dismantled, with a great proportion of its members purged, and others leaving in disgust.

The revisionist party could no longer control things in Poland: this is the simple fact, which has very important implications for the whole Soviet-bloc system. So all will not be joy in the Kremlin.

THE RISING TIDE OF NATIONAL STRUGGLES

The revisionist-opportunist bourgeoisie hopes that its rule will be much more stable and enduring than that of the traditional bourgeoisie. Against these hopes Solidarity has dealt a powerful blow. The passionate concern with democracy, with building the union as a fitting instrument for working people's interests, the revulsion against opportunism and the deep concern to prevent it arising within the new movement itself, all these are epoch-making contributions of Solidarity, which inspire all revolutionary struggles. Linked with this is a further profound development which Poland expresses, that the new trend of revolutionary national struggles, which has the third world as its main and leading force, is bubbling up in the heart of Europe.