

The class struggle in Poland—A socialist statement

The Socialist Party of Great Britain applauds with sympathy and admiration the courageous stand of the Polish strikers in their struggle to independently organise and negotiate over their wages and conditions. Their action bears out what we have constantly claimed and what no amount of repression, censorship, and pretence can indefinitely conceal. Poland is no "workers' state on the road to socialism", but a state capitalist, one party regime, where the working class inevitably comes into conflict with those who control the means of wealth production and distribution. The unity and determination of the Polish workers and the way they have handled their strike does them credit, and shows that their earlier clashes with the Polish leadership have taught them much. Their fight echoes the struggle of British workers in the nineteenth century to organise Trade Unions. They too could not be suppressed despite the Anti-Combination Laws and employers and governments since have been forced to acknowledge and negotiate with them.

The Polish strikers' actions is being reported in the British Press and on television in a manner which is in marked contrast to the way the media reacts to strikes by British workers. We hear the same whining about "economic difficulties" and the "national interest" that the Polish government is now invoking. But workers have no national interest. All over the world we have a common class interest with each other.

In every country where capitalism develops it can easily be recognised by wage labour, buying and selling, and production for sale and profit. Those forced to sell their mental and physical energies for a wage or salary—the WORKING CLASS—will come into conflict with those who own and control the land, mines, factories, docks, means of transport, etc—the CAPITALIST CLASS—because their interests are opposed. This happens whether ownership is bound up with individuals, companies or the State. State ownership provides a facade behind which the privileged class extracts its profit. In Poland, Russia, and similar countries that class is the ruling clique of the misnamed Communist Party.

The Socialist Party of Great Britain looks forward to the working class winning independent trade unions wherever they do not exist. Workers will find that trade unions can best defend their interests on the industrial front by insuring that their officials are subject to the control of the membership, that links with political and non-union organisations are avoided, and decisions made democratically. Over 60 years ago Rosa Luxemburg wrote contradicting Lenin to tell him that trade unions without democracy dominated by communist party leaders would become mere empty shells. Luxemburg was right, Lenin was wrong.

Necessary and inevitable though workers' struggles are, their results are limited. Whether promises of economic reform are made with sincerity or cynicism, while capitalism exists workers will find that a system based on their exploitation can never be made to operate in their interest.

The next step is for workers to organise a class conscious democratic political party which stands solely for the common ownership and democratic control of the means of production and distribution and rejects action for reform legislation. Such a party must work for the political objective of gaining control of the state machine as a result of majority consciousness for world socialism. No longer will minority ownership of the means of living stand in the way of the general welfare. No wages system between producers and the means of production and distribution. No market standing between people and products. Socialism will be a democratic co-operative system where production takes place for the benefit of the whole community.

WORKERS OF ALL COUNTRIES UNITE WITH US FOR WORLD SOCIALISM!

Executive Committee
Socialist Party of Great Britain
September 1980

(December 1980)