

POLAND



is
Socialism?

COMMITTEE FOR A PROLETARIAN PARTY

POLAND

is this
Socialism!

If Poland today is a socialist country, why would we want to fight and die for such a socialism? One of the greatest tragedies of the recent events in Poland is that many people of the world can be more easily turned against socialism because of such bad examples. It is not hard to understand why people would be reluctant to overthrow a dictatorship by the capitalist class when they will end up being ground under heel by a dictatorship of a new ruling class as in Poland.

WHAT IS SOCIALISM?

A society can be considered socialist in which the working class actually exercises basic political and economic power. In underdeveloped countries where the working class is a minority, it shares power with other progressive classes, such as sectors of the peasantry.

The first requirement is that the working class take political power by assuming control of the state—the executive and legislative apparatuses, the courts, the police, and the armed forces. It can then establish a government that is democratically controlled by the great mass of the people and also works to defeat any attacks by the capitalists and other reactionary classes.

To gain control of the economy, the working class must establish state ownership of the basic means of production, commerce, and finance. With such ownership, it can develop a national economic plan that gears what the economy produces to the needs of the people. To make such a plan work, working people must have a real voice at the grass-roots economic level, in the country's plants, farms, and offices.

BALANCING ACT

Poland's debt is held by sixteen governments and 500 banks.

Medium- and long-term debt

4.1

3.1

2.6

2.3

1.8

1.8

1.5

1.1

1.1

1.0

Polish Government data

Rather than following a Socialist policy of national independence and economic self-reliance, the Polish revisionists tried to use capitalist methods for quick industrialization.

Polish borrowing tied their economy to the imperialist's—a noose now around the neck of the Polish working class.



Shock Troops

In a country where the working people hold such power, there is the basis to reward people according to their work, not according to the class advantages of wealth and power. The basis also exists to maintain a country's independence from exploitation by the world capitalist system.

None of these achievements are possible where the working class does not develop its own revolutionary party. The working class needs a strong core of political leadership who can fight for the basic, long-term interests of the people. Because party members tend to hold a lot of the top positions in the state, there is always the danger that such a core of leaders could degenerate into a new ruling class. This is why it is essential that the party must always keep close ties with the masses and seek their active support for its basic policy decisions.

IS POLAND SOCIALIST?

Poland cannot be considered a socialist country because the working class does not hold any real political or economic power. If nothing else, martial law makes the political situation in Poland very clear: the working class does not wield state power; state power is wielded over them.

A bureaucratic state bourgeoisie holds state power, just as in the Soviet Union. Like any ruling class, this bourgeoisie relies on the police and standing army to maintain its political power and crush any mass opposition. It is this ruling class, not the working class, which controls the economy through state ownership and runs it for its own benefit and the benefit of the two superpowers.

Thus, we do not believe that nationalism or liberalism of the Polish United Workers Party is the main source of the problem, as promoters of Soviet revisionism such as Line of March like to argue. This line of reasoning focuses on the PUPP's departure from the orthodox Soviet model, i.e., funding the Catholic Church, failing to collectivize, and running up a huge debt to Western banks. But this reasoning is based on the false assumption that the Soviet Union is a bulwark of socialism and that Poland did not rely on this bulwark enough.



Workers sowing wheat with horse-drawn farm machinery in the Polish countryside

Capitalism runs the countryside- 90% is private



Dec. 16, tanks park inside the Gdansk shipyard after smashing through the gates in order to evict workers who had seized the plant. At least 9 people were killed and 300 wounded.

SOME POLISH HISTORY

When we look at Poland today, it helps to understand that while the country took the first steps towards socialism, it was never able to consolidate these advances. When the Soviet Red Army liberated Poland in World War II, the Polish Communist Party, as it was called then, was very small and had little influence. Thus, Poland's form of state power, "people's democracy", was not built on the basis of a broad, popular revolutionary movement, but was unstable and bureaucratic from the very beginning.

As early as 1956 the mass demand for workers councils in the country's enterprises indicated that the working class felt that it had no real power in running the economy. During these periods of crisis, such as 1956 and 1970, changes were made in Polish society, but these changes did not lead to building socialism, but to strengthening capitalist tendencies. The problem of the working class's lack of political and economic power was never solved, but only made worse.

The rapid growth of the Solidarity Movement was a direct result of the inability of the working class to control the direction of Polish society and have any real voice in the PUPP. The mass dimensions of the movement cannot be explained away by labelling it an anti-socialist attack by counter-revolutionary elements.

We can point to the PUPP's conciliatory policy towards the peasantry and the Catholic Church as part of the problem in Poland. The PUPP has been unwilling since 1956 to merge small capitalist farms into more productive collectives in which the means of agricultural production and land would be socialized. This is part of the reason for higher food prices, shortages, and a lower standard of living for all Poles. The government has also actually funded and maintained the Catholic Church as a loyal opposition. Thus, while many Catholic workers have played a progressive role in organizing Solidarity, the Church hierarchy has played a backward role in blunting the struggle against the Polish ruling class and preventing a real revolutionary movement from developing.

The main reason for the PUPP's conciliation towards the peasantry and the Church is that it is not really interested in building socialism, but is seeking to maintain itself in power. The interests of the Polish ruling class and its ties to the two superpowers stand directly opposed to the revolutionary task of developing a society which is genuinely controlled by the working people.

The Polish state has indeed nationalized most of the financial and industrial resources of the country and has attempted to carry out a national economic plan. But such a plan cannot be considered socialist when it is geared to the power, privilege, and enrichment of the Polish ruling class and is also greatly determined by the economic needs of the two superpowers.

THE ROLE OF THE TWO SUPERPOWERS

The Polish economy has long been subordinate to the dictates of Soviet social imperialism. Through COMECON, the Soviet Bloc's economic alliance, the economies of Eastern Europe have been developed to be basically dependent on the USSR. This relationship has stunted internal capital investment and led to a marked slowdown in economic growth even in the most industrialized countries of the Soviet Bloc, such as Czechoslovakia and East Germany. Since the middle 1970's the dependence of these countries on the Soviet Union has dramatically increased and they have fallen even further behind in growth rates to Western capitalist countries.

When the Gierek leadership came to power in Poland after the 1970 strikes, it moved away from sole dependence on the USSR and began borrowing heavily from Western finance capital. But this "opening to the West" has proved disastrous, with Poland now in debt up to its ears to Western banks. Poland has a 100% "debt-service ratio", which means that all of its hard currency goes to paying just the interest on its loans. This heavy debt has intensified the efforts of the Polish ruling class to extract greater surplus-value from the working class through higher labor productivity or higher consumer prices.



A Soviet warship dockside in Polish port: Power in reserve if Jaruzelski can't keep the lid on



REVOLUTION INSTEAD OF REFORM

Martial law has provided valuable lessons for the Polish people in revealing the real nature of their state bourgeoisie. It has also dispelled any illusions about the possible rectification of the PUPP. Despite differences among themselves, groups like the Communist Workers Party, Line of March, and Theoretical Review have all pinned their hopes on party rectification. But we can no longer talk meaningfully of reforming the party or the system itself. What Polish revolutionaries need to discuss is how to organize a new Marxist-Leninist party and build a revolutionary movement which can overthrow the Polish state bourgeoisie and carry out genuine socialist construction.

We do not rule out in principle the value of working within a revisionist party as a tactic to win over honest elements, but the vast majority of party members who harbor real revolutionary aspirations have left the PUPP in the recent period. Under the concrete circumstances in Poland, revolutionaries should throw their support behind the Solidarity movement because it helps to build up the strength of the working class in its battle with the Polish ruling class. But such support for Solidarity does not mean that we endorse the leadership of figures like Lech Walesa and the influence of the Catholic Church.

The relative ease with which the police and elite military units were able to suppress Solidarity shows why the working class cannot rely on trade unions and the threat of a general strike to carry out a revolutionary struggle. The working class needs its own party apparatus which can coordinate its activities underground as well as through legal mass organizations and make the necessary preparations for an armed insurrection.



During the Cultural Revolution the Chinese working people also rose up against the bureaucracy- their goal was to defend and expand the democratic gains of socialism, that were being threatened by capitalist elements.

THE STRUGGLE FOR A SOCIALIST POLAND

Marxist-Leninists in Poland are a small minority of the active political forces, but the developments of the last two years have provided the conditions for their rapid growth in numbers and influence. Many of the active workers and their allies among the intelligentsia are social democrats, syndicalists, or Catholics, but the suppression of Solidarity and the imposition of martial law are bound to have a radicalizing effect on these forces.

Marxist-Leninists should strive to build a broad united front of all those forces searching for the ways to build a genuine socialist society which is democratically controlled by the masses and functions in their interests. In this regard, we believe there is much to be learned from the methods of struggle and institutions developed in China during the Cultural Revolution. Mao Tsetung and other Chinese Marxist-Leninists recognized in the 1950's the problems of bureaucratic degeneration of the party and state that was widespread throughout the socialist camp. They developed a number of new revolutionary mass forms to give the laboring masses greater political and economic control over Chinese society. These forms included the revolutionary committees and the implementation of the Anshan Constitution in enterprise management. Under these changes workers struggled to put the needs of the whole society ahead of their individual interest, and they participated actively in management while party members and government officials were required to take part in manual labor.

The struggle to revolutionize Polish society will probably prove to be a long and complicated struggle. But already the Polish workers have exposed for the whole world to see the real character of this new state bourgeoisie which masquerades as the leadership for a socialist state. If Marxist-Leninists are able to develop leadership over this powerful workers movement, then a new chapter in the struggle for socialism is bound to be written that will inspire and educate the working class and oppressed people the world over.



The Committee for a Proletarian Party is a communist group which is active in the labor movement in San Diego as well as in other struggles such as the anti-war movement and the movements of oppressed people against discrimination and national oppression.

Our central task right now is to try to help bring together the political forces who can build a communist party. The goal of this party will be to lead the working class and other oppressed people of this country to make a socialist revolution.

We believe that the working class itself has to exercise real power in carrying this socialist revolution through to success; the party cannot substitute itself for the class and hold state power on its own. This is one basic reason that CPP does not look at any of the current countries in the world who are called socialist as a model to be followed. We learned the most about socialism from China when it was following the political leadership of Mao Tsetung and other revolutionary communists in the Chinese Communist Party.

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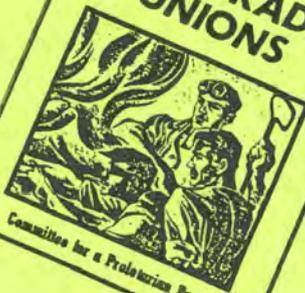


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Committee for a Proletarian Party

We welcome comments, questions, criticisms.

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