

Solidarnosc and the crisis of Polish state capitalism

The crisis in Poland is not a crisis of socialism. They are not socialist military dictators who have formed a junta to coerce the Polish workers into what the Western press sickly calls "moderation". They are not socialist banks that are banging on the door of the Polish Politburo, demanding the repayment of financial loans. They are not socialist journalists who compose the propaganda which the Polish media pours out in order to blind workers to their real interests. They are not socialist bureaucrats who sit in luxurious offices in the Kremlin and applaud every measure by the Polish rulers to subdue and humiliate the workers whom they exploit. It is not socialism which has been tried and found wanting; the social system which has led to misery for millions of Polish workers is STATE CAPITALISM.

The crisis of Polish State Capitalism has its immediate origin in the investment boom of the early 1970's. In 1973 Poland had the third fastest national growth rate in the world. To pay for this investment it was necessary for the Polish government to borrow from the Western banks: in 1971, Poland's foreign debt stood at 700 million dollars. By 1975, when the boom was in full swing, the debt had reached 6,000 million dollars. The interest owed on the loans was so great that the Polish government had to borrow more from the Western banks in order to pay its previous debts: by 1980, Poland owed approximately 27,000 million dollars to Western capitalists. Because of the need to pay off these debts, industrial organisation contracted. With less consumer goods on the market, Poland's private farmers—who own 80% of all agricultural land—refused to sell their produce for money which could not buy them what they needed. The scarcity of agricultural produce—meat in particular—led to price rises. The Polish workers, having been pushed to breaking point in a productive drive to produce enough profits to pay off their masters' debts, regarded the increase in the cost of already scarce food as the final straw. All of these problems were direct consequences of World Capitalism: the farmers could produce enough food to feed everyone; the industrial workers could produce consumer goods and have plenty to eat; but under capitalism, financial debts come before food (profits before needs), and that is why the military has attempted to crush the working-class organisation, Solidarity, while the wealth producers of Poland are suffering, many on the verge of malnutrition.

The distortion of the idea of socialism has been one of the greatest political crimes of our age. So-called socialists who were once praising Lenin from the distance of Western Europe are now claiming to support Solidarity, even though many of them have not repudiated their Leninist sympathies. Yet as early as January 1918, the Leninist attitude to Trade Unions was clearly expressed by Zinoviev: "trade union independence is a bourgeois idea . . . an anomaly in a workers' state". In November 1920 it was Trotsky who proposed the sacking of the elected leaders of the Russian railway union so as to "replace irresponsible agitators . . . by production-minded trade unionists". Even in the midst of the great strikes of August 1980, the New Communist Party's paper referred to Solidarity as "the Gdansk wreckers" and stated that "irresponsible individuals, anarchic and anti-socialist groups are attempting to exploit work stoppages . . . for their own ends". In the 1930's the Socialist Party had to expose the anti-socialist activities of their hero, Stalin. Today, in 1982 we are still as hostile as ever to the pseudo-socialists of the Left who advocate State Capitalism.

The only alternative to the system which oppresses the workers of Poland and all other lands is WORLD SOCIALISM: a society without frontiers, classes, property or rulers. Only democratic political action by the working class, without leaders or dogmas, will lead to the creation of a socialist society. By their principled and democratic actions, the workers in Solidarity have won the admiration of socialists, even though we strongly oppose their nationalist and religious illusions

and even though we recognise the limitations of trade union action. Having defied their masters and combined together, the next step which the Polish workers must take is to organise a class-conscious, democratic political party, to aim for the common ownership and democratic control of the means of wealth production and distribution. To this end, the Socialist Party of Great Britain offers support to our fellow workers in Poland.

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