Poland: CLAMPSDOWN That May BLOW UP

At least seven are now known to be dead and hundreds injured as Poland approaches its second week of martial law imposed by the revisionist rulers with the glowing approval and backing of Soviet social-imperialism, and the entire Warsaw Pact military bloc. While the so-called Military Council of National Salvation, headed by General Jaruzelski, still swears that it intends to "preserve the basic features of socialist renewal," all the jails and prisons in Warsaw are reported to be completely filled, as thousands—workers, journalists, students and intellectuals—have been arrested and/or detained, including nearly all the national leaders and key sympathizers of the Solidarity union, snatched in the initial sweep by the government. Estimates of the number of arrested vary from 5 to 45,000, as roundups of Poles opposing the government onslaught continue.

The Polish rulers have shamelessly tried to present the iron-fisted imposition of the most draconian measures as a "dignified" attempt to lift Poland "out of the crisis, to save the country from collapsing"—then, honey acompanied the clampdown. Another honeycombed accessory was the arrest of 37 former "old guard" party leaders, including Edward Gierek, as "evidence" to buttress Jaruzelski's dubious assertion that "there is no turning back to the false methods and practices from before August 1980." The bottom line, however, was that all gatherings, demonstrations and strikes are forbidden. Hundreds of factories have been placed under military rule, and the six-day work week has been declared restored.

Refusal to work and comply with many other measures carries a penalty of death. As troops with fixed bayonets patrol the streets, the list of martial law decrees grows as new ones are added each day. (See the list on page 11)

Lech Walesa, who is under arrest and being held somewhere just outside Warsaw, has yet to be heard from.

Flying in the face of this vicious repression, the righteous resistance of the Polish masses has erupted as workers and students have rebelled. Reports indicate that many workers regrouped, set up clandestine strike committees, elected new leaders to replace those interned, and issued calls for a general strike. Thousands occupied factories. From the coal mines of Silesia to the steel mills of Warsaw and Katowice to the Lenin shipyards in Gdansk, workers barricaded their workplaces, welded the gates shut and, in many cases, arming themselves with tools and steel rods. A bulletin issued from the giant Huta steelworks in Krakow defiantly proclaimed "We are workers, not Slaves!!"

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The Polish Press Agency (PAP) issued feeble assurances about how everything was "functioning normally," how the army had the "overwhelming support" of the population and praising the "dignified civic attitude of the work force." Polish TV broadcasts showing pictures of "happy Poles" Christmas shopping in film of the Hungarians being crushed by Soviet troops in 1956, a pointed reminder that things could be worse—and would be—if things didn't settle down.

Meanwhile, the naked truth rumbled through snowbound streets on the grinning treads of Polish armor. Factories were surrounded by tanks, their gates smashed through, as troops firing into the air and laying down blankets of teargas removed occupiers, arresting thousands. Crowds of jeering youth were broken up by military assaults.

Protestors occupying campuses, including the literary society of the prestigious Polish Academy of Sciences, were dragged out and beaten. A protest by Polish women was met by brute repression, heads banded, arms broken—compelling testimony to Jaruzelski's plaus, in his appeal to the nation, that "None of Poland's problems can be solved by force."

As of this writing, the army has reportedly broken a number of major strikes and factory occupations, but there is certainly no sign that they have the situation under control. Warsaw Radio reported that seven people were killed and 39 workers injured when striking miners at the Wujek coal mine in Silesia fought back with stones, crowbars and axes, throwing 41 policemen. Clearly the spirit of rebellion has been by no means smudged out, and the Polish masses remain a powerful force to be reckoned with.

Interestingly enough, The Associated Press felt obliged to consciously distort reality—of at least one demonstration—over a thousand people in downtown West Berlin against the Polish rulers' martial declaration, mentioning only that the protestors broke windows of the Polish LOT Airline offices of the Soviets' Aeroflot offices, and then "burned flags of western nation[s] apparently in protest of the "non-interference" policy." In fact, at this demonstration organized by the squatters' movement that has repeatedly targeted the U.S. which upheld the resistance of the Polish workers, protestors also broke windows at the offices of British Airways and Pan Am, and marched under a banner reading: "Russians and Yankees, Hands Off Poland!") Many could be seen carrying red flags, and as for any Western flags that were burned, it was obviously for reasons other than what the AP would have people believe.

International Implications

As the U.S. and Soviets crossed verbal swords over this crackdown in Poland, it was readily apparent that these latest events were having far-reaching ramifications for future international developments. What is happening in Poland today is by no means limited to that country's borders, and is in fact very much related to the much larger pre-war political topography internationally.

For sometime, Poland in particular has been a focal point of contention between the Eastern and Western blocs—for the West, a chance to drive some wedges into the Soviet bloc, and for the East, the necessity to prevent this. The ludicrous pretensions of the Soviets that the martial law crackdown is merely "Poland's internal affair," and that they have had nothing whatsoever to do with backing the suppression of the Poles—something they have been quite openly leaning on their revisionist allies to get down to the business of for some time—were belied by one of the Associated Press commentaries which noted that the Soviet leaders "received with a feeling of satisfaction Jaruzelski's statement that the Polish-Soviet alliance has been and remains the cornerstone of Polish state interests." This is precisely at the heart of the matter.

Given the press of international events, the necessity of the Soviets and their Eastern allies was clearly no longer a question of simply finding ways to contain the "Polish disease," but rather to seize the first opportunity to knock out the contagion with a powerful dose of revisionist medicine. The threat of Solidarity leaders in Random to hold a nationwide referendum on whether the Polish party should continue to rule, and whether Poland should continue to give the Soviets' "military guarantee"—was not so much the immediate spark, as it was an excuse for the Polish government to make its move—conveniently assisted in tactical matters by the Soviet commander of the Warsaw Pact who abruptly arrived in Poland just before the clampdown (and who, according to a British reporter, told Jaruzelski, "If you don't do it, we will").

The sometimes sardonic and thoroughness of the military takeover made clear that plans had been "in place" for some time. This was confirmed as Polish diplomatic sources finally admitted that the move had been in the works for four months in preparation and that the deployment of four man elite security and army units in 2000 Polish villages last October was, far from being related to "food distribution problems" as

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U.S.: "Martial Law? Good... in Turkey"

The imposition of martial law in Poland this past week has underscored a veritable torrent of outrage and concern about suppression, from the U.S. ruling class and assorted mouthpieces of theirs. "We are seriously concerned that large numbers of people have been arrested..." said Secretary of State George Shultz in the State Department's weekly news conference this past week. "In the absence of independent information, we can only imagine what may be happening in those factories and homes across Poland."

The upsurge in protests on the part of the Polish working class, which continued to grow following the imposition of martial law on December 21, has reverberated around the world. The Polish Solidarity movement, the first independent trade union in the world, has been attacked by the U.S. State Department. "Their disorganized tactics," an official of the State Department said, "are aimed against governments blocked with their Soviet imperialist rivals!"

Just a year ago, the Polish Solidarity movement won a smashing victory in its goal of overthrowing the socialist government of Poland in the first free elections of Poland's modern history. This year, on the 15th anniversary of the historic Solidarity movement, there have been reports of massive arrests and torture. The Solidarity movement was the first independent trade union in the world, and the first to win democratic elections. It is the first example of a social movement that has been forced to go underground in order to continue fighting against a brutal repressive regime.

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