

# General Jaruzelski's Coup de Force, or The Stakes of the Polish Crisis

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What are the conditions which brought about an actual military coup d'état?

What are the consequences of this confrontation, in Europe and internationally, for the stability of the imperialist system and for the proletariat?

What support should we give to the resistance movement taking shape, and with what objectives?

## A. Origin of the Confrontation

1) The development of the Polish workers' movement:

The current crisis began in August, 1980 with the launching of the big strikes in the Baltic. But a long period of development paved the way for this movement. A decisive stage of this was Gdansk, 1970.

Indeed, in order to grasp the current movement, and especially its future, despite the clear setback it has just suffered, it is important to briefly recall the previous struggles in Poland and the other Eastern countries.

Whether a worker or from other social strata, no Pole can forget the 1944 Warsaw insurrection. For nearly two months, Warsaw and particularly its working class neighborhoods, resisted the German army under the intentionally passive eyes of the Soviet military forces.

In '56 the Polish workers also made their presence powerfully felt. They surged into the breach opened up by the hesitations of "destalinisation." But their actions and reasoning were still confined to the strict framework of "real socialism" ("socialism as it actually exists"), trying to rectify the Party and unions and contenting themselves with "workers' councils" conceded by the PUWP (Polish United Workers Party) and under its leadership.

The Baltic strikes of December 1970 and January 1971 brought about a qualitative change; compared to what had taken place previously in Eastern Europe, it was the naval shipyard workers this time who launched the strike. It was the working class alone waging and leading the struggle: mass demonstrations at first, then mass strikes and strike committees independent of the PUWP and the official unions. This movement rapidly produced sharp social tension and was met with unprecedented brutality; the street demonstrations of the strikers turned into slaughter, the militia fired without restraint. Unofficially, between 150 and 500 dead were counted. In response, the workers turned to rioting: their two targets were the militia (burning buildings and vehicles) and the Party, whose headquarters were also torched.

But this repression did not break the Polish workers' movement. It could even be said that the movement took a qualitative step forward. Social antagonism increased and expressed itself more sharply. Despite their clear-cut victory, the authorities were shaken: Gomułka left the political scene, replaced by Gierek who took full advantage of his working class origins to try to appeal to the working class. At the time of the January '71 strikes in Szczecin, the authorities negotiated. In this second outbreak, the workers, rather than confronting the militia with their bare hands in the streets, entrenched themselves in the factories they had occupied, and formed strike committees.

These events of '70-'71 profoundly affected the class consciousness of the Polish working class and in a very tangible way influenced the struggle of 1980, its objectives and its tactics.

A long period of maturation for the working class took place between the struggles of '70 and '80. A maturation which resulted first from the depth of the class contradictions that exploded in '70. Of all the countries of the East, Poland is the one the Soviets have least been able to shape in their image. The existence of a powerful Church and a strong private peasantry attest to the depth of the contradictions. Furthermore, in 1968 Poland experienced powerful student unrest; and this type of unrest is always a very revealing sign of the ripening of class contradictions.

The 1976 movement continued and deepened this process of maturation. Other workers' struggles, especially at Ursus, were brutally repressed and numerous workers imprisoned. The contradiction deepened even more at this time: a political movement—the KOR—arose around the defence of the imprisoned workers. At the head of this movement were the leaders of the '68 student movement. Thus, the two movements of '68 and '70 which had been oblivious to each other, joined together from then on, making it possible to change the balance of forces in relation to the authorities, as well as moving the struggle to a higher stage, including, among other things, the founding of a newspaper called *Robotnik*, which was very well received within the working class.

Thus in ten years the workers' movement went from riots, direct responses to the massacres, to much more highly developed tactics, leading in particular to a nationwide organisation. The fact that Gdansk was the epicentre of the 1980 movement is significant in terms of the nature of the confrontation; it was indeed a question of the struggle begun ten years earlier. The two protagonists were perfectly aware of this. The Gdansk workers responded to the authorities' "victory" won through the massacre, with the victory

of '80 which was sealed by forcing the rulers to build and inaugurate a monument to the memory of the victims of '70.

Clearly Jaruzelski was now trying to win the third round. Yet this time, the battle did not unfold solely in the area of the Baltic ports, but throughout the country as a whole, occurring in an already tense international conjuncture, with the USSR already entangled in Afghanistan, the Polish revolt threatening to seep through elsewhere (Rumania, for example), and with a social movement in the West no longer under the "spell" of Brezhnev-style "socialism."

## 2) The development of the bureaucratic bourgeoisie:

Along with the development of the workers' movement the policies of the bureaucratic bourgeoisie also developed. Gierek played his card of modernising Polish industry, for which he borrowed massively from West European governments and banks, especially West German. Modernisation was supposed to lead to a strong expansion, to a development of exports that would provide the currency needed to pay back credit.

This policy ran up against two realities:

—The first was the decay of the system of rule which hampered economic policies. Indeed, all the evils labeled "Western" flourished and developed in this new style state capitalism: corruption, local and rival feudal kingdoms, etc., with a very restricted *nomenklatura* (system of rank and privileges) cut off, of course, from the people.

The state apparatus was nothing but a huge body of impotent and incompetent bureaucrats, incapable of achieving the goals of the Plan, forced to allow the development of the black market, a parallel economy. . . . Some Solidarity leaders described how the different clans clashed within this apparatus, each one measuring its strength by the number of factories it operated, without worrying about general coordination or modernising the old ones.

—The second is the crisis of the world economy, which hit Poland with full force through the rise in energy costs, and stagnation, indeed decline in markets, made even worse by its exploitative trade relations with both the West and East.

In these conditions, the economy headed straight towards collapse, pure and simple. This economic situation along with its effects on the masses' standard of living thus increased the objective basis of the social tensions. This was felt all the more sharply because along with industrial modernisation, there was a great expansion of the black market and the privileged strata.

## 3) The characteristics of the workers' movement of summer '80.

The workers' movement of summer '80 had the following key traits:

—Its base was an organised mass strike around the factories, especially those with large concentrations of workers, with tactics consisting of avoiding armed confrontation with the authorities and their Soviet protector.

—The demands put forward (that is, more or less radical reforms), although negotiable, shook the whole ideological and political system ruling Poland, especially those for a free union, and for the abolition of privileges such as special stores, allocations to militia personnel, etc. . . .

—The workers' aspirations, particularly as they were expressed in the formulation of demands, implicated the political system as a whole. But the alliance between those with experience in struggle against the system and those thoroughly familiar with it from the inside (particularly members of KOR) made it possible to agree on a tactical line for the negotiations.

—Implicating the political system didn't translate into a desire to build a Western type of society, but rather to establish workers' control, particularly in the domain of economic management.

—The founding of Solidarity. Although it calls itself a union, Solidarity can't be compared to other trade union forms in the West

(or East). On the one hand, Solidarity was formed on the basis of strike committees, which came out of large-scale class struggle. On the other, Solidarity became the representative of a whole class, then of a whole people; in addition to being forced to take responsibility for a whole series of problems regarding social life, it very rapidly became a social and political force. All the forces in the country came to recognise this role, which was consecrated in the tripartite meeting aimed at establishing the basis for national accord.

Another basic trait of this movement was indeed its protracted character. As soon as the bureaucratic bourgeoisie consummated the August defeat, the proletariat continued its pressure while preserving a remarkable cohesiveness by uniting different strata of the population around it. Day by day the rulers grew a little more isolated, with gangrene setting in even in its strongholds: the Party experienced a great deal of turmoil, since part of its base belonged to Solidarity and was challenging the way things were going, elections, etc. . . . within the PUWP.

Solidarity also developed within the ministries, the judicial apparatus, and even the militia.

The class struggle thus continued to develop in several phases:

—Extension of the Gdansk agreements to Poland as a whole, the establishment of Solidarity in all of industry and the administration.

—Spreading the struggle to the peasantry, with the recognition of Rural Solidarity.

—The Bydgoszcz incident was undoubtedly the most important stage before the coup d'état of December 1981: by having the representatives of Solidarity beaten, the rulers launched a test operation to measure the proletariat's reaction.

The extraordinary mobilisation at the time of the four-hour warning strike on March 27, '81, showed that the rulers would have a difficult force to put down in case of a confrontation.

The greatest risk of confrontation up until December '81 was finally defused by a coalition between the moderates and the authorities. Contrary to what is happening today, the working class controlled the Polish situation, and those in power then were not ready to fight it out. However, a large section of the proletariat wanted to launch a general strike, and the agreement signed as a last resort by Walesa gave rise to widespread protest within Solidarity's ranks.

Nevertheless there can be no illusions about the ability to overthrow the political power through a general strike. Some very timely Warsaw Pact manoeuvres in Poland itself moved into place the necessary apparatus to smash any possible rebellion.

## 4) The different stages leading to the coup d'état. After this date, three phenomena appeared:

The *first* was an *effort to unite the moderates* in a centrist type of Party, pulling together the Church, the wing of the Party considered moderate, and the moderate wing of Solidarity. This effort, heavily influenced by nationalism, was supposed to lead to national accord; but due to the existing antagonism, carrying it out proved impossible. The contradiction between the strength of the industrial proletariat and the needs of the bureaucratic bourgeoisie supported by Soviet power, made any such centrist coalition illusory.

The *second* was *the struggle within the PUWP*. The conflict of August '80 thoroughly shook the Party: the rank-and-file challenge, radicalisation of the "hard-liners," horizontal structures sweeping away the hierarchy. This struggle reached its full intensity during the preparations for the Congress. The Congress did not achieve anything: the line was upheld; the CC reelected, the status quo preserved. In other words, the decomposition could continue. This reached its peak at the time of the plenary which shelved Kania; the very confused debates prevented any coherent position from surfacing; Kania was dismissed probably due to his lack of firmness, and his

assistant replaced him to carry out the policies we know today.

In fact it was at this plenary that the wheels for the military coup d'état were set in motion. The nomination of Jaruzelski, minister of defence and military careerman, coincided with the political decomposition of the PUWP and the dispatch of military units throughout the country for the official purpose of keeping the authorities afloat (supplies, maintaining the state's organisational structures, settling conflicts).

The *third phenomenon* was *Solidarity's Congress*. The Congress has been long awaited since it was the first general debate since August '80. On the other hand, it is interesting to consider the effect of the clash at Bydgoszcz. In fact this Congress showed the limits of the tactics of self-restraint practised by Solidarity since the beginning: it adopted a programme that generally indicted the system; it called on the workers of Eastern Europe to form free unions; it put the problem of the Soviet Union on the table.

All the points adopted bear testimony to this. It was also apparent during the election of Solidarity's president. Although Walesa was elected with more than half of the votes, three other candidates together brought in a significant number of votes. Thus, while no opponent was able to develop a coherent alternative policy, doubt began to set in about the policy of self-restraint.

Thus through these three phenomena the coming confrontation could be seen. The political power, whose main foundation was crumbling, had no other *way out except to rely on military force*. The proletariat did not know how to develop the tactics suited to this new situation and maintained its self-restraint. A few days before the coup d'état, awareness of this fact was expressed in the union at Radom. Jaruzelski had to force the proletariat to toe the line. His manoeuvring room was tight. What did he have in mind? Did he respond to a Soviet ultimatum? Did he instead try to beat the Soviets to the draw by staging a nationalist coup d'état?

What is certain is that the general staff of the Warsaw Pact had to have known what was coming down. The coup had been in preparation for quite awhile in conjunction with fraternal help from the Soviets. The form taken—*isolation by cutting communications, massive arrests*—showed both the General's resolve and his fears.

Strange as it might seem, Jaruzelski appears to have placed his bets on nationalism and an understanding with the moderates; he apparently never completely abandoned his vision of reaching some kind of national accord.

The PUWP, for its part, totally disappeared from the political scene and people only began to talk about it again five days after the coup d'état!

Jaruzelski was making a risky bet: any resistance by the proletariat that was just a little too strong would lead to open intervention by the Soviets. All the nationalist dreams of the bureaucratic bourgeoisie faded away in the face of the very actions of those considered the most nationalist: the military.

## B. Lessons of the Movement

The unfolding of events in Poland over those 18 months provide many lessons, particularly on the character and nature of the Solidarity movement. Further, this movement certainly did not end on December 13, 1981.

The features that can be defined out of this experience are the following:

1) The basic trait is that it involved a *proletarian movement*. The large industrial centres were the heart, the mainspring of the mass movement, forming its organisational pivot. After the December 13 coup d'état, it was the industrial proletariat which continued to resist the army and militia most actively.

—The working class movement, on the other hand, in the form of mass political strikes, shook all of bourgeois society. Not only did it

stop it from functioning physically, but by pointing its finger at the social order, by emphasising the precarious, fragile aspect of social organisation, the movement starkly contrasted social reality with its deformed image: ideology. It brought out the truth. The official rhetoric, the pressures, the promises by the political and union apparatus which before helped stem the development of the aspirations, initiative and action of the masses, became ineffective. The force of truth which the working class movement unleashed attracted different social strata like a magnet. Through its broadness, it transformed the usual protagonists in Poland—the Party (PUWP), the Church and the dissidents. It divided each of them into two tendencies, one reformist, the other conservative. It reduced them to a state of political midgets.

By shaking up the whole social equilibrium and all the regulating mechanisms and the ideas that go with them, the mass movement clearly demonstrated that it was hitting at the fundamental contradiction in society between the bourgeoisie and proletariat.

In another vein, what was the influence of Catholicism and nationalism?

This must be judged on the basis of the facts more than on how the workers characterised themselves and society. Certainly the striking workers in the Gdansk shipyards "followed the crowd," but they didn't go along with the proposal to go back to work suggested by the primate of the Polish church. Certainly the workers sang "God Save Poland," but they appealed to the workers of the Eastern countries in September '81 and to the workers of the whole world after December 13. Nationalist ideas did not influence the 21 demands of August '80.

It's not a question of getting hung up on the most obvious appearances of the movement, but of trying to understand the profound nature of the proletarian movement.

2) The workers' movement was able to demonstrate a real *tactical genius*, making it possible, under a dictatorial regime, to push back the rulers on key questions, to rally the great majority of the people around it, and to bring about the decomposition of the system of rule, all while avoiding armed confrontation which is the rulers' favourite terrain.

In this respect, it must be noted that never has a workers' movement been able to achieve such a breaking down of the rule of the bourgeoisie through its own strength during a period of peace. Comparable examples can be found only in the countries emerging from war. This shows all the lessons to be drawn from this movement.

The method used can be summed up as follows: beat the authorities at their own game by turning their own arguments against them, make use of the rules of the official game to put the adversary in trouble, avoid the arena of confrontation which is the rulers' strong point, impose a constant tension based on the balance of forces, and on this basis, negotiate everything that the adversary finds unacceptable. All these things extend the limits of what is possible, cornering the authorities.

These tactics were able to be carried out for two reasons. First, because of the experience paid for in blood ten years earlier. Second, because of the cohesiveness which the very structure of the industrial fabric made possible, particularly the concentration in Gdansk.

The key to the success of these tactics was the cohesiveness of the proletariat which held up a seamless front in the face of the adversary. Beyond the prestige of the workers of Gdansk and other Baltic ports, and beyond the long development of the class struggle over the past ten years which strengthened this cohesiveness, there was the systematic practise of mass democracy and an organisation based on the reality of the social movement of the proletariat.

3) The practise of *self-restraint*:

The conditions of the struggle, especially the nature of the enemy, led the working class to practise what everyone has referred

to as self-restraint. This consisted of acting within a tolerable framework for the enemy: not denouncing the leading role of the Party nor the Polish state's alliances within the Warsaw Pact.

Some might criticise this self-restraint as a brake on the development of the workers' movement, and for resembling the ground rules of the social pacifists in Western Europe. Actually, the conditions for applying self-restraint suggest a different analysis:

On the one hand, self-restraint deprived the adversary of an excuse to attack the workers based on what they were putting forward, and at the same time permitted the enemy to not "lose face."

On the other hand, the principle of self-restraint remained an offensive position, insofar as through formal concessions (recognising the leading role of the PUWP) the workers' movement continued to grow stronger, while in reality, the Party's role as leader of the working class was reduced to nothing, and thus its foreign alliances became meaningless.

In this way the practise of self-restraint made it possible to mobilise and unite the whole working class, urban petty bourgeoisie and peasantry. It has therefore been a factor in the ripening of class contradictions in society as a whole, a ripening which took place evenly. Taking into account the conditions, this self-restraint in fact brought about the ripening of revolutionary conditions for the people as a whole.

4) But this self-restraint had its *drawbacks*.

As long as the bureaucratic bourgeoisie could pull back, self-restraint could be a formidable weapon, but as soon as it was backed into a corner, the only solution left was to fight no matter what the price. This tactic lost its effectiveness; on the contrary it even became an obstacle, preventing the real problems such as the military coup de force and foreign intervention from even being taken up. And this is where Solidarity's basic error lies: believing that the rules of the game based on a mutual acceptance of self-restraint and the existence of Solidarity were eternal, that peaceful general strikes could stop an armed, cornered enemy.

With regard to this error, several aspects must be seen. It's possible that religion and nationalism had an influence on the pacifism of the movement: Poles don't kill each other, they refuse to spill blood, even to defend themselves. But it is the experiences of the Gdansk massacres in particular that lie behind this behaviour.

Secondly, a dual power situation existed in Poland after August '80. Yet this kind of balance cannot last long: one of the two adversaries must force the other into line. But what alternative did the Polish proletariat have? Although in a national framework the balance of forces was favourable enough that seizing power was within its reach, the fact remains that the international encirclement (Warsaw Pact forces and Western silence) totally reversed this balance of forces.

5) Did Jaruzelski succeed with his coup after all?

While this situation prevented the development of the class relations in Poland, and thus the awakening of revolutionary consciousness as well, still Jaruzelski's coup was far from successful. For that to happen he would have to break the back of the industrial proletariat, the nucleus of the Polish social movement. It seems this was beyond his reach. Certainly a Polish or Soviet-Polish military regime had to take over in Warsaw, and the status quo reestablished in the end, representing a clear setback for the workers' movement.

Yet if the industrial proletariat is not broken, it will "digest" its experience, as it did in '70, and it will attack again with a heightened and deepened consciousness. The international contacts which exile will force it into making, as well as the development of the class struggle in Europe, can only be favourable for this movement. Finally this reality of the balance of forces demonstrates clearly the necessity for revolutionary struggle on an international scale.

The Polish proletariat has rocked Polish society to the point that it has fallen apart; this will not fail to be reflected on a subjective level, in the realm of consciousness, as the experience is assimilated; things will never be the same in Poland.

But this was also a blow against the whole socialist camp as well, including all the ideological tendencies claiming to be part of it. The results of this are incalculable.

Indeed, the entire ideological justification for this system is crumbling. This not only imperils the existence of the Eastern regimes and the CPs as a whole, but it especially frees the workers' movements from a tremendous mortgage: "real" socialism.

### C. The International Context

1) Poland's place in the Warsaw Pact (its strategic location between East Germany and the USSR, the Baltic Coast, the importance of the Polish army, etc.) makes it a country which must remain "eternally" socialist, an inalienable stronghold of the USSR. Any attack against Poland will inevitably provoke war, sooner or later.

The USSR lives in fear of being encircled, a fear arising from the reality of its history, especially since the October Revolution. This is the basic premise of the Polish question. Any country which is part of the Soviet fortress is by definition subject to, on the one hand, the political conditions accompanying this geo-strategic premise, namely the fascist dictatorship of a bureaucratic bourgeoisie nicely labeled "socialism," and on the other hand, the economic conditions: membership in Comecon.

In the same way, any internal challenge results in the crushing of dissidence by force of arms, as was particularly the case in Hungary and Czechoslovakia.

2) The legacy of Yalta defines the general character of the situation in Poland and the countries of the East. This division of the world dates back to the Second World War. According to the logic of Yalta, each great power, in reality the two superpowers, takes care of things in its own zone as it sees fit. This is why the events in Czechoslovakia didn't upset East-West détente in the least; the Western leaders just considered it an unfortunate incident. The same logic applies to the West as well: Vietnam and Chile are two particularly blatant examples.

3) East-West economic relations. The economic relations which developed between East and West, particularly within Europe, were grafted onto this legacy of Yalta. This is how West Germany became the second largest seller to East Germany and its third largest buyer. Western credits began to assume great importance: Poland's foreign debts are basically owed to Western creditors, particularly West Germany.

Thus the recognition of the Yalta agreements on a political and military level made the development of economic relations possible. This explains the quandaries of the West and the fears of the Eastern European countries when confronted with destabilisation in Poland. In time, these two aspects may become contradictory insofar as the uneven development of the economies leads to a redivision of the world sooner or later.

The particularity of the Polish crisis meant that the governments of Western Europe were almost as worried as their counterparts in Eastern Europe, which explains the great efforts by Western Europe, especially financial efforts, to bring about a settlement of the conflict. During 1981 numerous "political" credits were extended because of pressure applied by Western governments, despite the grumblings of the bankers. Any deterioration of the political situation in Poland which might force Europe and the West to eventually cut back its trade with the East is deemed an economic catastrophe. Now the context of the economic crisis and of unemployment must

be taken into account. For example, a cut-off of trade with the East would place West Germany in a very difficult situation and would destabilise it seriously.

This, therefore, is what determined the West's attitude toward Poland up until December 13. Although this attitude stems from Yalta, and later détente, the international situation is characterised by the challenging of these two ground rules. The worldwide crisis which has been developing since the end of the 1960s has led to:

4) Calling into question the global balance of forces.

In 1975 a decisive stage was reached with the U.S. defeat in Indochina and the Soviet-Cuban penetration into Angola and Eritrea.

The political and economic situation in the big Western powers began to deteriorate with a severe crisis of confidence in the U.S. and the rise in unemployment in all countries except Japan; but the real turning point came in '79 with the invasion of Afghanistan, the Sino-Vietnamese war and the occupation of Cambodia, the Iranian revolution and the energy crisis it set off, and the destabilisation in Central America and in Poland.

This set of events destabilised international relations totally. Each of the two blocs has been rocked in strategic areas and each sees this as the result of underhanded activity by its adversary. Distrust is growing and confrontation is in the making.

This is how the situation of the two superpowers presents itself:

The U.S. wants to return to the good old days and is putting up a great military effort to maintain its empire: militarily in relation to the Soviets, economically, in relation to the Europeans and Japanese, and in relation to the liberation struggles of the oppressed peoples.

The USSR's situation is quite different. Its economic strength does not equal that of the U.S., Europe or Japan. Its one strength is military. Here, it is in some respects superior, in some equal, and in some inferior but not unacceptably so, which gives the USSR its militarist character.

This character stands out even more because of growing weaknesses in its economy, technology and agriculture. As of now, the situation in these sectors is not about to improve: Poland is in a state of bankruptcy, and in due time, the USSR will no longer have the means to assume responsibility. Soviet agriculture is going downhill. Its technological inferiority may well lead to its losing its military advantage if the arms race is stepped up. And finally, with the events in Poland, a political and ideological crisis is lurking.

The economic, financial and moral bankruptcy of the Soviet bloc is developing surely and rapidly. There is only one way to try to escape it: military ventures in Europe, an inelegant but effective means of settling debts, and of finding the technological, industrial and agricultural capabilities which the USSR lacks. It is also the only way to substantially weaken the U.S., which is a greater and greater threat to them.

*The Polish situation poses a no-win situation for the West.*

On the one hand it can carry out an economic boycott of the East. This would mean compromising its own economic stability, which would intensify its own social tensions, and would mean suffocating the Eastern bloc, which would corner it and push it towards war.

On the other hand, the West could turn its head, as it did with Czechoslovakia, but this too would have its consequences: spurring the USSR towards military ventures (like Munich in '38), and rousing the people of Europe against it at a time when the political and social situation in the West is already very sharp because of the crisis.

Thus the gearing up for war in Europe is already underway; the Polish crisis is the finishing touch in this process. All imaginable hypotheses lead to the same place. Possible scenarios for American intervention in other areas of the world—in Central America, the Caribbean, Angola (through South African intermediaries), in Iran (with Israeli help), in Libya (with Egyptian help)—only lead in the

same direction.

The European bourgeoisie is the most worried about this situation, which explains its "cowardly behaviour" (as the Polonophiles call it). Since it doesn't have the military means to respond to the USSR, it has been taken hostage. This is even more the case because it's at the centre of the conflict, and because its alliance with the U.S. is both dangerous and not that reliable. Dangerous, because the European bourgeoisies have everything to lose in war, since Europe may be completely destroyed, and yet an attitude of compromise (like that preceding the Second World War) would mean sharing the spoils with the Russian superpower. Not very reliable, because the Americans could be tempted by an isolationist policy of withdrawal, which has happened before (at the beginning of the last two world wars). This withdrawal would be relative, since the U.S. would use the opportunity to rebuild its empire around the Pacific while waiting for the USSR to wear itself out in a war in Europe. Moreover, this would bring into line one of the U.S.'s most dangerous rivals: Western Europe.

The approach of war is not solely a result of deliberate calculations by the superpowers. In fact the great powers have completely lost control of the situation. The allies they've financed and armed are playing nasty tricks on them at every opportunity (Israel's annexation of the Golan Heights, for example). The underlords they have installed in the dominated countries do as they please. Finally, the masses are paralysing the superpowers' actions more and more (Iran, the pacifist movement in Europe, Solidarity in Poland, for example).

This loss of political control is occurring as a result of the economic crisis. Thus parallel to the approach of war, the imperialist system is threatening to crumble under the weight of its own contradictions.

## Conclusion

In this process, worldwide contradictions are converging in Europe. In addition to the inter-imperialist contradictions we have examined, Europe is pregnant with a broad social movement. The intensification of the crisis of imperialism and the approach of war have begun to spark the youth and even a significant section of the masses into action: the pacifist mobilisation which also hits the imperialist system; the ghetto movement in England; the socialist upsurge in France and in southern Europe; the struggle of the Polish people; the social decomposition in Italy; the more-than-difficult "democratisation" in Spain; etc. . . .

Along with the rise of these struggles comes a collapse of the bourgeoisie's most reliable bulwark, that is, the leftist forces whose role is to channel the struggles: the crisis of the PCF (France), the PCE (Spain), of trade unionism: the SPD in West Germany and the Labourites in Britain.

It is only through these struggles which must converge and rely on the strength and cohesiveness of the proletariat, and through becoming conscious of the stakes of the current situation in Europe, that the tide of history leading us toward war can be reversed.

The struggle of the Polish proletariat is, from this point of view, an example from which the proletarians of other countries must draw inspiration in order to develop. This is why it is so important to make clear what is at stake in the Polish crisis.

It is also necessary to support and strengthen the struggles in Poland in order to weaken the Soviet bear, encourage the struggle in Eastern Europe, aggravate the problems of the Western CPs, and finally, through support, make it possible to prevent the nucleus of the struggle in Poland from being crushed, in order to hold on to what was won in the struggles of '80-'81.

To strive to unite the social forces already in motion, to propagate as widely as possible the correct understanding necessary for the mobilisation of the social movement—this is the framework for the struggle to support the Polish people.

## APPENDIX:

### The ML group "Pour l'Internationale Prolétarienne" decided to dissolve in February 1982

—Two members of PIP

If it were merely a question of the importance of this group, this event by itself would not even deserve mention in the daily obituaries. But this dissolution could have implications for the signatories of the communiqué. And more, this demise is a reflection of the general crisis of revolutionary activism. It is from this angle that the problem is worth examining. The three following points take up the Joint Communiqué of Autumn 1980, the nature of the PIP's internal crisis, and the nature of the general crisis of organised Marxist-Leninists in Europe.

1. Is PIP's dissolution a reversal of verdicts on the communiqué, on its content and its role?

The authors of these lines remain convinced that the call represented a very positive step and marked a stage in the crisis of the ICM. At the time it was signed, the contradiction between revolutionary Marxism-Leninism and opportunism was a key manifestation of the contradiction between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat on a world scale. Major worldwide confrontations and upheavals are manifested first in intense ideological, philosophical, and theoretical struggles, etc. . . . The Autumn '80 meeting came in just such a phase. The manoeuvres of the PLA, the CCP, the centrists, the revival of the ultra-left, the campaign launched by the bourgeois intelligentsia against Marxism and the Chinese revolution—all this is testimony to the intensity of the ideological struggle. By drawing a certain number of basic dividing lines, the call was a positive response. By dealing with a great many questions frankly and critically, the meeting did not evade the serious problems of the day, but rather took a step towards resolving them. By linking up to bring together representatives from four continents, the initiative of the RCP, USA and the RCP of Chile put back on the agenda a real internationalism which had not been seen for many years.

A new situation was thus created for the revolutionary M-L forces. This remains true regardless of later developments with the participants and signatories.

The real question is: Are we able to confront this new situation? Are we able to be bold enough to deepen the advance begun in Autumn '80?

The dissolution of PIP answers in the negative—which is not correct—but the question is still posed for other forces that signed the communiqué.

2. In our eyes, the internal crisis of PIP did not stem from any incorrectness of our basic views. We are not blaming either the overall advance, or the concrete internationalist initiatives. The basic cause of the group's demise lies in its inability to define *the exact relationship between general views and concrete possibilities for action*. We were not able to resolve the contradiction between general political and ideological line on the one hand, and on the other, the actual movement of the class struggle and the concrete and immediate questions that it poses. Perhaps it seems bold for a group which is dissolving to talk about a correct political and ideological line, but this line

which was developed by going against the tide of the mainstream of the revolutionary movement in France has remained too general.

PIP was not able to carry out activity around a general orientation alone. On the contrary, it dissipated itself in concrete tasks, not knowing how to transform the general orientation into well-articulated concrete activity corresponding to immediate reality.

3. The question which is at the heart of PIP's dead end is also at the centre of the overall crisis of the revolutionary forces in the world, particularly in Europe. The various failures certainly involve the influence of opportunist ideas, but two things must be emphasized. First, these opportunist ideas are rooted in the history of the ICM. Second, revolutionaries attempting to go against the tide by opposing right opportunism or its opposite, dogmatism, haven't been able to formulate a concrete and viable response to the present situation.

In fact, the problems facing us M-L revolutionaries are immense. We are inheriting a doubly difficult situation: a very deep crisis of capitalist society and a very deep crisis of Marxism.

Objective reality is of course always basically definable as the epoch of imperialism; but beyond this generality, the world has undergone great political, social, ideological, technological and economic change. Clearly the current crisis of the world imperialist system is of the same type as previous crises, in the sense that it has resulted from contradictions inherent in capitalism itself, but it also has a depth, a scale and impact which give it a new dimension. What weapons do the revolutionary Marxist-Leninists have at their disposal in the face of this new objective situation? Very few! Marxism is going through what is perhaps the most serious crisis since Marx. While world history has continued to move forward like a locomotive, some time ago Marxism became stiff and frozen: only the Chinese revolution brought forward new ideas, and they are far from sufficient to make up for the tremendous lag. On the contrary, the development of the ICM has given rise to a lot of illusions which themselves are obstacles to becoming aware of the extent of the problems.

The very deep crisis of the imperialist system throws the world into turmoil and moves history forward rapidly. It reveals the profound nature of things, clears away men's illusions, lays bare all the weaknesses, including perhaps especially those of the revolutionaries. Looking at the profound changes the international Marxist-Leninist movement has undergone since the death of Mao is convincing enough.

Social and historical upheavals bring forth revolutions. But before they become social revolutions, they are ideological, theoretical and philosophical revolutions which educate revolutionaries and make them fit to face up to the objective situation.

We must make such revolutions and rid ourselves of dead weight by resolutely entering the arena of the actual experience of the proletariat.

Making revolutions means revolutionising our views, our methods of thinking and work.

Ridding ourselves of dead weight means rejecting old ideas, striking down taboos and icons, whether myths of the ICM or workerist myths.

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These then are the conclusions we have reached during the time of PIP's existence. We think it is important to make them known even in this terse form, to those who still hold lines that are indeed revolutionary.

These ideological revolutions which must be made concern us all. This is the way social revolution must take place. To deny it by contenting oneself with performing exorcism through dogma can only make the situation worse.

Paris—February 15, 1982.