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Reconstruct
the Fourth International!

Polish Workers Shake The World

SPECIAL ISSUE

THE GREAT CONTRADICTION

THE CRISIS OF STALINISM

U.S. LEFT IN DISARRAY

Including Full Text of the Gdansk Accords

Text of the Gdansk Accords

The following is the complete text of the agreement signed on August 31, 1980 by the presidium of the Gdansk Inter-Factory Strike Committee (MKS) and the commission of the Polish government. The translation by ***Socialist Voice*** *was made from the version published in the French newspaper* ***Le Monde*** *on September 2 and 3. We note that this version differed in some respects from the demands and excerpts published in the* ***New York Times*** *on August 29 and 31. It is possible that the indirect translation from Polish to English via French may have affected the accuracy of some of the more technical points. The important annex referred to in the text is not yet available in translation.*

The accords embody the workers' victory and contain reforms intolerable to the Polish state. Therefore the agreement is worthless without the constant mobilization of the workers. It must be noted that the agreement is not simply a truce between the workers and their class enemy but a series of political capitulations made by the reformist misleadership of the MKS. As well, obscurantist language masks the surrender of key demands in reality that seem to be accepted in words; see the section on the sliding scale of wages in particular. This historic document merits full analysis, which will be further illuminated by publication of the discussions among the Gdansk workers and the annex to the accords.

The governmental commission and the MKS, after having studied the 21 demands of the striking workers of the west region, have arrived at the following conclusions:

Concerning point No. 1, whose text reads: "Acceptance of free trade unions independent of the party and of the employers, on the basis of Convention No. 87 of the International Labor Organization concerning trade union rights, which was ratified by Poland;" it was understood that:

1) The activity of the trade unions in People's Poland has not responded to the workers' hopes and aspirations. We consider it useful to create new self-governing trade unions that would be authentic representatives of the working class. This does not challenge the right of workers to continue to belong to the old trade unions , and, for the future, the possibility of cooperation between the two unions will be studied.

2) In creating the new independent self-governing trade unions, the MKS declares that they will respect the principles defined in the Constitution of People's Poland. The new unions will defend the social and material interests of the workers and have no intention of playing the role of a political party. They are based on the principle of nationalized property in the means of production, the basis of Poland's socialist system; they recognize that the Polish United Workers Party plays a leading role in the state, and they do not challenge the existing system of international alliances. They wish to guarantee the workers the most suitable means of controlling, expressing and defending their interests.

The governmental commission declares that the government will guarantee full respect for the independence and self-government of the new unions, in both their internal organization and their functioning at all levels of activity. The government will guarantee the new unions the full opportunity to carry out their basic functions in defense of the workers' interests, in order to satisfy the material, social and cultural needs of the workers. At the same time, it guarantees that the new unions suffer no discrimination.

3) The creation and functioning of the independent self-governing trade unions conform to Convention No. 87 of the International Labor Organization concerning trade union rights and their protection, and to Convention No. 97 concerning the rights of association and collective bargaining, these two Conventions having been ratified by Poland. Legislative changes will be necessary to permit the existence of a plurality of unions. That is why the government undertakes to take the initiative on the legislative plane, especially concerning the laws governing trade unions, workers' councils and the labor, code.

4) The strike committees may transform themselves, at the factory level, into institutions representing the workers, either as workers' councils, factory committees or founding committees of the new self-governing trade unions. The MKS, as founding committee of these unions, has the right to choose the form of a trade union or of an association at the coastal-regional level. The founding committees will function until statutory elections of the new union authorities. The government undertakes to make it possible for the new unions to register outside of the Central Trade Union Council.

5) The new unions should have the real opportunity to intervene in the key decisions that determine the living conditions of workers; the principles for dividing the national income between consumption and accumulation, the division of the social consumption fund among its various objectives (health, education, culture), the basic principles of wages and income policy, especially the principle of automatic wage increases according to inflation, long-term economic planning, investment policy and price modifications. The government undertakes to guarantee the conditions necessary for carrying out these functions.

6) The MKS will create a center for social studies whose goal is an objective analysis of the workers' situation and the ways of properly representing their interests. It will carry out expert analyses on the indexation of wages and prices and will propose forms of compensation. It will publish the results of its studies. As well, the new unions will have their own publications.

7) The government guarantees that of Article 1, Point 1 of the trade union law of 1949, which guarantees the workers and laborers the right freely to associate in trade unions, will be carried out. The new union will not join the association represented by the Central Trade Union Council. We agree that the new trade union law will respect these principles. At the same time, the participation of representatives of the MKS or the founding committees of the self-governing unions, as well as other workers' representatives, in the elaboration of this law will be guaranteed.

Concerning point No. 2, whose text reads: "Guarantee of the right to strike and the safety of strikers and those who aid them;" it was understood that:

The right to strike will be guaranteed in the new trade union law. The law will have to define conditions for calling and organizing strikes, methods for resolving conflicts, and penalties for violations of the law. Articles 52, 64 and 65 of the labor code (forbidding strikes) will not be used against strikes pending the adoption of the new law; the government guarantees to strikers and those who aid them their personal safety and the continuation of their conditions of work.

Concerning point No. 3, whose text reads: "Respect for the freedoms of expression and publication guaranteed by the Constitution of People's Poland; and therefore no repression against independent publications, and access to the mass media

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SOCIALIST VOICE

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Polish Workers Shake the World

The Polish working class has won a tremendous victory. Its two-month long strike wave, culminating in a two-and-a-half week occupation of the shipyards and a general strike in Gdansk (Danzig) and other Baltic ports, brought the Stalinist state capitalist regime to its knees. Party boss Gierek was ousted, one government was forced to resign, and its successor had to yield to the 21 demands of the Gdansk Inter-Factory Strike Committee. This struggle, in the ninth industrial country of the world, surpasses anything seen since France in 1968. The workers' demands — economic, trade union and political — if carried out will lead to fundamental changes in the political life and society of Poland and all of Stalinist Europe.

If they are carried out. That is an unanswered question, for the struggle of the Polish workers was played out around a great contradiction. The workers' struggle needed revolutionary means to win a reformist program which the Polish state cannot tolerate. The struggle therefore is by no means over. A whole new period has been opened up, in which the authorities will try to first undermine and then repress the workers' gains, and the workers will fight to defend them. Different working class tendencies will inevitably emerge and struggle among themselves for the right to lead. Genuine revolutionary groups will arise. And only then will it be seen whether the revolutionary potential implicit in the workers' actions will be fulfilled.

Rival Rulers' Interests Linked

Throughout the last half of August the eyes of the world were on Poland. Russian bureaucrats muttered warnings about "anti-socialist elements" leading the Polish strikes, but refused to let the Russian people hear what the Polish workers were actually fighting for. U.S. bourgeois newspapers cheered the workers on, but worried out loud about the fate of the $20 billion in loans from Western banks to the Polish government and hoped that the workers would not win too much. The Catholic Church, led by its Polish Pope, pretended to back the strikers, but played a key role in support of the government's efforts to get them back to work. Washington and Warsaw, Moscow and Rome, all continually warned the workers of the Russian military threat. For despite their rivalries, all the rulers of the world found their interests linked in threatening, cajoling and praying for a return to capitalist stability.

The lessons of the Polish strikes will be taken to heart by the workers of the world. Front-page stories showing the effectiveness of general strikes and sit-downs, proving the resoluteness, solidarity and sheer power that workers are capable of, will have their effect. The *New York Times* quoted one Gdansk striker's comments on his government's propaganda: "endless pictures on television of workers in the West on strike." "What we learned," he explained, "was to ... get a pretty good idea of how you run a strike. How stupid could they think we were?" The same question can be asked today by workers in the West as well.

The Polish strikers were protesting severe cutbacks in their living standards imposed by government planners. But Poland's economic crisis is not unique; it is only the sharpest manifestation of the worldwide crisis of capitalism that is leading the Western powers as well as the East into depression. Poland's rulers were acting like capitalist bosses, bankers and politicians everywhere: demanding that the working class bear the burden. The Polish events will go a long way towards cutting through the cynicism and demoralization that has held back working class resistance.

Poland's History of Struggle

The Gdansk workers learned how to conduct their struggle from the previous history of uprisings by the Polish working class. Poland's workers have a long history of struggle, including a leading role in the 1905 revolution against Czarism. But it is the more recent history of rebellion against Stalinism that showed the way to victory in 1980. Mass strikes had broken out four times before; in 1947-48, when Stalinism was first consolidating its hold over Eastern Europe; in 1956, as the situation opened up after Stalin's death; in 1970-1971 and again in 1976, as the crisis of capitalism forced the regime to try to crack down on the workers.

The 1956 uprising was a near revolution. In Poznan in June, a demonstration broke out over economic issues and against Russian domination. It attacked police headquarters, seized arms and freed prisoners; and it was suppressed bloodily. But the Poznan revolt coincided with a fight within the "United Workers" Party, the Communist Party that rules Poland; and a reformist liberal wing that saw the need for concessions to the masses came to power, led by the new Party head Gomulka. When the hard Stalinists and the Russians still opposed the reforms and threatened armed intervention, Gomulka took the step of sending arms to the factories (without letting the workers know) and warning his rivals that the guns would be handed out to the workers if Poland was attacked. The Russians conceded, especially after the full-scale revolution that broke out in Hungary had to be put down by Russian arms. The Khrushchev regime learned to welcome Gomulka's capacity to buy off the workers with economic sops and the promise of workers' councils. Gomulka at this time also appealed to the peasantry by rescinding collectivization of the farms (leaving Poland's agriculture very backward), and made a new accord with the Catholic Church that included teaching religion in the state schools. From this time on, despite its ideological hostilities, the Church became a supporter of the Polish state, urging the workers to be calm whenever struggles broke out.

Within a year or two Gomulka was able to erode the workers' gains. The opposition press was closed down and the workers' councils subordinated to the party. The 1956 slogan "All power to the Workers' Councils," an echo of the Bolsheviks' "All power to the Soviets" in 1917, came to be denounced as "anti-socialist" propaganda.

The 1970 strikes, like this year's were a response to price raises. They broke out in Gdansk and Szczecin, the major shipbuilding centers on the Baltic. A march to the Party headquarters in Gdansk burned the building down; but the next day, police attacked workers coming to the shipyard and many were killed. At Szczecin, a workers' assembly was set up, and there too a mass march was attacked murderously by the police. As in 1956, the government was dismissed and a new

Party head brought in, Edward Gierek. In January 1971 Gierek was compelled to visit Szczecin to meet with the workers' delegates demanding withdrawal of price hikes; this event became widely known when workers recorded it and transcribed the hours-long discussion. Gierek did persuade the workers to return to work, but the discussion revealed the various layers of political consciousness among the workers and forced promises out of the authorities. Prices were finally brought down when textile workers in the industrial center of Lodz went out, threatening to spread the strike wave throughout the country.

Poznan strike, 1956. Workers march on secret police headquarters under flag drenched in martyrs' blood. Stalinist army killed 53, wounded 300 workers. U.S. Communist Party scum say such "differences," which regularly erupt in Poland, "occur even in loving families."

In 1976, a new round of price increases was withdrawn when workers struck against them in Radom and Ursus. As before, Party headquarters were burned down and repression was bloody and severe. One specific outcome of this struggle was the formation by middle-class intellectuals of committees to defend the victimized workers. One of those, known as the Committee for Social Self-Defense, or KOR, played a leading role in publicizing the 1980 strikes and the workers' grievances that led to them. Its underground paper has now a circulation of 30,000, which will undoubtedly increase. Other such groups included left- and right-wing Catholic and nationalist organizations.

The fundamental lesson taught by all of these struggles is that gains were won when the workers took revolutionary steps: illegal strikes, demonstrations, organizations. Many achievements of 1980 were based on this past experience. But a lesson only partially understood by the workers so far is that the gains were eroded in the periods between the upheavals.

The original demand of the 1980 strike wave was higher wages to make up for raises in the price of meat announced by the authorities on July 1. The regime was forced to concede this demand almost everywhere because of the intensity of the strikes, which spread across the length and breadth of Poland and included a 4-day general strike in Lublin in mid-July. When the Gdansk shipyard workers went out in mid-August, however, the struggle became fully political.

The disciplined collective organization of the workers was learned both from the 1970 workers' assemblies and from the repression suffered when the earlier struggles abandoned their industrial bases and took to the streets; the Gdansk workers this summer held hostage the immense capital invested in the shipyards and other installations to restrain the government from using force. The unity of the struggles, on at least the regional level, was another reason: the workers in the individual enterprises refused to settle their grievances locally, and denounced the government's efforts to divide them as a "capitalist policy." For they had also learned that the government and Party could not be trusted. Gains won in the high points of struggle were eroded and destroyed by the rulers when normalcy returned.

Strike Committee Was a Soviet

The demands worked out by the Gdansk strikers are of great interest. There is a full range of economic demands: programs for equalizing distribution of consumer goods through rationing and the abolition of consumer privileges for party bureaucrats and the police; maternity leave and adequate child care for working women; special demands on retirement, pensions, allocation of apartments, etc. There are political demands: freedom of speech and the press, Church access to the media, and an end to repression for political beliefs. There were trade union demands: the right to strike and the organization of unions independent of the state and the ruling party. There were even demands that appeared to come out of the Trotskyist Transitional Program: the sliding scale of wages to keep up with inflation, workers' control of production and opening up the books of the economic enterprises. According to the workers, the specific character of many of the demands will make it easier to resist their erosion by the government; and they hope that the institutions set up, the free trade unions, will serve as a vehicle to defend the whole panoply of gains. The workers believed that the right to independent trade unions was their chief demand, and they organized their strike committees as models of what they thought they wanted. But they were far more than unions.

The Gdansk Inter-Factory Strike Committee (known by its Polish initials as the MKS) was a genuine workers' parliament, a successor to the Paris Commune of 1871 and the Petrograd Soviets of 1905 and 1917. Workers from all enterprises in the Gdansk region (and some from other areas of Poland) sent their representatives to the Lenin Shipyard assembly; they were all seated, applauded and given a participating vote. The MKS worked out its program of 21 demands and delegated negotiating committees to meet with the bosses and the government. The operation of the Gdansk MKS is what drew the rapt attention of the world. It was the workers' greatest triumph, set up not by the demands but by the struggle itself.

Whether the workers were fully conscious of it or not, such workers' soviets have a long revolutionary tradition. Moreover, such institutions implicitly represent an alternative state power. The control that the strike committee held over the shipyards and Gdansk industry (some of which was kept operating to produce for the working-class population) is indicative of its capacity to run society. It forced the government to reopen telephone lines, it directed what should be

broadcast on radio and television, it freed political prisoners — in a word, it was an organization of dual power. During August the Warsaw government did not rule Poland alone. Had the MKS continued, it would have been compelled to dispute *every* facet of power with the bosses' regime. Two such rival governments could not long exist in a continual state of tension. The workers would then have been forced to bring the struggle to a head through a revolutionary civil war. That is what happened in Petrograd in 1917.

Short of revolution, the workers proved that they could run society more efficiently and far more democratically than the upper classes. For example, the prohibition of alcohol during the struggle was a symbolic and significant act and was strictly enforced. The revolutionary tradition of "open covenants, openly arrived at" was loyally adhered to: the workers were kept informed of the progress of negotiations, and most of the proceedings were broadcast over the Gdansk radio and to the assembled audience in the shipyard, including workers, journalists and practically anyone except provacateurs from the ruling party who were expelled.

Where class society breeds hooliganism and crime, the Gdansk workers demonstrated, in the grand tradition of every previous revolution known to history, that revolutionary acts generate discipline and devotion that no ruling class can match. The "exhilaration" that many bourgeois journalists and politicians expressed in observing the Gdansk workers has to be absolutely mistrusted; yet it reflected the overwhelming admiration that millions of working people felt for the striking Poles. No one could watch the struggle in Gdansk unmoved.

The bourgeoisie is now gloating that the Polish struggles disprove Marxism. Not at all. The general strike in Gdansk has proved once again what Marxists have always said about the working class: its organization, strength, and revolutionary capacity can change the world. (In particular, it demonstrates the power of a general strike to boost the workers' self-confidence, a point the League for the Revolutionary Party has long fought for — see, for example, "For a General Strike in Britain," in *Socialist Voice* No. 9) Once again we had an indelible picture, broadcast to the world on television this time, of working class power: what socialism will be when Gdansk is writ large. The Russian soviets of 1917 were also such a picture, but they have been long covered up by the muck of Stalinism. The imagination, confidence and power of the working class can be awakened once more.

The Great Contradiction

There is another, more recent lesson of Marxism taught by the Polish strikes. Here was a giant revolutionary accomplishment, the Gdansk soviet — yet the program of demands that it worked out, taken as a whole, was reformist. Individual demands were far-reaching, even transitional, but transitional demands remain reformist in the absence of a revolutionary party to draw the necessary lessons out of the struggle. The fundamental mistake was the decision to turn the MKS into a trade union rather than an alternative organ of state power.

Marxists have learned from decades of class struggle that lasting gains cannot be won through the reform of decaying capitalism, Eastern or Western. For a time, unions were able to develop because capitalism was prosperous enough to afford sops for sections of the working class. Today, even in the strongest imperialist countries, unions are floundering, unable to defend the gains workers won in the past. Poland is one of the weakest links in the capitalist chain, and union struggles alone will accomplish little. This was shown once more by the MKS itself, which had to go far beyond the limits of trade unionism in practice.

One Gdansk worker told a *New York Times* reporter after the strike was won: "Don't go yet, it's good if you stay around. It's good if somebody's watching." She understood that the bureaucracy will do its best to take away the gains. But the only possible defenders are not bourgeois journalists but the workers themselves. For this they need the active operation of the strike committee (which could perfectly well continue as a workers' parliament after work has resumed). It is the soviet's potential for organized economic and political action that can hold the government to its promises. The workers will now learn the need for the continuation of the MKS in its soviet form by the inevitable failure of mere trade unions to be able to act politically. This does not rule out the possibility that the new independent unions will strive to take on political tasks, as if they were the political *party* that the agreements signed with the government prohibit. But it will take a conscious change in policy to do this.

Even so, soviets or even a radical quasi-opposition party would only be a stopgap so long as the Stalinist ruling class controls state power. To change this the workers need revolutionary consciousness, not just institutions with revolutionary potential.

The workers' failure to draw revolutionary conclusions from their revolutionary actions was not an oversight. It was the result of a conscious effort on the part of the strike leadership. The illusion in the possibility of reforming the ruling party that the workers held in 1970 was gone in 1980, but at the same time the revolutionary ideas of the previous uprisings (slogans for rule by the workers' councils, the attacks on the Russian military presence, the assault on Party headquarters) were suppressed. The leaders convinced the workers that revolutionary actions had been undisciplined in the past and had led the workers to be smashed. But the actions of the past had taken place in the absence of a guiding revolutionary program, and without the use of industrial action to insure their defense. Revolutionary action guided by a revolutionary program — that is, a *party*, a general staff — is the synthesis that the Polish workers have so far failed to draw out of their experiences this year and in the past. It will have to arise out of the further struggles that the latest victory will inevitably bring about.

Revolutionary Strategy

A revolutionary program would not have required the Gdansk MKS to issue immediate calls for insurrection. That would have been sheer adventurism. But it would have meant an unceasing effort to inform the workers of the truth that revolution and insurrection are necessary and that the basis for it must be laid for them immediately. It would have meant using the workers' organization and strength in the strike to promulgate a revolutionary program: organize political demonstrations, appeal to the soldiers to solidarize with the workers cause, explain to the peasantry the benefits of workers' rule, send delegations to other workers throughout Poland and

even to other European countries, East and West. A revolutionary leadership would also have placed demands on the government to undercut its excuses that its hands were tied: asking that it call for arming the workers (as Gomulka had once threatened to do), for the withdrawal for Russian troops and the cancellation of the Western debt.

Such a program would over time have raised the consciousness of even the politically backward workers. From the most advanced workers, it would have helped form a proletarian cadre capable of explaining the vicissitudes of the struggle, inoculating the workers against cynicism when the state inevitably breaks its agreement and preparing for the future revolution.

A clear indication of the workers' weakness without revolutionary leadership was the failure of internationalism. One worker, again cited by the *Times* reporter, criticized the Czechs for not having fought back when the Russians invaded their country in 1968. But where were the Polish workers' appeals to workers in Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary and Russia in 1980? Did the KOR or the MKS call for solidarity with the embryonic independent trade unions in the USSR? It is certain that the KOR intellectuals are aware of these formations. Going back a quarter century, the Poles can hardly criticize the Czechs without self-criticism. When Russia took on an isolated Hungary in 1956 the Polish revolution allowed itself to be bought off by Gomulka's reforms. And the Polish Army joined Russia's attack on Czechoslovakia in 1968!

We are not condemning the Polish militants for absence of heroism and sacrifice: that has been proved enough. We are criticizing the lessions that are being drawn from the struggles: an internationally minded, internationally linked leadership — a revolutionary international — is what has to be forged if the East European workers are to win lasting gains and overthrow the oppression they live under. Then the national bickering among Czech, Polish, Hungarian, German and Russian workers would end and a united struggle against Russian imperialism begin. The workers of each nation are afraid, not without reason, that their separated struggles will be smashed. A united struggle is a different matter. The absence of internationalism is crucial for those enemies of the working class who seek to limit its struggles to the minimum.

Church Ba[illegible].ed Party Rule

As if to prove its faith in the stabilizing institutions of bourgeois society, the strike leadership made every effort to wrap itself not only in the Polish flag but also in the cloak of the Catholic Church. Lech Walesa, the head of the Gdansk MKS, adopted the Christian cross as his symbol, distributed pictures of the Virgin Mary and did his best to enlist the Church on his side. The Church returned no favors. Cardinal Wyszynski, the Polish primate, issued a homily, widely broadcast over government-controlled television, that sympathized with the workers in the abstract but urged them to end their strike, short of victory, in the concrete. The workers, fortunately, paid no attention to the Church's recommendation. Whether this undermined their faith in the Church's political wisdom we have no idea yet. It is also possible that the workers in general had less faith in such wisdom than the reports from Gdansk would lead one to believe. It may be, that is, that Walesa and other reformist leaders thought that a public display of religiosity would be a good technique either to cow the government, appeal to the West, or perhaps even win over reluctant workers. Such a maneuver, if that is what it was, could have led the strike to defeat, for example, if the Church had won the leverage to mediate. The Church's timely betrayal prevented that.

A Marxist leadership would have known better than to flirt with the Church. The right to religious belief and activity is one thing, but the Church as an institution is a reactionary bastion of the ruling power. In Poland it plays the role of loyal opposition. It seeks to wrest more influence for itself from the Stalinists as the price for helping to contain the anger and anguish of believers. Thus it helps to preserve the state power. The Church continues to render unto Caesar even in modern dress.

In particular, the Church is nationalist; it shares with the state the desire to create a stronger Poland without provoking the Russian overlords. Its bedrock is the petty landholding peasantry. While in Poland and internationally it is far happier with privatized rather than with nationalized property, it has learned to accommodate out of fear of the proletarian revolution which would socialize all property, including that controlled by the state bureaucrats, the monopoly bourgeoisie and the Church capitalists.

The fact that the strike leaders and their intellectual advisers, many of whom come out of a tradition of Marxism and even Trotskyism, could tie the workers' fate to reactionary nationalist institutions shows to what extent Marxism has been gutted— and proves the need to fight for its revival.

Dissidents Want Only Reform

The strike leadership around Walesa and its supporters around KOR represent a conscious political tendency. Walesa, Anna Walentynowicz (whose firing by the Gdansk shipyard managers sparked the walkout there in mid-August) and Bogdan Borusewicz of KOR were among the 100 signers of a "Charter of Workers' Rights" issued in 1979 (*Intercontinental Press*, September 1, 1980). The Charter is a detailed program calling for a number of vital trade union rights. But it does not deal with such fundamental democratic reforms as the right to form political parties or to oppose Stalinist rule. That is, it remains firmly reformist by refusing to challenge the existing state.

KOR's leading spokesman is Jacek Kuron, a one-time revolutionary whose document, "An Open Letter to the Party," written in 1965 jointly with Karol Modzelewski, earned him a 3-year jail sentence. Later, his participation in student demonstrations got him 3 years more. Today, however, he is a self-styled "former Marxist" according to the Western press who appreciates the power of the working class and wants to guide it to reforms, not revolution.

It seems very likely that the strike's focus on the demand for independent trade unions is due to the influence of KOR. It is a deep-going reform but one that falls short of challenging Stalinist rule, and therefore it fits KOR's program ideally. KOR sees the crisis of Poland as caused by bad bureaucrats, not a whole system of class rule and exploitation. It urges immense efforts by the workers, but limited changes. Its strategy is to restrict the workers' demands to "what can be won." Unlike many of the workers, KOR forgets that what can be won can also be lost.

Dialogue with the Workers

The workers themselves may for the moment have accepted the reformists' arguments, but they do so for practical, not ideological, reasons. They clearly had no confidence in Gierek or any successor, no matter how the Party is reformed. They wanted to have sufficient control themselves, but they have

been led by their "expert" mentors to believe for the moment that this can be done through unions alone.

A revealing report (*Le Monde*, August 19) underlined the difference in attitude between the reformists and the workers in general. The article was describing, impressionistically, the late-night session of the Gdansk MKS on August 16 at which the list of demands was formulated. The list originally included the demand for elections "open to all socio-political currents," but this was apparently dropped from the final list of 21 demands for reasons given in the dialogue below:

The formulations were clear. Their authors were very pleased with them, and the petrified militants of the opposition groups looked at each other in consternation. Lech Walesa attempted to make it understood that this list could not be the *sine qua non* condition for ending the strike. He was listened to: "Yes, that's true, but we will see; let us always make our demands; besides, those demands are good, aren't they?" The workers' delegates wanted no adventurism. But they did want a great deal, and new delegations kept arriving, proudly, to applause. "It will be Budapest '56," murmured a militant from *Young Poland*, a liberal nationalist Catholic group.

Small, frail, his eyes swollen from fatigue, Bogdan Borusewicz, an historian and leader of KOR in Gdansk, attacked head on: "To demand pluralist elections is maximalism. If the party gives in, Moscow will intervene. We do not need demands which will drive the party to violence or else lead to its decomposition. It was the liquidation of censorship which led to the intervention in Prague. It is necessary to leave them a way out." A totally ingenuous comment from a delegate: "We leave them a way out by letting them rule." Borusewicz went on: "We need more economic demands and negotiable political demands, for example freedom for political prisoners, giving their names."

The *Le Monde* writer also reports a dialogue in Gdynia, a nearby port city also on strike, between himself and several workers:

"What about re-establishing order by force?" "A wave of strikes cannot be repressed, and *they* do not dare take the factories by assault."

"A Soviet intervention?"

"They have enough to take care of with Afghanistan, and we are not saying — write this down — a word against the USSR."

"Why so few economic demands?"

"Because, with the country's foreign debt, they really can't give us a great deal; but we can, ourselves, win changes in the system."

"Is the suppression of censorship really so important for the average striker?"

"Do you know what it is to live in a country where one knows nothing? Go talk with the people here, you will see if they are ready to sell themselves even for 3000 zlotys."

Six strikers seated in the sun, soon a crowd. When one answers, all approve. "Why are you striking?"

"When things are so bad, we must. The meat, the lines, the unions that never defend us, the government that always lies and deceives us, that's enough! We can't discuss, we have no news, and we are always attacked if we are politically active."

"What are you hoping for?"

"Concrete improvements."

"Most important?"

"First of all, trade union freedom, then food supplies and wages. We must have unions that defend us."

"If the government refuses the political demands and satisfies the financial demands, what will you do?"

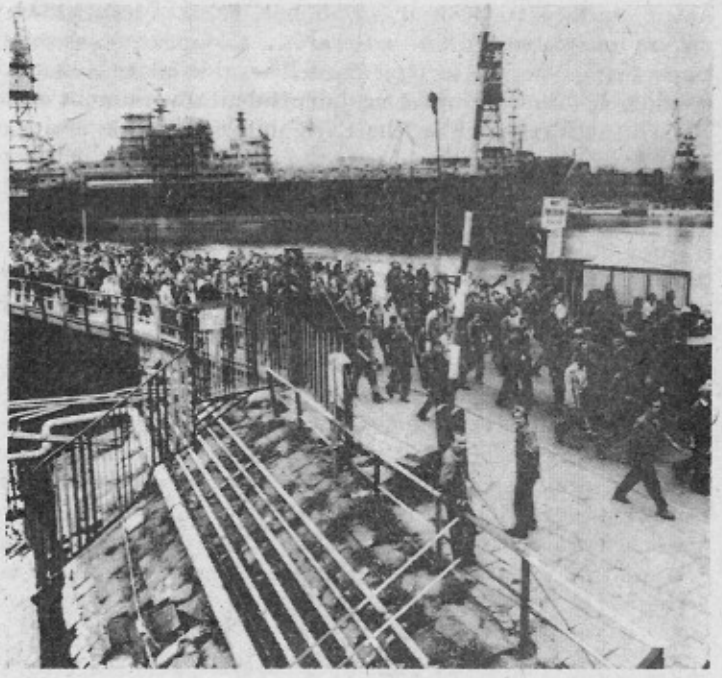
"If we do not win the political demands, it will begin again. We must be able to influence the policy of the government."

"You understand that your demands could open the way to a crisis of the regime?"

"Yes, we are aware of that. We are fully committed."

"And you believe that it is possible to change a regime in a socialist country allied to the USSR?"

"It is difficult to imagine, but it has to be tried once. It will end however it ends. Thirty-five years is already too much."



Gdansk workers cross bridge to aid dockers' strike.

Note carefully the role of the reformist leaders in this dialogue. It was Walesa who doubted that all the demands could be won, but other workers who preferred to stick to the full program. It was Borusewicz who demanded that the right of all political tendencies to participate in elections be dropped, along with the abolition of censorship — and he was apparently successful in part. Whereas the reformists constantly brought up the possibility of Russian intervention as setting distinct limits to the struggle, the workers interviewed wanted to stick to the far-reaching demands, whatever the consequences.

Nothing could make clearer the truth of Trotsky's assertion in 1938, at the height of the Stalinist counterrevolution: "The world political situation as a whole is chiefly characterized by a historical crisis of the leadership of the proletariat." The workers' actions were revolutionary, their ideology reformist. Their leaders, oppositionists though they are, Catholics and reformists, are supporters of the existing Polish state. In that they are part of the enemy. It will take the workers time to recognize this, just as it took the Russian workers time to learn that the Cadets and the Mensheviks who rose to power in the February 1917 revolution, were their enemy. In Poland, the contradiction of our epoch between revolution and reform has been posed clearly as rarely before.

The Crisis of Stalinism

The reformist leaders were able to convince the workers to restrain their struggle by arguing that the Polish economy could grant only limited demands. The kernel of truth in this argument actually makes a powerful case for revolution rather than reform. The rotting Stalinist state capitalist economy has been unable to fulfill workers' needs in the past, and the future promises only worse. Therefore the reformist program is a recipe not for the limited gains of the past but for defeats.

The fact that the USSR is a major military power masks its fundamental political and economic weakness. The entire bloc dominated by Russia is crumbling. Yugoslavia and now China have already deserted to the West, unable to develop through economic ties with Russia. Vietnam tried unsuccessfully to sell whole sections of its economy to the U.S. only months after its heroic people had defeated imperialism on the battlefront. Almost all the East European economies lean on the West to survive. Russia, unable to prop up its satellites on its own, must ignominiously acquiesce in and guarantee exploitation by Western finance capitalism. Russia itself not only borrows from the West but is also dependent upon Western technology for its industry and infusions of grain to make up for its perennial agricultural shortfalls.

The bureaucratically run economies are in a worse state of crisis than even the depression-prone West. All the industrial countries, East and West, are suffering from low rates of growth resulting from falling rates of profit, the shortage of capital for investment. This is especially noticeable in the Eastern bloc, whose "planned" growth has been steadily declining and whose actual rates of growth never seem to match the plans. Poland at the moment is worst off in this respect, because of the many economic concessions its rulers have had to make to the workers over the years. Poland's gross national product *declined* in 1979 by a reported 2 percent; a fact that has yet to be explained by the theoreticians of this "progressive" economy.

State Capitalist Waste

In Stalinist state capitalism the capitalist crisis normally takes on forms somewhat different from the West. Russia and its dependencies needed to accumulate capital rapidly in an area of the world where proletarian revolution threatened. They had to make concessions to the workers: a high social wage, differential wages to expand the labor aristocracy, and a policy of full employment. Peasants moving off the land were thrust into construction and industry. Such a full employment policy is essential for a genuine workers' state but becomes impossible for a capitalist state when its contradictions catch up. In Poland today the work force is over 60 percent industrial, and there is little room for extensive growth based in more uprooted peasants. The policy is also highly wasteful: forced rates of investment lead inevitably to unforseen bottlenecks and excessive inventories, and full employment is very inefficient for the accumulation of value.

Since 1970, the Polish government has tried to raise the rate of surplus-value by exporting meat and other goods rather than consuming them at home. This reflects the need to solve the problems of profitability through stepped-up attacks on the workers. But the strategy has failed: imports from the West used for the industrial build-up have far exceeded exports, so that service on Poland's cumulative debt to the West (the $20 billion) now takes up over 90 percent of the income earned on exports. After the 1976 strikes, Gierek cut back drastically on imports and stopped many projects in mid-construction in order to devote what resources were available to the projects of highest priority. One consequence was that electric power (which Poland exported only four years ago) is in dangerously short supply, and "nearly all the factories are blacked out one day a week or once every two weeks!" ("How Polish Strike Wave Began," by Cyril Smuga, *Intercontinental Press*, September 1, 1980).

An informative description of the brutal contradictions inherent in the Stalinist economies was given in the book *Money, Banking and Credit in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe* written by Adam Zwass, a former official in the Polish and Soviet banking systems and also in Comecon, the Eastern European economic organization:

"The following comparison of economic growth and inventories shows clearly the true value of the much-prized 'growth' in the Eastern European countries. From 1971 to 1973, Polish gross bational product increased by 334.1 billion zlotys, while inventories increased by 254.1 billion; in other words, three-fourths of economic growth was not embodied in solid commodities. The total value of inventories in Poland at the end of 1973 (743 billion zlotys, i.e., a reserve of 123 days) was 67.6 percent of the 1973 gross national product. The situation was even worse in the Soviet Union: between 1970 and 1973 inventories (133.3 billion rubles) increased 2.8 times more rapidly than the national product (47.3 billion rubles). ...

"The vast commodity stockpiles are not a result of overproduction in general or surplus over the general amount needed to satisfy the consumers' demand, although overproduction may occur from time to time in some sectors as a result of bad planning or deviation from plan targets. ...

Russian peasants march to the fields in 192o is notoriously low. Drive for accumulation met verted. Thus crises, as in Poland, frequently oc

"The statistics given above, although they refer to only the two largest of the Eastern states, cast the much-acclaimed growth of the planned economies in a somewhat different light. The disproportionalities that occur lead not to cyclic recessions accompanied by unemployment, but to enormous stockpiles that effectively eradicate the efforts of millions of workers."

The enormous stockpiling of unusable goods, frequently unfinished and of low quality, shows the fictitious character of much of the growth that took place under Stalinism. It reflects the Marxist law that under capitalism in its epoch of decay, the value-form of production is a brake upon the organic development of the means of production and therefore of useful goods. In the bureaucratically run economies, the relative lack of competition permits even greater obsolete capital and fictitious valuation than otherwise. The inconvertibility and black-market trading of the Russian and Eastern European currencies is a striking indication of this fiction. Zwass' conclusion that the enormous waste wipes out

20 Under Stalinist state capitalism, farm productivity ear hat consumer goods investment is inevitably di- ccover food shortages and high prices.

the "efforts of millions of workers" illustrates the same point.

Some commentators, including KOR spokesmen, have stated that Poland's claimed lack of unemployment is increasingly fraudulent. We have seen no statistical confirmation of this, but it does, nevertheless, follow from the economic logic of Stalinist planning. When major projects have to be shut down for lack of materials, many workers are bound to be left without jobs.

The full employment policy in Poland and the other Stalinist economies is a form of disguised unemployment, since much of the labor employed is wasted. It adds to a notoriously low rate of labor productivity that increases relatively slowly, if at all. As growth rates founder, the compulsion to attack the workers grows. Poland has already been forced to try cutting workers' real wages, and it is likely to turn to the discipline of open unemployment, as in Yugoslavia and the West. The fragile Stalinist system perpetually fears its own workers.

Gierek's austerity policies are backed by both Russia and the West. Thus *Business Week* magazine (July 14) wrote before the July outbreak that Western bankers "are attempting to get Poland to impose harsh economic restraints in return for...badly needed balance-of-payments financing." A subsequent issue (August 25) added; "Western banks are forcing the Poles to reveal more statistical information than before and to consult with them every two months on Poland's economic problems." (The Polish government prefers to consult with imperialist bankers rather than Polish workers.) The same issue also pointed out that Russia would give Poland some assistance but "would probably press for cutbacks in the Polish version of 'goulash Communism'." "Goulash" without meat is a perfect symbol of unproletarian "communism."

The Western monopolies are interested in East Europe because of its cooperative regimes, cheap labor and a skilled work force. They have shown some interest, in Poland especially, for co-ownership of industry. But by and large they accept the nationalized character of industry and seek chiefly to break down the central government's monopoly of foreign trade; this has already been partly accomplished for Yugoslavia and China. Above all, the Western imperialists demand higher productivity and better quality of commodities so that sales on the world market will pick up.

The impact of the West only increases the pressure on the Stalinist rulers to attack the workers' living standards. The system's fragility, however, leaves open the possibility of workers' revolts, which makes the bankers fear for the safety of their loans and investments. This is not the only fear; the West is as terrified of social revolution in the East as is the Kremlin. That is why Carter, Schmidt and Co. rushed to boost aid to the Polish state after the strikes. That is also why, in 1956, the U.S. hastened to support Gomulka's Poland as opposed to the Hungarian revolution.

Although many imperialist bankers have expressed worries about Poland's ability to repay the debts, some have pointed to Russia as Poland's ultimate guarantor. This does not mean that the USSR would take over Poland's obligations, but that that Russia would see to it that Poland would pay. The *Wall Street Journal* (August 21) quoted one banker who surmised that even if "the Soviet Union took over, the credit status would actually go up since the Soviet Union is in a stronger economic position than Poland." The western bourgeoisie, of course, does not want Russia to invade, but it did appreciate the Russian threat as a way to cow the striking Poles into concessions. It is a pretty spectacle: the "socialist" USSR guarantees the debts of "socialist" Poland to imperialism by the threat of war between "socialist" states. It is not the facts but the "socialist" interpretation that is cockeyed. The Polish state is the antithesis of proletarian socialism. In fact, it speeds on an inevitable collision course with the workers because it can no longer meet even their minimal needs.

Will Russia Invade?

The reformists also argue that the Polish workers must not raise their demands too high — and most certainly not raise a revolutionary program — because of the Russian threat. This view is static and anti-Marxist; it depends on the assumption of Russia's strength and the absence of other actors on the scene. For one thing, Russia is not at all eager to invade. Its hope for detente with the Western powers (meaning imperialist collaboration rather than hostile rivalry) makes it

very concerned for the opinions of the Western bourgeoisie. After the invasion of Afghanistan and Carter's Cold Warrior reaction, the Russians rightly fear that another breach would force even the European powers to give up on detente, including trade and loans. Moreover, Russia's rivalry with the West means that its foreign invasions have occurred when its rivals were otherwise embarrassed and could not protest with great moral force. Hungary was simultaneous with the British-French-Israeli invasion of Egypt; Czechoslovakia took place at the height of the Vietnam War; Afghanistan, when Russia expected that the U.S. was compromised over the Shah and the hostage-taking in Iran. That is not the situation today.

There is also the Polish army, which certainly cannot be relied upon by the Russian rulers to join an attack upon Polish workers. Most importantly, the danger of upheavals in East Europe and Russia itself is greater than ever before; the economic crisis is deeper, and the news of the Polish victory will seep through despite radio jamming. There are, for example, dissidents in all the Soviet-bloc countries; they know each other as well as Western leftists and Social Democrats. At present, this network bears a heavy responsibility for confining the Polish uprising within national boundaries, but the Russian military cannot assume that it will remain nationalist forever. Some dissident intellectuals can draw lessons from experience too. The workers see that the bloc is in an economic crisis, that Russia is politically weak, that Polish workers have won unprecedented gains. Workers in the West also will want to prove their solidarity. Who can believe that a military invasion will not touch off explosions?

Is Poland Socialist?

The analysis of events given here depends, of course, on the understanding that Poland and Russia are not socialist countries but are in fact state capitalist. This is not the popularly held opinion, even though some Polish workers reportedly call their rulers the "red bourgeoisie." For example, the agreement signed between the Polish government and the Gdansk Inter-Factory Strike Committee stated that the new unions "accept the principle of nationalized property in the means of production, which is the basis of Poland's socialist system."

The idea that the Stalinist states are socialist (or some form of workers' states) is accepted not only by the general public both in the West and the East, but also by Stalinist leftists and a variety of pseudo-Trotskyists. On the most superficial level it is true: that is, if we adopt the term "socialist" to refer to countries where the basic industries and property are owned by the state rather than private individuals or corporations. But Marxists, whose task it is to penetrate beneath the surface appearances of society and discover the essential social relationships, have never used such a definition. Socialism means the first stage of the classless society of communism, and a workers' state (or dictatorship of the proletariat) means the transitional society that results from the proletarian revolution and leads over time into socialism.

Marxism has been dragged through the mud for so many years by the forces of reformism and Stalinism that these essential points have been lost from memory, especially by what poses for the left today. The LRP has set itself the task of restoring the achievements of Marxism, Leninism and Trotskyism in theory and practice. We have often presented our analysis that the USSR is no longer a workers' state, that the socialist revolution of 1917 was overturned by the Stalinist counterrevolution that finally restored capitalism in 1939 (see *Socialist Voice* No. 2). The fact that property remains in the hands of the capitalist state results from this historical accident. The bureaucratic capitalist class that stole power in the USSR had to retain the workers' conquest of state property in order to turn it as a weapon against the workers. (See the article, "Is Nationalized Property Proletarian?", in *Socialist Voice* No. 6.)

Our arguments have often seemed to be abstract, based on an analysis of Marxist theory and working-class history. Events like Poland make it possible to be more concrete. The property relations of state capitalism can be made even clearer by examining the present events in the light of Poland's history under Stalinism.

When Stalinism took power, the old Polish bourgeoisie had been overthrown and exiled by the German conquest of 1939. At the end of the Second World War, as the Russian army "liberated" Poland from the Nazis, basic industry, which had previously been expropriated by the Nazis, was taken over by the workers. Ownership in general reverted to the new state set up by the Russian conquerors, originally governed by a coalition of the newly formed Stalinist party (the old Polish Communist Party with its revolutionary traditions had been virtually exterminated by Stalin in the late 1930's), the Socialists and bourgeois and petty-bourgeois parties. The Stalinists were of course in control because they had the backing of the Russians and they controlled the police. (In the former German territories of Silesia, Pomerania and Prussia, property also devolved to the new state.)

In view of the positions held by present-day pseudo-Trotskyists, it is worth citing the summaries made at the time by spokesmen of the Fourth International. Here is Ernest Mandel, now a leader of the pseudo-Trotskyist United Secretariat:

> **"When the Red Army approached Poland, this country was caught up in the whirlwind of a revolutionary upsurge. The workers occupied the factories, established workers' control over production, set up factory committees, etc. At that moment, it could be said: the proletarian revolution in Poland had begun. But the *political* intervention of the Soviet bureaucracy was primarily *counter-revolutionary*. The Soviet Army was used to 'restore order,' 're-establish the authority of employers' and rapidly rebuild a *bourgeois* Polish state apparatus."** (*Fourth International*, February 1947)

An even more succinct statement was made by E.R. Frank:

> **"...the Red Army entered Eastern Europe as an executor of the counter-revolutionary politics of the Kremlin. It did not support the uprisings of the masses; it suppressed them."** (*Fourth International*, November 1946)

In the case of Poland, the suppression took two stages. One was even before the Soviet conquest. On August 1, 1944, as the Russian army approached Warsaw, the people of the city rose up in arms against the German army and took control of most of the city. The large working-class component of the Warsaw uprising insured that the insurrectionary program included a nationalization of industry and workers' control, although the overall leadership of the insurgents was drawn from the pre-war Polish bourgeois regime.

Even though the Russians had called for a Warsaw rising against the Germans, the Soviet Army stayed on the far side of the Vistula River for two months as the Germans suppressed the insurrection. After a battle of 63 days, the city was destroyed, a quarter of a million people were killed and three-quarters of a million deported. Only after the revolutionary force of the Polish workers had been crushed did the Russians

complete their "liberation" of the country.

The Polish workers were still not prepared to go back to living under capitalism. It took a conscious effort on the part of the Stalinist party and its Russian masters to suppress the workers' initiatives; this was done between 1945 and 1947. As Mandel indicated, the Stalinists wiped out the workers' councils and workers' control. But power was not handed back to the traditional bourgeoisie, as he predicted. The Stalinists used the supposed need for peaceful relations with the old bourgeoisie and Western imperialism only to destroy the workers' industrial power. They declared that a "democratic revolution," not a socialist one, was on the agenda. They then used their control of armed force to eliminate the traditional bourgeois parties, and property remained in the hands of the state. In late 1947, a wave of strikes broke out, centered among the textile workers of Lodz, against the government's attacks. Reports of this outbreak were heavily censored, but apparently it involved tens of thousands of workers and was countered with mass arrests of strike leaders and violent clashes with the police, leading to at least a dozen workers' deaths. It was the first in a series of protests against Stalinist rule that continued with 1956, 1970-71, 1976 — and 1980.

We draw two central conclusions from this history. 1) The working class never conquered state power in Poland, although it did take steps towards a proletarian revolution. Stalinism grabbed state power after the Nazis, and adapted the nationalized property to its form of capitalism. 2) The nationalized property, nevertheless, was a conquest of the workers — who then had it seized from them before they were able to successfully take *state* power. This apparent historical paradox was possible only because of the volatile conditions of the world war.

Since then, nationalized property in the hands of the state capitalists has been a two-edged sword. It made easier the temporary spurt of growth that brought the economy back from wartime devastation. But it required certain concessions to the workers, since unemployment and inflation would now appear to be a matter of policy, not blind economic laws (which they in fact reflect). And, as Trotsky put it, in describing the theoretical possibility but practical unlikelihood of state capitalism, "in its quality of universal repository of capitalist property, the state would be too tempting an object for social revolution." The present struggle verifies exactly this point. The workers were not interested in returning property to private hands, not even to the Church's. They wanted to run it themselves.

A genuine workers' state is characterized by its movement towards communism, a system in which production for use replaced production for value. This will mean putting an end to the capitalist perpetuation of obsolescence and backwardness. It will also put nationalized property in a different light. Rather than being just a large-scale competitor on the capitalist world market, state property will participate in the creation of a true internationalist division of labor through the eradication of national economies. Stalinism used the nationalization of industry to preserve the bourgeois nation state as a barrier to proletarian internationalism. The Gdansk workers' agreement (over the objection of many) to accept the existing form of nationalized property and "the existing system of international alliances" is a concession to this barrier, for this system perpetuates Poland's subservience to imperialism, East and West. Only by overthrowing the existing Polish state and the imperialist web it belongs to will the workers be able to create the socialism they deeply desire.

U.S. Left in Disarray

When a working-class struggle of such significance breaks out, the socialist left in every country would be expected as a matter of course to join and even lead in movements of solidarity and support. The Polish struggle, however, is so closely linked to all the historical and theoretical crimes carried out in the name of Marxism, that the number of different socialist tendencies in the U.S. that have found one excuse or another *not* to support the Polish workers is little short of incredible. They include not just the Moscow-lining Communist Party and its hangers-on but tendencies that have staked claims to being anti-Moscow or anti-Stalinist. Much of this was predictable, but it turns one's stomach nevertheless.

On the other side of the fence, the majority of the tendencies that have declared themselves in support of the Polish strikers have also lined themselves up, to one degree or another, behind the nationalist and reformist intellectual dissidents. This too has been predictable. Normally the centrist groups talk abstractly about the need for revolution but confine their practice to reformism because, they say, the working class is backward and not accessible to radical ideas. But when, as in Poland, the workers break out into revolutionary action, the same "revolutionists" remain firmly reformist. The Polish events have done a great deal to clear the air.

The Communist Party was of course worst of all. It had the task of trying to deny the significance of the events, blame them on the "anti-socialist elements," and then treat the settlement and the ouster of government and party leaders as if such matters were perfectly routine. Naturally it lied through its teeth. Thus Conrad Komorowski wrote in the August 20 *Daily World* that "it is known ... that the strikers' demands were mainly economic." Three days later he "corrected" this outright lie: their demands have been "confined to economic issues ... with one additional factor — a demand that the system of worker self-government be improved." But a page 1 article in the same August 23 issue tried and failed to back him up: "Demands of the striking workers are confined to economic issues, with one major political issue included — the placing of responsibility for the economic mistakes of the past six years." Then, when the strike ended, Komorowski shamelessly denounced its "political character" (September 3).

Komorowski also informed us that the Polish workers have the right to strike; the only reason they raised the demand was "for foreign consumption." After the strike was settled Komorowski blandly reported that "a law will be prepared granting this right" (September 3). Further, in both the August 20 and August 23 issues, he insisted that only a small minority of the Gdansk workers were out on strike! The whole pack of lies was summed up by the August 26 editorial: "Sure there have been differences; they occur even in loving families."

Only the cynically corrupt can accept such a tissue of lies. But subtler defenses of the Stalinist position have been provided. The Workers World Party, which once called itself Trotskyist, nevertheless backed the Russian invasions of

Hungary and Czechoslovakia on the grounds that these national revolutions, however proletarian in composition, threatened to "restore" capitalism. This year it has published lengthy articles on Western influence in Poland, clearly setting the stage for support to another Soviet invasion. It does not actually say which side it is on, but all its advice is addressed to the government. For example:

"The beginnings of a socialist solution clearly lie, first of all, in fearlessly approaching the workers, granting new economic concessions even at great risk, explaining to them Poland's new bondage to the imperialist banks, suspending the payment of interest, and declaring a moratorium on foreign debts." (*Workers World*, August 29)

As if the workers had not long ago given up listening to the government's "fearless" explanations! The suspension of debt payments could be carried out only by a revolutionary government backed by the workers in arms, for the first response would be an invasion by the USSR. It is the bureaucrats who are the agents of "restoration," through their alliance with the Church and Western banks. Calling on the rulers to break their tie to the West is just an excuse to defend them from the workers.

The most widely circulated left paper in the U.S., the Maoist *Guardian*, takes a "guarded" view. It congratulates the workers for keeping their struggle within the bounds of "socialism," but it doesn't actually come out and support them. It worries a little about the Church, a little about the "revisionist" ruling party — but most of all it worries about the dangers of "massive escalation of the confrontation." That is, it comes down on the same side as everybody else — Washington and Warsaw, Moscow and Rome — urging the workers to stay cool.

The pseudo-Trotskyist Spartacist League also enlisted in the army of those terrified by a workers' upsurge uncontrolled by themselves. It decided to take no chances: the Polish struggle is described as "an explosion which could bring either proletarian political revolution against the Stalinist bureaucracy or capitalist counterrevolution led by Pope Wojtyla's church" (*Workers Vanguard*, September 5). It is a marvelous Marxism that cannot distinguish between revolution and counterrevolution!

However, not to support such a massive proletarian action is in fact to oppose it. This the Spartacists proved when they added their characteristic contempt for any but the aristocratic layer of workers in the imperialist nations:

"In a country facing the international bankruptcy, heavily subsidized 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 recognize that the big money wage increases will only fuel the inflation."

This sort of venom is what we imagine the financial editors say privately when they are done prating about the Polish workers' heroism. It is also what their counterparts in the Stalinist planning bureaus sneer under their breath, the distilled essence of bourgeois economic wisdom, freed from cant: "Let the workers pay" and "All these shiftless bums want is a free ride." Significantly, in criticizing the workers in this passage, the Spartacists support the petty-bourgeois dissidents whom they otherwise revile. At bottom both accept the limits of the present Stalinist economy. For people who so hate the Church, they have worked themselves into the position of feigning neutrality in order to backhandedly back Gierek. It is the same position as the Pope's.

Striking workers, armed with clubs, guard the Lenin Shipyard in Gdansk. The ruling class is waiting for the workers' guard to go down before it launches its counter-attack. Workers will soon need more than clubs.

The "revolutionary" ex-Maoist but still Stalinist Progressive Labor Party did an about-face to join the growing pack of scabs. One week it solidarized with the strikers, but then it discovered that the leaders were not genuine communists:

"Given the leadership of the strike, given the demands of the strike, and given the religious hue of the strike, we must conclude that it is not a strike for socialism. It is not even a progressive strike. It is a strike essentially

for a return to Western-style capitalism dominated by the Catholic Church." (*Challenge*, September 10)

There is no basis whatever for the claim that the workers wanted a return to Western capitalist rule; nor did they follow the Church's instructions despite their illusions in it. The fact that PL uses such puny excuses to reject the Poles' massive show of workers' power illustrates only Stalinism's hatred for real proletarian revolutionary acts. PL at least had the bluntness to make its position, the same as that of Workers World, the *Guardian* and the Spartacists, explicit.

The pseudo-Trotskyists who claim to support the working class against the Stalinists then have to square the events with their notion that Poland is a proletarian state. Andrew Pulley, Presidential candidate of the Socialist Workers Party, does it this way (*Militant*, August 29):

"There's a big difference between the situation of workers in Poland and here. Polish workers made a revolution that got rid of capitalism a few years after World War II. The shipyards, mines, and factories they work in don't operate for private profit. There is no capitalist class claiming its right to command the economy at the workers' expense. This strengthens the workers' position.

"Although their living standard is lower than ours, they have a lot less to fear in terms of unemployment, plant closings, high medical costs and soaring rents. But their economy also feels the squeeze from the international economic crisis."

So far this fairy tale is indistinguishable from Gierek's speeches that the Polish workers refused to listen to. But Pulley finds a point of criticism:

"What Polish workers are up against is a corrupt gang of anti-democratic bureaucrats who control the government. These parasites live off the gains won by Polish workers. The bureaucrats want to defend their privileges."

The idea that greed and corruption are the only ills plaguing the Polish economy follows logically from the theory that capitalism has been overthrown and that a "deformed workers' state" exists. All the workers really have to fight for is unionism and democracy, a program that coincides exactly with that of KOR and Walesa, whose roles the *Militant* reports uncritically. Like the Polish reformists, the SWP insists that the Gdansk MKS was nothing but a pro-union strike committee with no revolutionary implications. This too follows from the idea of Poland as a deformed workers' state, one in which no social revolution is necessary but only the reform of the state apparatus. However, when Trotsky in the late 1930's called for a political revolution to overthrow Stalinism and reform the state apparatus he understood that force was required — revolutionary action and a revolutionary party. The SWP prefers to forget the revolutionary essence of Trotskyism.

What about political revolution in Poland? That should, after all, be the slogan of those who consider Poland to be a deformed workers' state. But the workers have already shown this to be a fantasy. The strike committees took the soviet form even though they did not have a revolutionary program. If a revolution were to take place, the MKS's or soviets would be the basis for workers' power — that is, they would be the new organs of state power. The revolution would therefore have to replace the old state apparatus with the new one. In 1938, Trotsky's program for political revolution in the USSR called for democratizing the soviets, driving the bureaucrats out of them, etc. In Poland today, the workers had to create their own soviets out of nothing, even though their struggle fell short of revolution. They proved that the creation of a new state apparatus is necessary. Fighting for the transfer of state power to the MKS formations is the litmus test for a truly communist position on Poland today. It is also the call for a *social* revolution.

Other Leftists Endorse Reformism

There are other wings of leftism that deserve brief comment; for example, the anti-Russian Stalinists, Maoists and ex-Maoists, who believe that Russia is the main enemy in the world today. (These people, however, support Russia's conquests in East Europe in the 1940's and 1956, when Stalin himself was in power or when Mao approved them.) The pro-Peking Communist Party (Marxist-Leninist) warns of U.S. imperialist "appeasers" who want to placate Moscow. The anti-Peking groups will not go this far, but their hatred of Russia above all leads them to endorse whatever anti-Russian leadership appears: Khomeini in Iran, say, or now KOR in Poland. The Communist Workers Party, which religiously shouts revolution and denounces reformism in the U.S., has reported the Polish events with the same uncritical attitude towards KOR as the staid and eminently "practical" SWP.

There are also anti-Stalinist "third campers," those who applaud uncritically any opposition to the imperialisms of both the U.S. and the USSR. A demonstration in support of the Polish workers in New York on August 21 organized by many of them was indicative: there was enthusiasm for the Polish strikers, antagonism towards the U.S. and the Russians, but no hint of a revolutionary road forward for the Polish working class (except from the LRP which was also present). In part this is due to the "rank and file-ist" attitude that teaches leftists to leave the question up to the Polish workers themselves without any "foreign" advice. But the fundamental reason is that, for them, the Polish intellectuals are doing exactly the right thing: aiding and publicizing the workers' struggles and keeping them moving only one step at a time. Unionism and democracy are fine for now, and the rest can come later.

Some "third campers" will criticize the *open* reformism of KOR and Kuron, applaud their current steps, but urge them to go further — to more democracy. The "revolutionary" justification for this step-at-a-time approach is that such reform demands cannot be met by the state, so they automatically become revolutionary. This is exactly backwards. If the state is forced to sign reforms it cannot tolerate, it will seek to destroy them. If the workers are fed illusions that such reforms will multiply into revolution, they will not be prepared for the coming battle. The time-honored Marxist proposition has been proved again in Poland: to win reforms, make the revolution. The "step-at-a-time"-ers do not regard

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reformism as an opponent of revolution; they see it as the revolution in embryo. Thus, for all their support to the workers they fundamentally advocate the democratic modification of the present state and, like KOR, defend a society incapable of maintaining even democratic rights.

Their unwillingness to "prematurely" present the need for revolution rests on the assumption that workers cannot come to vanguard politics and therefore should not. The MKS once again proved the Bolshevik understanding that no matter how democratic the institution, there must be a revolutionary leadership of the working class. If the class is not to be smashed and its institutions corrupted, a genuine communist party has to be built.

The League for the Revolutionary Party is dedicated to the construction of that genuine Fourth International. We believe that the Polish events are a triumph not only for the working class but for our revolutionary politics. Our analysis of Stalinism has proved its accuracy, and so has our insistence on the importance of the general strike. During the coal miners' strike of 1978, during the British strike wave of 1979, during the New York transit strike of 1980 — in all major strikes — we unceasingly fought for this tactic. The Polish workers have shown its value: the powerless suddenly awoke to their power!

But the left as a whole disagreed. Calls for a general strike were inevitably rejected as premature or adventuristic. The workers would never listen. What was really meant was that the workers would get out of hand. On Poland, the applause of the left for the mass strike (that part that wasn't openly hostile) amounted to crocodile cheers: what it applauded was the "worker-intellectual alliance," the control that the reformist ideas of middle-class intellectuals had achieved over the goals of the strike.

Most American workers know that the intellectuals reflect an upper-class view of the world. This is a real understanding that even the socialistic wing of the intelligentsia does not have of itself. The intelligentsia is terrified of the anarchy of modern capitalism, of the collision of the major classes squeezing out its own interests. It seeks to reform capitalism to mollify the workers and to use the leviathan state to bring planning and order out of chaos. Having no cohesion or mass strength of its own, it seeks to use the workers as a battering ram to achieve its ends. It covers its self-interest with the do-good ideology of the condescending savior who will advise the workers not to get out of control.

The Polish working class has gone beyond the intelligentsia in practice; it now must learn to go beyond it in conscious understanding. The American working class, already mistrustful of "social engineers," must do the same. The first step is for advanced workers to break from the influence of the radical wing of the intelligentsia and take the first steps towards rebuilding a revolutionary vanguard of the proletariat. Individual intellectuals who break from the outlook of the middle class, including the centrist wing that talks revolution while practicing reformism, can be of enormous help to the proletariat. But it is fundamentally up to the working class to build its own party.

Re-create the Fourth International!

The expansion of Stalinism after World War II defeated the working class and propped up world imperialism. As a result, it undermined the revolutionary forces then still assembled under the banner of the Fourth International. The various wings of the International either saw the emergence of new workers' states in the workers' defeats, or else took the imperialist revival as a sign that capitalism was once again a world system accessible to reforms. Some did both. It is no wonder that today, hostile to revolution and corrupt to the core, they turn a revolutionary event into either counterrevolution or reform.

Those centrists who see Stalinist counterrevolution as the creation of workers' states have a profound cynicism toward actual workers in struggle. At best workers are a pressure group to be manipulated to achieve modifications of state power. The "third campers" who reject Stalinism with traditional state capitalist or bureaucratic collectivist theories also believe the workers capable of reaching only democratic consciousness. The fact that Stalinism appeared to eliminate the 1917 workers' revolution without a trace led them to lose faith in the revolutionary capacity of the proletariat. Only the theory of Stalinist capitalism which has been painstakingly developed in the pages of this magazine has been able to account for the actions of the Polish workers and shed light on their future road.

The key tests of the Polish events are 1) to support the workers' struggle against the Polish state and all its allies; 2) to oppose the reformist program and the leadership of the struggle that embodies it. Half the left fails the first test, the other half fails the second. Having completely capitulated to social-pacifism they all fail test 3): to warn the Polish workers to arm themselves against the inevitable Stalinist repression. But there are individuals and groupings here and abroad who are being forced to revolutionary conclusions by the pressure of great events. Poland is one, and capitalism guarantees us that there will be more. The Polish workers are helping to forge a new revolutionary leadership. They themselves will come to see that soviets are an elementary necessity and that a revolutionary party will be decisive. They have taken giant steps toward reinvigorating the Bolshevik tradition and re-creating the Fourth International of genuine Trotskyism.■

September 9, 1980

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for representatives of all religions;" it was understood that:

1) The government will introduce into the Parliament within three months a draft law on the control of the press, publications and performances, which will be based on the following principle: censorship must protect the interests of the state. This means the protection of state secrets and economic secrets which will be defined more precisely by the law, the protection of the state security and its important international interests, the protection of religious convictions and the rights of non-believers, as well as the prohibition of the distribution of publications which constitute an attack on morality.

The draft law will include the right to bring complaints before the supreme administrative tribunal against the institutions controlling the press, publications and performances. This law will be included in the code of administrative activities as an amendment.

2) The use of the mass media by religious associations in the sphere of their religious activites will be realized via agreements between them and the state institutions concerning problems both of content and of organization. The government will guarantee the radio broadcasting of the Sunday Mass, in the framework of a special agreement with the episcopate.

3) The activity of radio and television as well as the press and publishing houses must serve the expression of diverse thoughts, points of view and opinions. It would have to be subject to social control.

4) The press as well as the citizens and their organizations must have access to public documents, above all administrative acts and socio-economic plans, etc., which are published by the government and its administrative institutions. The exceptions to the principle of openness of administrative activity will be defined in the law according to point No. 3, Section 1 above.

Concerning point No. 4, whose text reads: "A) Reestablishment of the rights of those dismissed after the 1970 and 1976 strikes and of students excluded from higher education for their opinions; B) Freedom for all political prisoners (including Edmund Zadrozynski, Jan Kozlowski and Marek Kozlowski); C) Ending repression for opinions;" the following was agreed to:

a) Immediate analysis of the reasons for the dismissals after the 1970 and 1976 strikes in all cases presented; and if there is any injustice immediate rehiring if the interested persons so desire, taking into account their new qualifications. The same principle will be applied to the students.

b) Presentation of the cases of the individuals mentioned in point B) to the Minister of Justice who, within two weeks, will ask his office to carefully examine their dossiers; if the individuals mentioned are imprisoned, it will be necessary to suspend the execution of their punishment pending a new trial.

c) Analysis of the reasons for the temporary arrests and the release of the individuals mentioned in the annex.

d) Full respect for the right to express opinions in public and professional life.

Concerning point No. 5, whose text reads: "Announcement by the mass media of the creation of the MKS and the publication of its demands;" it was agreed that:

This demand will be satisfied by the nationwide publication in the media of this document.

Concerning point No. 6, whose text reads: "The launching of real actions aimed to get the country out of its crisis, beginning by giving the public all the facts about the socio-economic situation; and permitting all social groups and layers to participate in the discussions over a reform program;" it was agreed that:

We consider it necessary to accelerate the preparation of economic reforms. The authorities will define and publish within the coming months the basic principles of these reforms. There must be a broad public discussion. The unions in particular should participate in the drafting of laws concerning socialist enterprises and workers' self-government. The economic reforms will have to be based on the broadening, the autonomy and the participation of the workers' councils in management. Specific rules should guarantee that the unions will be able to fulfill their functions as defined in point No. 1 of this agreement.

Only a conscious society fully aware of reality can take the initiative and undertake economic reforms. The government will significantly broaden the sphere of socio-economic information to which society, the unions and the economic and social organizations have access.

The MKS suggests, as well, elaboration of firm perspectives for the development of family agricultural property, the foundation of Polish agriculture; equalization of access of the agricultural sectors (collective and individual) to the means of production, including the land; creation of conditions for the rebirth of self-governing cooperatives.

Concerning point No. 7, whose text reads: "Payment for all workers participating in the strike for the strike period with vacation pay from the funds of the Central Trade Union Council;" the following was agreed:

The workers in factories participating in the strike will receive an advance of the order of 40 percent of their wages after their return to work. The rest, up to 100 percent of their wages, will be counted as if for a vacation period, on the basis of an 8-hour work day. The MKS asks its members to undertake actions — after the end of the strike and in cooperation with the management of the enterprises and factories — with a view towards increasing labor output, raw material savings and greater labor discipline.

Concerning point No. 8, whose text reads: "An increase of the base wage for each worker by 2000 zlotys per month to compensate for rising prices;" the following was agreed:

These wage increases will be introduced gradually for all categories of workers and above all for the lowest-paid. Agreement was reached on the principle of wage increases by branches of production and factories. The increases will be realized, taking into account the specificity of occupations and sections. Their goal will be to increase wages by revising the wage scales or by increasing other elements of the wage.

Concerning the salaried employees of the enterprises, their salaries will be increased on an individual basis. The increases discussed in this point must be realized between now and the end of September 1980 through an agreement in each section.

The government, after having analyzed the situation in each section, will present between now and October 31, 1980, with the agreement of the unions, the program of wage increases from January 1, 1981 for the lowest-paid, placing special emphasis on those with large families.

Concerning point No. 9, whose text reads, "Guaranteed sliding scale of wages;" the following was agreed:

It is necessary to restrain the current rising prices of consumer goods through increased control over the public and private sectors, and particularly by suppressing disguised increases.

Following the decision of the government, studies will be undertaken on the cost of living. These studies will be made jointly by the unions and scientific institutions. The government will elaborate between now and the end of 1980 the principles of compensation for cost of living increases, principles which will be submitted to public discussion. After being accepted they will come into force. In these principles it will be necessary to take into account the problem of the minimum standard of living.

Concerning point No. 10, whose text reads, "Full supplies of food products for the domestic market, exporting only the surplus;" point No. 11, whose text reads: "Abolition of commercial prices and of foreign currency sales on the domestic market;" and point No. 12, whose text says: "Introduction of ration cards for meat and meat products pending the stabilization of the market;" it was agreed:

That meat supplies will be improved between now and December 31, 1980, based on the increased profitability of agricultural

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production, the limitation of meat exports to the indispensable minimum and supplementary meat imports. At the same time, during this period a program for improving meat supplies will be presented, taking into account the possibility of introducing a rationing system.

That the Pewex (foreign currency) stores will not sell domestic products whose supplies for current consumption are deficient;

The population will be informed, between now and the end of the year, of all decisions concerning market supplies.

The MKS asks for the suppression of "commercial" stores and the correction and equalization of prices of meat and meat products at a moderate level.

Concerning point No. 13, whose text reads: "Introduction of the principle of choosing personnel based on qualification and not on party membership, and elimination of the privileges of the police, the security agencies and the party apparatus by equalizing family allocations and by eliminating special stores, etc.;" it was understood that:

The demand is accepted that the choice of personnel be based on the principle of qualifications and competency from among the members of the United Workers Party, the Democratic Party, and the Unified Peasant Party, and non-party people. The program of equalizing family allocations for all occupational groups will be presented by the government between now and December 31, 1980. The government commission declares that there are stores for direct sales only for the party apparatus, as for other factories and institutions.

Concerning point No. 14, whose text reads, "The right to retire for women at age 50 and for men at 55, or after 30 years of working in Poland for women or 35 years for men without regard to age;" it was understood that:

The government commission regards it as impossible to satisfy these demands in the present economic and demographic situation of the country. The problem can be discussed in the future.

The MKS asks that these problems be analyzed between now and December 31, 1981, with the possibility of lowering by five years the retirement age for people who have worked under harsh conditions (for at least fifteen years). This request would have to be satisfied only if the workers demand it.

Concerning point No. 15, whose text reads: "Raising the old retirement and pension payments to the level that is currently paid;" it was understood that

The government commission declares that the lowest retirement payments and pensions will be raised every year in line with what the country can afford and with the raising of the lowest wages. The government will present a program to this effect between now and December 1, 1981. The government will prepare projects for increasing the lowest pensions and retirement payments up to the level of the minimum standard of living defined on the basis of studies made by the scientific institutions; they will be presented to public opinion and submitted to trade union control.

The MKS emphasizes the great urgency of these problems and maintains its demands: to increase retirement and pension payments under the old system to the level of the present system, taking into account the increased cost of living.

Concerning point No. 16, whose text reads: "Improvement of the operating conditions of the health services in order to insure the workers better medical care;" it was understood that:

It is necessary to increase immediately the resources for investment in the sphere of health services, to improve supplies and medicines by supplementary imports of raw materials, to raise the wages of all health workers (changing the category of hospital workers' wages), and to urgently prepare governmental and ministerial programs seeking to improve the health of the population. Other actions in this regard are mentioned in the annex.

Concerning point No. 17, whose text reads: "Assurance of a sufficient number of places in the day-care centers and kindergartens for the children of working mothers;" it was agreed that:

The government commission is fully in accord with this demand. The regional authorities will present a program between now and November 30, 1980.

Concerning point No. 18, whose text reads: "Lengthening of paid maternity leave to three years to permit mothers to raise their children;" it was agreed that:

Between now and December 31, 1980, an analysis of what the nation's economy can afford will be made in common with the trade unions, and the sum of a monthly allocation will be defined for women who are currently on unpaid maternity leave.

The MKS asks that this analysis include setting up an allocation which, during the first year after birth, must equal 100 percent of wages and during the second year, 50 percent of wages — but is never lower than 2000 zlotys per month. This objective must be reached gradually, beginning with the first half of 1981.

Concerning point No. 19, whose text reads: "Reduction of the waiting period for assigning apartments;" the following was understood:

A program for improving the housing situation seeking the reduction of the waiting period for the assignment of apartments will be presented by the regional authorities between now and December 31, 1980. This program will be submitted to a broad discussion at the regional level, and the regional authorities will consult professional organizations (the Association of Polish Urbanists, the Association of Polish Architects, the Central Association of Technicians, etc.). The program must include in addition to using the existing building enterprises and factories that make prefabricated houses, a major development of the productive base of the building industry. Analogous action will be taken throughout the country.

Concerning point No. 20, whose text reads: "Raising the travel allowance from 40 to 100 zlotys, and raising the payment for relocation;" it was agreed that:

An accord will be concluded on the increase, to begin January 1, 1981, in the travel allowance and the relocation payment. The government will present proposals to this effect between now and October 31, 1980.

Concerning point No. 21, whose text reads: "Establishment of Saturday as a day of rest. For workers in factories operating around the clock which have the four-shift system, the loss of a free Saturday will be compensated either by increased vacation time or by the granting of another (non-fixed) day off;" it was agreed that:

The principle and application of this program instituting Saturday as a day off, (or another method of establishing a shorter working time) will be devised and presented between now and December 31, 1980. This program will anticipate an increase in the number of Saturdays off starting in 1981.

Other possibilities for action in this matter are mentioned in the annex, where the point of view of the MKS is to be found.

After having reached the above conclusions, it was further understood that:

The government undertakes to:

a) guarantee the personal safety and maintain the present working conditions of those participating in the strike as well as those supporting it;

b) examine at the ministerial level the demands specific to given branches of prduction presented by the workers of all the factories associated with the MKS:

c) publish immediately in the nationwide mass media (press, radio, television) the full text of this agreement.

The Inter-Factory Strike Committee undertakes to end the strike at 5 pm on August 31, 1980.■