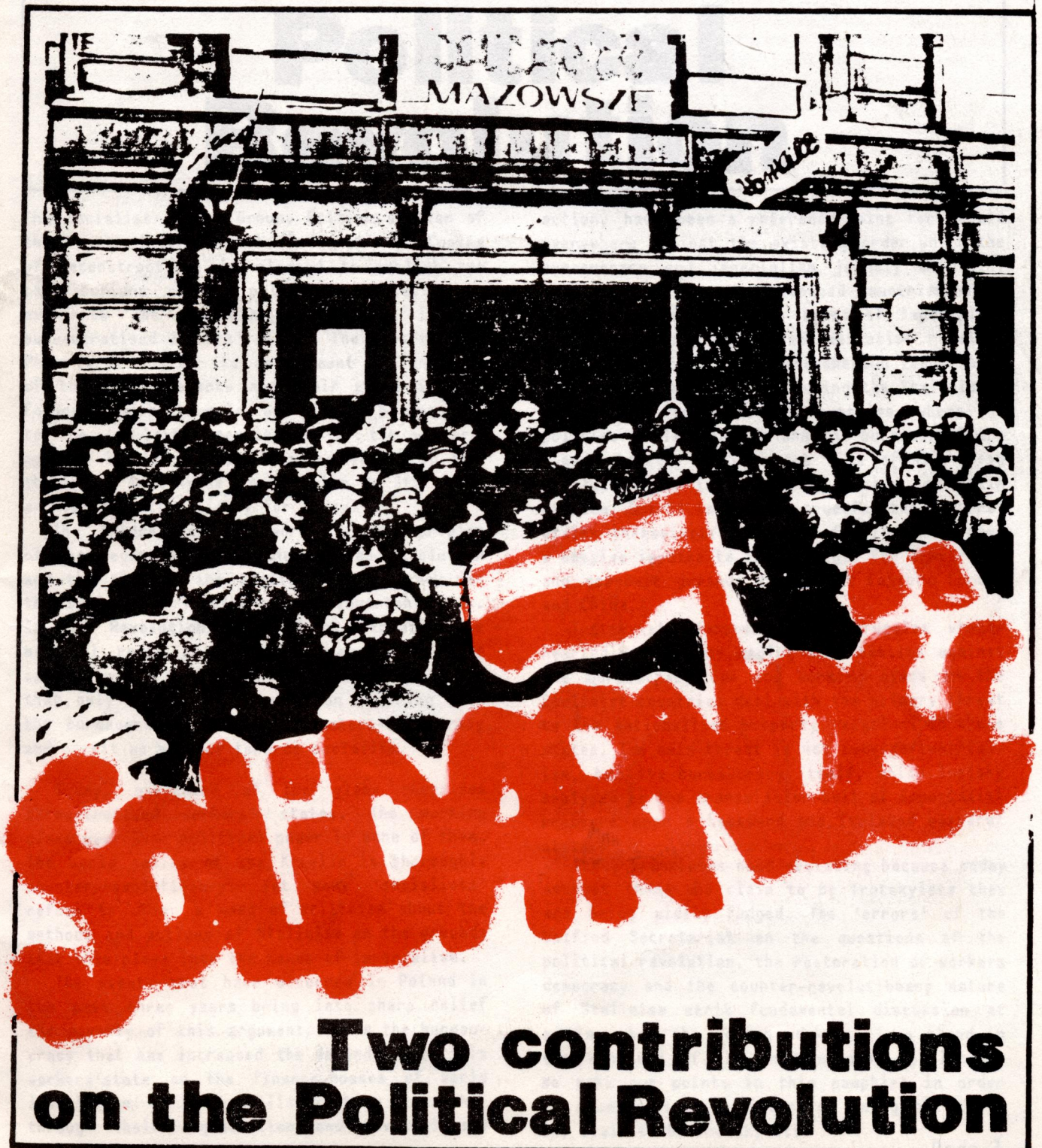


# socialist newsletter

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# SOCIALIST LABOUR GROUP

## Two contributions on the Political Revolution

The Socialist Labour Group, British section of the Fourth International (International Centre of Reconstruction) is pleased to publish two contributions on the political revolution to overthrow the Stalinist bureaucracy in the bureaucratised workers' states. The contribution from Carol Coulter is an account and analysis of the Polish events and their place in the European class struggle. She gives a background to the 'political revolution' of the workers against Stalinism. Mike Pearse centres on the theory of Trotskyism in relation to Stalinism and defends its validity for today.

The theoretical framework for the problem of the degeneration of the Russian revolution and the rise of the Stalinist bureaucracy was the subject of Trotsky's most important work. In **The Revolution Betrayed** he explains the material roots of the bureaucracy and how it can be overthrown. On this he was unequivocal, that only a political revolution to bring down the bureaucracy can restore workers' democracy and permit an advance towards socialism.

Today, one-third of the globe comprises bureaucratised workers' states. The working class exercises political power in none of them. The world policy of the Kremlin is thoroughly counter-revolutionary. Yet many 'socialists' refuse to utter a word of criticism about the methods and actions of Stalinism on the grounds that this plays into the hands of imperialism.

The events that have occurred in Poland in the past three years bring into sharp relief the poverty of this argument. It is the bureaucracy that has increased the dependency of this workers' state on the finance-houses of world imperialism. It is the Polish working class who, through their organisation and revolutionary

action, have been a reference-point for people everywhere against the existing order which the bureaucracy and imperialism jointly maintain. This is true for the advanced countries where workers are bearing the brunt of imperialist austerity plans, whose implementation receives the collaboration of the treacherous leaderships of the working class, including the Stalinists. It is true for oppressed countries, where the policies of imperialism and the bureaucracy are aimed directly against the rise of the world revolution, as in Palestine, Africa and Latin America. But it is no less true for the workers' states themselves: the rise of Solidarnosc gave a massive impulse to the struggle for democratic and economic demands throughout Eastern Europe and China.

Trotskyists endorse these struggles wholeheartedly. Only by waging such battles against the bureaucracy can the working class in the Stalinist countries deal with the primary threat to the nationalised property relations in these states. The main threat is not outside imperialism, but the bureaucracy itself, which Trotsky analysed as the transmission-belt of imperialist pressure upon a backward and isolated workers' state.

These principles need restating because today amongst those who claim to be Trotskyists they are being widely fudged. The 'errors' of the Unified Secretariat on the questions of the political revolution, the restoration of workers democracy and the counter-revolutionary nature of Stalinism merit fundamental discussion at a time when the Polish working class stand in the vanguard of the international revolution. We make our points in this pamphlet in order to promote such a discussion among all those who claim to be Trotskyists.

# The Workers Revolution in Poland by Carol Coulter

## INTRODUCTION

IN AUGUST 1980 the word "Solidarity" took on a new meaning for workers all over the world. The Polish working class demanded and won the right to form a free and independent trade union. This was indeed a historic occasion. For the first time ever a Communist government was forced to recognise a workers' organisation which it did not control.

In this pamphlet we will examine the background to this significant event and estimate its importance for the Polish working class and for workers all over the world. We will follow the reaction of interested parties – the Soviet Union, the Catholic Church, the United States – and examine the difficulties it provoked for the Communist Parties of Western Europe and the trade union movement. Above all we will explain how the workers' revolution in Poland vindicates the programme of those, Trotskyists and fighters for the Fourth International, who have fought against the bureaucracy of the Soviet Union since its formation.

Solidarity grew into a union of over 10 million members and every day of its existence increased the difficulties of the Polish government and its master in the Soviet Union. The Polish Communist Party which governed Poland claimed to represent the working class. How could they continue this claim, as more and more workers demonstrated by their actions that this was no longer the case? Solidarity was threatening the very delicate balance of power which existed in the countries in Eastern Europe. It had to be destroyed.

## 1. POLAND IN EUROPE

TOWARDS the end of the Second World War the victorious allies (the US, Britain and the Soviet Union) met to consider the fate of Europe after the War. Its fate was to be decided, not by its peoples, but by the politicians running the big powers.

The reason for their precautions soon became clear. Everywhere in Europe occupied by Hitler the defeat of his armies brought with it the collapse of the collaborationist states it kept in power. The local landlords and capitalists who had collaborated with Hitler fled, leaving the land in the hands of the peasants and the factories in the hands of the workers. Workers' committees were formed and workers' trade unions and parties, banned under Hitler, were re-established.

If this process had been allowed to develop unchecked much of Europe would have soon fallen into the hands of the workers and the farmers who supported them. Even in countries which had not been occupied, like Britain, the majority of the population were looking for political and social change and elected governments, like the Labour Government in Britain, which they thought would give it.

The agreements arrived at between Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin were aimed at re-establishing capitalist order in Europe.

So on the night of 12th December 1982 the Polish secret police raided the homes of carefully selected leaders of Solidarity, rounding up several thousand national and local trade union and political leaders. The following day martial law was declared, Solidarity was suspended, strikes were declared illegal and the internment camps were opened. In the depths of the hard Polish winter, tens of thousands of workers, students and intellectuals were locked up without charge or trial, without proper facilities or medical attention for no better reason than the fact that they were regarded as leaders by the members of Solidarity.

In the months that followed strikes and demonstrations showed the authorities and the world that the Polish working class was not crushed. On May Day 1982 tens of thousands took to the streets to show that the 1st of May, the day of international workers' solidarity, belonged to Solidarity and not to those who had usurped the name of socialism. On that day and on 3rd May pitched battles took place in the streets.

Every month since then has seen similar protests. And as we go to press the underground leadership of Solidarity has called on its supporters to prepare for a general strike. The great independent movement of the Polish workers is not dead. Yet it is far from the front pages of the newspapers, and is now almost ignored by the leaders of the labour movement in the West. Those who seek to discuss it now are told that Solidarity has failed, that the experiment is over, that Poland is returning to 'normal'.

Is this so? And why are the governments and official trade union leaders in the West so anxious to bury the memory of Solidarity? We need to look at the place of Poland in recent European history to understand it.

They agreed on dividing Europe into 'spheres of influence' in which stable governments would be guaranteed and the workers kept from taking direct political power.

The first thing that had to be done was to ensure that the organisations of the working class were rendered powerless or neutralised. In Western Europe, the American 'sphere of influence', this was achieved by the Socialist, Labour and Communist parties, entering coalition governments with the capitalist parties, and thus undertaking not to radically change the political system. In Britain this undertaking was given by the Labour Party without a coalition.

In France and Italy, where the old capitalist state had all but collapsed, there was not much in the way of a capitalist party to coalesce with. But this did not stop them. In France, for example, the Communist Party was the largest party in government and had the support of the majority of the working population. But it insisted on forming a 'Popular Front' government with De Gaulle who, when he felt strong enough, just threw them out of the government.

Throughout Eastern Europe the Communists were held in high regard as the representatives of the army (the Red Army) which had defeated Hitler. The Red Army was welcomed into Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Rumania. In Yugoslavia the Communists led the resistance. In Germany itself the collapse of Hitler's administration led to the rebirth of the Social Democratic Party (the SPD), and the birth of numerous new parties and groups claiming to be communist.

In Poland the Socialist Party had played an important part in the resistance, and had claimed the allegiance of millions of Polish workers since the beginning of the century. It expected to play a major part in the government of a free Poland.

The Communists were a smaller, but still important, force. Their popularity was somewhat limited by the fact that most of their leaders had spent the war in Moscow, and the Red Army had refused to cross the Elbe to come to the help of the Warsaw Uprising, in which tens of thousands died and Warsaw was flattened, in the closing days of the war.

But the Red Army did come into Warsaw where it established a Communist-led government under Gomulka, which was supported by Britain and the US. The economy had almost totally collapsed during the war, most of the capitalists and landlords had fled, and the people were looking for radical change.

In the elections called in 1947 the official results gave the Communists an overall majority, though recent accounts challenge this figure. The Party took over a monopoly of political power. The Socialist Party had been forced into a shotgun wedding with the Communist Party which it had not sought, giving birth to a new party, the United Socialist Workers' Party (USWP), modelled exactly on the undemocratic, bureaucratic and highly centralised Communist Party of the Soviet Union. All its leaders were hand-picked and trained in Moscow. Any socialist who did not like it quickly found himself or herself in jail or in exile.

However the fact remains that the Polish capitalists had, in the main, left the country. Most industry was nationalised. Only the workers and farmers remained to rebuild it after the war. And, despite the rigid and bureaucratic government to which they were subjected, they did so.

Faced with the flight of the capitalists from the countries of Eastern Europe occupied by the Red Army, and the clear desire of the working people of these countries to reorganise the economies in their own interests, Stalin and his local agents, who claimed to represent the workers and socialism, had no alternative but to nationalise industry to prevent the workers taking everything into their own hands. But this was done in a way which prevented the workers from controlling the factories and the economy, which were controlled by a greedy and self-interested bureaucracy, similar to that which had grown up in the Soviet Union under Stalin.

Imperialism was far from happy about these measures which placed a major section of the world's economy beyond its grasp. But it had agreed that Stalin would maintain political stability in Eastern Europe. There was no-one else around to do it. So it developed the strategy of *economic and financial* pressure on the economies of Eastern Europe, while doing everything to maintain the *political* stability of the regimes there. That policy applies to Poland today.

If the political regimes established in Europe after the war are upset by the action of the working class the post-war settlement between imperialism and the Soviet Union will be shattered. Europe is a closely integrated geographic and historic entity. Events in any one of its components have profound repercussions throughout the whole continent. The history of every country in Europe is closely bound up with that of its neighbours, and so, therefore, is its future.

Nowhere is this more true than in the case of Poland. Poland was occupied by both Russia and Germany, it has a long history of national struggle, its people are closely linked culturally and linguistically with those of Czechoslovakia. In its struggle against national oppression it had built up a relationship with France. Maintaining stability in Poland is one of the keys to maintaining stability in the whole of Europe, East and West. But ever since the War the workers of Eastern Europe have resisted the stability imposed on them against their will by bureaucratic governments taking their orders from Moscow.

## 2. WORKERS' RESISTANCE 1953 - 1980

THERE were many who hailed the takeover of Eastern Europe after the war as unalloyed victory for socialism. Indeed the leadership of the Fourth International, which in 1938 had described the leaders of the Soviet Union as having "decisively gone over to the side of bourgeois order", in 1951 decided this was not true after all and declared that the Stalinist Kremlin regime was progressive.

This led to a split in the Fourth International and a crisis which has not yet been resolved.

But it did not take the workers long to show what they thought of their new leaders. In 1953 the workers of East Berlin went on general strike, demanding free elections and a government based on the strike committee. They were denounced as the agents of imperialism and their strike was crushed by Russian tanks.

Three years later came the Hungarian uprising. There the workers formed workers' councils throughout the country and literally strung up the hated secret policemen on the nearest lamp-posts.

The Hungarian workers' councils were also crushed by Russian tanks, in the name of socialism. Thousands died, and thousands more fled, leaving the memory of a bloody defeat in Hungary.

That same year, 1956, came the first workers' rebellion in Poland. The hard-line Stalinist who ran Poland, called Beirut (Gomulka had fallen in an internal party struggle) had imposed a regime of harsh repression of intellectuals and workers alike. On June 28th 1956, fifty demonstrating workers were killed by police in the town of Poznan. Throughout Poland, workers' councils appeared. They developed links with the army, some of whose members distributed arms to the workers' detachments.

On October 19th divisions of the Soviet army had advanced into Poland to crush the rebellion and were threatening Warsaw. The government was in crisis. It released Gomulka, a "liberal" Communist jailed under Beirut, and installed him as prime minister. He persuaded Soviet premier Khrushchev not to intervene, that he could restore order. He released the Catholic Primate, Cardinal Szyzinsky, also jailed under Beirut, and made concessions to the Church and the peasants.

Because of his imprisonment under the old regime, and because of the fact that he had been a Resistance leader during the war, he had the prestige to win the confidence of the workers and "left-wing Communist" intellectuals whom they looked to as leaders. These "left-wing Communists" did not want to see the government overthrown, they wanted to see it handle the economy in a more rational way and to ease up on the repression being meted out to all and sundry.

With the help of these "left-wing Communists" (the political ancestors of the "reformist" wing of the PSWP today) Gomulka won back the ground lost to the workers' councils.

The workers' councils themselves were not disbanded. Instead he decided to emasculate them of all power by integrating them into the monolithic state. They were legalised and then integrated into the state system; they could no longer represent the workers and soon disappeared.

But the Polish workers were not defeated like the Hungarian workers were in the same year. Stalinist rule was only maintained through the granting of a number of concessions. And the Polish people learned a number of political lessons they would carry into their next struggle.

This came, not from the workers, but from the students and young intellectuals. In 1965 two young Communist intellectuals, Jacek Kuron and Karol Modzelewski, published a manifesto entitled "An Open Letter to the Party". In it they argued that Polish society was divided between the working people, the vast majority of the population, and a "ruling bureaucracy". This bureaucracy exploited the labour of the workers every bit as ruthlessly as did the capitalists of the West, they said. This could be changed through a political change, introducing democratic control through workers' councils.

Although they did not call for the overthrow of the bureaucracy, but for its reform in a democratic direction, this did not save them from its wrath. They were both sentenced to three and a half years in prison for their pains, and the call for their release was one of the rallying points of the students' movement in 1968.

The manifesto of Kuron and Modzelewski was the first attempt since the Left Opposition in Russia in the '20s on behalf of a socialist opposition in Eastern Europe to put forward a programme for *political* change which accepted the *economic* status quo.

On January 30th 1968 the government banned a play by a nineteenth century nationalist playwright, Adam Mickiewicz. The play was a vicious attack on Czarist Russia. Many of the lines denouncing Russian rule provoked loud and long applause like Yeats' play, "Cathleen ni Houlihan", had in the Abbey in the early years of this century). The government closed down the play. Riots broke out and the Polish 1968 had begun.

Street battles between students and police raged throughout the spring. Just to the south of Poland the "Prague Spring" reform

movement was in full swing in Czechoslovakia. The name of the Czech prime minister, Alexander Dubcek, was being shouted in the streets of Warsaw. Within a few months the student opposition had been viciously suppressed in Poland and Warsaw Pact troops, including Polish troops, had been sent in to crush the peoples of Czechoslovakia.

The student uprising of 1968 did not lead to a victory, and the students had not been supported by the workers. In "socialist" Poland there was always a big gulf between workers and intellectuals. When the workers went on strike two years later the students stayed behind the walls of their university hostels. But the next time intellectuals became politically active, in the mid-'70s, they would not be calling on a Communist Party leader to lead them.

The next big upsurge came in 1970. On December 14th of that year the prices of basic foodstuffs were increased by 10 to 20 percent. The workers of the Northern Baltic ports around Gdansk went on strike. In Gdansk it developed into an insurrection. The workers marched on the local party headquarters to the tune of the Internationale and burned it down. Hundreds of workers were killed by the police.

Within ten days prime minister Gomulka had resigned and was replaced by Edward Gierk. The food price increases were cancelled and wages increased. But the strikes did not stop. Indeed, they spread to other cities in the area. In Szczecin, some two hundred miles along the coast, the shipyards also went on strike. Under the chairmanship of Edmund Baluka (later to found the Polish Socialist Workers' Party) a city-wide general strike committee was formed and took over the running of transport and the provision of food. Gierk had to go in person to Szczecin to negotiate with the strike committee.

The government backed down all along the line. The leaders of the strike committee were elected to the leadership of the state-controlled "trade unions". But a few years afterwards mysterious things began to happen to them. Some were found dead in their homes. Others died as a result of mysterious beatings. A few were promoted and isolated from their workmates. Others were offered a choice between moving town or resigning. One of these was Baluka. He got the message. He left his job, went back to his old job as a seaman and jumped ship in Western Europe, feeling safer out of Poland until some independent workers' organisation had come into being again.

Six years later, in 1976, the Polish workers were revolting again. The government, faced with growing economic problems as a result of its own mismanagement of the economy, tried again to put up prices. The workers of the towns of Ursus and Radom struck. The food price increases were withdrawn, though some of the strikers were jailed.

This was the cue for one of the most significant events in the recent history of Poland. The dissident intellectuals of Warsaw led by Jacek Kuron (whose determination had only been strengthened by his three and a half years in jail), Adam Michnik and Jan Litynski, set-up a Workers' Defence Committee to defend the workers of Radom. This later became the Social Self-Defence Committee (KOR) which played an important part in the development of the political opposition up to 1980, and supplied the main "experts" to Solidarity.

The workers of Radom did not forget Kuron and his friends. When, in 1981, after the formation of Solidarity the government tried to arrest Kuron the workers of Radom went on strike, declaring Kuron and the KOR to be under their protection, and pointing out that they had defended them when they were weak. The old division between the workers and intellectuals in Poland was at an end.

After 1976 the workers of Poland had learned that through their own action they could defeat government measures. They had learned that there was no point in trying to take over the official state-controlled "trade unions", after what had happened in 1971. Small groups calling themselves "independent trade unions" were being set up in a number of cities, usually with the help of KOR, which published a paper for workers called "Robotnik" ("The Worker"). The scene was set for the emergence of Solidarity.

### 3. THE EMERGENCE OF SOLIDARITY

IN AUGUST 1980 the management of the Lenin shipyard in Gdansk tried to sack a woman crane driver, Anna Walentinovitch, who was a member of the Free Trade Union of the Coast. The shipyard went on strike in her defence. The events which led to the formation of Solidarity had begun.

Lech Walesa, a former electrician in the shipyard, sacked in 1976, and also a member of the free trade union group, was dragged over the fence by the workers. He was co-opted onto the strike committee that quickly formed. Negotiations began with management, but this time they were about more than just wage increases and a price freeze.

The workers demanded a 33 per cent wage rise, the reinstatement of all those sacked, parity with the police in family allowances and a monument to those killed by the police in 1970.

Although all this was conceded the strike did not end. It spread all along the coast. Communications were cut between this region and the rest of Poland. In Gdansk the strike spread to other factories, an inter-factory strike committee (MKS) was formed and a list of sixteen demands drawn up. One of these demands said: "After the end of the strike is proclaimed the MKS will not dissolve but will carry through the execution of the demands; it will organise free trade unions, acting as the district council of free trade unions." The birth of Solidarity was announced.

A deputy prime minister, Jagielski, came to Gdansk to negotiate with the representatives of the MKS. Another deputy prime minister was sent to Szczecin. They got an unpleasant surprise.

The negotiations were carried on in a big room with one glass wall. Outside the glass wall the rest of the MKS stood making faces at the government negotiators. The negotiations were broadcast through loudspeakers to the tens of thousands gathered in the sun outside, who cheered every time one of the MKS representatives scored a point.

As the negotiations dragged on head after head fell in the government. The occupation of the shipyard continued, with food being passed through the wire to the men and women inside. All drink was banned. The unrest spread throughout Poland.

The Catholic Church held the allegiance of the majority of the Polish people as, like the Catholic Church in Ireland, it had always been identified with nationalism. But, contrary to the view of the Western media, it was not opposed to the existence of the "socialist" regime in Poland.

It was at this point that the Church showed its true face. One of the first concessions granted by the government was Church access to the media. Cardinal Wyszynski used his first broadcast to declare: "There is nothing without work... The demands cannot be settled on the spot." In a situation of almost total travel restrictions, the government did everything to make it easy for Catholic "experts" to come to advise the MKS negotiators.

The workers would not give in, especially on the point of free trade unions. Eventually this was conceded, with the proviso that these unions accepted "the leading role of the Polish United Workers' Party in the state, and without undermining the established system of international alliances". But in Szczecin the workers got away without this concession.

A number of other concessions were made. The strikers had demanded the end of censorship, the right to strike, a five day week, increased wages for the lower paid, family allowances and pensions, nurseries and kindergartens for the children of working women, three years maternity leave, improvements in the health service and an end to the privileges (special clinics and shops and hugely inflated salaries) of members of the ruling bureaucracy and its police. All except the latter were granted to some extent.

The demands and the victory of the workers of Poland were an inspiration to the workers of the whole world. They made clear that the "socialism" of Eastern Europe — of police repression, of denial of the most basic democratic rights, of social inequality, long working hours and inadequate housing and consumer goods — that this was not the only alternative to the oppression and exploitation of imperialism with its crippling poverty for the majority of mankind, its murderous brutality and cruel dictatorships in many parts of the world.

This victory struck terror into the hearts of both the Kremlin bureaucracy and the Western imperialists. Editorials in Western newspapers worried that the Polish workers would go "too far". Horror was expressed at the thought that they might challenge the rule of the PUP and the domination of the Soviet Union — an integral part of the status quo in Europe.

For the Fourth International the opening of the revolution in Poland vindicated the programme for which we have been fighting for over forty years. In the section on the Soviet Union (which also applies to the countries of Eastern Europe modelled on it) it says:

A fresh upsurge of the revolution in the USSR will undoubtedly begin under the banner of the struggle against *social inequality and political oppression*. Down with the privileges of the bureaucracy! Down with Stakhanovism! Down with the Soviet aristocracy and its ranks and orders! Greater equality of wages for all forms of labor!

The struggle for the freedom of the trade unions and the factory committees, for the right of assembly, and for freedom of the press, will unfold in the struggle for the regeneration and development of *Soviet democracy*.

The bureaucracy replaced the soviets as class organs with the fiction of universal electoral rights – in the style of Hitler-Goebbels. It is necessary to return to the soviets not only their free democratic form but also their class content. As once the bourgeoisie and kulaks were not permitted to enter the soviets, so now it is necessary to drive the bureaucracy and the new aristocracy out of the soviets. In the soviets there is room only for representatives of the workers, rank-and-file collective farmers, peasants, and Red Army personnel.

Democratization of the soviets is impossible without the legalization of *soviet parties*. The workers and peasants themselves by their own free vote will indicate what parties they recognize as soviet parties.

A revision of *planned economy* from top to bottom in the interests of producers and consumers! Factory committees should be returned the right to control production. A democratically organized consumers' cooperative should control the quality and price of products.

Reorganization of the collective farms in accordance with the will and in the interests of those who work there!

The reactionary *international policy* of the bureaucracy should be replaced by the policy of proletarian internationalism. The complete diplomatic correspondence of the Kremlin should be published. *Down with secret diplomacy!*

All political trials staged by the Thermidorian bureaucracy should be reviewed in the light of complete publicity and controversial openness and integrity. Only the victorious revolutionary uprising of the oppressed masses can revive the Soviet regime and guarantee its further development towards socialism. There is but one party capable of leading the Soviet masses to insurrection – the party of the Fourth International!

Down with the bureaucratic gang of Cain-Stalin!

Long live Soviet democracy!

Long live the international socialist revolution!

*("Soviets") are inter-factory workers' councils, similar to those which appeared in Poland.)*

*(from Leon Trotsky, "The Transitional Programme, Founding Programme of the Fourth International")*

In different words, these were the demands of the workers of Gdansk and Szczecin. Only one was missing – for a political overthrow of the bureaucracy and its replacement by a government answerable to the workers' committee. That is what we in the Fourth International call the *political* revolution which is to come in Poland, in the Soviet Union and the other countries under the control of a bureaucracy claiming to be socialist.

#### 4. WHY A POLITICAL REVOLUTION?

**THE POLISH** economy and state is modelled on that of the Soviet Union, which took over Poland after the war and helped set up the new state.

But the regime which rules in the Soviet Union, claiming to be socialist, was not always there. It was imposed over a number of years, against the will of the workers, at a cost of millions of lives.

When the Russian Revolution occurred in 1917 it took the form of a workers' and soldiers' rebellion, leading to the formation of workers' and soldiers' councils (soviets). The Czarist government collapsed and a provisional government was formed. But the provisional government refused to carry out the mandate of the workers and soldiers, and they demanded that the soviets take power.

This was also the demand of Lenin, Trotsky and the Bolshevik Party, which quickly became the dominant party in the soviets as conservative delegates were recalled and more radical ones were elected. It was the most democratic system the world has ever known, with the workers able to replace their representatives at any time.

The soviets formed their own army, the Red Guard, and seized government buildings. A new government was established, dominated by the Bolsheviks (the majority party in the soviets) but with the participation of a peasant party, the "Left Social Revolutionaries". Other parties, though not in government, carried on political activity.

The Western imperialist powers were terrified by this development, and began to organise to bring about the overthrow of the young Russian workers' state. They supported the army of the old

ruling classes which was already rampaging all over the countryside. They organised their own armies of intervention. And they infiltrated the opposition parties, using them to try to overthrow the regime, even to the extent of attempting to assassinate Lenin.

After this attempt on Lenin's life the opposition parties were banned, and other restrictions were imposed on democratic liberties. But the leaders of the Bolshevik Party made it clear that these restrictions were intended as temporary measures, and that they would be lifted as soon as the existence of the Soviet state was secured. Meanwhile open debate continued within the Bolshevik Party and in the press. Even the conduct of the war was debated openly, something unheard of in capitalist countries.

The hopes of the leaders of the Bolshevik Party and the Russian workers' state were pinned on the workers of the West, especially Germany. They were sure that the workers of Germany, after Germany's defeat in the First World War and the fall of the Kaiser, would overthrow their rulers and form another Soviet Republic.

The workers of Germany did form Soviets and take over their workplaces in 1918 and again in 1923. But there was no Bolshevik Party in these soviets to help them decide what to do next, to help in the formation of a Red Guard which could stand up to the army of the Provisional Government, representing the capitalists, and when the workers in the soviets demanded it, take power from it. The German workers were misled by their own leaders of the Social Democratic party who supported the Provisional government and betrayed, and capitalist rule was maintained in Germany. This led to a deepening economic and political crisis, and eventually to the victory of fascism.

The German revolution was defeated in 1923, and the German workers had to bear heavy repression as the bosses wrought their revenge. This was a heavy blow to the workers of Russia. Another was soon to follow. In 1924 Lenin died.

Before his death he had started a campaign against what he called the "bureaucracy" which was developing in the state. In a country where the majority of the population was illiterate there was only a small layer of people from which administrators and civil servants could be drawn. Many of the most educated workers and those most dedicated to the revolution had died in the wars to defend it. So those involved in the administration of the state and the economy had, on the whole, very little dedication to the ideals on which they were based.

Lenin saw that this layer, which had nothing to do with the workers who had made the revolution, threatened to strangle it. He warned against them, but before the Party Congress at which he hoped to launch his campaign took place he died of a stroke.

There were others who also opposed the rise of this bureaucracy. In particular Leon Trotsky, former President of the Soviets in Petrograd and leader of the Red Army, saw its dangers.

But by now the bureaucrats had powerful allies at the highest level of the Bolshevik Party (now known as the Communist Party). In particular they had the protection of Joseph Stalin, himself an administrator rather than a revolutionary. As an administrator he had won the powerful position of General Secretary of the Communist Party.

In the struggle which broke out within the Communist Party the Left Opposition led by Trotsky was at a disadvantage. Thousands of the best members of the Communist Party, those who had led the soviets to take power, were dead. The defeat of the German revolution, soon to be followed by the defeat of the British General Strike and the Chinese revolution, discouraged many others. So the Left Opposition was defeated and driven out of the Party. Trotsky was exiled. His family and supporters were jailed and, later, killed. In the mid-30s Stalin launched his infamous purges in which three million people died, in an attempt to obliterate the memory of the revolution and the workers' control over the state and economy it instituted.

The Soviet Union was now being run entirely in the interests of a bureaucracy whose interests and standard of living had nothing whatsoever to do with that of the workers. As far as they were concerned the greatest threat they could face was that the workers would take control back into their own hands. The international policy of the rulers of the Soviet Union was designed to maintain stability on a world scale, so as not to rock the boat and threaten their own position.

This led to a series of defeats for the workers in the rest of the world. In Spain the Kremlin (the Russian centre of government) pursued a policy of alliance with the local landlords and capitalists, thus undermining the Republican side and leading to the victory of Franco.

In Germany the Communist Party was instructed to concentrate its fire on the Social Democrat Party and allow Hitler to come to power, which they did. Then Stalin formed a Pact with Hitler. Not content with that he discovered a "plot" among his

most experienced generals and had them all killed just before Hitler invaded the Soviet Union.

All this led some people who had previously supported the Russian revolution to explain that, under the protection of Stalin (or even Lenin) capitalism had somehow sneaked its way back into Russia and that the Soviet Union was a capitalist state in all but name.

Not so, explained Trotsky. The economy, nationalised under the rule of the workers, remained nationalised. The state, and not any capitalist or group of capitalists, controlled foreign trade. And the individual bureaucrats, though they enjoyed great wealth and privilege, enjoyed it only as long as they kept their positions. They could not pass it on to their children. Indeed, the history of the state in the Soviet Union is littered with the political corpses of bureaucrats who fell from grace and went back into obscurity, having to give up fancy flats in Moscow, homes in the country and tickets for special bureaucrats' shops for the misery of crowded flats and food queues with ordinary people. No wonder political survival in Eastern Europe is so important. It is all a bureaucrat has.

Of course, from the bureaucrats' point of view, this is a very unsatisfactory state of affairs. So they try to guarantee that they maintain political power. Every detail of political and administrative power is monopolised by the bureaucrats and their party, the Communist Party. All advancement is controlled through the Party. All dissent is crushed through a system of police repression. Even the degree of freedom accepted in capitalist society is impermissible. Capitalists can tolerate a certain level of criticism because they control all the wealth themselves, and the individuals in power don't matter all that much to them (provided always, of course, that the right party is in power). But in Eastern Europe any chink in the system threatens to destroy the myth that it is a socialist state, and bring it all tumbling down.

The insecurity of their privileges drives certain sections of the bureaucracy to seek ways to make these privileges permanent. This forces them into a natural alliance with Western imperialism. If they could transform themselves into capitalists their children would inherit their wealth, they would not have to worry about upheavals in the Party... Life would be easier.

But restoring capitalism would not be easy. Especially as capitalism operates on the basis of different economic rules to the nationalised economies of Eastern Europe. There unprofitable factories are kept open to provide employment, and the deficit is made up by other, profitable, enterprises, as they are all part of the same economic unit. But under capitalism they would have to be closed down. And the workers of Eastern Europe would not take that lying down. So any attempt to transform the way the economy is run would provoke a big social and political crisis. This leads to major differences of opinion on economic strategy within the Communist Parties of Eastern Europe, with some bureaucrats favouring more cooperation with Western capitalists and others opposing it.

But Western imperialism, with the encouragement of the bureaucracy, is still making its presence felt in these economies. Their big weapon is loans. Faced with the need to develop the economy and maintain their own privileges at the same time, caught up in the inefficient and wasteful running of the economy which arises from the bureaucracy's refusal to allow the workers to have any say in it whatsoever, the bureaucrats turn to the Western banks. The banks are delighted to oblige. Where else are they going to get whole countries as collateral?

But increasingly they are getting worried about their investments. Political unrest in Eastern Europe makes the repayments less certain, especially as the workers there are refusing to work harder for lower wages just to repay loans to Western banks. The conditions on the loans are getting tighter, and Western imperialism is — at last — beginning to get a toehold in the nationalised economies of Eastern Europe.

This is a big danger to the gains made by the workers of Russia in 1917, when they threw out the capitalists, and the workers of the other countries of Eastern Europe and China, who also managed to get rid of their capitalists.

Trotsky explained that the rule of the bureaucracy in the Soviet Union could only be temporary. It arose from a very specific set of circumstances. It had no real roots in the economy or history. It would either be overthrown by the workers taking back the political power they had lost, or it would lead to the restoration of capitalism, he said.

The bringing of imperialist banks into Eastern Europe by the bureaucracy shows that they are indeed the tool of the restoration

of capitalism there. But the events in Poland over the past two and a half years show that the workers are capable of overthrowing the bureaucracy and seizing political power for themselves.

In the Soviet Union itself and in the countries of Eastern Europe, including Poland, a number of groups have grown up which appeal to the bureaucracy to reform itself, to give some of its power away, to abuse its power less, to allow freedom of expression, to abolish social inequality.

However well-intentioned such appeals are, they will never be heard. The bureaucracy and its Party cannot be reformed.

Once that bureaucracy became privileged, which it did almost at the moment of its inception, membership of it became the passport to wealth and position. Once this happened it had to control access to itself, it needed machinery of recruiting and vetting procedures. It needed to control all sources of privilege, which meant controlling economic activity in the state. This meant controlling all political power. And this meant a vast repressive machine to keep dissent quiet.

Naturally all this led to great resentment in the population. The dissent could not be allowed expression. There could be no free press, no free elections, even at the most limited and local level. These people, despite their privileges, control nothing *except* the state machine. They cannot afford to let any of it go, because its very centralised nature means that if any of it crumbles it all falls apart.

Poles — and other people from Eastern Europe — find it very difficult to understand why, if in the countries of the West there is no censorship and free elections, everyone is not content and there is not a government supported by the people. Because they know of no wealth separate from political power, they cannot understand how "free" elections mean very little when the whole process is manipulated by the wealthy and powerful. They have always seen wealth concentrated in the hands of those involved in the state machine.

So in Poland and the countries of Eastern Europe the workers will only be really able to control their own future when they have got rid of the bureaucracy which rules over them. Any independent organisation threatens the monopoly of power of the bureaucracy, so it cannot be tolerated. The bureaucracy cannot allow independent trade unions to exist, because they challenge its claim to represent the workers. It cannot allow free elections, because the workers, farmers and youth would reject the Party of state repression, of power and privilege. It cannot allow an end to censorship because these demands would be voiced.

So the appeals of groups within these countries for the bureaucracy to give up some of its power fall on deaf ears. The power will have to be taken from the bureaucracy. Its Party, the Party of spying on neighbours, of repression, of corruption, will have to be thrown out of all workers' organisations and workers' councils. There will have to be free elections and the legalisation of all political parties who want to keep the nationalised economy and who oppose the return of capitalism (which no-one in these countries wants anyway).

This is the only possible basis for a government supported by the people of these countries, for, the formation of democratic workers' republics. This is what we mean by the "political revolution" as outlined in the Transitional Programme quoted above. And this is the direction events were taking in Poland before the declaration of martial law just over a year ago.

## 5. FROM THE DEMAND FOR FREE TRADE UNIONS TO THE DEMAND FOR POLITICAL POWER

IN THE sixteen months between the Gdansk and Szczecin agreements in August 1980 and the declaration of martial law in December 1981, the Polish state all but collapsed as the bureaucracy was forced to make concession after concession to the Polish people. The only thing which saved the bureaucracy was the lack of a united and coherent leadership at the head of Solidarity and the support of the Catholic Church.

Despite declarations that it would never recognise a rural or a students' independent union the government was forced to recognise Rural and Student Solidarity (the NZS).

But Solidarity did not press home its advantage. When the hated political police attacked a union meeting in the town of

Bydgoszcz, killing one worker and wounding others, the workers there went on strike demanding the disciplining of the police involved. Walesa refused to support them.

Meanwhile the government was using its own methods to try to demoralise the people. Grave food shortages developed. For the first time in Polish history since the war there were mass street demonstrations, sparked off by women workers in the town of Lodz, as they took to the streets demanding food. A national march on Warsaw was threatened.

As the food shortages worsened angry workers discovered that in some areas vast quantities of food were being dumped by government lorries. The dockers went on strike, refusing to load food for export while people were threatened with starvation.

Political groups were springing up all over Poland. These included the KPN, a party dedicated to the total independence of Poland from foreign interference, and the Polish Socialist Workers' Party, founded by Edmund Baluka and fighting for free elections and an independent workers' republic based on workers' councils. The leaders of the KPN were arrested and jailed.

The Solidarity National Executive Committee met in emergency session in August 1981. It decided not to support a march on Warsaw demanding the release of the political prisoners. It also decided to accept an increase in the price of bread.

The KOR group decided to disband, explaining that its function of "social self-defence" had now been taken over by Solidarity. Its leaders made no move to set up a political party to seek a change in Poland's political structure. Some of its members floated the idea of a government formed of Solidarity, the Church and the Party.

Despite these retreats by the leadership of Solidarity the workers of Poland were determined to press on against the government. At the first national conference of Solidarity some six weeks later delegates voted for a number of policies which, if carried out, would have spelt the end of the rule of the hated bureaucracy in Poland.

The most important of these was the demand for free elections. An opinion poll conducted a few months later found that if there were free elections in Poland the government party, the UPWP, would win 2 per cent of the vote! Already its membership had fallen from three million to one million.

But the delegates were also concerned with international solidarity. On the proposal of Jan Litynski from the KOR they voted to help and support the formation of free trade unions in the rest of Eastern Europe and among the peoples of the Soviet Union.

For the Kremlin this was like a red rag to the bull. The threatening noises emanating from Moscow got louder.

Meanwhile the food crisis worsened. On October 23rd the National Committee of Solidarity called on the union to prepare for a general strike. In several towns and cities throughout the country the workers were asking the local Solidarity leaders to organise free elections.

In the Lodz region the union took over the distribution of food and printed its own ration cards. This produced a marked improvement in the food situation in the area.

The Church, the government and the conservative leaders of Solidarity moved to try to prevent a confrontation. On November 4th the Catholic Archbishop Glemp, Walesa and the new prime minister, General Jaruzelski, met to head off the growing crisis.

They issued the following joint communique: "The parties exchanged their points of view of the means of overcoming the crisis and the possibilities of forming a front of national accord which would be a permanent platform of dialogue and consultation between the political forces on the basis of the Constitution."

The government's interpretation of this "national accord" was to step up the pressure and introduce anti-strike laws into the Parliament (whose members are nominated by the Party, not elected). It also applied to the International Monetary Fund for help.

Tens of thousands demonstrated in Warsaw for national independence. Solidarity decided to organise a referendum on the holding of free elections and set December 17th as the date for a general strike.

Meanwhile the old guarantors of order in Europe, imperialism and the Kremlin, made their moves. Representatives of the foreign banks, which have lent Poland 25 million dollars, told the Polish government to put its house in order as a condition of receiving more loans. Marshall Konlikov, commander of the Warsaw Pact forces, met General Jaruzelski. They certainly did not talk about the weather.

On the night of December 12th martial law was declared.

## 6. RESISTANCE AND REORGANISATION

THERE is no doubt that the hesitations of the leadership of Solidarity, which, as a trade union, did not have a programme for *political* change, weakened the movement in the face of the declaration of martial law. Had there been a political party of the Polish workers involved in the struggle from the beginning, advancing the struggle for political power in each phase of the struggle, it is likely that the authorities would not have been given the opportunity to gather their strength for the coup after the Solidarity Congress in September 1981.

The declaration of martial law and the decapitation of the Polish working class which went with it was undoubtedly a blow to the Polish workers, to the movement for political revolution throughout Eastern Europe and to the struggle for socialism throughout the world.

But this is not to say that the Polish workers have been defeated. Far from it. The declaration of martial law provoked a wave of sit-down strikes. In the mines of Silesia the government had to flood the mines, killing hundreds of workers, before the authorities ended the occupation.

If there are still people about who think that Solidarity was a plot on the part of the Catholic Church, a look at the role of the Polish hierarchy since the declaration of martial law should disabuse them. In the days immediately following martial law Cardinal Glemp made daily appeals for resignation, saying that "Pole should not shed the blood of Pole". And as the first anniversary of martial law approached the trump card was produced - if the Poles were "good", if they did not resist the authorities, the authorities, after consultation with the hierarchy, would allow their Pope to visit them.

But this has not prevented Solidarity from reorganising underground. Within weeks regular bulletins were appearing in the cities and towns. Within months a functioning national leadership had been reconstructed. Arrests, prosecutions, beatings did not deter the workers and youth who came onto the street time after time, who sat in in their factories at the appeal of Solidarity.

But even more revealing indications of the success of Jaruzelski's attempts at "normalisation" are his total failure to increase production and the refusal of the Polish workers to join the newly established state-controlled unions. In the big factories their membership is estimated at under 5 per cent of the workforce.

## 7. THE DEVELOPING REVOLUTION IN POL AND SHAKES WORLD ORDER

AS THE coup was being prepared, all the world politicians rallied to the side of Jaruzelski and order in Poland. On the very day of the coup West Germany's Chancellor Schmidt visited East Germany bearing his best wishes to Hoenneker and, no doubt, his friend across the border.

Reagan and Thatcher of course made a lot of noise, using events in Poland to put more military and economic pressure on the Soviet Union. But they did not do anything that would really make things difficult for Jaruzelski, like cutting off the massive loans he owed. On the contrary, just after the coup they agreed to reschedule the debts, giving Jaruzelski a period of grace to get things sorted out so that he could start paying them again.

Not that we support any economic or political pressure from imperialism on the countries of Eastern Europe. We know that it just wants to get its hands on new areas of investment and exploitation, and we will do nothing to help the banks of Western imperialism, who are already bleeding dry the Irish people, to bleed the workers of Poland as well. But a look at the activities of these banks puts the ravings of Reagan and Thatcher in perspective.

These banks are terrified that if the Polish workers succeed in overthrowing the government they will never see their money again. And they are right. So they quietly support Jaruzelski's "normalisation". Banks were never very friendly to workers' taking things into their own hands.

But above all *all* the Western powers, as well as the Kremlin bureaucracy and its satellites, are terrified that the uprising of the Polish working class will overthrow the regime, take Poland out of



the Soviet "sphere of influence" and thereby destroy the delicate political equilibrium in Europe and destabilise every European regime.

The development of the political revolution in Europe has also created deep divisions within the world labour movement.

Since the Second World War the Communist Parties throughout the world, and especially in Europe, have played an important part in maintaining political stability. They have entered Coalition governments or supported existing capitalist governments at the behest of their masters in the Kremlin.

This has already cost them quite dearly. The Communist Party in France was already losing votes before the coup in Poland as a result of its support for the conservative President Giscard.

But the events in Poland have plunged these parties into deep crises. The Italian Communist Party verbally opposed the coup though they did nothing to oppose it actively. The French Communist Party supported it, which undoubtedly played a part in the drop in their vote in the recent elections. The Spanish Communist Party has been decimated, reduced from the most powerful workers' party after the death of Franco to a shadow today.

But even the socialist and labour parties are torn between their claims to represent "democratic socialism" and their concern not to disturb the political order established in Europe after the War. In every socialist and labour party, in every union, different leaders are at each others' throats as they try to satisfy at the same time the deep feelings of support which workers everywhere feel for the Polish people, and their desire not to upset the political status quo.

## 9. THE DEVELOPMENT OF A POLITICAL LEADERSHIP OF THE POLISH WORKING CLASS

**THE STRUGGLE** of the Polish workers shows that the workers will fight for their rights whether or not they have "leaders" or "revolutionaries" telling them what to do. They are quite capable of deciding what they want and what to do themselves, of choosing their own leaders and developing their own organisations against those of their rulers.

But even in the most revolutionary upheaval, even among a working class quite free from the influence of a corrupt trade union bureaucracy, there are different layers and different stages of consciousness. There are some who are more far-sighted than others, some who just want immediate improvements, others who want lasting changes guaranteed for the future.

A union is for everybody, to defend their immediate interests. Even a union like Solidarity must be open to everybody, whatever their ultimate objectives, whether they be to force concessions from the bureaucracy, to take some power from it, or to take it all.

The development of the revolution in Poland meant that millions of workers, intellectuals and youth debated the future of the movement and how it could advance. After the declaration of martial law this debate centred on what could be done to defeat it. Those linked to the Church favoured seeking negotiations with the government. Others favoured more revolutionary action, up to the point of an organised insurrection.

Among those who favoured the latter course was Jacek Kuron, veteran of the struggles of the '60s and '70s, founder of the KOR, and leading adviser to Solidarity. In 1981 he advocated concessions to the government. But from his prison cell in 1982 he smuggled out a letter in which he explained that the government understood only one language - that of force. Calling for the preparation of a general strike, he wrote, "The time for illusions is past".

Such an insurrectionary general strike would directly challenge the power of the bureaucracy. Without agreeing with Kuron about everything, the Polish Trotskyists and the Fourth International (ICR) supported his call for an insurrectionary general strike to force the end of martial law.

## 10. THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL IN POLAND

**THE TROTSKYISTS** in Poland and the Fourth International (ICR) fight for the complete restoration of all the rights which existed prior to the declaration of martial

law. In particular we fight for the legalisation of all the political parties formed in the heat of the struggle for the right to organise.

The basic aspirations of the Polish people, expressed five times since the Second World War, are for democracy, national independence and equal rights for everyone on the basis of socialism. Not a single organisation or party has questioned the type of social regime which exists in Poland. All they want is to remove from it its social inequalities and its repressive characteristics.

The only guarantee of these aspirations is free elections to a national assembly, supported by the committees and councils of workers and peasants. These sprang up in the weeks immediately prior to the declaration of martial law. There is no doubt that they will arise again as the Polish workers fight to regain the ground they have lost to the bureaucracy under martial law.

The party of the bureaucracy, the United Polish Workers' Party, claims to represent the Polish working class. This claim has already been shown up for the lie it is. But showing up the lie is not enough. The Polish workers need a party they can really call their own, which represents them and their own traditions and aspirations and seeks to help them take power from the bureaucracy which claims to act on their behalf.

In the months leading up to the coup such a party was founded. The Polish Socialist Workers' Party was founded in Szczecin in September 1982. Within a few weeks it had 10,000 applications for membership. Its manifesto included total national independence for Poland, free elections and an independent republic based on workers' councils. Although the PSWP is not a section of the Fourth International, the FI (ICR) supported its foundation.

Several of its founding members, including Edmund Baluka and Tadeusz Litochka, were arrested as the coup was declared. Baluka, who visited Ireland twice while in exile in the West, is now in jail charged with "conspiring to overthrow the state by force" for his activity in founding the party. If convicted he could be sentenced to death.

## 11. INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY

**HE IS** not the only one facing such charges. Kuron and several of his comrades from KOR and seven of the most radical leaders of Solidarity face the same charge. The government is clearly determined to get the most resolute, most politically opposed and most highly regarded leaders out of the way before the next upsurge of resistance.

Today the Polish working class is terrorised by the militarisation of workplaces, by censorship, by jailings and by its leaders being locked up in mental hospitals (like Anna Walentynowicz from the Lenin shipyard in Gdansk). It is looking to its brothers in the labour movement of the West for help, help it was glad to offer to its brothers in the East at its first Congress just eighteen months ago. Effective international solidarity can defeat Jaruzelski and snatch the leaders of the Polish working class from his clutches.

That appeal is being heard. Last December 12th several hundred delegates from four continents met in Paris and formed an International Commission to investigate the repression in Poland and to campaign for the release of the political prisoners.

The Commission has the support of civil libertarians and trade unionists from countries as far apart as Canada, Britain, France, Ireland, Spain, Brazil and Peru. Dissidents from other Eastern European countries were there to pledge their support. Some forty members of Solidarity, exiled in the West, were present.

## 12. THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL AND THE POLISH REVOLUTION

**AS WELL** as having the support of several leaders of trade unions and workers' parties, the conference was supported by the Fourth International (International Committee for Reconstruction), whose sections campaigned for its success in several countries.

Indeed, in every country where there are sections of the FI (ICR), Trotskyists are to be found campaigning in defence of Solidarity and the political prisoners in Poland.

We make no apology for this. Indeed, we are proud of the work we have done and continue to do in defence of the workers' revolution in Poland.

We do this work not because we are, like many people, moved by the courage and idealism of the Polish workers, by the fact that they are fighting for the ideals of the whole workers' movement, although we recognise their heroism.

We defend the workers of Poland and fight for their total victory because their battle is part and parcel of our programme for socialist revolution throughout the world. We defend them because their fight, for an end to the usurpation of the name of socialism by a rotten, corrupt and privileged bureaucracy has been our fight for over forty years. We defend them because we believe that the workers' movement throughout the world will be rebuilt on the basis of their ideals, of their fight, of the defeat of the alliance between imperialism and the Kremlin which today is trying to strangle them.

There are many who claim to be friends of the Polish workers and students but who shrink from supporting them unconditionally, who say they "tried to go too far", they weren't "realistic", or that their organisation, Solidarity, was not socialist enough, was too much under the influence of the Catholic Church.

All this is nothing more than an excuse to defend the bureau-

cracy and the status quo in Europe, a status quo which includes the division of Ireland. It is interesting that the same people who defend Jaruzelski are frequently those who defend the Assembly in the North and the British presence in Ireland.

We don't think Solidarity "went too far". Nor do we feel we should offer it advice from the safety of drawing rooms in Dublin. We defend all the organisations of the Polish people unconditionally. We will fight for the release of the political prisoners in Poland and until not one of them remains in jail.

As for the demands of the Polish workers "going too far", we feel they would gladly take Connolly's words for their own,

"For our demands most modest are,  
We only want the earth."

In fighting to defend them, to defend all those who, like the workers and peasants in Central America, struggle against all forms of oppression, we are fighting to build a powerful international workers' movement which will put an end to imperialist exploitation and the repression of totalitarian bureaucracies, to national oppression and the impoverishment of millions, an international which will take up the revolutionary programme on which the international workers' movement was founded and built, as adapted for the twentieth century - the programme of the Fourth International.

# Poland and Trotskyist Principles by Mike Pierce

The Socialist Labour Group is a revolutionary organisation, the British Section of the Fourth International (ICR). It is not the only organisation in Britain claiming to be Trotskyist. There are several other groups which claim the heritage of Trotskyism. The most important is the Socialist League, - once the International Marxist Group which is the British affiliate of the Unified Secretariat of the Fourth International, led by Ernest Mandel.

Why are there several organisations and two internationals? Is there not agreement on the basic tasks which we face in overthrowing capitalism and in the fight for socialism? These are questions constantly raised by those who desire genuine unity of all those claiming to be Trotskyists.

The differences and history which separate the SLG from the other groups are not accidental or trivial.

The Fourth International (ICR) aims to construct a Fourth International with mass influence, on the basis of the principles of Leninism-Trotskyism. The principled unification of forces standing on the basis of the programme of the Fourth International is our aim.

## THE POLITICAL REVOLUTION

Let us examine the problems more closely.

Trotskyism is the only heir to the Bolshevik tradition of October 1917, which has stood against the Stalinist bureaucracy and the destruction of Lenin's Third International by Stalin. It has fought Stalinism from a Marxist viewpoint and Trotsky, in the course of that struggle for the traditions of Lenin, concluded that a new workers revolution was necessary in the Soviet Union to clear out the Stalinist apparatus which had total control of the state. This revolution he called the 'political revolution' in distinction from the social revolution which the working class was to make in those countries still under the control of the bourgeoisie.

The political revolution has long been the method of Trotskyists in the fight for workers' revolution against

the counter revolutionary Stalinist caste which now rules not only in the Soviet Union but in China, VietNam, 'North Korea', Poland, Hungary, 'East Germany', Czechoslovakia, Rumania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Albania and Cuba and which has occupying forces in Afghanistan and Kampuchea.

It would be wrong to confound and run together the problems in all these countries, or to think that the exact nature of the bureaucracy in each case was a carbon copy of the apparatus in the Kremlin. But the common origin of them all in Stalinism is clear, as is their bureaucratic and counter-revolutionary nature.

Today, the states where capitalism has been expropriated, bureaucratic workers' states, cover over a third of the planet. In none of them does the working class exercise political power. The programme of the Fourth International, the Transitional Programme for Socialist Revolution, retains all its relevance for the working class in these states.

Today in Poland the political revolution is a reality. Despite the blows suffered under martial law, the Poles have not submitted to the iron heel of Stalinism. As repression and the hard regime continue every possibility that the bureaucracy might still be capable of self-reform in the face of the demands of the working class fade into the background for the Polish working class. The central problem facing the Polish workers is forming a workers' party which can lead them in the fight to overthrow and sweep away the bureaucracy and its party the PUWP.

The Polish events do not outdate the theory of political revolution, they reinforce it and enrich its content with a unique historical process, which Stalinism has not been able to destroy.

## BREAKING LINKS WITH STATE UNIONS

A recent **Socialist Challenge**, the paper associated with the IMG, surveyed the resolutions going to the 1982 Labour Party Conference. It drew attention



to a resolution from the Basingstoke Labour Party, which called for the end of martial law, the release of those detained and the restoration of full trade union rights in Poland. **Socialist Challenge** commented, "This resolution, excellent in its intentions, suffers from one major flaw however - the demand for the workers movement to break all links with the Communist Parties and official trade unions (sic) in Eastern Europe. Not only is this wrong in itself, but it is a surefire way to divide the support for Solidarnosc at the Conference."

The point about the Labour Party Conference, given the presence in the Labour Party of many ex-members of the CPGB, is open to question. What is most important from the viewpoint of Trotskyism is that **Socialist Challenge** considers the breaking of all links with Stalinist 'unions' and the PUWP wrong in itself.

First consider the 'trade unions'. The puppet 'unions' in Eastern Europe are the absolute negation of what we in Britain know as trade unions. They exist solely to ensure greater levels of productivity and as an arm of the ruling party in industry. They root out 'troublemakers' in the workplace and act as an industrial police force. The leader of the official 'union' in the USSR tends to be an ex-leader of the KGB, the political police; the two jobs are very much interchangeable.

Every year, British trade unions, as well as the TUC, invite these cops to their conferences. Meanwhile those with the courage to set up free trade unions, such as the Russian miner Klebanov, are locked up in prisons and mental hospitals.

When ten million workers showed their contempt for the state 'union' in Poland by joining Solidarnosc, any illusion that in some way, perhaps a very imperfect way, the Stalinist state 'union' could in any way be said to represent the interests of workers was laid to rest under the boots of the whole Polish working class. It seems, however, to have lingered among the less dynamic political feet of the IMG-SL leadership.

Immediately Solidarnosc was set up the Socialist Labour Group organised a campaign in the trade unions to break all official links with the state 'unions' in Eastern Europe and to develop links with the free trade unions. It was not difficult to see which British trade union leaders saw more importance in staying on good

terms with Stalinism than in endorsing the historic rise of Solidarnosc. By opposing the breaking of links with the Stalinist state 'unions' **Socialist Challenge** only helps the friends of Moscow in the British labour movement to sustain the threadbare suit which masks the repressive nature of these institutions, which are scorned by all workers in Eastern Europe given the chance.

But sadly **Socialist Challenge** went even further. It also opposed the breaking of links with the Stalinist parties in Eastern Europe. Surely the editors of **Socialist Challenge** were aware that when martial law was proclaimed in December 1981 buckets were taken around the factories to collect the torn up party cards of thousands of members of the PUWP? Did they choose to ignore the fact that martial law was introduced precisely to stifle the development of new parties among the Polish workers and people, not one of which proposed to do away with the nationalised property relations? Did they not know that thousands of worker militants were flocking to the Polish Socialist Party of Labour, openly a party of Lenin against Stalin?

#### THE POSITION OF TROTSKY

We cannot believe that **Socialist Challenge** would be so ill-informed, we find it hard to believe that the methods of historical accuracy and Marxist analysis should have been put aside for the stance of the ostrich on such an important issue.

In the eyes of **Socialist Challenge** the PUWP still has some sort of progressive role to play. Trotsky argued on the contrary that if the better militants in the Stalinist parties after 1933 wanted to find a way to help the masses they would have to find a way out of those parties. The only way to reconcile this position with the idea that the PUWP can still be progressive would be to claim that the PUWP, the party of the bureaucracy and the army, which has a total monopoly of political life, somehow is not exactly a counter-revolutionary Stalinist party. Or perhaps things have changed with Stalinism since the days of Trotsky. This we would want to discuss with comrades of the IMG.

What do the international cothinkers of the IMG-SL say on this subject?

## THE PUWP - A CONTRADICTION OR AN INSTRUMENT OF THE BUREAUCRACY?

In a recent issue of *Rouge*, paper of the LCR (Revolutionary Communist League) the French section of the Unified Secretariat, sister organisation of the IMG-SL, we read, "The PUWP is not a pure and simple expression of the bureaucracy....The PUWP is thus torn by the same conflict which divides the working class and its allies from the bureaucracy at the level of society as a whole."

So the PUWP, the party - the only party - of the Stalinists in Poland, of which General Jaruzelski is a member, has somehow become a sort of 'neutral ground' on which the battle between the working class and the bureaucracy can be fought. Perhaps the PUWP has two heads, like the Polish national eagle, over which the workers and Stalinists can fight for its soul? Strange that the Polish workers have never seen in the PUWP what *Rouge* can, stranger that those members of the PUWP who wanted to side with the working class turned their party cards into a confetti of disgust in protest at martial law.

But there is worse. For *Rouge*, "There is now a real opposition in the PUWP. The future of the political revolution largely depends on the capacity of the oppositionist wing to turn towards Solidarnosc."

How can we interpret this? That the outcome of the political revolution (which for Trotsky is made by the whole working class and not a small group of people) hinges on what might happen in the rump of the Stalinist PUWP? Where, in fact, do we begin the look for the 'opposition' inside the PUWP to which *Rouge* refers? What is the programme of this 'opposition', who are its leaders?

The real opposition is not to be found in the hollow shell of the PUWP, but in the dozens of political parties which were springing up from the workers and farmers at the moment of martial law. Not a single element in the Polish working class saw the PUWP as a useful tool for advancing their demands. For oppositionists - and there were many in the PUWP who opposed the imposition of martial law - to come over to the side of the working class they had to leave the PUWP, and this is what they did in their thousands.

All this would be crystal clear to

anyone studying the situation with an objective mind. So why all this myth-making about 'opposition' in the PUWP? Why the silence about the real process in Poland - the formation of new parties which defend the nationalised property relations?

The heart of the problem for us, and the line of march for the Polish workers, is the total destruction of the counter-revolutionary apparatus of Stalinism. This means also its party, the PUWP. This problem *Rouge* seems unable to face. How then to build a revolutionary Trotskyist party in Poland? Through the reform of the PUWP or a wing of it?

## A TROTSKYIST PARTY - OR PERHAPS.....

Perhaps a Trotskyist party is not needed at all. Can *Rouge* be hinting that a wing of the PUWP can be pushed by events into leading the political revolution? We do not need to indulge in exaggeration on this point. Let us repeat the words of *Rouge*, "The future of the political revolution largely depends on the capacity of the oppositionist wing (of the PUWP) to turn towards Solidarnosc."

Is this simply an aberration on the part of one of the writers on the staff of *Rouge*? Apparently not, since three months before the imposition of martial law in Poland, Ernest Mandel, main theoretician of the United Secretariat, the international to which *Rouge* is affiliated along with the IMG was writing about, "the pressure..... of the international workers' movement which is highly favourable to Solidarnosc, and which the Spanish and Italian Communist Parties express to a certain extent in their own way."

The language is circumspect, "to a certain extent" and 'in their own way', but the meaning is once again clear. In this case it is the Spanish and Italian Communist Parties which can 'express' the 'pressure of the international workers' movement."

## 'BLUNT INSTRUMENTS' AGAIN

In an even more elliptical fashion Mandel draws a link between the CPs of Italy and Spain and...Solidarnosc. Let us remind ourselves that in Spain the Stalinists are giving support to the king, the heir of Franco. In Italy the CPI leaders are part of a tacit agreement not to force down bourgeois governments, known generally as the

'historic compromise'. For this the Polish workers bear no responsibility and the aims and methods of Solidarity have nothing in common with those of Carrillo and Berlinguer.

Once again we find a leader of the IMGs international movement looking for progressive traits from the core of international Stalinism.

This goes to the heart of the politics of the Unified Secretariat, which have their roots in the crisis of the Fourth International in the 1951-3 period. Ernest Mandel was at that time linked to Michel Pablo, a leader of the Fourth International who put forward the theory that under mass pressure Stalinist parties, in power and out, would lurch to the left and could be used as 'blunt instruments' for workers to make revolutions with. Pablo tried to make sections of the Fourth International go into the Stalinist parties on this line, which led to the destruction of many young cadres and the crisis of the central leadership of the Fourth International. Pablo was pushing through his policy at the very moment when the building workers in East Berlin were rising against Stalinism in the first of many post-war expressions of the process of political revolution as outlined by Trotsky twenty years before. The blood of the workers of East Berlin was the answer to the methods of Pablo.

The Pabloite crisis dislocated the international framework of the Trotskyist movement for many years. Today, thirty years on and after many rich experiences of political revolution in several countries, Ernest Mandel is still looking for a progressive wing of Stalinism. In the middle of the 1930s Trotsky said, without any reservations, that never again in history would a Stalinist party act as a vehicle for revolutionary leadership. New parties and a new international are needed to lead the working class to power - Trotskyist parties and the Fourth International.

#### LIES, DISTORTIONS AND SLANDERS

One could argue on tactical grounds that it makes sense to encourage a dialogue with the leaderships of the Communist Parties, on the basis of a firm adherence to the principles of Trotskyism, in order to try and break rank and file members of those parties

from Stalinism. This has been done in the past under the impulse of great events such as the Hungarian Rising of 1956. But in that case, and in the overwhelming majority of other cases there was no formal 'dialogue' with the leaders of international Stalinism who saw their job as the destruction of Trotskyism, not debating with it programme against programme. Where the Stalinists have set a section of their leadership the task of 'debating' with Trotskyism it is under strict control and with the purpose of dredging up the lies, distortions and slanders of our movement from Stalin's day. Such was the role of Monty Johnstone in Britain for a number of years.

The kind of 'dialogue' which led Tariq Ali, when a leading member of the International Marxist Group, to say that the Stalinist **Morning Star** newspaper should be saved from bankruptcy, holds no prospect for breaking up the Stalinist apparatus.

#### MANDEL DEBATES THE KREMLIN

In the Spring 1982 edition of a new theoretical journal produced by the IMG, **International Marxist Review**, Ernest Mandel opened a discussion on the role of Solidarnosc. Mandel took as his 'debating partner' F.Kousnetsov the First Secretary of the Union of Moscow writers, whose attack on the Polish free trade union **International Marxist Review** reproduces at length. The editor of the IMG review admits that the "polemics of the bureaucrats" are "worthless as scientific or analytical documents"...which is no doubt why Kousnetsov's text was reproduced at such great length.

However, the important point is that Mandel treats these slanders of Solidarnosc by this Kremlin literary boss as well-reasoned arguments. One could get the idea from the way in which the 'debate' was conducted that the differences were merely ones of 'interpretation' and not opposite sides of the class lines.

For example the Kremlin hack lays the accusation that Solidarnosc is full of 'anarcho-syndicalists' (what unhappy references to the battle Marx put up against Bakunin) and uses this 'theoretical' point to justify the repression of Solidarnosc. Mandel answers, "It is true that there is a strong syndicalist (or anarcho-syndicalist) influence



in Solidarity. We regret that. We criticize it at the political level."

This is astonishing! Solidarnosc was the first mass expression of independent working class organization in Poland for more than forty years. More than that, it is a unique historical development under the most difficult of circumstances. Despite this it encompasses all currents in the workers' movement. How could it not do so? Perhaps the workers in their youth, should have paid more attention in the school lessons in 'marxism' which they were forced to undergo at the hands of Stalinism, then they would surely see the error of their 'anarcho-syndicalist' ways.

It was not accidental that such an elemental upsurge of the whole working class and people in the specific conditions of Poland would bring to the surface many currents, reformist, Marxist, anarchist, nationalist and so on. These may have been repressed by Stalinism but they were never overcome in the full historical sense. The Stalinist repression has only served to perpetuate their political life.

#### THE QUESTION OF POLITICAL PARTIES

It was the maturing of political consciousness within the Polish masses which was leading towards the founding of various political parties, none of which we repeat, stood for a return to capitalist property relations. It was this process, in which the PUWP could have no part, which led to the army takeover.

Mandel has not expressed his full support for the right of all working class parties to freely organise in Poland - the position of the Transitional Programme, which calls for the "legalisation of Soviet parties. The workers and peasants themselves will indicate what parties they recognize as Soviet parties."

Mandel goes so far as to agree with the Kremlin writer that it was "regrettable" (regrettable!) that the Polish workers did not show more sense in their choice of leaders and allowed anarcho-syndicalists to exist!

#### UNCONDITIONAL DEFENCE OF THE WORKING CLASS

A major question is at stake here. Trotskyists cannot have any agreement with Stalinism on our critique of the mass movement of the Polish working class. If one or another Kremlin hack

has enough knowledge of Marx or Lenin to be able to make use of their words then that can only be against the real interests of the working class and in the interests of the bureaucracy. How is it possible to exchange viewpoints with those who are actually repressing Solidarnosc?

The unconditional defence of the working class to organise independent unions and parties, free from state control, this is the number one task of revolutionaries in relation to the situation in Poland. Only within this principled framework can the political struggle between differing ideas and tendencies within the workers' movement take place.

The problem which comrades of the IMG-SL should be addressing themselves to is the organisation of an international campaign in solidarity with the Polish workers, not the exchange of views with Kremlin bureaucrats over whether or not some leaders of Solidarnosc are 'anarcho-syndicalists'.

#### PLEASE! CHANGE COURSE MR JARUZELSKI

The political revolution, which means supporting the workers of the bureaucratic workers' states in their fight at this stage for economic and democratic rights - without conditions - remains the core of the programme of the Fourth International in the bureaucratic workers' states. Today the whole of Eastern Europe, with Poland at its head, faces a quickening of the battle between the workers and Stalinism. Abstract formulations will no longer suffice in the face of the Polish events.

The leading writer on Poland from the IMG-SL has been Oliver MacDonald. Nine months after the imposition of martial law he wrote in **London Labour Briefing**, "The British Labour Movement has an urgent duty to bring the maximum pressure to bear on the Polish government to change course and fall back on the promises made when Martial Law was imposed that Solidarity's right to function would eventually be restored."

It would become MacDonald to say why it is that the Eastern European Solidarity Campaign of which he is a prominent member, and which the IMG-SL has supported, was nowhere to be seen on any demonstration in support of the Polish workers in the past nine months. There certainly is an 'urgent duty' to perform there - mobilise the

EESC. But let us follow his thoughts further...he was not proposing an end to the military regime in Poland. He was not saying that full rights should be restored to Solidarnosc. He was not calling for Polish workers to be able to say which political parties they wanted to support - all fairly basic democratic demands and not one which could be construed as 'anti-socialist' - no! MacDonald called for Jaruzelski to change course (!) and fall back on 'promises' made when Martial Law was imposed. Every Polish worker learned in the nine months between December 1981 and when MacDonald wrote his article what the precise value of any promise from Jaruzelski was. MacDonald it seemed, had not. But in his haste not to upset the Polish government he took fifteen steps backwards beyond where even the most cautious leader of Solidarnosc was standing - he would not call for full rights to Solidarity **immediately** - only for them to be restored..."eventually".

After over a year of repression the Polish workers remain militant but cautious. They have not in any sense given up the hope of getting the PUWP off their backs and restoring full rights to Solidarnosc. In that they deserve the full support of everyone in the British Labour movement. But it would seem that Oliver MacDonald would like us to stop short of full support for Solidarnosc and asks us merely to pressurize the Polish regime to "change course".

Is this caution on the part of MacDonald simply related to tactics of the moment? It would seem not. No-one can predict exactly how the course of the political revolution against Stalinism will run in any of the bureaucratic workers' states. But one thing is for certain, both in terms of what Trotsky conceived the process to be and in terms of the experiences of East Germany in 1953, Hungary and Poland in 1956, Czechoslovakia in 1968 and Poland since 1970, and that is that we are not talking about reform of the bureaucratic system but its overthrow by the working class.

MacDonald has his own answers to this question. In *International*, a review of the IMG, he wrote in July 1981, "The political revolution in Eastern Europe does not necessarily imply a workers' insurrection or an armed confrontation with the repressive apparatus of the state."

This avoids the heart of the matter which is that a revolution is a revolution. We repeat, only a fool would speculate on the exact forms through which the overthrow of the bureaucracy will pass, but for the workers to come to power the Stalinists must be overthrown, and nowhere have they yet given up the power voluntarily. This is the truth of the matter. Precisely what is 'implied' in the political revolution in Eastern Europe is an 'insurrection' by the working class which means a 'confrontation with the repressive apparatus of the state', which, do we have to remind MacDonald, is at this moment in time in Poland the army, the ZOMO and the PUWP.

MacDonald argues that it would be "suicidal" for the Polish bureaucracy to use widescale repression against the Polish masses under current conditions. Five months after he wrote that hundreds of Polish workers lay dead and wounded in the streets and thousands more were in the camps. Anyone can make a mistake, but the error of MacDonald was not only in his view of 'peaceful transformation' but in a reluctance to face up to a historic confrontation between the Polish workers and Stalinism common to many international leaders of the Unified Secretariat at that time. Livio Maitan of the Italian section wrote, "The idea of political revolution does not necessarily imply resorting to violence." Mandel wrote himself that there was no reason why "the political revolution must necessarily be bloody."

#### THE BUREAUCRACY CAN BE REMOVED ONLY BY A REVOLUTIONARY FORCE

As Trotsky wrote in 'The Revolution Betrayed', "With energetic pressure from the popular mass, and the disintegration inevitable in such circumstances of the government apparatus, the resistance of those in power may prove much weaker than now appears. But as to this only hypotheses are possible. In any case, the bureaucracy can be removed only by a revolutionary force. And, as always, there will be fewer victims the more bold and decisive is the attack. To prepare this and stand at the head of the masses in a favourable historic situation - that is the task of the Soviet section of the Fourth International. Today it is still weak and driven underground. But the illegal existence of a party is not nonexistence. It is only a different form of existence."

The entire history of the relations between Stalinism and the working class since 1940 confirms Trotsky's view rather than that of Mandel and Maitan. Stalinism means the liquidation of the Bolshevik Party, the cold blooded murder of millions of peasants national minorities and opponents, the assassination of Trotsky himself and the establishment of Kremlin dictatorship across most of Eastern Europe on the basis of the political disenfranchisement of the working class. In every case the working class fought and opposed these things, which were carried out cynically in its name.

All this points to one thing - the only way the working class will get rid of Stalinism is through a mass movement which cannot rule out the resort to force against an armed and brutal oppressor. To hold out the illusory perspective of a 'peaceful road to political revolution' is to politically disarm those who must lead the fight.

#### CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS AND TREACHEROUS LEADERSHIPS

Oliver MacDonal would like to see Jaruzelski 'change course'. **Rouge** is of the opinion that events in Poland depend mostly on what happens inside the PUWP. Where is the working class and its independent movement in all this? Do MacDonal and **Rouge** not have confidence that the working class which created Solidarnosc will not only carry on the fight but will win? Ernest Mandel perhaps stated most clearly why leaders of the Unified Secretariat have their doubts about the Polish working class when he wrote in 1976, "Class consciousness after the Second World War was qualitatively lower than it had been after the First World War. While Stalinism and reformism constituted the main form in which this low level of class consciousness was expressed, the long duration of Stalinism's hold over the proletariat in key countries is likewise a result of this low level of class consciousness."

In contrast to this gloomy view the **Transitional Programme of the Fourth International** saw the problem of reformism and Stalinism not in terms of an expression of the 'low level' of working class consciousness but in terms of the treacherous role of the leaders of the working class. It opens with the words, "The world political situation as a whole is chiefly charact-

erised by a historical crisis of the leadership of the proletariat."

The Trotskyist view of the nature of the crisis of revolutionary leadership is lost. Forgotten is the incredible organisation of the working class across the whole of Europe at the end of World War Two, a wave of struggle which was run-down and sold out to imperialism by the Stalinists in France, Italy and Greece.

Stephane Just, a member of the Fourth International (ICR) leadership has characterised the overall method of Usec leader Ernest Mandel as a

"failure to assign the causes and responsibilities of defeats. It puts on the same plane the crisis of revolutionary leadership and the 'consciousness of the masses' which, seen in this light, is nothing more than a lifeless abstraction, opening the door to dangerous conclusions:

- the masses are spontaneously reformist, even Stalinist!
- the masses have the leadership which they deserve!
- the masses therefore carry the responsibility for their defeat!
- it is necessary the 'revolutionise' them ideologically, or by exemplary acts, or both together!"

#### ONLY THE WORKING CLASS CAN MAKE THE REVOLUTION

In Mandel's world everything is seen upside down. The working class with its 'low class consciousness' becomes a conservative force. The bureaucracy is there because of it. The left of the bureaucracy must be looked to as the agency to free the working class. The logic of revisionism, which is **adaptation** to this counter-revolutionary apparatus leads to the abandonment of the cornerstone of Marxism: that the emancipation of the working class is the task of the workers themselves.

One further point. If the long duration of Stalinism's hold over the workers in the USSR was a result of the workers' lack of class consciousness (rather than brutal repression), then presumably all the workers need is an improved class consciousness for the socialist utopia to hover on the horizon. Presumably Stalinist repression which, as Trotsky said, differs from fascism only in its 'greater unbridled savagery', would melt away. No, comrade Mandel, the



problem lies in repression and not in the consciousness of the working class, but in the concrete struggle for free trade unions, independent parties and democratic rights.

In 1976 - another year in which Polish workers rose up against the government - Ernest Mandel wrote: "The political revolution is not an immediate perspective." Amongst the obstacles to political revolution in the USSR he points to "the lack of political perspectives and consciousness among the Soviet working class in the absence of a realistic (sic) and credible (!) alternative to both capitalism and the rule of the bureaucracy." Apparently Trotsky's programme for the Soviet Union - part of the most vital of his life-work - was not 'realistic'. But there is more:

"The long-term, slow but steady increase in the standard of living of the workers in the USSR during the past 25 years, which, given the lack of political perspectives, creates a material basis for 'consumerism' and for posing only 'reformist' demands on the government."

A recent press report announced that the Soviet government hoped that there would be adequate essential supplies in the shops for the Mayday celebrations, a special occasion in the USSR. The country has had one good harvest in five years. Free trade union leaders are jailed and strikers shot. The 'Marxist' economist Mandel calls the Soviet working class 'consumerist'. Lenin would turn in his grave.

#### ADVICE TO THE KREMLIN

But what about those countries where there have been major mobilisations of the workers and oppressed masses, opening the road to political revolution against the bureaucracy? In Hungary in 1956, a workers' rising quickly established workers' councils and the Stalinist party started to break up. Thousands were slaughtered when the Kremlin's tanks moved in. What lessons did Mandel draw from this rich experience?

Mandel explains to the working class in painstaking detail what they should have done. They should have organised a national conference of workers' councils and "put up their own democratic workers' power against those with illusions and parliamentary dreams." Note: not against the bureaucracy, but those (presumably other workers) with

illusions. He continues: "Then if this test turned out badly, an intervention by the Soviet army always remained possible."

Excellent advice -for the Kremlin! If my schematic blueprint doesn't materialise, says Mandel to Kruschev, well then you can drown the Hungarian workers' rising in blood! Is Mandel on the side of the Hungarian workers - or on the side of the bureaucracy? None may tell from the above.

#### THE EXAMPLE OF HUNGARY

What Mandel unfortunately does not seem to realise is that Moscow has no interest in seeing democratic workers power established. In Russia the democratic organs of workers' power, the Soviets, were destroyed by Stalinism. Stalinism also decimated the Soviet working class. But it is to this same Stalinism to which Mandel gives the job, which rightfully belongs to the working class, of deciding which political tendencies were genuinely based on the working class, the conquests of the nationalised property forms and so forth, and which were seeking to reintroduce capitalism (which is not the same at all as just having 'parliamentary illusions'). The working class can decide these questions in free and democratic discussions. The Russian tanks made no distinctions over who their guns were aimed at.

Hungary was in many ways unique. Only in Hungary did a leader of the Stalinist party, Imre Nagy, break with the Stalinists and attempt to organise around a platform of workers demands. On previous form, we would expect Mandel to welcome this warmly, proof at last that a former Stalinist could play a progressive role. But no! For Mandel Nagy went too far and "began to manoeuvre outside his class camp":

"A real revolutionary leadership would have made an appeal to the committees and proletarian currents of the masses with sincerity and would have been able to convince them of understanding the class limits to democratisation and the necessity for an alliance on an equal footing(!) with the USSR."

This astonishing attack on the political revolution stands in sharp contrast to Mandel's view of events in Poland in the same year, when Gomulka was brought into the bureaucracy to head off the advancing mass

movement and keep the regime intact. For Mandel, Gomulka was "an expression of the real tendency of the masses...a centrist tendency moving to the left...through the Gomulka tendency, the political revolution was able to avoid the dangers(!) inherent in the situation." Comrade Stephane Just noted:

"Thus the apologists for Gomulka condemn Imre Nagy. How typical! According to them, Gomulka, who acted on behalf of the interests of the bureaucracy to contain and derail the mass movement, should be supported, being in their 'class camp'; on the other hand, Imre Nagy who resolutely broke with the bureaucracy and who put himself into the service of the proletariat, even if in a confused way, and who paid for this act with his life, was outside their 'class camp'."

Lastly we turn to Czechoslovakia. What lessons does Mandel learn from the Czech youth radicalisation and the fight for democratic rights, the Prague spring of 1968, which was crushed by the Kremlin's tanks in August of the same year. For once Mandel is succinct: "The Czechoslovakia affair (sic) reveals the inabilities of the peoples' democracies to reform themselves without a mobilisation of the masses."

#### 'TWO CAMPS' OR CLASS STRUGGLE?

This is the essence of Pablo-Mandel revisionism. The working class, historic agent of the revolution, is relegated to the subsidiary role of 'a mobilisation' to help the Czech Communist Party and state -for Mandel the real motor force of history - to reform itself. For Marxists, there are two fundamentally opposed classes in society - bourgeoisie and proletariat. For revisionists, there are two camps - capitalist and workers' states. For Marxists, the workers' states are a contradiction: the socialised property relations which give them their character as workers' states are continually under threat from a counter-revolutionary bureaucracy which serves as a transmission-belt for the pressure of imperialism on these countries.

To successfully ward off that pressure, it will be necessary for the working class to overthrow the bureaucracy, a vital task to prevent the penetration and restoration of capitalism. For revisionists, it is not the bureaucracy, which by its privileges, wastage and debts, strengthens the pressure of the bourgeoisie

on the workers' states; it is the working class fighting for democratic demands ('parliamentary dreams'). For revisionists, it is not the working class that guarantees the socialised property relations and rallies to their defence, as at Stalingrad in 1943 when the entire existence of the Soviet Union was threatened; no - it is the bureaucracy, once a few flaws have been ironed out. For Marxists, the bureaucracy is a parasitic growth on the healthy foundations of the first isolated Russian workers' state. Its consolidation took place on the backs of the workers and on the liquidation of their organisations. For revisionists, the bureaucracy is **an inevitable and necessary growth.** Mandel explains: "Historically, the hegemony of the bureaucracy stems from a delegation of power(!) by the working class to a layer of 'professionals at power'. It is therefore a kind of division of labour (sic). In this light a certain form of bureaucratisation is inevitable."

What could be plainer? Bureaucracy is 'inevitable', the political revolution is not 'realistic', the working class is 'consumerist'; all that is lacking is a few lines on the impossibility of socialism at all...

This is no academic discussion. It is nothing short of criminal that the Unified Secretariat has deceived workers - including in the workers' states - by claiming that it stands with them on the programme of Trotsky against the bureaucracy. Today Petr Uhl, Czech dissident, and a broad sympathiser of the policies of the Unified Secretariat, languishes in jail. Where is the international campaign of the Unified Secretariat for his release? **It does not exist.** Where is the campaign for the release of Polish strike-leader Edmund Baluka, a sponsor of the magazine **Labour Focus on Eastern Europe** which is associated with the IMG-SL? Again, there isn't one.

#### AT THE CENTRE OF THE WORLD REVOLUTION

The theory and the practice both testify that the Unified Secretariat offers the workers of the bureaucrat-ised workers' states nothing. The sections of the Fourth International (ICR) are meanwhile engaged in mass campaigns of support for the Polish political revolution in dozens of

countries of the world, including in Africa and Latin America. In Britain, the SLG has been involved in the collection of thousands of signatures calling for the end of Martial Law and the release of the detainees. It has helped organise pickets of the Polish Embassy and lobby MPs and trade union leaders. The SLG has mobilised for many demonstrations and raised the issue throughout the labour movement, winning the support of national trade union bodies to the cause of the Polish workers. Throughout this campaign the IMG-SL have had only a token presence on a few of the many public initiatives.

But the political revolution is not going to disappear. Poland is today at the centre of the world revolutionary process. The Unified Secretariat ignore this at their peril.

#### THE POSITION OF THE AMERICAN SOCIALIST WORKERS' PARTY

In this brief pamphlet, we have centred our criticism on the European wing of the Unified Secretariat. But their American supporters, the Socialist Workers Party, which historically has played an important role in the world Trotskyist movement is today spearheading a revisionist onslaught on the very principles of Trotskyism.

The degeneration has been rapid. In the past three years, the pages of the American SWP's publications have been increasingly given over to full-scale reproductions of Fidel Castro's speeches and glowing articles about the Stalinist regimes in North Korea and Vietnam and Grenada's New Jewel Movement (which is affiliated to the Second International). The leaders of the US-SWP are currently engaged in an international discussion with Mandel's European wing, arguing that Trotsky's role in the Russian revolution has been overstated, that his theory of Permanent Revolution, which is central to the principles of revolutionary Marxism, 'underestimates the peasantry' (a verbatim slander straight from the mouth of Stalin himself!) and that Castro's government in Cuba constitutes a revolutionary team superior to that of Lenin and Trotsky's Bolshevik Party.

The American SWP has done nothing in support of the Polish workers,

claiming that any activity on the question plays into the hands of the imperialists. They withdrew their permanent representative from the Unified Secretariat in Europe after the LCR, its French section, correctly participated in the largest labour movement demonstration ever in support of Solidarity.

#### IS THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL NOW OBSOLETE?

The real reason for the remarkable positions of the American SWP have precious little to do with 'playing into imperialism's hands'. The government of 'revolutionary Cuba' was the only one of the Kremlin's satellite bureaucracies to support Jaruzelski's coup before it happened. Castro stands arms-linked with the Kremlin against the right of the Polish workers to free trade unions. Alongside him stand the American SWP, claiming that Cuba has developed "the most profound internationalism in the world."

The leaders of the American SWP have even gone so far as to question the need for the Fourth International at all, envisaging instead a 'broader' movement with the governments of Cuba, Nicaragua and Grenada. What has been the response of the Mandel wing of the Unified Secretariat to this open liquidationism? Negligible. Very slowly, very tentatively, Mandel and his supporters have tried to answer this attack. In *Socialist Challenge* there was only one article, which does not mention the SWP by name, in which Phil Hearse unconvincingly explains that Castro's policy is revolutionary in Cuba (and also Central America), but less so, the further one goes from Havana (Eritrea? Poland?). This method was scorned by Trotsky fifty years ago: "We reject as derisory to Marxist thinking the position of the Brandlerites, according to which the policy of the Stalinist bureaucracy, whilst running up a chain of errors in other countries, rests infallible in the USSR. Such a theory is based on the negation of the general principles of proletarian policy... A Marxist can have nothing to do with this social-democratic conception."

In condemning the idea that somehow Stalinism was not wholly counter-revolutionary in all countries, Trotsky also rejected the conception of a 'federal' Fourth International whose different sections were allowed to go their own way. There are many questions on which the American SWP



and the European leaders of the Unified Secretariat diverge completely - but the question of the political revolution, the counter-revolutionary nature of world Stalinism and the historic necessity for the Fourth International are hugely important matters of principle that are now being disputed.

The American SWP are leading the cadres of the Unified Secretariat towards a crisis. The European leaders of the Unified Secretariat can only stand in the way of this crisis by an honest and thorough accounting of the issues of principle which increasingly occupy the pages of the publications

of the Barnes leadership of the SWP. If the supporters of Mandel do not draw some real lessons from their own attitude to Stalinism and the political revolution in the workers' states there is a real danger that the crisis will not stop with the SWP but become a threat to all the sections of the Unified Secretariat. It is to urge a fightback and to rearm comrades in the battle for a Trotskyist policy on the workers' states that we have written these lines. Today it is relevant as ever to defend the necessity for the Fourth International, as a world party, with sections in all countries.

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"Only the victorious revolutionary uprising of the oppressed masses can revive the Soviet regime and guarantee its further development toward socialism. There is but one party capable of leading the Soviet masses to insurrection - the party of the Fourth International!"

The Transitional Programme of the Fourth International.

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