

POLAND: THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES

Since last summer the Polish workers' movement has captured the world's attention, winning respect and sympathy from workers and freedom-loving people around the globe. A great experiment is underway in Poland. Through their independent trade union movement, the striking Polish workers have taken the lead in what has quickly become a popular nationwide revolt. They are fighting not only economic hardship and mismanagement, but a repressive system of Soviet-style fake socialism. Their struggle is nothing less than an assertion of the Polish people's will and right to control their own country.

A few weeks ago Poland was once again the lead story in the international news. As thirty Soviet divisions massed on the Polish borders; as a section of the East German border was closed off to outside observers; as the Warsaw Pact nations held an unannounced summit in Moscow -- the world waited anxiously. Czechoslovakia in 1968, Cambodia in 1979, Afghanistan in 1980 -- would Poland be next?

The Polish people have stood firm and, so far, the Russians have held back from a military action against their neighbor. Unfortunately, international concern over the threat to Polish independence has not matched the Pole's own courage and determination. The Common Market countries have toned down their initial harsh criticisms of the Soviet Union's militaristic maneuvers. The White House likewise softened its reaction, with national security advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski declaring that the United States has no interest in "upsetting existing international arrangements or threatening the legitimate security interests of any party."

Meanwhile Soviet and East German troops and tanks remain poised for action on the Polish borders. The massive military build-up has not been reversed. The danger of Soviet invasion of Poland is as real as ever.

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How should the U.S. people respond to these events? With the crisis in Poland dragging on, it's easy to lose sight of the threat that the Soviet armies pose to the Polish workers' struggle. And with all the recent talk about "easing East-West tensions" and protecting "spheres of influence," it's tempting to dismiss the situation in Poland as just another internal Eastern-bloc affair.

This is precisely how the Kremlin leaders want the world to think, as they lash out at western governments for "interfering" in Poland and ignoring "the generally recognized norms of international relations."

The Soviets like to pose as the friends and protectors of the Polish people, but there is nothing friendly or protective about the Soviet military build-up on Polish borders. It is intended to keep Poland in line and under the Russian thumb. And though the United States and the Soviet Union -- the world's two superpowers -- may talk and think in terms of "spheres of influence," this has never been the

language of the people. It is basically up to the people of Poland to carry on the struggle and make their own future. But if the peoples of other countries -- the U.S. included -- stand idly by, we discredit our own struggles and the futures we seek for ourselves.

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Every time the independence of a small country is challenged or abridged by either superpower we are brought closer to world war. By arming dictatorships like the Salvadoran junta, the U.S. government not only tramples on the rights of another people, it also provokes strife and makes it even easier for Soviet meddling. But the Soviet Union isn't waiting around for the excuse of further U.S. provocation. In Afghanistan, Indochina, the Middle East, and Africa -- the Soviet war machine is on the move. If worldwide response to a Soviet occupation is weak, the next Soviet aggression will be even harder to curb.

Poland is teaching us that a people united in the cause of democracy can influence even the most rigidly undemocratic government. The Polish workers are demonstrating the power of labor committed to its own stand. If the people of our country support the cause of Polish democracy, if we believe in freedom from outside domination for all nations -- from El Salvador to Afghanistan -- then we have to find a way to turn those beliefs into productive action, just as the Polish people are doing.

Measures like the grain embargo, the severing of trade relations, and the Olympic boycott slow the Soviet Union down. By pressing for even stronger measures to isolate the Soviet Union, we can join with those people already resisting Soviet aggression. The Soviet Union must know that each new aggression it undertakes will bring new condemnation, that each new invasion will arouse wider opposition, and that each step it takes down the path of world domination will unify the opposition of people around the world.

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