


SOLIDARITY

with 

SOLIDARNOŚĆ

25p

Socialist Challenge

PAMPHLET

SOLIDARITY, Poland's mass trade union movement, was the best advertisement for socialism for many years. It inspired millions of workers throughout the world. It was a living example of an alternative to Stalinist totalitarianism that did not hark back to the exploitation and misery of capitalism.

On the weekend of the 12/13 December last year the Polish ruling elite sent in the military, backed to the hilt by the Kremlin, to smash Solidarity. Thousands of union activists were herded into jail, many were killed, and martial law was imposed.

This Socialist Challenge pamphlet, written by staff writer Davy Jones, puts the case for solidarity with the Polish workers.

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Part One

What Solidarity stands for

ANNA Walentynowicz is a veteran activist of Poland's free trade union movement and a crane driver at the Lenin shipyard in Gdansk.

Many times the management had victimised Anna for her union activities. On 31 January 1980 a hundred workmates led a four hour strike for her reinstatement after she had been moved from the yard. In August later that same year the management moved to sack her again, and opened the door to the mighty strike movement that rocked the whole country.

But the shipyard strike was not just in defence of Anna Walentynowicz. It also concerned a cost of living rise in wages. On 1 July the Polish government had raised the price of meat, sparking off a series of strikes and walkouts by workers across the country.

In Lublin there was a virtual general strike, and by mid-July more than 51 plants and enterprises in the country had successfully fought for pay rises. A hundred more had taken action before the Gdansk shipyard workers' strike.

Nor was this the first strike wave against price rises. Dozens of workers were killed in riots over prices and wages in 1956, the year that Soviet tanks crushed the Hungarian uprising. There were similar revolts in 1970 and 1976. Each time the workers achieved some economic success, but government promises of greater union and political freedoms were always broken.

There was a profound sense of anger among the Polish workers in the summer of 1980. They were disgusted by the corruption and injustice of the system they lived under, and they sensed that they alone had the power to change it.

They had learned the lessons from their previous struggles. These became the guiding principles of the 1980 August strike wave and for the subsequent development of Solidarity itself: the need for an independent working class movement, for unity of the workers and of other social groups behind the workers, and for the fullest workers' democracy.

The 21 demands of the inter-factory strike

- 1 *Acceptance of free trade unions independent of the Communist Party and of enterprises, in accordance with convention No 87 of the International Labour Organisation concerning the right to form free trade unions, which was ratified by the Communist Government of Poland.*
- 2 *Guarantee of the right to strike and of the security of strikers and those aiding them.*
- 3 *Compliance with the constitutional guarantee of freedom of speech, the press and publication, including freedom for independent publishers, and the availability of the mass media to representatives of all faiths.*
- 4 (a) *Return of former rights to:*
 - *People dismissed from work after the 1970 and 1976 strikes — Students expelled from school because of their views.*
 - (b) *Release of all political prisoners, among them Edmund Zadrozynski, Jan Kozlowski and Marek Kozlowski.*
 - (c) *Halt in repression of the individual because of personal conviction.*
- 5 *Availability to the mass media of information about the formation of the Inter-Factory Strike Committee and publication of its demands.*
- 6 *Undertaking of actions aimed at bringing the country out of its crisis situation by the following means:*
 - (a) *Making public complete information about the social-economic situation.*
 - (b) *Enabling all sectors and social classes to take part in discussion of the reform programme.*
- 7 *Compensation of all workers taking part in the strike for the period of the strike, with vacation pay from the Central Council of Trade Unions.*
- 8 *An increase in the base pay of each worker by 2,000 zlotys (app. £30) a month as compensation for the recent rise in prices.*
- 9 *Guaranteed automatic increases in pay on the basis of increases in prices and*

Solidarity — a mass working class movement

The interfactory strike committee established in the Gdansk shipyards drew up a list of 21 demands on the authorities (see box). These ranged from improvements in pay and pensions, freedom of speech and the right to strike, and an end to repression. But the first, and most important demand, was for the right to form independent trade unions.

The old national trade union centre (CRZZ) was completely bureaucratised and incapable of defending the workers' interests. Its officials were nominated by the ruling Communist Party and it concerned itself mainly with social facilities and improving production. Above all the Polish workers wanted new trade unions to fight for their interests.

When the government signed the Gdansk agreement and similar ones across the country in August 1980, it accepted the principle of independent unions with the right to strike. It spent the following months desperately trying to stop the workers from implementing that principle.

It attempted to prevent Solidarity being legally registered, it arrested union activists, and placed as many obstacles as possible in the way of the development of Solidarity. But by the end of 1980 the new union movement had almost ten million members, the overwhelming majority of the Polish workers.

More significantly, Solidarity's power bases were in the industrial regions and in the large enterprises — the Lenin shipyard at Gdansk, the Warski shipyard in Szczecin, the Katowice mines, the Huta Warszawa steelworks and the Ursus tractor plant both near Warsaw, and the industrial centres of Lodz and Krakow.

committee at the Gdansk shipyard

the decline in real income.

10 Full supply of food products for the domestic market, with exports limited to surpluses.

11 Abolition of 'commercial' prices and of other sales for hard currency in special shops.

12 Selection of management personnel on the basis of qualifications, not party membership. Privileges of the secret police, regular police and party apparatus are to be eliminated by equalising family subsidies, abolishing special stores, etc.

13 Introduction of food coupons for meat and meat products (during the period in which control of the market situation is regained).

14 Reduction in the age for retirement for women to 50 and for men to 55, or after 30 years' employment in Poland for women and 35 years for men, regardless of age.

15 Conformity of old-age pensions and annuities with what has actually been paid in.

16 Improvements in the working conditions of the health service to ensure full medical care for workers.

17 Assurances of a reasonable number of places in day-care centres and kindergartens for the children of working mothers.

18 Paid maternity leave for three years.

19 Decrease in the waiting period for apartments.

20 Increase in the commuter's allowance to 100 zlotys from 40, with a supplemental benefit on separation.

21 Day of rest on Saturday. Workers in the brigade system or round-the-clock jobs are to be compensated for the loss of free Saturdays with increased leave or other paid time off.

As half of Poland's population is under thirty and one third of all its industrial workers under 24, it is not surprising that many of Solidarity's leading militants were also in their early twenties. The leader of Solidarity in Warsaw, Zbigniew Bujak, was only 26, and Jan Kulaj, the head of Rural Solidarity, only 23.

Solidarity fought for basic workers' rights: rights which workers in this country would take for granted. It fought for and won more Saturdays to be work-free. It established the workers' right to strike without victimisation by the management.

As the economic crisis intensified it campaigned for fair rationing and an end to the special privileges of the bureaucratic elite. The workers in Jelenia Gora held a long strike early last year for the removal of corrupt local officials and for the special hospitals of the military and police to become part of the health service.

Former TV and radio minister Maciej Szczepanski was arrested after a public outcry over his luxury villas and debauched lifestyle. More than five thousand party members and figures in the national and local apparatus were sacked for corruption due to Solidarity's pressure for justice.

Solidarity also challenged the ruling party and the government to give the full facts to the workers about the economy. Workers' councils for self-management sprang up across the country in the major enterprises to develop control of the economy and to run it in the workers' interests. In the factories and the mines the workers argued for re-organising economic priorities. As Silesian Solidarity leader Andrzej Rozplochowski said: 'In the future, there will be no planning without us'.

Solidarity demanded the right to have its own newspapers and journals. The army and party newspapers and the radio and TV were all run by the party apparatus and subject to its heavy bureaucratic censorship.

In April 1981, some eight months after the Gdansk agreement, the government reluctantly agreed to the establishment of *Tygodnik Solidarnosc* (Weekly Solidarity) with a half a million print-run, and *Jednosc* (Unity) in the Szczecin region with a print-run of some 100,000 copies. Solidarity was also allowed to produce local newsletters and its own internal news agency, AS, which sends out news reports from each region of Solidarity.

But even these officially tolerated journals came under fire from the authorities. In November 1980 a Solidarity printer in Warsaw, Jan Narozniak, was arrested for publishing a state document outlining the authorities' plans for harassing and undermining the union movement. He was only freed after the threat of a major strike.

Solidarity's first national congress last summer in Gdansk issued the call for free elections and an end to the system of only party-appointed candidates. The right of workers to run their own factories was also to be developed through ending the party's exclusive right to nominate the managers of the enterprises. Solidarity demanded the right to have its own candidates for the job (see box).

Declaration of Solidarity Congress, 10 September 1981

The supreme aim of the independent trade union Solidarity is to create dignified conditions of life in an economically and politically sovereign Poland, a life freed of poverty, of exploitation, of fear and deceit, in a society organised democratically and on the basis of law. Today the nation expects:

1 *The improvement of food supplies by the establishment of control over production, distribution, and pricing, in collaboration with the Solidarity union of individual farmers.*

2 *A reform of the economy, through the creation of authentic self-management councils in the factories and through the liquidation of the party 'Nomenklatura' (ed note: the system of party appointments to key jobs).*

3 *The truth through social control of the mass media and the suppression of falsehoods in education and Polish culture.*

4 *Democracy through the introduction of free elections to the Sejm (parliament) and the people's councils.*

5 *Justice through the assurance to each of equality before the law, the freedom of prisoners of opinion, and the defence of persons charged for their political, editorial or trade union activities.*

6 *The protection of the nation's health, through the protection of the environment, an increase in the funds channelled into medical services, and a guarantee to the handicapped of the rights which are due to them in society.*

7 *Coal for the population and industry, through giving a guarantee to the miners of decent living and working conditions.*

We will achieve these aims through the unity of the trade union and the solidarity of its members. The activities of a variety of forces creating a feeling of exterior danger will not remove from us the desire to struggle for the ideals of August 1980, for the implementation of the Gdansk, Szczecin and Jastrzebie accords.

Solidarity — winning the support of all social layers

But Solidarity is not simply an organisation for those workers with industrial muscle, greedily demanding more power. It is also notable for the help and support it gave to other sectors of the population, in particular the farmers and the students.

There are more than three million small farmers in Poland. For years they had been discriminated against by the authorities. They saw the development of Solidarity as their opportunity to get organised. In December 1980 there was the first national meeting of representatives of the small farmers, and in early 1981 there followed a wave of occupations of public buildings and offices by Rural Solidarity supporters demanding official registration of the union.

Many groups of workers gave support to the farmers' protests with their own strikes. Then on 19 March last year the authorities violently broke up a sit-in by Rural Solidarity and Solidarity members in Bydgoszcz. Activists were badly beaten up, including Jan Rulewski, the militant leader of Bydgoszcz Solidarity.

Solidarity responded with the threat of an all-out general strike to protest the beatings and the failure to register Rural Solidarity. By early May the small farmers' union was legally registered, thanks to the support of the workers. Soon Rural Solidarity could boast of over two million members allied to Solidarity.

Students too fought successfully to establish their own independent students association, thanks to the help of Solidarity. Throughout the 1980 strike wave students and academics helped Solidarity establish the national union.

In November 1980 medical students occupied the Medical Academy in Gdansk in support of the health workers who were demanding higher wages and an increase in the budget for the health service. Tram and bus drivers stopped work in Gdansk, Warsaw, Poznan and Lublin in support of the students and health workers, in an incident which symbolised the unity of the workers and other social layers to help the lower paid and to improve the health care for the whole population.

Solidarity — a model of workers' democracy

From the outset of the 1980 August strike wave Solidarity has presented an inspiring model of workers' democracy. The Gdansk inter-factory strike committee comprised democratically elected delegations from each striking workplace. Each of these delegates was subject to recall. All the meetings of the committee were taped by the delegates so that the workers in the enterprises could hear the debates.

It is well known that the negotiations with the government ministers which ended the strikes in Gdansk were relayed 'live' over a public address system for all the workers in the shipyard to follow. As a result every worker was able to hear every word from their own representatives and from the government. There were no secret deals cobbled together behind the backs of the workers, and no secret clauses in the agreements.

This approach was continued at subsequent meetings of Solidarity. Its national congress was opened to the world's press and the proceedings were taped by delegates for report-back meetings. This enabled all the workers to be aware of the inevitable and healthy differences and debates within the union leadership.

The structures of Solidarity were created with such democratic considerations in mind. Rather than craft-based unions, Solidarity developed regional cross-industrial organisation enabling the strongest sectors to aid the less well-organised workers. Great care was taken to ensure that workplaces were adequately represented within the regional and national structures, and that delegates were subject to recall.

In January last year in Bielsko-Biala Solidarity members staged the most daring democratic experiment of all. Their negotiations with the government over corrupt local officials were broadcast through the public address system of all the major enterprises. Further, Solidarity telephone engineers also hooked them up to the phone lines

so that anyone in the region could listen in to the 'live' negotiations by dialling a special phone number!

Free access to all information and accountability of all representatives — these are the democratic principles of Solidarity. These principles combined with Solidarity's imaginative use of technology to strengthen workers' democracy would be more than welcome in our own trade unions. Perhaps the Terry Duffys and Frank Chapples of this world, who have been quick to claim support for Solidarity, should take note.

Solidarity is a mass democratic movement of the workers, fighting for the interests of the working people of Poland. And that is precisely why the Kremlin and the Polish ruling hierarchy sent the military in to crush it.



Part two

The struggle for workers power in Poland

TO understand why the very existence of Solidarity, a mass independent organisation of the workers, was intolerable to Poland's bureaucratic rulers, we need to look at the nature of Poland's political system. Described by Western analysts as 'Communist' and 'totalitarian' along with the Soviet Union and other Eastern European states, Socialist Challenge would characterise Poland as a bureaucratically-ruled workers' state.

Poland: a post-capitalist society

Poland was devastated by the war. More than twenty per cent of the population died during the war, almost forty per cent of the entire national wealth was destroyed, and the whole country was moved physically two hundred miles to the West.

The country was liberated by the Communist-led resistance and the Soviet Red Army. The Communist government quickly transformed the economy. What was left of the landowning class after the war was obliterated by the breaking up of the old estates of more than 50 acres of arable land. All industries employing more than fifty workers per shift were nationalised, and by late 1946 over ninety per cent of industry was state-owned and controlled.

As a result of the Yalta agreement, Poland passed into the Russian 'sphere of influence' together with other Eastern European states. The socialisation of the Polish economy went hand-in-hand with the crushing of the self-activity of the Polish masses, and their isolation from the labour movement in the West. The division of Europe into pro-Stalinist and pro-imperialist camps has been used to this day to disrupt the fighting unity of the workers of the European continent.

Poland's nationalised economy works in a completely different manner to the capitalist system. Economic life is no longer governed by the capitalist market but by the principle of state planning. Production and investment resources are not allocated according to market profitability but through deals and decisions of the bureaucratic elite that has political power.

But while capitalism may have been abolished in Poland the workers do not have political power either in this bureaucratically-ruled workers' state. That position has been usurped by a huge bureaucratic apparatus, organised by the Communist Party, numbering at least two hundred thousand people. This layer has big material privileges: its own special shops, better access to consumer goods, decent housing and education, and above all, political privileges in decision-making.

Although the membership of the official party apparatus in Poland is only about 10,000, the party also controls tens of thousands of positions of power and influence in the national, regional and local areas of state administration, the army hierarchy and the police, the economy, and the trade union and youth organisations.

The bureaucracy uses the 'nomenklatura' system common to other Eastern European countries whereby candidates for any of these positions have to be approved by the party hierarchy at the relevant level. The aspiring bureaucrat must satisfy one key criterion: his or her capacity to defend and serve the interests and political needs of the bureaucratic apparatus as a whole.

The maintenance of this bureaucratic system in a post-capitalist society also depends on the ruling Communist Party having some genuine roots within the working class. In the absence of the discipline of the capitalist market over the workers, and of any system of genuine workers' democracy, the ruling party needs a channel of communication to the working class. A tightly disciplined party is vital to carry through the bureaucracy's political and economic projects.

The challenge of Solidarity

The bureaucratic system in Poland, at least after 1956, tolerated some limited freedoms to certain layers of the population. In particular the Catholic Church was allowed to run its own religious organisations and journals, and freedom of worship was not drastically repressed. The bureaucrats even tolerated the visit of the Polish Pope, John Paul II, in 1979 which brought millions of Poles onto the streets for the first time in a non-party organised event.

This allowed an extremely moderate opposition force to exist which had sufficient power within the system not to want to rock the boat too much. So while the Church often gave some shelter to dissidents facing repression it also issued appeals for moderation at crucial times to defuse the workers' struggles. Cardinal Wyszynski for example called for an end to the Gdansk strikes in late August 1980. Similarly the response of the Catholic hierarchy to the imposition of military rule in December last year was to beg for calm rather than a fight back.

But the bureaucratic system cannot tolerate independent activity by the working class that undermines the party's monopoly of political power. Under capitalism trade unions may be an irritant to the ruling class but they do not threaten its very existence. Trade unions and their bureaucratic leaders can be 'integrated' into the capitalist system.

From its creation Solidarity never questioned the state ownership of the means of production, nor called for a return to capitalism. Its links with the Church and its dislike of any trace of Marxist or socialist terms should not lead socialists in the West to be sceptical of its aims. Decades of Stalinist totalitarianism in the name of 'Communism' inevitably produced deep suspicion of all left wing ideology.

But the dynamic of Solidarity has been clear. It has increasingly challenged for workers' power. After years of repression and injustice the working class has moved to use its new-found strength in Solidarity to challenge the whole oppressive system. The days of the Gdansk shipyard occupation in 1980 were marked by poetry and writings bemoaning every feature of life under Poland's Stalinist system (see box).

Poem printed in Solidarity strike bulletin 5, 26 August 1980

*One day a woman goes to the doctor:
'Doctor, give me an examination!'
'You've come to the wrong place, I'm afraid.
I am just a vet.
I don't look after humans.'
'O, that's all right, doctor,
I feel just like an animal.
When I get up in the morning
I dash through the house,
panting like a dog or a cat,
I gallop to work like a horse,
I cling to the bus like a monkey,
Loaded up like a camel,
Defending my marriage like a lion,
I'm already asleep when
I get back from work in the evening, and
then I hear my husband whispering
Above my head, "Wake up, owl!"
Perhaps you have some miracle cure
which will make me a human being.'*



As a mass working class movement in a state supposedly run by and for the workers, it was natural for Solidarity to challenge the privileges of the bureaucracy and to champion an end to corruption. This in turn led to a series of challenges to the party's political domination.

Solidarity demanded an end to party nominations for factory directors and for candidates in local elections. When the government used the economic crisis to justify price rises, Solidarity demanded full access to economic information and the establishment of workers' self-management in the enterprises. Solidarity asked for its own journals and an end to censorship of the media. Solidarity's campaigns for radical democracy within the context of a nationalised economy threatened to explode the power of the bureaucracy and to totally undermine the 'leading role of the party'.

It is because the bureaucrats in Poland and in the Kremlin understood the dynamic of Solidarity towards an increasingly comprehensive challenge for workers' power that they tried every possible method of weakening or destroying it.

The bureaucrats tried to use the Church's moderating influence whenever possible; they attempted to use repression against union militants or supporters of KOR, the dissident movement that played a key role in the creation of Solidarity; they tried to split Solidarity by co-opting sections of its leadership into a 'government of national unity'.

And all the time they were preparing to use their last card — the army, which alone among all the establishment institutions in Poland retained popular respect. General Jaruzelski was made first prime minister and defence minister, and then party leader — the first time someone had held all three posts in an Eastern European state since Stalin!

Conscription periods were extended and special military patrols were sent into the countryside during the autumn supposedly to help food distribution. All the while the plans for military-led repression were being laid. General Siwicki, deputy defence minister, was sent to Moscow for a month just prior to the crackdown, and Marshall Kulikov, head of the Warsaw Pact armed forces, arrived in Warsaw two days before Sunday 13 December to supervise events.

Workers' power is an alternative

Socialist Challenge does not believe that there are only two alternatives for the workers of the world: Stalinism or capitalism. We believe that a system of workers' socialist democracy is both possible and necessary. The Polish workers began to point seriously in that direction before the recent repression was unleashed.

There can be no medium or short-term compromise with the ruling bureaucracy in Poland or the Eastern bloc. There can not be two powers in such a system; the workers and the bureaucrats. The workers' movement has to prepare for the sweeping away of the whole bureaucratic caste from its position of political domination if it is not to be crushed by the bureaucracy's repressive apparatus. Unfortunately the Solidarity activists have only now learned this lesson through the bitter experience of the military repression.

Sweeping away the whole bureaucratic caste would transform Polish society. Not only would this eliminate a vast parasitic curse on the economy it would also enable the



workers to reorganise the economy and society as a whole in the interests of the workers.

The bureaucracy is unable to utilise the state monopoly of trade, investment and production resources through serious workers' planning as the latter entails the creative involvement of the workers themselves in the productive and political system. Such an involvement threatens the existence of the bureaucracy.

Freed from its tyranny the workers would be able to organise a system of national, regional and local workers' councils to thrash out the needs of society through the mass participation of the population. All Solidarity's technological innovations and many more besides could be utilised to allow huge democratic debates to be carried out throughout the population.

Such open discussion would need the maximum freedom of expression of political views and the right to form political parties — the very opposite of the current practice in so-called 'Communist' countries. All political trends within the workers' councils would be granted full democratic rights as long as they did not take up arms to overthrow the system.

A system of workers' socialist democracy would bring more and more of the population into active participation into the affairs of the state, allowing for an increasing decentralisation of decision-making and the beginnings of the end of any separate State bureaucracy. Revolutionary socialists would build a party to fight for their ideas within the system of workers' councils, but in an open and democratic debate, not through any insistence on the 'leading role of the party'.

For us socialism means *more* freedom than under capitalism, not less. It means an extension of democratic rights alongside a socialised economy. That will only be possible in Poland or the other Eastern European countries through a political revolution to overthrow the bureaucratic rulers. Such a system is possible and it would be a fantastic inspiration for workers throughout the world.

Part three

The need for international workers' support for Solidarity

FEAR of a workers' revolt leading to genuine socialist democracy in Poland is the one thing that unites both the Kremlin and the Cold War warriors like Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher. The only interest that these hypocrites have in shedding crocodile tears for the Polish workers is to whip up anti-Communist hysteria against their own working classes.

An indication of how 'concerned' Reagan is about 'human and workers' rights' was given in two statements announced by the White House on the same day as Reagan's sanctions against Soviet trade. The US State Department appealed for an end to Common Market sanctions against the Turkish military junta — the very same day that more than 50 trade union leaders in that country went on trial for their life for opposing the regime. Reagan also announced his intention to start training programmes for soldiers and officers from the Salvadoran army who are responsible for the murder and torture of thousands of Salvadoran workers and peasants.

The Polish workers have no friend in Reagan. Nor are the international bankers going to help Solidarity. They put enormous pressure on the Polish government to crack down on the Polish workers and to join the International Monetary Fund. As one top banker told the *Sunday Times* just before the coup: 'It would be a good thing if Russia invaded because then she would be obliged to honour Poland's debts.'

Nor will Cold War campaigns to boycott Soviet goods help the Polish workers, such as that launched by the Solidarity with Solidarity campaign, which has the sponsorship of engineers' leader Terry Duffy, Joe Gormley of the miners' union and steelworkers' leader Bill Sirs.

A defeat for the Polish workers would be a defeat for the workers of the whole world. It would be a blow against every workers' struggle, particularly those of the workers and peasants of the Caribbean and Central America. It would undermine the massive 'peace' and disarmament movements throughout Western Europe as the imperialists whipped up a mighty Cold War campaign.

That is why it must be the international labour movement that takes the lead in organising a solidarity campaign with the Polish workers. In other European countries like France it has been the trade union movement that has led the solidarity campaign.

Unfortunately the failure of the TUC and Labour Party to initiate serious solidarity work with the Polish workers before the recent repression is now coming home to roost. The Labour Party national executive shortly after 13 December failed to adopt the solidarity statement proposed by Eric Heffer, which called for a Labour demonstration on Poland for the Sunday before Xmas. Instead it passed an empty statement noting the threat to world peace posed by the Polish crisis.

The labour movement, and the left wing of the Labour Party in particular, must launch a mighty campaign of solidarity with the Polish workers. It should demand an end to martial law and all restrictions on Solidarity's right to organise. It should further demand the release of Lech Walesa and all the union and political prisoners. Any external military intervention by the Kremlin or Warsaw Pact countries should be vigorously opposed.

The labour movement should also turn its resources to sending material aid to Solidarity's resistance against the military repression and to sending labour movement delegations to Poland to help get out the facts about Solidarity to the British working class. Every opportunity should be taken to express through demonstrations, rallies, work stoppages and material aid, our fullest solidarity with Solidarity.

Such an approach will have much more impact on the Polish rulers and give much greater support to the Polish workers than all the campaigns for ending food aid or boycotting Polish or Soviet goods.



Socialist Challenge appeals to every reader of this short pamphlet: strain every muscle to build a solidarity campaign with Solidarnosc: the best advertisement for socialism for years.

We give the last word to Zbigniew Kowalewski, a leader of the self-management movement and a regional presidium member of Lodz Solidarity, who appealed from Paris for labour movement solidarity in *Le Monde* on 17 December.

Poland: a matter for workers everywhere

The conquests of the national strike of August 1980 opened up a new phase in the struggle of the Polish workers to take their affairs into their own hands. Today the counter-revolution is a reality in Poland. The bureaucratic power, plunged into an unprecedented crisis over the last months, is using its last weapon.

Given the inertia of the civil administration of the state, which had lost all capacity to lead the country, and given the decomposition of the base of the Communist Party, the powers that be considered that their last chance of help lay with the military apparatus. The state of war installed by General Jaruzelski against the working class and the whole of society is an attempt to crush the workers' revolution by methods which restore a genuine State terrorism.

Over the last months the inability of the State and party apparatus to satisfy the most elementary needs had become evident to everyone. Nevertheless, the workers placed their hopes in the economic reform based on workers' self-management which was planned to start with vigour in early January, freeing them from the strict control of the central bureaucracy and allowing them to take control in the enterprises. The development of social control over the political economy, and the perspective of the first free local elections next spring, reinforced these hopes.

In November, the unexpected abandonment by the government of its own project of economic reform, and its decision to concentrate even more economic power into the hands of the bureaucratic apparatus provoked widespread social tension. In numerous enterprises and regions the workers of Solidarity began from then on to prepare for an 'active strike' in order to exercise control over the means of production and distribution, to install a genuine workers' self-management and to impose an economic reform from below through a mass movement.

At the same time, to ensure self-defence in view of the workers taking control of the enterprises, Solidarity began to put into place workers' guards. The question of who should hold power — a privileged minority or the working masses themselves — began to be discussed within Solidarity.

A directly revolutionary situation developed from then on in Poland. It's then that the Polish army hierarchy decided to put into motion the preparations to impose its dictatorship: preparations which had begun a year ago, but to which the leaders of Solidarity had devoted insufficient attention.

Today, recourse to bayonets is suppressing not only the possibility of workers' socialism and self-management to which the free unions and the Polish working masses aspire, but also the elementary rights of man, of citizens and of workers. The Polish revolution, which constitutes one of the most advanced and audacious experiences in the world from the point of view of the emancipation of the workers, is in danger of being crushed.

The working class and the Polish people have decided to resist, but they need the united and determined support of the workers of the world, and in the first place from the powerful workers' organisations of Western Europe. The defeat of Solidarity would represent their own defeat. What is happening today in Poland is a matter for every worker.



What to read on Poland

Labour Focus on Eastern Europe, detailed factual material on the Polish workers' struggle, £1.50.

Theses on Socialist Democracy, produced by the Fourth International, 30p, Marxist analysis of workers' democracy.

Solidarity, Poland's independent trade union, Denis MacShane, Spokesman Books, £3.50. Basic guide to Solidarity for trade unionists.

The Polish August, Neal Ascherson, Penguin, £2.50. Comprehensive history of Polish events up to end 1980.

The Revolution Betrayed, Leon Trotsky, Pathfinder Press, £3.25. Revolutionary analysis of the degeneration of the Russian Revolution.

All these books and pamphlets available from Other Bookshop, 328 Upper Street, London N1.

Useful addresses for Polish solidarity work

Labour Focus on Eastern Europe, Box 23, 136 Kingsland High St, London E8.

Eastern European Solidarity Campaign, 10 Park Drive, London NW11.
Tel: 01-458 1501.

Polish Solidarity Campaign, 69 Edinburgh Road, London E13.

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