

HANDS OFF POLAND

Today, Poland and its people are suffering under a military dictatorship every bit as brutal and vicious as those of Chile or El Salvador. Tens of thousands of people-workers, trade unionists, intellectuals, religious people-have been locked away without charge or trial. Often their families have no idea where they are held. Overnight, democratic rights fought for in the uprisings of 1956 and 1970 and through 18 months of struggle by Solidarity, have been taken away. They have been replaced with:

- People demonstrating, striking, or simply not turning up for work can be shot;
- All forms of assembly are banned;
- All letters and telephone calls are censored.

And never far in the background lurks the threat of all-out Soviet invasion and occupation.

What has this to do with socialism or communism? What has this to do with building the better society that the heroic Polish people sacrificed their lives for in their anti-fascist war of 1939-1945? The answer is, nothing. What it has everything in common with is fascism!

For 18 months, progressive people around the world have watched with admiration as a united Polish people, led by an organized working class, have clawed one concession after another from their ruling class and successfully held Russian imperialism at bay. In doing this, they gave inspiration to the workers and oppressed people in other Eastern European countries, and in the Soviet Union itself. To workers throughout the world, the Polish workers, organized in their own union, Solidarnosc, showed what the working class was capable of achieving when it was confident, courageous, disciplined and united.

By weakening the Soviet grip on its European empire, the Polish people obstructed the war preparations of this most aggressive super-power and made an active contribution to the defence of world peace.

These achievements of the workers and people of Poland all constitute good reasons why all democratic and progressive people must stand by Poland.

Poland has long fought for its national freedom. Indeed, the Irish and Polish struggles are the most tenacious national struggles in Europe and, as the world imperialist crisis deepens, it is not surprising to find them making headlines around the world this year. For us, as genuine communists, national independence is an inviolable principle. That is why we not only give support to those fighting British imperialism; we also support those like the peoples of Afghanistan, Eritrea, Kampuchea and Poland who are standing up to the New Tsars, and we support those countries like China and Korea which are striving to build socialism in an independent way. We stand by the principle put forward by the great Irish socialist, James Connolly, that,

"The internationalism of the future will be based upon the free

federation of free peoples and cannot be realised through the subjugation of the smaller by the larger political unit."

Our support for the Polish people has nothing in common with the phoney "support" coming from the British and other imperialists. These imperialists are responsible for foisting a debt burden of \$27,000 million on the Polish people. Poland now has to apply for fresh loans merely in order to be able to repay interest arising on previous loans. While the Polish people stand hungrily in food queues, Polish cooked meats are stacked on the shelves of London supermarkets. Clearly these leaches are no friends of a genuine workers' movement like Solidarity. Indeed, after the wave of repression began, a West German banker told the "Financial Times,

"What I am saying may be a bit brutal, but I think the Polish government was no longer in a position to govern the country. I now see a chance for Poland to return to a more normal working schedule and this could be a good thing for the banks."

Today, communists have a duty to stand by the Polish people. Not only is their struggle a just struggle, it is vital for the defence of world peace.

In a speech in 1848, Karl Marx said,

"It is still Poland that has taken the initiative.... and from now on its liberation has become a point of honour for all the democrats in Europe."

He could have been speaking today.

SOLIDARITY WITH SOLIDARNOSC!

HANDS OFF POLAND!