collective ownership of the land, this movement also exists in Russia. Possibly more than the workers' movement, the peasant movement directly threatens the basic foundation of ruling class power: the privileged utilization of the means of production. It is more difficult to control and make a collaborator out of a peasant union which seeks to appropriate a means of production, the land, than it is to control a workers' union. But another consideration was that the peasants fed Poland. In the current situation, a head-on collision with them would mean empty shelves in the stores and would leave the authorities facing the already unruly workers.

The immediate problem was a more serious political one. The capitalist class can maintain its domination only by dividing the various classes and controlling them separately by means of settlements appropriate to their divergent interests. In periods of crisis, rulers can cope with the turbulence of one class only if the others remain quiet. This is what happened earlier in Poland. As long as the peasants and those who can be considered the middle class stayed inactive, the working class offensive could be more or less contained. The entry of the peasants into this struggle radically changed the political situation. The peasants make up more than a third of the population and have numerous links with other social classes and groups. Faced with a potential coalition between peasants and workers, the capitalist class had to modify its political approach. It is ironic that, unable to curtail the peasant movement at its origins, the government sent Walesa, thus sanctioning the momentary alliance and further aggravating the political crisis. And at this point the crisis became yet more acute: the universities demanded their autonomy, and the Party itself was shaken by reformist currents within its ranks. The crisis was threatening to become total and, aside from force, the system had only one recourse left: the army.

Poland 1980-1982

Class struggle and the crisis of capital

Henri Simon

1985

to the peasants. The Church played a coordinating role while furthering its own interests as landowner. But it was the weakness of the central authority that opened the dikes to other waves of demands.

The name Rural Solidarity and the support of its "sister" organization, given directly by workers in some regions (which was facilitated by the existence of large numbers of worker-peasants) should not give rise to illusions: the peasants pursued their own class struggle and their own specific objectives; unlike the workers, they clearly confronted the power of the ruling capitalist class, but their interests nevertheless diverged from those of their temporary allies in this struggle against a common enemy. It all began on January 2 as a wildcat action in Rzeszow, in south eastern Poland, where six hundred peasants and workers occupied the former union headquarters and demanded that it be turned over to them for their organization. In the same region, a newly created "Federation of Workers and Peasants of the Bieszczady Mountains" demanded the return to public access of the game reserve which had been confiscated by Gierek for exclusive use by Party dignitaries. On Saturday, January 10, again in Rzeszow, a national peasant strike committee was formed which called for, among its eleven demands, local self-government, freedom to sell the land and access to modern agricultural techniques. The growing movement called for a peasant union, "Rural Solidarity," to which Party leaders were, at that time, resolutely opposed. Things remained dormant until the end of January. Walesa agreed to serve as mediator with the peasants in order to end the wildcat action. Here, too, the Church would play a major role.

The activities of the peasants were just as troublesome to the state capitalist system as the workers' activities. An entire movement seemed to come to life in the defense of the right to private property and in claims on state property, reminiscent of old "Land to the Peasants" slogans of the 1789 French bourgeois revolution and the 1917 Russian revolution. In spite of

workers (that is, the union), ought to seek a common path: we should unite in the country's interest. We extend our hand to the government."

The compromise over free Saturdays was agreed upon at this point. Solidarity emissaries set out once again to put out the fires. They failed in Bielsko-Biala, despite Walesa's fancy schemes; a high Church dignitary finally succeeded in getting work resumed on Saturday, February 7, following the dismissal of only four local directors. In Jelenia Gora, the strike centered on the conversion of an Interior Ministry's health facility into a public hospital; the government finally gave in on February 10.

The Countryside in Motion: Agitation of Another Class, the Peasantry

An equally serious crisis developed in the countryside during the same period. This one affected another class, the peasantry. In 1956, the peasants were rewarded by a return to private property and, during the upheavals of 1970 and 1976, they made no specific demands. In fact, both times the government was able to maintain their neutrality in its class struggle against the workers by granting a few concessions. This time the clash with the government was deep enough for the peasants to take part in the conflict, but it was the basic economic situation that led the peasants to fight as they did. Poland's rapid industrialization toward a modern capitalism made the government, indeed, the entire society, press for consolidation and for techniques of profitable production in agriculture. The rise of an autonomous workers' movement undoubtedly acted as catalyst for peasant discontent and the model of union organization which grew out of it appealed

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The wildcat actions which arose in many parts of Poland went well beyond the Gdansk accords and expressed a desire for a rank-and-file democracy which would not depend even on Solidarity's top officials. They even affected Party leaders; strikes or threats of strikes demanded the dismissal of political leaders or enterprise managers. At Jelenia Gora the demand was to fire fifteen of them; on January 10, similar demands were made in at least ten regions of Poland. On January 27, in the vicinity of Bielsko-Biala, more than one hundred factories were occupied – again opposing local authorities. A regional strike committee was set up at Jelenia Gora. On January 29, the government proclaimed that it was compelled to maintain "law, order and discipline . . . Anarchy and chaos are entering in the life of the country, endangering the nation and its citizens." But in spite of the efforts of the government and the union, strikes continued. On January 28, Solidarity's National Coordinating Committee asked all its regional branches to avoid any strike activity from that day until further notice. Lech Walesa issued a clear appeal to halt wildcat strikes:

> "We have to end all strikes so that the government can say that Solidarity has the situation under control . . . We all have to concentrate on r-ankand-file problems. There is fire in the country."

By this time, it was clear that Solidarity had completely lost control of the situation; when a union official was asked how many of the strikes were authorized, he answered, "Not a single one." The Jelenia Gora strike committee called for a general strike in three regions to begin on January 30; the general strike in Bielsko-Biala continued and the strike committee refused to send a delegate to Warsaw to negotiate; . . . Let the negotiators come to Bielsko-Biala. Walesa stated at this time that

> "The situation is dangerous (for whom?). We need national unity. To achieve it, we, government and

here also, the contents of the accords were at fault. Kisiel, head of the Planning Commission, was merely applying the conditions of the Gdansk accords when he said on December 19 that, in 1981, only one-half of the Saturdays would be free days, and that the five-day week would be inaugurated only gradually and in relation to the rise in productivity. In response to Point 21 of the Gdansk workers' demands, the accords specified:

> "The principle that Saturday should be a free day should be put into effect, or another method of providing free time should be devised. This should be worked out by December 31, 1980. The measures should include the increase in the number of free Saturdays from the start of 1981."

Each side had its own interpretation of these statements. The rank-and-file wanted everything, immediately. In order to restrain the direct action movement which sprang up everywhere (workers simply did not report to work on Saturdays), Solidarity organized a diversionary action to bring the struggle back under its control: another one-hour warning strike and later the threat of a general strike. The agitation ever free Saturdays continued throughout January and ended with a compromise on January 30: three out of four Saturdays would be free and the work week was set at 41 1/4 hours. In these discussions with the government, Solidarity obtained recognition of its press and access to radio and TV. But the real compromise lay elsewhere. While Walesa was away paying homage to the Pope in midJanuary, there were further wildcat actions which affected the system much mere fundamentally than the issue of time off and media access. In exchange for Solidarity's increased stabilization, the union was now obliged to do its "job"not only on the Jelenia Gora and Bielsko-Biala workers, but also on the Rzeszow peasants; in both cases it was the vanguard of capitalist repression.

1. Toward a discussion of classes under capitalism in its eastern zone of domination

This work attempts to analyze the struggles of Polish workers from the summer of 1980 until today. It is a collective effort of several comrades from Echanges. It is the third in a series of texts. The first two were; Capitalisme et lutte de classe en Pologne 1970-71 (by ICO, a collective, 1975)* and Le 25 juin 1976 en Pologne (by Henri Simon, 1977). The development of capital in Poland and the class struggles which accompanied it may seem to be unique to Poland. In fact, the Poland of 1980 had very specific characteristics: a large class of peasants who owned their land; an equal balance between Western capital and Eastern capital in a rapidly industrializing economy; a balance of forces which favored the workers, who could not be restrained within the current economic and political structures; and an independent mass organization, the Catholic Church, which was a counterpoise to the only legal mass organization, the Communist Party. *Poland: 1970-71, Capitalism and Class Struggle, published by Black and Red, 1977.

These specific characteristics were not found in any other country in the Russian imperialist bloc nor in Russia itself. Like the movements of 1970-71 and 1978, the 1980 movement has apparently met with no direct response from the working class in these countries, even though they are linked under the same

form of domination of capital. But this is in appearance only. It is certain that in the Russian bloc there has been a resounding echo and that workers there are very much aware of what the Polish workers have achieved. In January 1981, a miner from the Donets basin said: "We know everything about Poland, but what can we do? We are for the Polish workers; but if Poland is attacked today, it will be our turn tomorrow." (This was part of an interview published in the Financial Times (London) on January 9, 1981 and conducted by Alexei Nikitin who has subsequently been interned in a psychiatric hospital.)

In Russia, for more than sixty years, and in the "peoples' democracies" for more than thirty years, economic development has been in the hands of a capitalist class (a specific neo-bourgeoisie) which was openly totalitarian and ruled through the dictatorship of the Bolshevik party. The form of this domination corresponded to the needs of the moment: primarily, to uproot the enormous mass of peasants in order to make proletarians out of them, and, additionally, to protect the nascent national capital from any foreign economic influence. After the Second World War the same form was applied to the countries annexed by Russia, including already industrialized ones like East Germany and Czechoslovakia. But the problems presented themselves differently in countries as dissimilar as, for example, the East Germany and the Poland of 1945. Paradoxically, the same form of centralized capitalist power was able to adapt itself to an advanced industrial structure like East Germany's since it corresponded to the needs of capital, (and increased efficiency) as well as to a backward structure like Poland's (where it administered the country's development). But behind the facade of Russian military domination, economic realities were all-powerful and affected the attitudes of the national Communist parties. The seemingly identical veil of Party centralism masked social and political realities which were strikingly different. Problems Poland encountered paralleled ones Russia had experienced or was still experiencing. The political and

herence to the system of exploitation itself'), no government could allow striking workers to prevent punishment of the "guilty." The Catholic Episcopate felt equally threatened by such a betrayal of a secret and straightforwardly declared on December 12:

> "Every effort must be made to protect the institution of the State and the sovereignty of the fatherland."

Walesa took up the same refrain on December 16: Any action "that could raise the danger of a threat to the freedom and statehood of the fatherland must be avoided," and on the 17th, he really went overboard:

> "The time has come for a concerted effort to surrender the strike weapon and negotiate a return to economic security and social peace . . .Society needs order at this time."

The dedication of the memorial to the Gdansk martyrs of 1970-71 on December 16 was an appropriate symbol of the significance of the "victory" that the Gdansk accords represented. It was a touching and ominous demonstration of national unity: oppressors and workers, gunmen and their prey, executioners and widows of victims, all carefully surrounded by the new police (the security forces from the shipyard union), all intoning the national anthem and all blessed by the Church, by Solidarity and by the Party. A workers' defeat was enacted here. Whenever capital is threatened by both the class struggle and its own problems it turns to the old, familiar ideology: national unity for the salvation of the endangered fatherland.

The "organized" tears of emotion were not dry before another conflict erupted, again relating to the Gdansk accords. This one was ever the five-day work week. Solidarity made a big fuss about the "non-application of the Gdansk accords" but

Already by November 14, Walesa was again negotiating with Kania; the over-zealous governor had to resign, wage agreements were settled, the rationing of meat and butter was expected to improve the organization of the shortages, an economic reform of the shipyards would be undertaken with Solidarity's cooperation.

Against this background of strikes for wages (in railways, textiles, sugar refineries, transportation), another serious conflict erupted. This one was over the problem of repression, which had also been left unresolved in the Gdansk accords. This conflict was set off by a rank-and-file initiative. A Justice Department employee leaked a document on the government's plan for repression, and a section of Warsaw workers printed it for immediate distribution. The police seized everything and, on November 21, arrested both the printer Narozniak and the employee responsible for the leak, Sapielo. Strikes immediately broke out at the Ursus tractor factory in a Warsaw suburb and the Huta Warszawa steel works. The rank-and-file set forth their demands: reduce the "security" budget, investigate methods used by the repressive apparatus; punish those responsible for past repression, release the two arrested on , November 21; wage demands were also made. In a communique, Solidarity condemned the "irresponsible strikes" and declared that it would repudiate strikes which were not officially sanctioned. Walesa was brought to Warsaw by helicopter to put out the fire. Narozniak and Sapielo were released and in exchange Walesa got work resumed at Ursus but failed at the steelworks; here, it took Kuron until 3:30 a.m. to persuade the workers to return. This disclosure of state secrets demonstrated the inadequacy of Solidarity and unleashed a violent campaign, the purpose of which was to intimidate the workers. It was the familiar scenario of threats of Russian intervention along with Western declarations of warning. No government could tolerate such an act (these secrets are an essential element for maintaining people's ad-

economic structures in the USSR were a hold-over from the period of formal domination of capital; these structures were perpetuated by certain backward sectors which maintained in a state of semi-backwardness an economy that had already largely passed to the stage of real domination. The problem of capital was to mass produce consumer goods, to put into operation modern techniques of production with high productivity, namely to have a field for the unhindered operation of capital. All this presupposed that the system of domination would simuItaneously be transformed into a different system, one compatible with these developments and with changes in the structure of classes, affecting especially peasants and those at the intermediate level of the economic and political hierarchy (these groups bearing resemblance to the middle classes in the Western branch of capital). The class struggle in Poland, even if it may have specific characteristics, clearly brings up these problems. Will the outcome of this struggle be the beginning of a transformation of structures in the Eastern branch of capital?

The international crisis of capital precipitated the economic crisis in Poland. To the extent that Poland's entire system of industrialization was based on foreign trade – especially with the Western branch of capital – the restriction of this trade hindered its operation. Polish workers rebelled once again when the ruling class tried to make them bear the burden, namely the increased rate of extortion of surplus value. But didn't every capitalist country face the same problem in this period of crisis? If the workers' struggle in Poland exposed clearly and brutally the nature of the crisis of capital in the Eastern branch, it simuItaneously exposed the nature of world capital.

In the Western branch of capital, the "solution" to the crisis, namely, increasing the rate of profit, was no longer seen as an intrusion of politics into economic matters, but as a freedom to be exercised by managers of the economy, a freedom where capital is unrestricted by political or state control. During the

preceding decades, the development of capital in the East gave rise to a conflict within the capitalist class itself between politicians (in control of the Party) and technocrats (in control of the economy). This period seems to have come to an end. No one within the capitalist class any longer denies the urgency of economic and political reforms, even if there are disagreements about what methods to use. One wonders if the conflict within the ruling class in Poland and in the other countries in the Eastern branch of capital, the conflict over economic reforms leading to more "freedom" (namely, greater productivity of labor by means of a more complete "bondage") may not be a specific case in the global tendencies of international capital. Within a national framework, capital tries to make use of the class struggle as a lever to dislodge the backward forces in its midst (the ones opposed to its present requirements) and to replace them with more trustworthy instruments of domination. But it is impossible to contain the class struggle. Poland provides striking proof that the crisis of capital, namely, the crisis of profit interacting with the class struggle, does not spare so-called "socialist" countries. In the East, as in the West, a free hand for capital does not in any way mean more "freedom" for workers. Given the magnitude of the crisis of profit and the working class reactions to it, the structures of capital oscillate between sharing the management of capital with the workers and repressing them most violently. In this respect, Poland, as a national entity, is just one specific case of the general crisis of capital. Self-management currents in Poland parallel the same currents in other industrialized countries. The military-police repression parallels the most brutal repressions – totalitarian in underdeveloped or industrializing countries, selective in industrialized countries. In fact, capital is trapped by its own development; the modern techniques which are widely diffused through competition cannot be entirely efficient in a totalitarian context or in a context of manipulated poverty. Nevertheless, the crisis of profit and the class struggle can be overcome

the "leadership role of the Party" in relation to the Solidarity statutes.

The "recognition" of the Party had, in fact, been spelled out in the Gdansk accords; it had actually been imposed on the rank-and-file by the pro-Catholic Gdansk Presidium without being voted on by the MKS; it is implicitly contained in the statutes themselves since they refer to the "validity of the Constitution." The debate was more fundamental than an ideological debate or a disagreement over words: the working class rank-and-file, backed up by the most radical members of the union apparatus, had a conception of rank-and-file democracy; the union apparatus (not by chance the section linked to the Catholic Church and the reformist wing) had an elitist, "party oriented," bourgeois conception of democracy. Their differences took the form of a "great ideological debate" but it was much ado about nothing: the clause in question was inserted in an appendix to the statutes. Both sides claimed victory.

All this turmoil hid the increasing activity of the rank-and-file. On October 22, the Wroclaw railway workers began a hunger strike for their wages; in Gdansk on October 27, dockers refused to load potatoes for export and threatened to do the same for any commodity which local markets lacked. During the debates over the statutes, wages and food supplies were also discussed. Solidarity was divided on what action to undertake for the statutes, but strike threats deaIt with more down-to-earth subjects. While Walesa and Solidarity leaders celebrated the "victory" of the statutes at the Warsaw Opera on November 10, fifteen factories in Czestochowa went on strike, demanding the dismissal of the regional governor. One hundred hospital workers occupied a room in the Gdansk administration building and demanded their wages; thirty instructors occupied another room. As Walesa declared: "These are uncoordinated actions which weaken the movement's cohesion."

clear indication that in this period, the workers retained the initiative.

This was precisely what Russia did not want. The majority of the rank-and-file struggles grew out of specific local, apparently minor, problems but always ended with the same political confrontation at the summit. Would the Party (namely, capitalist power) or the rank-and-file have the last word? This was a much more fundamental problem than the sharing of power among already established groups (or aspirants to power like the Solidarity leadership). The constant Russian intervention ostensibly sought to preserve the "communist model" of Party domination, but it was not the ideological facade of this model which mattered. Behind the myth lay the brutal and uncompromising domination by the military, economic and political interests of Russian imperialism. This suggests that the political model could have been aItered as long as the strategic interests of Russia were preserved intact. The rank-and-file struggles frequently called into question the practical effects of this military domination. For the rank-and-file, the struggle was for "undivided democracy," for power over the practical details of the worker's everyday life; at the summit, the response was rigid and undivided domination. At the intermediate levels the debate became ideological again and this served to conceal the real interests of the various protagonists. The Gdansk accords were particularly vague about wages. Threats of strikes, especially in the South, among construction workers, obliged Solidarity to organize a warning strike – lasting one hour, on Friday, October 3. The strike was unanimously observed; this can be interpreted in two ways: first, the rank-and-file followed the union's call, thereby authorizing it to deal with the government; or, second, the "organized" strike cut short the wildcat actions but the strength of the limited strike showed that the workers were determined to go further if nothing were done. In late October and early November there were further wildcat actions over wage demands and this increased the polemic over

only if capital is free to increase exploitation. Due to the interpenetration of the economies in both branches of capital, the failures and crises specific to one country become the failure and crisis of capital as a whole. The situation in Poland further accentuates the crisis which rages everywhere and further intensifies the class struggle. The question now is not what will become of Poland, but where will the chaos appear next in the West or in the East?

2. In Poland the class struggle never ended

Speaking to the Sunday Times (London), on August 31, 1989, a Polish journalist observed: ”Since the war, this country has been run by a succession of different methods. First we had sheer Stalinist terror and then the mobilization of idealism which was gradually dissipated under Gomulka. When Gierek came to power, he tried a new formula – technocracy and consumerism. But he combined it with autocracy, and the mix simply did not work. Technocracy must be controlled and channelled by democracy.’ At that time, his account was accurate but it gave only a superficial explanation of the Polish situation.

What the journalist failed to say was that the transition from one method of domination to another (the next) was made under pressure from workers’ uprisings, and that each ”new system” was a response to these uprisings. Resumption of work was the authorities short-term goal; restoration of the complete domination of capital was the long-term goal. The authorities were forced to make economic and political concessions every time. And Although, over the years, they tried by various repressive means to reimpose the yoke of exploitation on the workers, they were not able to erase from the workers’ memories the fact that a mass movement had caused capitalist power to back down.

In a certain sense, recent events in Poland are the direct resuIt of the 1956 insurrection. On June 28, 1956, the eruption in

Work was resumed in exchange for concessions that would not be too damaging to Party authority, union credibility or economic activity (all required for the continuity of capital). To the extent that the new union was unable to carry out the role expected of it vis-a-vis the working class, the threat of force became more explicit, orchestrated each time-as if by mutual agreement-by the medias of East and West. Capital, as much in the West as in the East, had a common interest in keeping the Polish workers’ movement contained within very precise boundaries, those imposed on workers everywhere. Some of the rank-and-file initiatives which appeared during the winter months provided dangerous examples for exploited people anywhere; and worse, they were an unacceptable incursion of rank-and-file power into the prerogatives of power itself. The duality of power which the leaders referred to on these occasions was not between the union and the Party, but between the rank-and-file workers and the leaders of both union and government. Above and beyond the war of words in this period, the economic interests of the West were just as important as the economic and strategic interests of Russia: in fact, these interests were so tightly intertwined that any political move by one side had to take into consideration the interests of the other. In addition, the clear determination of the rank-and-file made direct Russian intervention so risky that no strategic benefit could be expected from it. The situation could have been explosive for capital. Western ”warnings” against direct Russian intervention should be interpreted as stemming from a clear understanding of its own interests rather than just another rehash of the Cold War. It is striking to see the same pattern repeated during these months: wildcat strikes, negotiations between Solidarity and the government, threats of intervention, threat of a limited general strike, concessions which ended the struggle. Then an eruption elsewhere, often over different issues but just as explosive, continued the sequence. This is a

ertheless had to retain 'its links with the masses' in order to preserve its credibility with the authorities. This was not an easy task; Western unions – the apparent model for Solidarity – had long been skilled at it, just as they had much experience in detailing dangerous rank-and-file movements. It did not take long for the Presidium, and Walesa in particular, to learn 'how to end a strike.' As Walesa himself said:

> "I should remain where I am in order to fight, in order to put out useless fires like a fireman, in order to transform the movement into an organization."

Let us acknowledge him and his advisors (particularly the Church, about which Walesa said "its help was enormous") to be first-rate tacticians. The conflicts which broke out during the autumn and winter of 1980-81 were not, as was claimed, conflicts for the implementation of the Gdansk accords, but were opposed to the very contents of the accords. The new union was scarcely installed before it showed a tendency to assume its function under Eastern capitalism: the union itself, in agreement with the political authorities, had set limits to the direct action of the working-class movement. These were regularly over-stepped and this seriously called into question the union's power and existence as legal intermediary with the government. Both Western and Eastern medias pretended to see conflict only between Solidarity and the dominant power, so this struggle went unnoticed for many months. Week after week, new struggles arose from rank-and-file initiatives in extremely diverse domains. These struggles shook up the union apparatus, which was itself torn by internal conflicts – between the ex-MKS committee from Gdansk and the Solidarity leadership, between the regional branches and this same leadership. To contain each of these new struggles, the union leadership and Party representatives from the government had to hold negotiations at the highest level in order to work out a settlement.

Poznan dramatically revealed the Polish workers in struggle. At first, the repression was bloody and brutal, but after Gomulka (who had been ousted under Stalin) returned to power, the rulers skillfully managed to manipulate all currents of "liberalization" and of "struggle" so as to use them against both the workers and the revolutionary committees which had been set up. The climax of this period was Gomulkas return to power in October 1956.

At that time the political class thought it wise to define what it called "the Polish road to socialism" Gomulka legalized workers councils only to gradually empty them of all content. Furthermore, he channelled part of the surplus value extorted from the workers (which was then assigned to basic industrial investments in heavy industry) into the production of consumer goods in an attempt to raise the standard of living. So here was a Communist Party, under pressure from the class struggle, recognizing workers' interests and accepting their intervention in economic decisions, namely in the disposition of their labor. Another of the Party's retreats had equally great consequences for later events: a numerous peasantry (more than 30% of the population) recovered their lands in the form of private property, Although with certain restrictions.

This situation could have determined a form of capitalist democracy which would have served the global interests of capital within the framework of the Polish state. Progressive elimination of the peasant class in the transition to capitalist agriculture, industrial development with the proletarianization of the ex-peasants, transformation of the ruling class into a pro-managerial class – all this might have appeared as the "free and natural" development of the system. But the Russian domination, both strategic and economic, forced the retention of the Leninist model of Party domination, a Party claiming to centralize all decisions and to determine the rhythm of economic growth, which in a class society is absolutely impossible. A fundamental conflict developed and intensified over the years:

economic constraints were liberalized, especially those which allowed enterprise managers to make decisions appropriate to the interests of capital. But none of this implied the restoration of Western-style political liberties. Hence, this fundamental conflict, which became more violent and visible as industrialization proceeded, took the form of a confrontation within the ruling class itself. The world-wide crisis of capital made the problems more severe and the rulers' inability to resolve them opened the way to the workers' actions. Three overt worker revolts, in 1970, 1976 and 1980, demonstrated the system's inability to resolve this conflict. In addition to its own crisis, the capitalist class had to deal with power relations which favored workers who did not want changes in the system to be made at their expense.

The workers' insurrection of 1970-71 has undoubtedly had the most profound effect on the current generation of Polish workers. But it was just as instructive for the capitalist class because it exposed the internal contradictions of the system and gave rise to a generation of reformists. The December 1970 insurrection did not appear out of the blue. In their opposition to a capitalist class whose domination still emanated from an all-powerful Party, the workers responded with resistance on a day-to-day level which was often camouflaged but which became increasingly open in a society where industrialization turned enterprise managers into flaccid administrators because they had so little power. Thus, over the years, there developed a crisis endemic to the system – a crisis whose solution theoretically would involve economic adjustments (in prices and wages) as well as structural ones (internal reorganization with a different power distribution inside the capitalist class). Such reforms were, however, constantly postponed in order to assure social peace and also to maintain the equilibrium among the ruling class clans who served the Party.

By the end of the 1960s, the crisis had become more acute and was accentuated by more frequent, but locally isolated

placed by Kania; expulsions and power struggles ' would continue for a long time to come. The newly promoted officials endeavoured to reassure both the Russians and the West, so as to protect their posts and also to procure without delay the vital supplies and the credits needed to avoid strangulation of an economy heavily dependent on foreign exchange. In this area, underneath the propaganda and posturing, Kania found nothing but good will. For the time being, all were ready to come to Poland's "aid" - simultaneously brandishing self-serving offers of assistance along with threats of force, as in every capitalist context - to "aid" Poland in surmounting this obstacle, especially now since the accords and the situation seemed to guarantee that things were heading toward "normalization." Gdansk fulfilled its promises: within a month, Solidarity had become an instrument "with which discussions are possible," as Kania declared and, as Walesa would say later, Kania is "a man with whom discussions are possible."

Autumn 1980 and Winter 1980-81 Working Class Guerrillas. The Rank-and-File Against the Gdansk Accords

Once the period of conflicts between the MKS and the government over the new union's demands ended (the settlement adjusted the respective powers of the Party and the union), another type of conflict emerged. We already pointed out that this conflict was present in the September strikes, when the workers realized that the Gdansk accords were unsuited to their particular situation and that social peace was nothing to get excited about. The new Solidarity union, with one foot in the Church, the other in the reformist circles of the KOR, and its hand outstretched toward the reform wing of the Party, nev-

in practice, then legally, a sort of superior body. just as the Gdansk Presidium and the experts had formed a sort of central committee during the strike and later became the administration of the Gdansk union, so Walesa, the "natural leader," became simply 1 the leader. During the first half of September, it was quite easy to get acceptance of the Gdansk accords and of the transformation of MKS locals into branches of Solidarity. This was accepted in the Silesian mines on Wednesday, September 3. But there were already signs of discord. The aviation factory in Mielec resumed its strike on Thursday, September 4, and added twenty-three demands to the twenty-one points of Gdansk, including the firing of several upper echelon administrators; in the Tarnobrzeg sulphur mines, the working conditions took precedence over general conditions; elsewhere, workers demanded: the firing of a local Party chief; the cessation of the teamwork system currently practiced in the mines; the five-day week, etc.

Although these conflicts may appear to be the tail end of the strikes of July and August, they nonetheless anticipate what would take place later and, in particular, they indicate that the rank-and-file movement was guarding its autonomy. The apparent calm made the authorities hopeful that everything was being normalized in the newly established structures, each protagonist hoping to utilize circumstances in order to nibble away at the other's power. In fact, almost the entire work force joined the ranks of Solidarity; this emptied the official unions of all their constituents, compelling union bureaucrats to find other jobs. By the end of September 1980, Solidarity could claim to represent 90% of the workers; it had its own national structure (a permanent committee of co-ordination) and regional branches which, in principle, were autonomous. On Tuesday, September 16, the Gdansk branch of Solidarity issued an edict warning against wildcat strikes. For their part, the reformist bureaucracy in the Party set about eliminating the obstacles to the implementation of the "Gdansk program;" Gierek was re-

strikes, and by the student movement of March 1968. The repression unleashed against this revolt, which the workers had not joined, did not put an end to the strikes. In the course of the winter of 1969-70, the strikes spread, especially in response to attempts to make reductions in wages. The strikes made the authorities increasingly cautious in undertaking what was becoming increasingly urgent.

Thus, backed into a corner, in December 1970 the authorities resolved to strike a blow; it was hatched by the same Gomulka crew which had "settled" the 1956 crisis but the credibility this crew had enjoyed at that time was exhausted precisely because of this settlement. The attack was aimed against the workers alone because this seemed to be easiest, and it was launched on two fronts: wages and prices. The attack against wages took the form of changing the work norms. This did not have a unifying effect on the struggles; if struggles did resulT, they remained localized and isolated since each factory developed its own form of resistance. (The capitalist class undoubtedly learned from the insurrections of East Germany in June 1953 and of Hungary in November 1956, which originated in response to extensive and abrupt changes in work norms.) So it was not surprising that when the government announced an adjustment in prices on December 13, 1970, there was a strike in progress at the Gdansk naval shipyards precisely over the determination of wages. The price hike which was to affect the entire country and a great variety of products turned out to be the unifying element of the struggle.

The price increases affected mainly foodstuffs of basic necessity and were as high as 30%. This was more than enough to provoke a wave of protests which rapidly turned into riots. After December 14, the strike which had been under way at the Gdansk naval shipyards quickly spread to many factories throughout Poland and became a generalized worker rebellion which the capitalist class managed to subdue only by repeal-

ing, in succession, all the measures which had given rise to the rebellion.

There were three stages to the struggle, in a dialectic of the working class versus capital. As in Poznan in 1956, the first stage was a frontal attack against the regime. Workers came out in the streets to emphasize their demands; since their delegates were rebuffed and even arrested, and since the authorities refused any dialogue and resorted to violence and deceit, workers in many places congregated outside the local Party headquarters which they viewed as centers of power, took them by storm and set fire to them. This is what happened in the two large BaItic port cities, Gdansk and Gdynia, where the advance flank of the proletariat was the shipyard workers of these cities. Here, in spite of some continuing guerrilla urban warfare, the workers for a time essentially took over the cities. In Gdansk, on December 15, the local police and militia gradually drove the workers toward the naval shipyards; the workers proceeded to occupy the shipyards, but for a short time only because they were forced to evacuate them on December 17.

In Gdynia the strike was more confusing; as in Gdansk, a strike committee was set up, but after December 16, the shipyards were occupied by the army. On December 17, following an appeal broadcast on the radio the night before by one of the local Party leaders, the workers assembled early in the morning to resume work. They were met with a fusillade; a massacre ensued. This was followed by widespread fighting throughout the city and street clashes which finally ended with the police and army resuming control of the city. More than three hundred of the insurgents were killed. After this, in Gdynia too, the workers withdrew to the factories. In a number of Poland's industrial cities, similar events took place: strikes, demonstrations, fighting, but none of those cities experienced the violence or the tragedy of the events on the BaItic coast. The situation which developed in the coastal cities is hard to define: the workers, to all appearances, went back to the shipyards and

economic decision-making at the state as well as the factory level. They obviously ran up against the omnipotent power of capital and of the "Party bourgeoisie" but this is precisely the direction of capital's history. In difficult periods, capital resorts to appeals for national unity and, for the required time, "calls on the working men" (namely on their licensed organizations] to help manage the crisis and to re-establish the conditions of "normal" exploitation. Kuron was mistaken because he tried to see the role of the new unions in terms of the role of unions in the Western branch of capital. The role of the old unions in the Eastern branch was significantly different. Whereas in the West, the role of unions is to mediate, in the East unions are a political instrument and cannot play this role—the union leaders themselves being members of the capitalist class. The role of the new unions in the Eastern branch seems quite contradictory. During a transitional period, namely, as long as the workers' movement is on the offensive, they tend to function like unions in the Western branch. But in the political system of the Russian zone, it is impossible to maintain this function; they l can only be transformed into instruments of the capitalist class. This is why nothing could be stabilized; either the political system would have to be transformed, or else the working class j struggle would continue its autonomous movement and l increasingly detach itself from the union which was becoming l a cog of the system. Implacable logic would lead Solidarity to become an instrument ever more removed from the rank- and-file and from working class interests. This evolution would lead it first to demand and later to try to promote, for its own purposes, the only political transformation—democrati. zation—which would allow it to perform fully the function which the development of capital assigns to it.

Work was resumed in both Gdansk and Szczecin on Monday, September 1, and the two MKS committees were converted into branches of Solidarity. But just as the Gdansk MKS had served as model, the Gdansk local became, first

sities. As for food provisions, and meat supplies in particular, this all remained in the dark.

At the end of August a journalist for Le Monde reported that: "The situation is uncertain enough for the MKS Presidium members to worry that an uncontrolled rank-and-file movement might arise, have unpredictable consequences and jeopardize such an important victory." September 1980 was the month of great equivocation when the majority of workers, in the euphoria over the strength of the workers' movement which had dominated everything else for the past two months, seemed to be satisfied with the vague words which they thought contained their conception of protest and demands, whereas they contained the conceptions of the democratic bourgeoisie. These same workers seemed to have confidence in men who, because of their perseverance in the ranks of the underground opposition during the long years of repression, were above the slightest suspicion; they were unaware that it is the office that makes the man and that even the most honest among them cannot escape the pitfalls of union functions under capital. They were also unaware that many of these new l leaders had the same elitist conceptions as the leaders of the system they were fighting. Walesa, for example, later stated: "I have always been the ringleader, like the billy-goat that leads the flock, like the ox that leads the herd. People need that ox, that billy-goat, otherwise the herd goes on its own, here and there, wherever there is some grass to eat, and nobody follows the right road. A flock without an animal that leads is a l senseless thing without a future." Jadwiga Staniszkis commented about Walesa that he "has an amazing talent for manipulating the masses."

Kuron, pre-eminent among the experts and one of the KOR leaders who was hired right away by the new Solidarity union, was mistaken when he said: "The unions ought to be partners in the administration and protectors of the workers." Other Solidarity leaders already saw the union's role as participating in

their jobs, but control over what went on seemed to lie more with the strike committees than with the rulers. It was in another port city, Szczecin, that the second stage would emerge. Only three days after the Gdansk uprising and on the same day as the Gdynia massacre, the Szczecin workers at the naval shipyards called a solidarity strike. Having learned from experience, they first of all set up a strong organization for struggle: a workers' assembly and a workers' committee made up of elected representatives from every sector in the factory. Together they drew up a list of twenty-two demands to be discussed with the appropriate authorities. The refusal to hold discussions led to a street demonstration which, like in Gdynia and Gdansk, brought the workers to the local Party headquarters, which was set on fire. Here, too, a sort of urban guerrilla warfare broke out in the city. One might have thought it was a repetition of the situation in Gdansk and Gdynia. In fact, it was almost the opposite. There was nothing impromptu here; the resistance organization did not follow, but preceded defeat in the streets. In this sense the fighting inside the city was simply a tactic in a much broader approach. In order to make this clear, the workers' committee transformed itself into a central strike committee which took charge, not only of the struggle and negotiations, but of the organization of the activity of the region as well. This step in advance created a situation which was reproduced in other industrial centers, notably in Gdansk and Gdynia where the same organizational structures and the same type of demands appeared. The spread of this situation seemed to threaten the power of the capitalist class enough to warrant ousting Gomulka and replacing him with Gierek. Though apparently victorious in the streets, the government nevertheless had to try to palm off this change of ruler as a "victory" for the workers' struggle and thus try to put an end to a situation dangerous for the system as a whole. For the capitalist class, Gierek was the man of the technocrats who were in opposition to the politicians of the Party; the fact that he was

reputed to be a "reformer" aroused hopes that he was also "the man of the hour," capable of getting the workers to listen to reason and to accept the new economic and social conditions against which they had rebelled.

The struggle moved from the streets to the places of production; it was this terrain that Gierek chose for the second act, when he initiated a social repression in place of the bloody repression of the preceding days. The curtain opened with what was mentioned earlier: the presentation of Gierek as "the man of the workers' rebellion." But a Gomulka-type coup did not work a second time; the workers were not taken in and continued their struggle. The number of walkouts increased almost everywhere and, a week after the revolt, the strike committees were still more or less in charge wherever they existed. They even began setting up direct contacts throughout Poland. This situation continued into January 1971; the Szczecin and Gdansk committees repeatedly demanded that the head of the government, Gierek himself, come to them to discuss the workers' demands. This is what he and his entourage finally did on January 24 and 25, 1971, since he was backed into a corner. In appearance, he acquiesced to one of the workers' central demands. For the head of the Party which claimed to be the direct emanation of the working class to come to the workers

and face a strike committee of more than five hundred workers delegates (a real emanation of the workers), was more than a humiliation; it was an acknowledgment that the Party was an institution that had no connection whatsoever with the working class, and that it was neither more nor less than an ordinary capitalist exploiter which ruled over workers' destinies. But this humiliation was a tactic which furnished capital with a victory. Gierek's "courage" and "understanding" in confronting the anger of the workers cost him very little since the police and the army had encircled the shipyards and were ready to intervene. From this position of strength, by granting a few concessions, he was able to obtain two crucial results: the workers

September 1980: Two Bureaucracies Against the Rank-and-File

On Sunday, August 31, Lech Walesa announced not only to all workers in the Gdansk region but to all Polish workers: "The strike is over. We did not get everything we wanted, but we did get all that was possible in the current situation. We will win the rest later because we now have the essential: the right to strike and independent unions." This borders on involuntary * humour: Polish workers had been asserting their right to strike for a long time; and since July they had been exercising their right to independently organize and put forward their own demands. But now that work was resumed in Gdansk, they had to renounce their own demands and adopt the union's, they had to submerge their own rank-and-file organizations in hierarchical structures which issued orders and precise instructions for action; they had to go back to work and again - labour for the prosperity of a system in which they once more ? counted for little. Their autonomous activity, their abundant originality, the direct defence of their own interests, all this - in terms of the intentions of the government and the "free" union - should serve for nothing more than to institute reforms which soften the excessively brutal edges of exploitation. The goal of the reforms was to eliminate revolutionary tendencies in the movement and relegate them to the level of "provocations," and to enjoy the grandiose hollow words of politicians and the various promises of Party leaders. In actual fact, the accords did not serve that function, they did not succeed in eliminating all the revolutionary thrust of the movement. But that was the objective content of the accords. As for the original demands of the strike, they were put to one side: pay raises would not be immediate, only gradual, according to industrial sector and at the discretion of the government. There would be no sliding scale but merely an adjustment hinging on the cost of basic neces-

that the experts on both sides were more or less from the same world in the capital. In a way, if one considered only their political approach, their positions could have been reversed." It was not easy to impose this "solution" on the workers, and, in spite of appeals, strikes were still spreading on Wednesday, August 27, especially in the industrial region of the South. This made it urgent to come up with a statement which would save face for the leaders on both sides. On the workers' side, a leadership, the Presidium, made up largely of underground militants who were co-opted at the beginning of the strike, quickly detached itself from the rank-and-file. Many points in the negotiations were imposed either by the experts (underground political militants or economists whose "services" had been accepted) or by Walesa himself, who discussed matters privately with Jagielski. The democracy practiced by those who came, whether from near or far, to "organize the workers" had no relation to the democratic activities of the workers. But this took place in the euphoria of victory. On the governments side too, there were reservations: wouldn't these new structures sweep away a lot of the hard-won posts that many still wanted to defend by force? But those days were past and since the ground swell had shaken up the upper echelons of the Party as well as the economic experts, there was no other alternative but to ride the wave and try to save the essential: class domination. In fact, the Gdansk accords served a two-fold purpose. On the one hand, they put an end to the strikes which threatened to spread; on the other, they attempted to provide a structure which was simultaneously comprehensive, indefinite and efficient, into which the rank-and-file movement could be channelled.

agreed to the price increases and agreed to return to work. In effect, this agreement deprived the workers of both their weapon – the strike-and. the principal grounds for their action – the price increases. A few days later, the lowest wages were, in fact, raised; the rest of the promises remained a dead letter. But, in spite of all that, a new situation had been created. A journalist for Le Monde wrote on February 5, 1971, "The new leader of the Polish Party created a precedent whose extreme consequences could influence certain established norms in this ☒ country's internal relations. One of these norms determines the form of contacts between the Party leadership and the working class and it does not include direct dialogue between the head of the Party and the strikers.

The rulers considered the play to be over; however, it was not. A third act was to follow. Although most strikes were settled at little cost to the system, during the week of February 7 – 13, a strike broke out among the women textile workers of Lodz. The textile factories were occupied; before long, the city was barricaded. Strikes then reappeared in other cities, particularly in Szczecin., where the workers were becoming aware of the nature of the governments promises. It looked like the Szczecin scenario would be repeated; the rulers had to come to Lodz to negotiate with an imposing workers' delegation. But this time they had to back down on things they had been unwilling to concede before: all the December price hikes would be cancelled, but the wage increases granted since December would stand.

For the entire Polish working class, this was an unprecedented success in having its demands met, but it was no more than that. The workers saw that by striking they were able to make the government back down, but they reaffirmed the legitimacy of this very government when they laid down their arms. Because of this and because of their overconfidence in their "victory," they would experience severe repression, directly and indirectly, in subsequent years. No ruling class would suffer

such agonies for the purpose of retaining the very substance of its class domination without seeking to consolidate its position through a repression combined with structural changes which could prevent such a situation from recurring. This explains why the rulers carried out repression with one hand while with the other they tried to initiate changes which, in their view, would consolidate the system.

The new ruling clan – Gierek backed by the technocrats of The economy – tried to get out of the impasse by using Western capital and technology to embark on a modern industrial development. The new leaders obliged the peasant class to furnish foodstuffs at low prices; they also encouraged the growth of a middle class of small businessmen. In other words, the Polish capitalist class sold the Polish workers' labor power to Western capital by subsidizing their reproduction with inexpensive national agricultural products (or, at least it hoped to) – this in order to invest in modern processing industries. Even this very timid economic adjustment resulted merely in strengthening the privileged layer of the new capitalist class. The international economic crisis would thwart the attempt to cross the threshold of capitalist productivity solely by means of modern technology. The workers, restricted to the same condition of dependence and to a low living standard, resisted daily and refused to "participate" – which led to a very low level of productivity. Most of the peasants remained at the level of a closed economy, with no access to modern techniques of production for exchange, and although they produced willingly for the market, quantities were small and prices, high.

Nevertheless, after five years of adaptations which furthered a capitalism of consumption and links with international capital, the capitalist class seemed to think that a new reform of the economic and social organization would give it sufficient leverage to attempt to win what it had not been able to win earlier. But the class struggle had not ended; on the contrary, the attempts to modify the conditions of exploitation

One deputy Prime Minister, Jagielski, finally came for discussions with the Gdansk MKS while his counterpart, Barcikowski, negotiated with the Szczecin MKS. The government seemed to capitulate, and seemed to go on capitulating, more or less, until the signing of the "Gdansk accords" and the call to resume work on September 1, issued by the MKS representative, Lech Walesa. This all took place amidst appeals for moderation circulated by the Church, the KOR and by Walesa himself: Gdansk was to be an exemplary island in a Poland hard at work, a safety valve where responsible people who had the situation well under control set up structures appropriate to a modern capitalist Poland. Why has there been so much attention given to the Gdansk accords and so little to those of Szczecin which were signed at about the same time and had the same provisions? At this time, the government was possibly attempting a defensive strategy to try to limit the accords geographically, just as it had earlier tried, unsuccessfully, to restrict them to individual enterprises. The concentration on what happened in Gdansk was due not only to the region's economic importance and the strength of the strike: during the days of strikes p and negotiations, a familiar tactic evolved which was aimed at the resistance movement itself, namely at the workers and their will to resist.

On the one hand, in Gdansk, an inter-factory strike committee held power in a portion of national territory. On the other hand, and this is the more important aspect, the negotiations in Gdansk were not discussions between strikers and the authorities, but a meeting of reformists, some of them Party members, the others connected with the political opposition or with the working class rank-and-file - all of them serving as experts seeking a satisfactory solution in order to "save the Polish nation," namely to make the workers labour "properly" in order to straighten out the capitalist economy. In describing these discussions among experts, Jadwiga Staniszkis spoke of a relaxed atmosphere and added: "One of the reasons was

and he should be at the shipyards") who were quickly joined by one hundred delegates designated by different shipyard departments. The demands no longer had any connection with what had unleashed the strike - or rather, they had a profound connection, being a generalization of what was inherent in the particular repressive event which had ignited the powder barrel: along with economic demands, there was a call for free unions, access to the media, repeal of all repressive measures and an end to certain ruling class privileges.

The government tried to stem the rising tide with the weak means available at the moment; with one hand, settlements at individual enterprises; covert repression with the other. On August 17, twenty-four enterprises in the region were on strike; on August 18, there were 180 in a 100-kilometer area around Gdansk. The strike committee at the shipyards transformed l itself into an inter-factory committee, the MKS, which was composed of two delegates from each factory.

This committee controlled the entire region and resolved transportation and food distribution problems. Although Gierek proclaimed on August 18 that "the only just path is one of dialogue and compromise? the government ignored the MKS; its delegated official, Pyka, stated he could meet only with representatives from individual factories; at the same time, on August 20, twenty KOR members were arrested. In Szczecin, the situation was the same as in Gdansk. MKS committees were set up in other industrial regions, notably in the Silesian mines. A general strike spread throughout Poland without anyone having issued a call for one; rank-and-file committees sprang up on their own and managed everyday activities in ever-larger geographical sectors. The government had to change its policy. It apparently was influenced by two considerations whose relative importance remains unclear: lower echelons of the Party (including certain security forces) went over to the strike and the army chiefs did not want to "restore order" because they lacked confidence in their troops.

of labor connected with the new economic orientation intensified it. The new orientation again made it urgent to reform the entire price structure. The reform measures were announced on the evening of June 24, 1976. No one was fooled by them: they involved taking from workers the part of the surplus value needed for the "modern" development of capital. The strike which erupted on tune 25 all over Poland, from Gdansk to Katowice, lasted just one day. It had its most open expression in the Warsaw region, in the sectors of newly established manufacturing industries; at the Ursus tractor factory, at the Zoran auto factory in a 'Warsaw suburb and in the entire city of Radom, 130 kilometers from Warsaw. At Ursus and Zeran, factory organizations were immediately formed and they quickly undertook actions which affected vital interests (railroads, highways). This appropriation of social space was a turning point in the struggles and anticipated events of a few years later. In Radom, by contrast, there was a repeat of what happened in Gdansk and Gdynia in December 1970; the workers overran the city, set Party headquarters on fire and then carried on guerrilla warfare in the streets. While in 1970-71, more than a month and three waves of strikes were needed to revoke the price hikes, this time one day was enough. On June 25, at 10 p.m., the government announced that the increases were annulled. The outburst of joy which followed was of brief duration since, this time too, repression was soon unleashed. But capital had been transformed as well as class relations; just as new methods of struggle had appeared, new social and political phenomena would arise.

Already in 1970, in the West as well as in Poland, observers were saying how incredible it was that simple questions of wages and prices could unleash movements which threatened the system to its roots; all this could easily be avoided by estab lishing "democratic" unions. Olszowski, a Party leader who favored "liberalization" of the economy as well as strict political control, declared at that time: "The Polish people are so

well developed and educated, have so much culture, that the lack of democratic structures has become a caricature which is no longer tolerable." Further industrialization (and more industries using modern productive techniques) created a new mentality for both workers and managers; as the political impasse became more and more obvious, two opposing views of theory and action emerged. Among the rank-and-file there was a will to fight in order to maintain the standard of living and to obtain more. Within the bureaucracy, there was growing criticism accompanied by proposals which would allow the system to change while preserving class distinctions.

After 1970, the growth of a protest movement incorporating diverse elements created conditions favorable to setting up associations of defense and coalition. A dialectical relation was established between the two positions, largely through the mediation of intellectuals; the class struggle sharpened the internal critiques and encouraged their open expression; the internal critiques softened the repression and promoted the growth of horizontal networks of association, solidarity and exchange of information (existing institutions such as the Catholic Church and possibly certain Party organs were able to play a role in this development). All these associations were inextricably linked to the direct actions of the workers. The importance of these associations in extending, unifying and coordinating the movement is difficuIt to ascertain; it is easier to trace how they emerged and developed from the rankand-file movements in order to become direct auxiliaries of the capitalist class.

These are the circumstances which, following the movement of June 25, 1976, gave rise to the KOR, Committee for Defense against Repression, which was initially set up solely by intellectuals and after 1968, by embryos of "free" unions which took as long-term goal the establishment of rank-and-file associations on the model of the comisiones obreros in Spain under Franco. (It was obviously well concealed that

able to play a useful role. In fact, the repression helped the union establish itself in the function it had defined for itself from the beginning. Toward the end of August, the Party found it needed to initiate a new and different approach because its policy of conciliation had brought meagre results. After more than six weeks, the strikes continued; arresting the militants most committed to the "free trade union movement" was clearly not a means to end the strikes. Nevertheless, this is what the authorities attempted.

August 15 - 31, Two Crucial Weeks; Gdansk: The Institutionalization of the Rank-and-File Movement

The first repressive measure seems to have taken place in Warsaw on Monday, August 11; the police detained and held for nine hours Marek Glessman, "leader" of the garbage collectors' strike. In Gdansk on August 13, the new policy became more explicit when three Lenin Shipyard workers who were connected with the underground independent union were fired (among them were Anna Walentynowicz and Nowicki). Prior to this, the Tri-city [Gdansk, Sopot and Gdynia) had largely remained outside the struggle but now the general strike spread like wildfire and was concentrated around the Lenin Shipyards. lf the activity of militants was apparent in the summons to the struggles at the shipyards, the speed with which things moved in the shipyards themselves and then in all enterprises in Gdansk demonstrated yet again workers' spontaneity and the rapid transformation of collective working class consciousness. Last-minute concessions at the shipyards no longer stopped anything, A strike committee was formed by some ten militants [among them, Lech Walesa who had climbed over the wall as soon as he heard news about the strike because "the situation was ripe

Working-class Consciousness is Aroused

Such are the economic, social, political and ideological conditions which moulded these workers' collective consciousness. This collective consciousness would accelerate the pace of subsequent struggles and permit new organizational structures to establish themselves. It was not the KOR and the handful of "free unionists" which precipitated the struggle and turned it into the tidal wave which effectively brought down the entire regime. It was rather the ground swell which opened the way for new structures among which the unions were one of the key elements. The system's reformers used the ground swell as the basis for their organizational project. The end of the strike in Lublin did not end strikes elsewhere: strikes continued to run rampant through the first days of August. The government seemed confident that its strategy of partial concessions would be successful, but its weakness was shown by the extent to which concessions granted in one i place were immediately taken up elsewhere. The underground groups themselves acknowledged that they played a very small part in the outbreak and persistence of the wave of strikes. But now, suddenly, their organizational project was transformed from a far-off ideal into a reality close at hand, especially since their working class contacts were carried to the forefront by the surge of the movement and hundreds of workers, previously unknown, were turning toward them. Only a member of an elitist and hierarchical organization could believe that all this energy could result from the activity of a tiny minority and that if a few individuals - supposedly leaders - were eliminated, the movement would be abruptly broken. The government's attempt to do this had the opposite effect from the one expected; for the rank-and-file as well as the Western mass media (which came looking only for leaders), the repression which now descended gave credibility to the idea that the underground groups had played and were

these comisiones obreros, created by the rank-and-file, had been colonized by the Spanish Communist Party which turned them into its union apparatus; the irony is that the Polish militants – hostile to the Polish Communist Party – undoubtedly harbored the same hopes as their adversaries of transforming the Polish comisiones obreros, which they wanted to stimulate in the rank-and-file, into a union which they would control.)

In April 1978, the founding charter of the underground unions of Northern Poland contained the following totally unambiguous declaration: "Only free unions and associations can save the state, since only democratization can lead to the integration of the interests and the will of the citizen with the interests and the power of the state." Lech Walesa was among the signers of this charter. In 1979, ten Party experts submitted a 150-page report which warned Gierek about the need to change the country's official policies; they reported a growing rift between the government and the population; they thought that a more independent press and worker representation. worthy of its name – namely, political reforms in conjunction with economic reforms – could help avoid the worst. They described this "worst" as an explosion more violent than any since the war. In Gdansk, on July 4, 1989, at a "working" meeting of the local Party committee, Kania, a member of the Political Bureau, declared that "the Central Committee can no longer control the economic crisis; it is disastrous, and shortages may soon affect meat and bread." As he spoke these words, the explosion had already begun; but no one knew that in violence and scope it would truly exceed anything Poland had experienced since the war.

3. A new world: from meat prices to direct democracy

July 1980: Spontaneous Strikes Run Rampant Everywhere

On Monday, June 30, the government announced a "reorganization of meat distribution". The details are unimportant; the result was an immediate price increase of almost 60% and greater difficulty in obtaining meat. On Tuesday, July 1, strikes broke out in factories throughout Poland: Ursus [tractors] and Huta Warszawa [steel] near Warsaw, at Poznan (metallurgy], at Tczew (transmissions], at Mielec (aviation], at Swidnica [aviation], near Lublin. The Party [PUWP] defined its position toward the strikes: no repression, negotiations at the local level with factory managers who had authority to make concessions at their plant in order to end the strife.

The government's plan was clear; it would avoid a generalized explosion by settling the problems one by one, keeping the workers divided. This plan was feasible because for some time there had been some autonomy in enterprise management. But if the government thus effectively avoided direct political attack and sheltered itself a bit, it furthered the strike because each factory took up the struggle won next door. In actual fact, these tactics resulted in the decentralization of decision- making - not only on the part of management, but also on the workers' side; the already discredited official unions were accustomed only to transmit decisions from above, not to negotiate working conditions in the factory; this situation undoubtedly

encouraged the spontaneous appearance of discussion groups and associations for collective decision- making. By July 15, fifty strikes had already broken out or were still going on. They often lasted only a few days; that was enough to make management give in. In some cases, the mere threat of a strike was sufficient. New elements were already visible: the desire to guarantee the demands that were already granted without having constantly to begin the struggle all over again; the continued existence of rank-and-file committees after the struggle had ended - the committees which the rank-and-file had elected or approved and which had negotiated directly with management over the head of the official union.

By this time, things had already gone much further, even though it appeared that the authorities had succeeded in extinguishing the incipient conflagration, On July 17, the city of Lublin (population, 300,000, 100 kilometers from the USSR) was completely paralyzed; railway workers had discovered that a train labelled "fish" was filled with meat and headed for the Soviet Union; they shut down rail traffic by leaving trains and engines on the tracks. Everything was on strike: buses, bread and milk delivery, nursing, construction, water service; the meat would have to be distributed to the population. The government sent Jagielski, deputy Prime Minister; the Party issued an official summons to return to work. Everything ended two days later, but the fact remained that an entire city organized itself to go on strike; the demands did not remain merely economic. A desire to assure the gains already won led to an attempt to set up permanent organs of defence. Fifteen days later, following procedures they themselves set up, the Lublin railway workers began electing union representatives directly and other Lublin workers followed their lead.

> the failing of the official trade unions in defending their interests. There is also an acute awareness of inequalities in society."

In fact, there was much more than this. Here was an entire class with years of experience in outwitting the authorities inside and outside the factory on a daily basis, seeking escapes wherever it could since conditions for a frontal attack were lacking. These everyday practices should not be judged in terms of bourgeois morality or of "revolutionary" ethics but in terms of what they represented within the capitalist production apparatus to those who undertook them. The act of stealing has opposite meanings for an owner and a worker: for one, it is an increase in his share of the surplus value extorted from the workers, for the other, it is a decrease.

Finally the conditions were there and everything was coming apart but, in spite of appearances, there was no discontinuity in what the workers had been earlier; they simply understood that they could now assert their refusal differently and could win something that would allow them to change their former life. It was their life of misery and cunning which had shaped their present class consciousness in which yesterday's negative aspects now appeared as positive. The early confrontations were provoked by the increase in meat prices but they already indicated the direction the entire movement would follow. The original goal may have been to "make the authorities back down," but this goal was no longer acceptable, as it had been in the past. Now there was concern about guarantees that concessions won would not be immediately neutralized; there was concern about maintaining the organizations of struggle – in Lublin, by electing delegates who would meet in case of emergency; or at the Ursus plant, by retaining the strike committee after conclusion of the strike. There was concern to guard against repression: negotiating delegates were never the same (One of the repressive acts in Gdansk was for

Jaruzelski: Another Attempt at Reform

It is instructive to quote Walesa's comments on General Jaruzelski, Minister of Defense who became head of the government on February 9, 1981:

> "Poland needs a strong government, a government capable of governing and Jaruzelski can do it. Because he is a soldier, a general, therefore used to giving orders and to imposing discipline on others and on himself. As a soldier, he also should have the clean hands which are necessary to clear the country out of bastards with dirty hands. We must let him work."

Walesa's naivete and illusions are astonishing, or perhaps it is his political skill. This statement clearly shows what was expected from Jaruzelski's investiture at this precise moment; what Walesa said is exactly what the rulers had hoped "the man in the street" would feel and say. The General was the New Man, an almost providential savior. It might be tempting to conclude that, as in so many other places, the army became the arbiter in a situation where no other structure of domination retained any real hold over the subordinate classes. But Poland was not Bolivia or South Korea. In the Russian bloc, appointing a general to be Prime Minister is quite exceptional. Jaruzelski had always been a distinguished member of the capitalist class. Prom a strictly capitalist viewpoint, Walesa's words on Jaruzelski indicate that the reputation of the army was still intact (something that could not be said for the other sectors of the capitalist class); this situation significantly enhanced the authority of the army within the capitalist class itself. In fact, the General was considered to have remained somewhat aloof from political circles and to have opposed those who advocated violence to quell the movement; he was

undoubtedly a realist in whom the Russians had confidence. The General proposed a three-month truce in order to institute economic measures; he created a permanent committee of coordination with the unions and appointed another "liberal" Party member, Rakowski, to this committee.

This was nothing less than an attempt to divorce the workers' movement from the peasant's movement. Solidarity responded favorably to the truce proposal, provided that all the unresolved problems would be discussed, especially those dealing with official recognition of Solidarity (laws concerning legal unions) and access to instruments of power (laws concerning censorship). This was the beginning of generalized haggling; Modzelewski, a KOR member who was given access to the columns of Warsaw's official daily newspaper, offered the following: "Implementation of the Gdansk accords has been largely inadequate. The principles formulated by the Prime Minister as well as the composition of his government create a real chance to get out of the dangerous situation of recent weeks.. . The only role to which Solidarity aspires is to be a recognized and respected social partner."

In actual fact, Jaruzelski was hardly enthroned before agreements were reached in many sectors. Settlement with the students was reached on February 20: they would have access to faculty committees; admission requirements would be revised; course programs modified; and the independent union recognized. Agreement on the five-day work week was published on the same day and provided a wide choice between different formulas. Solidarity and the Minister of Commerce reached an agreement on meat and sugar rationing. The government was negotiating at the local level with Rural Solidarity's strike committee in both Rzeszow and Ustrzyki DoIne; legislation would recognize the right of individual farmers to ownership of their land. At the same time, there was an agreement with France for cooperation in improving agricultural techniques on the small family farm. The Rzeszow local of Solidarity was granted most

4. A class united to change the world

"Striking Polish workers have no class consciousness," declared Lukaszewicz, propaganda minister under Gierek, on August 25, 1980.

"And you, there, in France, do you realize that a revolution is underway in Poland? A revolution that will not stop as in Portugal after the flowers but which will go further, go to the end, until we have complete democracy." This is a statement by a Polish worker following the Bielsko-Biala strike on February 6, 1981.

Where, given these two evaluations of the workers' actions, should the autonomous Polish movement be located? There are a few first-hand reports on the July and August 1980 spontaneous strike eruptions. At the Ursus tractor plant in early July and in Gdansk in mid-August, in a matter of hours, the actions of a few were transformed into a powerful irreversible movement which organized itself as it proceeded. But it was the earlier struggles, those of 1970-71, of 1976, and all the daily confrontations since 1970 which shaped the forms of the workers' actions. A reporter for the (London) Financial Times summarized;

> "This shows a working class which is learning the rules of industrial disputes fast. They are younger and more ambitious than before. Surveys carried out a few years ago show that they are well aware of the lack of democracy at their work place and

essary for economic recovery or to counter attempts to further lower the standard of living. The vacillations of the authorities are evidence of the workers' resistance. One might think that this was a return to the pre-1980 situation but, in fact, everything is much further along. Between the two sides, capital and labor, there is no longer an opportunity for intermediaries to prevent direct confrontation.

of the belongings of the former official union. This period of relative calm coincided with the Twenty-second Congress of the Russian Communist Party which opened in Moscow at the end of February and also with the acrimonious discussions in Paris between all Poland's Western partners over revising the conditions for economic and financial exchange. It was equally important to each branch of capital that the social peace provide guarantees that the new system of social relations would bring the most effective domination of the exploited and improve the productivity of labor in present-day conditions of industrial development.

The Counter-Threat of Bydgoszcz

Once again, the attempt to stop the rank-and-file movements backfired. Beginning in March 1981, autonomous actions began to spread in the most diverse domains. In Majdow, on March 14, peasants demanded – and obtained – the construction of a school. On the same day in Radom, two hundred enterprise delegates presented twenty demands including the punishment of those responsible for the 1976 repression, and the social use of militia buildings. These delegates threatened a general strike if negotiations did not begin immediately. Walesa arrived in Radom on March 16:

> "We must put a stop to this. We must not annihilate ourselves. We have got a reasonable government. We cannot go on striking. I think this government will sit down at the table and cooperate with us . . . The robbers have robbed, it's finished. Now, it is up to us to work since we want to live better and this depends on us."

With the assistance of the parish priest, the defense lawyer for the 1976 victims and Kuron, the strike was avoided. "What happened at Radom is a formula," Walesa declared.

> "Dates had been set for a two-hour warning strike, to be followed by a general strike. I went there and I convinced the people they had to abandon this program since negotiations with the authorities were scheduled to begin the next day. . . The past weighs heavy and this tendency to want to obtain everything right away always exists in society. But what we have succeeded in obtaining is already good. Today, we have to say 'enough.' We have to learn to delegate the decisions."

These are ominous words in the light of future developments.

While several hundred peasants occupied the offices of the official peasant party in order to gain recognition of the peasant union, a local Solidarity delegation tried unsuccessfully for three days to intervene on their behalf at police headquarters and they refused to leave the premises. For the first time since July 1980, the militia intervened directly and seriously wounded several delegates. This took place on March 19, in Bydgoszcz, in the very center of Poland.

It is an irony of history that Walesa now had to revive the anti-repression movement which he had defused in Radom a few days earlier – not only because Solidarity delegates had been direct victims but because all Polish workers were ready to rise up over what they rightly considered a return to the oppressive system with which they were fed up. For them, the attack was proof that they had not gained much since July 1980, despite Walesa's reassuring declarations. Once more Solidarity had to resort to its customary diversionary action. But this time the entire rank-and-file was preparing for a serious conflict.

ity militants who had escaped the December round-ups. The freeing of almost all the Solidarity union militants at the end of 1982 was only one aspect of the normalization of the repression, of the return to the minimal freedom a modern economy needs in order to function, of incorporation into the system of special laws permitting military intervention. The Church contributed a great deal to this normalization and from the spring of 1982 on, made appeals for "order and calm" and expressed its "hopes for stabilization and for bringing about a renewal. " For the workers and peasants, the Church played the ambiguous role of being a substitute for Solidarity because it was the only existing legal organization besides the army and the Party.

This role had its limitations, however, especially in regard to the workers. The attempts by the technocratic-military alliance to reconstruct a viable apparatus for managing the capitalist economy ran into insurmountable obstacles; aside from the army, no organized structure – neither the Party nor the new unions-was able to manage a system which required minimal participation in order to function. (In December 1983, the army again had to send special emissaries around the country to find out the real state of things in Poland.) At every level of society, the forces of direct repression, capital's ultimate bulwark (which had been obliged to take the place of the customary intermediaries) was confronting labor which was once again carrying on the struggle in its own way, using the means it had available at the time, Although few of these means are known, since very little of what actually happens in the enterprises filters through, the fact that the significant price increases slated for the beginning of 1984 were postponed and considerably reduced in the face of expressions of discontent, gives an idea of the government's fear of another explosion similar to the ones in Poland's recent past. It is important to note that this happened just when the local union organizations were visibly weakened and reduced to ideological groups and when there was no move either to impose measures nec-

Realizing that their sphere of action lay more in the enterprises than in the streets, the committees tried to launch strike movements by getting the support of active rank-and-file workers who were operating more or less autonomously. Most of these efforts were woefully unsuccessful. The most important failure was the strike called for October 11, 1982, opposing the new legislation on unions which put an end to Solidarity. In spite of the significant deterioration in the standard of living and the resulting discontent, the strike objectives were exclusively political: restoration of Solidarity, release of Walesa and amnesty. Only one crew from the Gdansk Lenin Shipyards went on strike; they set up a strike committee which called for a general strike. Here, too, there was an attempt to achieve from above, for the benefit of Solidarity alone, what the rank-and-file had done in August 1980 for the benefit of the workers. Two days later, there was nothing left; a few cities had some demonstrations but nothing out of the ordinary. One can blame the militarization of the factories, the isolation, etc., as certain discouraged workers hastened to do; but the failure was due simply to the fact that the great majority of workers were not inclined to follow. When one of them declared, "It's finished now. We are losing . . . We are alone," he was not referring, as he thought he was, to the totality of the workers, but to the handful who thought that an exclusively political action was sufficient to put pressure on the government.

This situation made it clear to the authorities that the Solidarity apparatus had become harmless. The repression was certainly partly responsible for this but, objectively, the approach Solidarity leaders adopted to recover their following was most to blame. As prisoners of their theories, the leaders were led to expose to the repression their contacts in the factories who had the closest links with the rank-and-file; these contacts were then lost to them. In fact, the only consequence of the unsuccessful strikes, a serious one for the apparatus, was to empty the enterprises-through dismissals-of the rankand-file Solidar-

Rank-and-file organizations gathered in factories and planned their strategy. First on their list of demands was the firing of those responsible for the March 19 attacks; they also called for recognition of Rural Solidarity and guarantees against repression of all sorts. The collaboration between workers and peasants which Jaruzelski's nomination was supposed to have cut short thus grew more intense; a strike lasting two hours took place on March 27 and, since it looked like the government was not inclined to yield, the workers proceeded feverishly with plans for a general strike on March 31; this one would have no time limit.

A Critical Date for Normalization: March 30, 1981 Political and Union Leaders versus the Rank-and-File

> "For years I've waited for that moment, and now they ruined everything."

With these bitter words, a Polish worker greeted Walesa's announcement that, after seven hours of negotiation with the government, the strike was called off and an agreement was signed without even consulting the union's National Committee. "Violating all democratic procedures and facing inevitable recrimination, they (Walesa and a few experts) signed an agreement which contained only promises and then ran to the TV to call off the strike without asking anyone's advice." This was the Walesa Edict as described by a reporter in Le Monde. Walesa tried to justify this edict by claiming that "70% of the demands were granted" (in fact, the agricultural union was recognized and a few over-zealous officials were transferred), but two victims of Bydgoszcz gave voice to the general dismay when they condemned Walesa's betrayal of all their ideals: "Walesa has

bungled. We can compromise on supplies of onions, but not over spilt blood."

At this point it became obvious to all workers that the union fit the description made by Dymarski, president of the Gdansk local;

> "Solidarity has become a different union from the one we joined in September. Anti-democratic practices which are encouraged by Walesa's paranoid behavior are beginning to pervade the unions."

The capitalist class, on the other hand, was euphoric. Rakowski praised the positive role of the experts who "gave their utmost to find compromise solutions." Two subordinate police officers from Bydgoszcz were transferred in early April. Finally, on May 11, Rural Solidarity was registered and this event was followed by a large demonstration in which the Church's control was so obvious that the capitalist class must have been reassured that the Church would serve as the best guarantee against the risks of such a union. Workers undoubtedly viewed March 30 as the definitive rupture between the rank-and-file and the entire bureaucracy of Solidarity; this rupture would have serious consequences in the period which followed.

For all practical purposes, none of the rank-and-file problems which had prompted wildcat actions during recent months had been resolved. Solidarity's role at the end of these conflicts gave it respectability in the eyes of the Party; the regimentation of union locals was the counterpart to daily participation in making economic and political decisions. The Party congress in July and Solidarity's congress in August were not the only stimuli for the great reformist upsurge in both organizations which were now attempting to accommodate each other, one purging on its right, the other on its left. Party "liberalization" apparently went in the direction desired

ganized at regular intervals and which had as their principal goal the recognition of Solidarity as spokesman for the reform of the capitalist economy. But the situation was radically different from the one in the summer of 1980. Then, a mass movement had brought Solidarity to life; now Solidarity wanted to create a mass movement in order to resurrect itself.

It would be tedious to list all the actions which took place prior to the autumn of 1983. Every month, if not every week, demonstrations which often encountered brutal repression took place in the major cities; sometimes people were killed; hundreds and even thousands were arrested, then given relatively light punishment, and released. Anything could serve as pretext, but the underground committees' political objectives were invariably repeated. Sometimes the actions consisted of workers coming out of their factories, but usually they were gatherings of a cross-section of the population in churches or in the street under the pretext of a religious or nationalistic observance. The frequency of the actions and the number of demonstrators taking part in them may seem impressive but compared to the mass demonstrations in the summer of 1980 and even during 1981, they involved only the active minority. One might consider the repression responsible for both limiting the extent of these actions and for their progressive decline at the end of 1983. However, this repression was not more severe than in 1970, 1976 or 1980; it may have been less violent and some of the demonstrations remained peaceful and even had a sort of tacit authorization. If this type of guerrilla activity against the government ran out of steam, it was because this form of action gradually lost the support of the rank-and-file of the workers and because the workers more and more openly showed that they were not inclined to follow the political calls of the underground Solidarity committees. (The regional committees had been replaced by a national committee, the TKK.)

hid the weaknesses of a system which was shaken by rivalries within the ruling circle and by convulsions of an economy out of control.

In 1982 and 1983, working class activity took place largely in the streets and in the enterprises; it is sometimes hard to distinguish the social struggles from the specifically political ones. We have seen that months before the December 1981 coup, rank-and-file actions became dissociated from Solidarity's increasingly political activity – a result of the capital-labor dialectic. The repression, which appeared to be directed equally against Solidarity's organization and the workers' December actions (although the punishments differed greatly in degree), made it seem that the union apparatus and the rank-and-file were once again united in a common struggle ‘ where the specific interests of the workers coincided with those of the dismantled union apparatus. For a time, the underground organization tried to reconstitute itself and to assert its power and credibility. It could do this only by making use of the rank-and-file movement and by trying to involve it in factory struggles or street demonstrations which had objectives useful to Solidarity's survival as organization but which also could appear to be defending workers' gains since July 1980. From this point on, the program of those who set themselves up as provisional underground administrators was clearly geared toward acquisition of authority (liberation of prisoners and amnesty, reinstatement of Solidarity and dialogue with the government), while rank-and-file actions continued to be motivated by conditions of exploitation. By the beginning of 1982, it was obvious that the mass of workers was reviving a rank-and-file organization, the one which had existed before the December coup, and that the underground committees, attempting to coordinate the struggle, thought they had recovered their faithful followers. These committees thus understandably hoped they would be followed when they gave an obvious political cast to the demonstrations, factory actions and strikes which they or-

by the rank-and-file; but the Party remained the Party and the union tried to become the union. The significant events of the summer of 1981, one year after the great anticipation of workers' democracy, were not so much the publicized decisions on various ”liberties,” but rather, the attempts to set up economic reforms at the enterprise level. The few documents available show that Solidarity was already functioning as a partner in efficient management. Polish workers were increasingly aware that the class struggle is unending and each struggle is just one more stage as long as capital endures.

The Rank-and-File Movement, An Obstacle to Solidarity's Integration

The events of March 30, 1981, led the leaders to conclude that capital was now in a position to work out its problems without considering rank-and-file opinion and without provoking widespread, spontaneous responses. The old class organs, Party, Church, army, and the economic establishment had reason to believe that the new arrival in their midst, Solidarity, was able to control the workers and make them accept the solutions of capital. None of them had reason to believe that the workers could possibly proceed to another stage of organization.

There were many new faces at the Party congress in mid-July 1981, and a new Central Committee as well as a new Politburo were elected. But the Party remained the Party, weak in numbers (three million members compared to the Church's faithful millions or to Solidarity's ten million members) but powerful because of the backing (armies and police, always and everywhere ready to restore and maintain capitalist order) of Russian and Western capitalism. The Party was weak not so much because of its numbers but because the workers, conscious of their own power, were no longer afraid of it. Could

Solidarity become the needed and official link in restoring the "normal" functioning of capital, namely, could it manage the workers and impose decisions on them?

The Solidarity congress opened with two sessions: September 5-11, and September 26 – October 16, 1981. Between the two sessions, Walesa, Kuron and two other leaders from Solidarity's national office reached an agreement on selfmanagement with the Parliamentary legislative committee; this agreement conflicted with a resolution passed unanimously at the congress a few days earlier. "We are heading for a tough fight and we need some generals," Walesa stated in order to justify himself, and Kuron added;

> "Solidarity must continue to work for an institutionalized relation between the governors and the governed."

Just as the cancellation of the March 31 strike had shown that the union leadership could openly act against the rank-and-file, the September 26 compromise on self-management showed that a few leaders could even ignore the wishes of their organization. The union functioned like the Party and like every other hierarchical capitalist apparatus; this is the proper context for Walesa's remark. From this point on, neither debates at the congress nor election proceedings would have much significance. The only thing that mattered was increased participation in capitalist power. One militant, Gwiazda, commented,

> "in the last six months, union representatives no longer speak the members' language but the governments That language is not understood."

Twice in six months the Solidarity leadership exhibited in practice, and on a national scale-namely, at a "political" level

to this statistic. As the (London) Times emphasized on December 28, 1981, "In any case, it is impossible to run a complex modern economy by terror." The Dutch weekly, Vrij Nederland, (in December 1981) was more explicit: "Whatever they try to construct in Poland without the workers is doomed to failure." Intervention had made this vividly apparent. The two classes were once again confronting each other. A Polish sociologist was quoted in the (London) Sunday Times of January 3, 1982: "The trouble with the authorities is that they simply didn't expect such a reaction. They see the social world as they see their own party. So they thought that by arresting the top leaders that would finish it. They have no way of understanding the nature of a mass movement. Nothing in their background and training equips them to understand."

A Tactical War

As good strategists, the military men and super-technocrats thought they could even plan out the consequences of their brutal intervention. They believed that in the next three or four years, with the population under control once more and living conditions sufficiently improved through economic reforms, all discontent could be easily channelled. This was, to some extent, tactical warfare on their part, a follow-up to open warfare. The first task was to restrict Polish workers to the confines of their exploited situation (to which they had just been brutally returned) and to make them accept working conditions like those imposed on them in the wake of the repression.

The class struggle did not end, but its real character was not immediately apparent. There was a great deal of uncertainty; the defeat of the working class and Solidarity's dislocation masked the actual activities of the proletariat; the apparent monolithic nature of the army and its military methods

11. Help the families of the arrested, wounded and all victims.

12. Collect money for social self-help funds in your enterprise.

13. Take active part in the campaign to counter official propaganda, spread any information you have about the situation in the country and acts of resistance.

14. Paint slogans, hang posters on walls and distribute leaflets. Pass on independent publications. But always be cautious!

15. In any organizational activity, always keep in mind two principles: I know only what I need to know, and today there is nothing more important than the struggle for national liberation, the lifting of the State of War, respect for civil liberties and union rights. (Le Monde, December 31, 1981)

Such counsels are the daily practice of workers throughout the capitalist world. Was it necessary to recall these counsels in the form of union orders while combining them with old slogans about "national liberation" and "rights" and "liberties"? When chaos reigns as a result of confusion produced by the authorities themselves, it is much easier to push things a little further by making use of the chaos and contributing something to it. But workers know this better than anyone and they do not need "guides" to instruct them; in such circumstances, workers can find individual and collective responses appropriate to the situation in their plant. The January 18, 1982 Newsweek reported that most factories were operating at only 50% of their capacity. It is hard to say to what extent the class struggle – both direct actions and their cumulative effects – contributed

– its scorn for the rank-and-file: first, in March, when the general strike was called off and then, in August, with the self-management compromise. Both times, the attitude of the Solidarity leadership revealed a profound breach not only between the top and bottom but at the very heart of the organization. The problem is not merely to ascertain that workers' democracy had been repudiated – Walesa and his circle knew that better than anyone-the problem is to understand what caused the leaders to act as they did, and, in spite of their grand words, to develop tendencies which had already been visible in the August 1980 Gdansk discussions.

In the October 3, 1981 Le Monde, Bernard Guetta reported on the Solidarity congress debates, and commented:

> "The union cadres are now formed and have begun to prowl around the political machinery; from now on, they will more readily delegate their power."

Like every union in a capitalist system, Solidarity could have a legal existence only by functioning as mediator; in order to carry out this function, given the contradictions and factional struggles within the governing bodies, it had to propose political solutions. At the end of August 1981, Kuron explained this to striking printers who opposed calling off their strike:

> "The union now has other things to do besides firing directors and political functionaries . . .There are more important problems for all of Poland."

For him, the solution was essentially political; a government of national unity was needed to carry it out. Walesa and many other experts had the same approach. But in order to perform its function effectively, a union cannot cut itself off from "its" rank-and-file; it should be the mouthpiece of those who support it and should articulate at least some of their

grievances. From the beginning, Solidarity was plagued by this contradiction. At this time, its legal existence depended entirely on the strength of its rank-and-file support and this made it difficult to maintain the fundamental dualism while trying to retain its recognition by the capitalist rulers. Thus in one organization, two tendencies existed in a dialectical relationship which was accentuated by the ambiguity of the struggles–tendencies toward integration among the leaders and toward autonomy among the rank-and-file.

At the congress, Gwiazda warned the delegates: "Everyone wants to change the world, but no one knows how to help the workers in their daily struggle." Marian Jurczyk expressed it even better: "Every union militant must preserve his links with the workers." In a period of economic upswing, this dialectical relationship can be contained fairly well within the framework of the organization, since capital can concede some things to the constant pressure of the rank-and-file movement. The union justifies its efficiency, its usefulness, by pointing to protracted worker actions. But in a period of crisis, a rift appears because capital needs everything for its recovery and has nothing to give; then the union's fundamental role as capital's cop becomes obvious. Walesa himself said he was "the flying fireman" and in his final speech on the night of December 12-13, 1981, when he already knew that the army was approaching, he described his function:

> "The economic crisis would have taken place in any case … The crisis would have been a lot worse and the beatings even more numerous if Solidarity hadn't existed. We negotiated with the authorities so that no one would be laid off and no one would shoot. The crisis would have been a lot worse without us. People would have looted the stores, a lot of things would have been destroyed. The authorities knew this and even authorized

3. In every place of work, Solidarity members must be present physically. Do not risk arrest by foolhardy acts.

4. Do not take revenge on your neighbor. Your enemies are the policeman, the over-eager employee, the informer.

5. Work slowly; complain about the mess and incompetence of your supervisors. Shove all decisions into the lap of commissars and informers. Flood them with questions and doubts. Don't do their thinking for them. Pretend you are a moron.

6. Do not anticipate the decisions of commissars and informers with a servile attitude. They should do all the dirty work themselves. In this way you create a void around the bastards, and by flooding them with the most trivial matters you will cause the disintegration of the military-police apparatus.

7. Eagerly carry out even the most idiotic orders. Do not solve problems on your own. Leave that to the commissars and informers. Ridiculous rules are your allies. Always remember , to help your friends and neighbors regardless of the rules.

8. If some bastard instructs you to break a rule, demand written orders. Complain. Try to prolong such games as long as possible. Sooner or later the military commissar will want to be left in peace. This will mark the beginning of the end of the dictatorship.

9. As often as possible take sick leave or days off to take care of your children.

10. Openly shun the company of informers and bastards.

to make concessions. In spite of the terror, the resistance continued, though altered in form. It did not consist mainly of the underground terrorist movements which were beginning to operate and which, ultimately, led to the same abyss as political activity, but, rather, of working class resistance in areas of capitalist production where it revived the everyday techniques acquired through years of struggle but less used since July 1980. One phase of the struggle had ended and a new one was beginning. This one was much less susceptible to the repression but was just as detrimental to capitalist exploitation; this is the very heart of worker resistance in the East as in the West. Another phase was beginning, the phase of passive resistance: absenteeism, slow-downs, sabotage, etc. In Szczecin, forty ships waited to be unloaded because the dockers were "working to rule." Martial law had created an administrative vacuum in which passive resistance could be practiced. It is hard to describe the vicious circle in which all industrial activity found itself due to the lack of raw materials and spare parts, the communications breakdown, the absence of decisionmaking on all levels, and the various forms of worker sabotage.

In one week, the Ursus factory produced only one tractor. At the FSO auto plant near Warsaw, the workers altered the tolerance levels of the machine-tooled components so that the parts no longer fit together on the assembly line. In Gdansk, some dockers loaded and unloaded the same cargo. In Silesia, under the auspices of the Solidarity local, the following "rank-and-file rules for passive resistance" were circulated:

> 1. During a strike, stay with the workers; do not establish strike committees; there should be no leaders.
>
> 2. In contacts with the police or the military you should be uninformed, you know nothing, you have heard nothing.

> our formation… since they realized that Solidarity would play a role of shock-absorber, reasonable and serious, that it would not liquidate the Party. . ."

During the last six months of 1981, the growing rift between the leadership and the rank-and-file polarized Solidarity. One side increasingly looked toward support from the capitalist government, provided that the union's position would be assured; the other side tried to express the aspirations of the rank-and-file movement, some, like Gwiazda, favoring strict worker control over decisions, others, like the regional leaders from Lodz and Lublin, going further with their proposals for active strikes and for control of the economy by means of horizontal links. Failure to understand this situation led to the misconception, reinforced by the medias on both sides of the Iron Curtain, that whatever happened in Poland was initiated by Solidarity. To understand subsequent events, two distinct responses should not be confused: while the leadership increasingly elaborated political solutions in a sort of anticipated retreat, the rank-and-file increasingly used the organization for its own ends. The union apparatus was no threat to capitalist domination (as Walesa made clear when expressing his determination not to "liquidate the Party"); the threat came from the rank-and-file using the apparatus for its own ends. At the end of 1981, 16,000 of the 19,600 workers at the Katowice steelworks belonged to Solidarity; Party membership fell from four thousand to twenty in December 1981 and it was only natural that the Party should give up its premises when they were "requisitioned" by the rank-and-file organization. When Gwiazda said that the language of Solidarity was not understood, he was obviously referring to the language of the leaders. Other leaders, however, recognized it as their own language, just as workers saw that it wasn't theirs.

During the summer and fall of 1981, a new wave of strikes broke out over highly diverse issues but largely over the very material issue of food supplies. On November 18, 1981, after a discussion between Party personalities and their English counterparts, the latter reported an almost total disappearance of Party and union authority (Solidarity's authority, too, one might add); the basic characteristic of the situation was rankand-file determination to discuss openly whatever might affect workers. From what we know about these struggles, their scope was so vast that they deserve to be classified as expressions of the workers' own interests.

The question of self-management also exposed the rift between the leadership and the rank-and-file. The little that is known about what went on inside the enterprises suggests that, in the wake of the apparent victory of the Gdansk accords, there was strong rank-and-file impetus toward decision making as well as monitoring. This "wildcat" movement for rank-and-file control more or less coincided with the rise within Solidarity (but nevertheless somewhat on its fringes since the chief authorities did not "recognize" it for some time) of a "self-management" faction which called itself "the network" and which we will mention later. This faction wanted to set up a framework for self-management at the enterprise level in which the local union and management would work together, with a certain measure of rank-and-file control, in order to achieve a "smooth functioning" enterprise. This was an early attempt to channel the rank-and-file movement, but it contained two sources of conflict: with the administrators of capital, since the program advocated the complete autonomy of the enterprise from centralized decision-making; with the rank-and-file who might not conceive of this neo-management as sel-fmanagement. We know very little about the second source of conflict, but about the first, we know that Solidarity included self-management in its platform and that it participated in high-level discussions with the government when

while army and militia were still mobilized, weapons in hand, and while Party supervision in the factories was reinforced with direct military supervision. Under these conditions it was possible for WRON (the ruling military-civilian council) to state that Poland experienced "the first day in fifteen months without a strike." They then proceeded to open the naval shipyards, schools and universities and left the "disruptive elements" out in the cold. And one month later they could authorize price increases of between 100% and 200% amidst impressive demonstrations of force. This did not change the shortages and every worker understood that the "reorganization of the economy" would be achieved primarily through a much larger extortion of surplus value. The Polish workers had been fighting openly against this for more than ten years and militarization was a logical step in capital's response to their continuing struggle. Whatever institutional reforms were undertaken, whether by peaceful means or by using force, the apportionment of surplus value remained the fundamental issue.

One battle had been lost, but the working class was far from defeated. From the beginning, the militarized society could not prevent the rise of new and overt forms of resistance. In Gdansk on January 30, two hundred were arrested after large-scale demonstrations; in Poznan, 114 were arrested; there were overt go-slow strikes for specified periods in Wroclaw, Ursus, Lodz. The "leaders" of this open class warfare were rewarded with long years in prison, usually three to ten years. On February 18, an enormous round-up added 3500 to the thousands arrested since December 13. But at the same time the military government had to undertake some "adjustments," reduce certain prices, shorten working hours, grant three free Saturdays out of four, restore certain holidays. It had to set up "special factory committees" to deal with pressing social tasks (housing, emergency aid, etc.). All this indicates that the government, faced with large-scale resistance, had

confrontations at the Anna and Salsk Mines. At Ziemowit and Piast, the miners shut themselves in the mine and threatened to blow up everything, including themselves. The Piast miners did not come up again until December 28. At the Wujek Mine, 2000 miners remained below on December 13, but were dislodged three days later, following a ferocious battle with the militia who literally took the mine by storm. Eleven were killed, eighty wounded. At Radom, more than two thousand were arrested. The list of dead and wounded grew longer. An armed peace was imposed on Poland.

In addition to eliminating intermediaries in the class struggle against capital, the military intervention had other consequences. The struggle was once again confined to the production plant, since the web of contacts permitting the struggle to spread quickly had been destroyed. But, paradoxically, the repression re-established those conditions for the future; the unity of the repression and the new conditions of exploitation (militarization of enterprises, new working conditions, price hikes) restored the unity of the rank-and-file movement that had been broken when Solidarity was politicized. In certain sectors, the rank-and-file movement had been in a position to do what it wanted to do and when it wanted to do it. This was intolerable for capital and the repressive action was first of all concentrated against this. As in every capitalist country, East and West, this repressive action again confined rank-and-file movements to the authorized framework of exploitation by defining the limits which may not be exceeded without provoking-ultimately-armed intervention, This is what happened in Poland and what happens daily everywhere in the world.

The authorities were able to militarize vital enterprises, make workers sign no-strike pledges and renounce Solidarity, increase the work week to forty-eight hours, revoke free Saturdays, and decree compulsory employment between the ages of 18 and 45, when the workers seemed to be defeated militarily,

legislation on self-management was being considered by Parliament. In a reverse dialectic, these many debates on self-management at various levels undoubtedly led many workers not only to theorize about, but also to extend, their practice, taking literally whatever could be said on the subject. The movement was clearly extensive enough to require co-optive legislation, which incorporated the compromise mentioned earlier between Walesa and the deputies. Below, we will give a Lodz unionist's account of the potential links among the self-organized within the enterprises and neighborhoods. From the little we know about activity elsewhere, we can see that workers were not revolving around principles but around actions, they were putting into practice what they understood as workers' control. It may seem purely symbolic that the Party-imposed managers at the national airlines, LOT, and at the Katowice steelworks were ousted and others elected in their place, but it shows how things had changed within the enterprises. Gdansk and Gdynia dockers exercised control over the export of foodstuffs. At Radom, as a result of constant strikes, the workers demanded the punishment of those responsible for the 1976 massacres; in Olsztyn, some print shop workers got a lie on television retracted by means of a strike; on September 9, 1981, 150 prisoners escaped from the Bydgoszcz jail, assisted by local inhabitants; at the Tarnobrzeg sulphur mine there was a shut-down strike with occupation in order to get improved working conditions. At the beginning of October 1981, more than 250,000 workers were 0n strike at Zielona Gora, Tarnobrzeg and Zyrardow (textile mills). On October 20, 1981, several thousand workers attacked a Katowice police station following the arrest of some militants; almost everywhere, there was threat of other conflicts: at Wroclaw, at Sandomierz, etc. Walesa no longer knew what to do to restrain the movement.

At the end of July 1981, there was a new form of protest: street demonstrations which, until then, Solidarity had always

avoided because they could take on an openly political character (not because Solidarity wanted to avoid provocations, as the leaders claimed). The union thought it was strong enough to channel this movement. But in August the movement spread to all parts of Poland and could not easily be restrained. The demonstration in Warsaw nearly paralyzed the city for several days. At the end of October, Solidarity again tried to use a one-hour general strike to stop the movement and Walesa said that he "hoped that this would be the last one." It was obvious that Solidarity could not "command obedience" and that something else would have to be found in order to dominate the workers.

A Race Between Two Bureaucracies

Like every capitalist class, the Polish rulers counted on the exhaustion, the deterioration of the autonomous rank-and-file movement. But in spite of the government's co-opting maneuvers, promises and manipulation of resources, the movement not only persisted but continued to develop while the existing bureaucracies defaulted on providing basic necessities. The response of the capitalist class was a function of its national interests and of its links with international capital. It was no coincidence that on October 18, just after Solidarity's congress, General Jaruzelski replaced Kania as Party chief and thus occupied every ruling office in Poland – including the office of head of the repressive apparatus. The wave of strikes had left powerless not only the capitalist class but also Solidarity (in which some Party leaders had placed their hopes). Fluctuations between policies of force and policies of reform paralleled Solidarity's fluctuations between peacefully sharing capitalist power (with repressive manipulation of the rank-and-file movement) and confronting the established clique in order to become capital's manager by making use of the radicalism of this same rank-and-file movement (to more effectively repress it later).

intervention, 20% of Polish workers were still on strike. Little is known about Poland in general, paralyzed as it was by the disruption of communications, but something is known about the resistance in a few regions of heavy industrial concentration. On December 16 and 17, a veritable pitched battle took place in Gdansk, first at the shipyards, then at the railway station. People were killed and more than four hundred were wounded. The army was probably relieved by the militia. The shipyards were eventually cleared by force and were reopened on January 4 – after new identification badges were issued. The Szczecin shipyards, cleared by force, were again occupied on Friday the 18th by workers armed with rifles and supplied with enough food for several weeks; the outcome here is not known.

On December 23, the Ursus tractor factory was finally "pacified." Night after night, the militia had entered the occupied plant and proceeded to beat and arrest whomever they found there. The Pafawag railway car factory in Wroclaw was taken by storm with armored cars; fifteen people were killed. In Lublin, some militiamen were taken as hostages in a helicopter factory. But it was in the SilesJan mines that the insurrection of the workers posed the greatest threat to the authorities. On December 23, thirty shafts were still occupied. At the Ziemowit mine, 1300 miners shut themselves in after blowing up one of the entrances and mining the other. At the Piast mine, 1740 men were at the bottom of the mine; women and children also went down. At Huta Katowice, 8000 workers barricaded themselves in the steel plant. They shut down the blast furnaces and threatened to blow them up with acetylene and oxygen. This region also reported disturbances in the army (mutinies, arrests, executions).

The security units gradually took over the repression and relegated the army to the background. These reliable troops overcame one by one the bastions of worker insurrection. The militia took Huta Katowice by storm on December 23. There were fourteen killed at the Manifest Lipcowy Mine and violent

A New Turning Point in the Polish Workers' Class Struggle

While deliveries, mail service, radios, telephones, newspapers, air and automobile traffic were reduced to minimal levels, it was easy to announce that "the situation is returning to normal." By completely blocking all systems of communication, thus paralyzing the state as well as the economy, the military killed two birds with one stone; they made it extremely difficult to coordinate a resistance movement and they also made it difficult to determine the extent of the resistance to the military coup; not only was information unavailable, but it was impossible to assess how the resistance affected the functioning of the system.

But this was not the case for the factories and mines. We know that from Monday, December 14, practically all factories were paralyzed. In the seven principal industrial regions, all the large factories were occupied by the workers. The repressive tactics seem to have been the same everywhere: army tanks broke down the gates, some of which had been soldered shut. Then the militia entered the factory and "persuaded" the workers to leave. Those who resisted were arrested and treated as criminals. (We should take note of the difference in treatment meted out to union functionaries – not to speak of Walesa himself – under preventive arrest, and to those arrested in the thick of the struggle; moreover, this discrimination increased in the days that followed.) Censorship and the blackout of all communications has prevented us from learning the details about this first period of spontaneous struggle against the militarization of labor, the period between December 13 and 31, 1981. Could it be that there actually was a general strike? The Solidarity leadership had called for one in response to the governmental coup which they sensed was coming but which they considered improbable. Moscow reported on December 23 that ten days after

At the beginning of December 1981, there really existed only two of the former institutions of the Polish state; the army and the Church. Both retained some authority and their reputations were more or less intact since (with rare exceptions for the Church), they had not intervened in recent events.

The role of institutions such as the army and the Church was to guarantee the stability of Polish capitalism for the benefit of this capitalism itself, for the capitalist class and for the benefit of capital in its entirety (Western and Eastern branches). But these institutions also acted in their own interests; these interests were not, however, guaranteed within the system except when they coincided with the general interests of capital and with the specific interests of the various capitalist cliques. To the extent that the two imperialisms peaceably divide up the world, these institutions function to defend common interests. We can note some privileged links with one of the imperialisms: the Polish army and the entire police apparatus may seem to be an integral part of the repressive system dominated by Russian capitalism; the Church might seem to be an integral part (at least in theory) of another capitalism, that of the Western branch of capital.

Admittedly, compared to its "big Russian brother," Poland appears to be relatively powerless. But in a state which ranks eleventh among world powers, the development of Polish capital within a national framework tended to promote an independent defense of specific interests which did not necessarily coincide with the defense of the interests of the other imperialists, even of the dominant imperialism. (The same thing can be observed in the countries of Western Europe in relation to the USA.) It was not accidental that the institutions of control and co-optation had as common denominator the vehement affirmation of Polish nationalism, namely support for a capitalism within a state framework. Each faction of the capitalist class may express preferences for one imperialism or the other and preferences for one or another apparatus for dominating the

workers. In its role as capital's manager, Solidarity reflected this national dichotomy. One faction of the leadership gravitated toward the Church and its links with the West, another faction was Party-oriented and inclined to come to an agreement with a reformed Party still linked to the USSR. This dual approach to serving the "national interest" can be seen in Solidarity's sending a delegate to Washington to negotiate an extension in Poland's debt repayment while simultaneously discussing sending a delegate to Moscow in order to work out a political formula appropriate to Polish capital.

Solidarity's orientation toward national and international political spheres grew more explicit as its bonds with the rankand-file decreased. The more it distanced itself from the workers, the more it tended to become the manager of national capital, and the more it sought to recover its lost power by making . explicitly political demands and by supporting capitalist interests different from those of rival governing cliques. Capitals policies are essentially pragmatic; one method's success-namely, its efficacy in protecting capital's interests – temporarily eliminates all others. Failure opens the door to another method, even one that is contrary to the one previously followed. There is no doubt that both approaches to the Polish crisis, the reformist and the repressive, were studied and prepared simultaneously. At the Party congress in July 1981, Rakowski stated that a new positive formula for a front of – national understanding had to be found,

> "This front should grow into a rational alliance which embraces the various social groupings and movements."

At the end of October, Jaruzelski tried to put this recommendation into practice by holding talks with Walesa and the Church's Polish primate, Glemp, in order to try to define the foundations of a new structure for capitalist power.

was that one section of the army of the Eastern branch of capital intervened in Poland (because this was its designated operational zone) on behalf of the consolidated imperialisms and it destroyed some of the economic-political structures (or what remained or was expected of them) in order to try to rebuild a system which would preserve the interests of the dominant imperialism better than the former system did. Whatever the consequences, unified capital had to destroy this revolutionary conflagration whose existence was a constant threat. The Military Council for National Salvation, composed of generals and admirals, was, according to Jaruzelski, "the last chance before the collapse of the State," He was right, but arresting tens of thousands of members of a substitute bureaucracy only eliminated an apparatus which was taken by surprise because of its illusions and its intoxication with power. In France, economist Aleksander Smolar, KOR representative to the Socialist International, accurately wrote; "The authorities are largely mistaken about their enemies. The real radicals are not Solidarity's leadership. The real radicals are the Polish people, the Polish workers." But he should have added that, despite appearances, the army's repression was directed primarily against Polish workers and that if the union apparatus was swept away at the same time, it was to attack more effectively the rank-and-file movement and to deprive it of an instrument which it might have made use of.

Thus, as in all major workers' struggles, at the critical moment the circumstances and the logic of events eliminated the intermediaries, both political and unionist, and the working class found itself-almost empty-handed – facing capital's ultimate bulwark: the armed forces. The military leaders were well aware that they were creating economic chaos. Jaruzelski acknowledged: "In an extraordinary situation, extraordinary methods are essential. The rebellion must be put down." To an army chief, it is clear what that means.

unsuccessful, since other strikes broke out, they objectively paved the way for the repression by capital's armies. The December 3, 1981, militia raid on the Firefighters' Academy, which had been occupied by students resisting a military statute, was more than a rehearsal and a test of public reaction. It was a rehearsal, because a few hours earlier, telephone and telex lines had been cut in all Warsaw Solidarity headquarters and enterprise branches, and because it was accomplished without fuss in mid-day, in the very center of Warsaw, despite crowds of protestors in front of the building. It was a test of public reaction, because there was no immediate spontaneous response from the factories to this raid, carefully chosen as a situation that did not involve workers. And it was more than these, because one could not help comparing this event to Bydgoszcz at the end of March 1981. Solidarity leaders had then responded by calling for a general strike (and everyone was prepared to carry it out); now, too, they declared an extreme emergency-but banned any action which did not have specific instructions from the "central leadership." A few days later, for the second time since the hunger marches of the summer of 1981, Solidarity leaders, in launching their political demands, issued a call for mass demonstrations in Warsaw and in other cities on December 17 "against the use of force to resolve conflicts." But there would be no December 17, since the outcome of Solidarity's entire eighteen-month history was that it could no longer resort to the weapon of the workers: the general strike, the weapon which all workers had used in July – August 1980, but which the union had gradually blunted. We will not dwell on the military-police intervention on the night of December 12-13. (The necessity of selectively joining the two forces demonstrates the extent of the rank-and-file movement and the relative weakness of the front line of the repressive apparatus – the police – even though its "reliability" made it the spearhead of the repression and the instrument of control over the army.) What happened

Jaruzelski's Machiavellianism has been widely censured; he is accused of using his procrastination skills and of dissimulating during discussions held until the very last minute, all the while secretly preparing military intervention. A spokesman from WRON, the Military Council for National Salvation, stated on February 4, 1982:

> "What happened on the night of the 12th and 13th was a well-planned and well-conceived military attack."

But other members of the ruling circle spoke openly of "a political defeat." On December 1, Jaruzelski asserted,

> "The process of decomposition has to end, or it will lead to confrontation, to a sort of state of war."

From the standpoint of a capitalist ruler, he was right; below, we will examine the economic collapse and the near-disappearance of the state. In 1968, in France, DeGaulle did not wait eighteen months before preparing the "military" alternative for saving capital, should it be needed. The single problem, "how to end the strikes and make the economy function" appears constantly, as a leitmotif. Jaruzelski stated on December 25, "Until the last minute we remained hopeful that emergency measures would not be necessary." It is very likely that he continued to look for a less risky alternative. Even if the army and police are always available to carry out their tasks, a commander-in-chief, promoted to the rank of politician, cannot disregard political solutions; if a political decision is possible in a situation which involves all participants in the production process, it should be taken. The important question is to know why the political negotiations failed and why this failure made the capitalist class act as it did in Poland.

The proposals from both the government and the union all seemed to run into what the media called the "incomprehension" either of the union or of the Party. But this is not why they were unsuccessful. The negotiations failed because the rank-and-file movement was still intact and because it continually exposed Solidarity's inability to assure the support and allegience of its "troops," the fundamental condition for its admission into an alliance of power. The "front of national understanding" foundered, not because Solidarity risked losing its virtue (which, in any case, it no longer had), but because it was clear by this time that Solidarity had lost its power and thus was of no further use to the capitalist rulers. In fact, Solidarity's existence had become a hindrance since it tended to look elsewhere for power and this "elsewhere" went out of bounds and landed in competition between imperialisms; this, in the Polish context, warranted an immediate death sentence. In mid-November, there were more than 400,000 strikers – wildcat strikers – throughout Poland; the strikes ranged from an unlimited one by 1700 Krosno refinery workers demanding direct self-management, to a strike by commercial employees who were fed up with being accused of fostering shortages. On November 9, Newsweek observed, "The biggest obstacle to improving the country's prospects is now the union's own rebellious members." When Walesa was in France, he held a secret interview in Roissy with a group of important American businessmen who asked him, among other things, "If your government listened to you, would you be able to control the protest movement?" This was on October 18, 1981. We do not know Walesa's response, but the question sounds like a condemnation by capital's representatives.

Solidarity leaders multiplied their efforts to show their good will. After appealing to the miners to give up their free Saturdays, they proposed the "active strike" as "a new method of struggle," and then the National Committee considered

had become so accustomed to using their only force, the threat of closing down the vital industrial sectors (but only if this threat were wielded by them, and not by one of the wildcat movements they had so often repressed), that they overlooked the crucial fact that now it was the army taking action and that this institution was organized to act in an autonomous fashion without any support from civil society (responding, rather, to its own communications network). Even if this army did not have long-term supplies, Russia would furnish them. Moreover, a general strike had been threatened so many times without ever being called that the threats gave Party and police spies ample opportunities to study Solidarity's mobilization techniques, and the rank-and-file finally recognized these threats for what they were: instruments of negotiation, and nothing more. Under the circumstances, a general strike would make sense only if it were insurrectionary and would proceed to set up its own organization to counter the repressive organization. In the face of this predicament, the leaders appeared defenseless; they could only make appeals, many of which were self-contradictory and in conflict with the leaders' own recent restriction of rank-and-file movements. These appeals, first for a "passive" strike (work stoppage), then for an "active" strike (work with control over disposition of the products), then, finally, for submission, sounded like "recipes" designed to promote a policy which the rank-and-file movement had obviously rejected. The final call for submission was openly supported by the Church, which was concerned to preserve its gains, including those achieved as a result of the workers' struggles. As mentioned earlier, Solidarity made no appeals while time still remained. Throughout its brief existence, Solidarity attempted to build a power apparatus by using the power of the rank-and-file and by acting against it; its repression was aimed at the autonomous groupings which tended to form in all the wildcat strikes which erupted one after another. Although these maneuvers of Solidarity were

and possibly more than a decade." Lasting this long would make it close to the "interim technocratic" government that a Solidarity leader, Rulewski, was advocating on December 11.

The Polish Chaos is Contrary to the Interests of the Two Dominant Imperialisms: West and East Agree to Destroy a Dangerous Revolutionary Ferment

"Don't you know with whom you are dealing?" Kadar asked Dubcek a few days before the 1968 Russian intervention in Czechoslovakia. The same question immediately comes to mind when one observes the incredible naivete combined with equally incredible pretensions displayed during Solidarity's internal debates in December 1981 – from the Radom events (when the discussions were secretly taped by a police informer), to the session of the National Committee in Gdansk on December 11-12. Even though telex communiques from all parts of Poland kept arriving throughout the afternoon and reported troop movements and the calling up of reservists, the discourse on a referendum for free elections, on defending union rights by the "active strike," on setting up an alternative government, continued until 1 a.m. On this evening when telephones and transportation were not yet cut off, when the entire Solidarity apparatus was still intact, the delegates returned peacefully to their hotels, to be rounded up a few hours later by the hundreds, by the thousands, from their beds. In a few places, however, preparations for a confrontation had been made by the rank-and-file; underground factory committees were formed in Poznan, first-aid supplies were stockpiled in Olsztyn, food supplies elsewhere. As mentioned earlier, the situation was the reverse of the one in August 1980; now an organization was calling for strike action as a political solution to ensuring its survival, whereas in 1980 an entire spontaneous movement with material grievances had permitted an organization to establish itself and act as intermediary between it and capital. What is more, in eighteen months of discussions with capital's representatives, the union leaders

disciplinary measures "against wildcat strikes which threaten to destroy the union." Walesa added:

> "Strikes should be used in a thoughtful and planned manner, otherwise the name Solidarity becomes an empty slogan."

There is no better way of saying that the union is nothing without the "discipline" of its members, namely, the discipline of capital over its members. This is the point at which Jaruzelski must have definitively chosen another approach for imposing this discipline. On November 27, he introduced in Parliament legislation to prohibit strikes. By this time, Solidarity's staff was in general disorder. The often contradictory proposals for dealing with the situation can briefly be summarized: How to recover the lost power. There was great temptation to try to co-opt the vigor of the autonomous movement by means of demagogic radicalism in the hope of restoring the situation of August 1980. Solidarity's congress in September-October had already distinguished itself along these lines. This demagogy could follow either an economic or a political path. The economic path meant restoring power to the rank-and-file and fragmenting the union's power even more. This is why restrictions to preserve the organization's power were attached to every proposal: "We ought to think not as unionists, but as Poles." Archbishop Glemp expressed

> it as: "Let's get to work! We should do everything for the well being of the Fatherland. Only at that moment will God intervene and produce a miracle."

Walesa urged the miners: go to work and you will see. Jaworski continued the same theme on November 13:

> "Today, the time for work has come and even if we should organize new strikes, they will be active

ones so work doesn't stop. We are going to take the enterprises under our authority and in this way save the Fatherland and safeguard the existence of our fellow citizens."

Nevertheless, the political path increasingly took precedence over the economic path in Solidarity's demands. This was a response to the government's proposals, but this was also a clear demand for a share of capital's power within a revamped political system. While preparations were being made for the restoration of the capitalist class, Solidarity's National Committee had nothing other to propose than setting up an alternative political power: a "technocratic" interim government, a commission for the national economy, and the organization of a referendum to decide on free elections.

To set oneself up as a direct political competitor of the ruling capitalist class is to ask for trouble, especially in the Polish context. The ruling clique's response was all the more violent because the political call for Western-type democracy was not only incompatible with the structures imposed by the dominant Russian imperialism, but also because it inserted itself in the inter-imperialist rivalry. With the exception of Hungarian unions, all Eastern bloc countries avoided any contact with Solidarity. Due to the force of circumstances, Solidarity's overtures to the West seemed to confirm it as an agent of pro-Western interests within Polish capital. From among the diverse contacts with the West (an American bishop saying the opening mass at a Solidarity congress, Walesa's travels in Western Europe, contacts with various unions, etc.), the medias chose the spectacular ones which were suitable to the contest between propagandas. These spectacular contacts concealed more concrete links such as those established with banks, particularly German ones. But although Solidarity was in pursuit of power, it did not hold any real power. Competition with the other existing institutions of

credited Party and the relief measures undertaken by a self-organized rank-and-file. Stationing the army around the country was officially designed for distributing foodstuffs, ensuring deliveries and resolving "local conflicts." A lieutenant-colonel even claimed: "People expect from the men in uniform protection against the stupidity and license of local bureaucrats and an end to the scandalous mess and favoritism." This installation of the military filled a power vacuum. It was directed more against the "uncontrolled rank-and-file" than against the Party or Solidarity, both organizations revealing their powerlessness at this time. Its purpose was to prevent the spread of the spontaneous organization network which had begun to appear both within enterprises and in distribution , projects. But behind its real and visible mission, this military grid provided an efficient information network and a capability for swift repressive action.

By November, even the authorities stopped concealing I their intentions. The November 9 Newsweek cited Jaruzelski suggesting that the only way out of the situation was martial law and a ban on strikes. The legislation introduced in Parliament at the end of November concerned not only strikes; it was a complete panoply of repressive proposals: prohibition of strikes and of all non-religious gatherings, restrictions on travel in Poland and abroad, proposals dealing with commodity distribution, with telecommunications, postponement of elections, draft of a law on unions, strengthening enterprise managers' control over communication and printing facilities. Jerzy Wiatr, director of the Central Committee's Institute of Marxism-Leninism, analyzed the Polish situation and perceived four possible courses, one of which was the setting up of a military government that would be acceptable to a large part of the population and which would require suspension of political liberties: "This power would base itself on the peasantry and the white collars . . . Very efficient and combined with profound economic reform, it should last several years,

a Polish nationalism which excludes total submission to Russian interests. The Warsaw Pact is not a monolithic bloc without contradictions or rifts. The massive and direct presence of the Russian army and secret service in all countries in the Eastern branch of capital simultaneously serves a strategic function and is an element of social control; in both cases, it serves to protect Russian military interests. Could it be that the intervention of the Polish army guaranteed a strictly Polish capitalist, and in a way, anti-Soviet, solution?

As we will analyze below when we discuss Polish capital's links with international capital (Eastern and Western branches), at this time Russia, because of its own problems, had no interest in direct intervention in Poland. Russia's well defined strategic military interests and its economic-political domination were preserved through "peacefully" subduing the Polish conflagration. (The expression "state of war" should be understood for what it is: war against the workers and against their revolutionary activities.) Of course in the geographic distribution of capital's repressive tasks, Russia's position in Poland led it to furnish visible material support to the national repressive forces (if only to maintain an army in the field with provisions which the mistrustful Russians apparently limited to a one-week supply) and to organize a propaganda campaign which served as a warning to its own proletariat.

The two positions described in the preceding paragraphs reflect the difference of opinion over the role that Russia played – indirectly – in repressing the Polish workers. Before the "coup" on the night of December 12-13, the Polish army had increasingly "mixed" in the daily life of the country and it is clear that only the Polish army could have carried out the coup in this way. Military patrols were put on the streets at the beginning of October; more than 2,000 cities lodged military units whose function it was to supervise administrative and economic activity. This was undoubtedly essential for capital and for the two imperialisms, given the deficiencies of the completely dis-

Polish capital centered around a single question (which is the only real problem for every capitalism): Who could, at present, control the class struggle? At the end of 1981, it was very clear that the Party could not do it; hence, the repressive apparatus came into renewed prominence and became the mouthpiece of the totality of capital's interests, in a sort of merger with what remained of the Party. Solidarity's weakness can be seen in the fact that it had to share the stage with a third protagonist, the Church. The relationship of forces between these "institutions" can be summarized with a comparison: In August 1980, it was the government ministers who journeyed to Gdansk in order to suppress the workers' movement; in November 1981, it was Walesa and Glemp who were in Warsaw seeking interviews with the single representative of the entire capitalist class. The situation was inverted: Solidarity no longer had any social force behind it. Summarizing the situation in Poland in November 1981, we see that:

- The class struggle was blocking all attempts to co-opt the autonomous rank-and-file movement.

- Both the Party and the old union had lost all their authority.

- Fierce factional struggles were shaking up the Party, and the struggles were made more acute by the prospect of reforms and of more direct management procedures which would eliminate a fair number of Party members from the avenues of power; if some of them feared for their skins, others foresaw prospects for careers in a renovated state.

- The new union, Solidarity, had lost practically all its authority with the workers whenever it tried to fulfil the function for which it existed. In attempting to create conditions favorable to the exercise of this function, the leaders proposed political changes. This led to divisions within the union, cut it off yet more from the rank-and-file, and determined the terms of the conflict against and within the Party.

- The chaos of the economy became more pronounced as a result of accumulated causes and effects, of economic, social and political interactions which strengthened the structures of the rank-and-file movement but at the same time exacerbated the radicalisms, both reactionary and reformist.

- Capitalists in East and West had cause for concern in three areas: 1) Economic: the loans had not been paid back; deliveries of raw materials were considerably reduced; and in order to avoid worse problems, capitalists had to furnish aid from their own output; 2) Social: there was fear that the union movement would spread to other places in the Eastern branch; there was fear that the rank-and-file movement in the West would be radicalized; 3) Political: there was fear that a disturbance growing out of the inability to control the situation in Poland would bring about instability harmful to capital's interests.

This situation required that something be done. It pushed the capitalist class to find political solutions (a coalition between Solidarity, Church, Party), and if they failed, to turn to military intervention. Everything was oriented toward political change; the capitalist class did not categorically reject a political transformation but in order to accomplish it, while preserving capital's interests, it needed a powerful authority.

Solidarity had demonstrated, daily, that this union was not the powerful authority that capital was looking for. To the capitalist class, any political transformation sponsored by Solidarity was a gloomy prospect indeed. Such a political transformation would encourage yet more rank-and-file activities, whereas what was needed was to curtail them, to control them, to crush them. The capitalist class was undoubtedly aware of the risks of military intervention when it decided on this course. In the capitalist context, it was not difficult to choose between an attempt to restore capitalist order and the certainty of even greater chaos.

"In the Name of Law and Order" (Jaruzelski's Declaration of December 13, 1981)

Can the military intervention be seen as the execution of an order coming from Moscow, which was annoyed by all of Jaruzelski's equivocating and, on December 11, had sent high-ranking ambassadors (among them, Koulisky, head of the Warsaw Pact armies) with an ultimatum: "If you don't do anything, we will"? Can the slow but sure promotion of Jaruzelski be seen as the setting up of a military system? Didn't the legend of Jaruzelski (and of the army) – a legend propagated by Solidarity and by Walesa himself – ignore the fact that he was above all a military man with Russian training? At the crucial moment, would Jaruzelski not be the ideal person to carry out Moscow's commands in order to preserve Russia's strategic interests? It now appears that extensive precautions had been taken (in collaboration with the Russians) to avoid any leaks: for example, the printing, in Russia, of the proclamations of the state of siege, the use of the Warsaw Pact communications network for the preparations, the arrival of Russian soldiers in Polish uniforms. But it is difficult to verify all these assertions. It is more certain that by the end of the summer enough arrangements were being made to suggest that something was afoot. Brigadier General Leon Dubicki, who defected to the West, warned the leaders of Solidarity already in November 1980. He later remarked: "They minimized the whole problem. They knew and they didn't act." Others said that in February 1981, Jaruzelski began choosing units he could depend on.

Nevertheless, even after December 1981, there still was no proof that the Polish army could unleash a bloody repression of Polish workers like the one the Russian army had perpetrated against East German workers in 1953 or in Hungary in 1956. By tradition and by political position, the Polish army was loyal to

In spite of appeals from Solidarity's underground National Committee, and even though the rank-and-file considered itself Solidarity, the law was passed without serious opposition. However, when the law was put into effect, the authorities found much less acceptance than they had anticipated; of 40,000 major enterprises, only 16,000, involving around three million workers, had set up "their" union by August 1983; there was widespread lack of interest, especially among young workers and managerial staff; even Party members were unenthusiastic. But, as in the case of the special committees, this observation is a generalization of very different situations, of which we have few examples. In Katowice on October 21, 1983, the first congress of the new Federation of Mine Workers' Unions was held; it represented 150,000 out of 400,000 miners. Half of the members were toadies, the other half were there to see what could be done within the limits of the new law. Martyniuk, the president, was a former Solidarity member and he stated,

> "If workers' interests require it, we are prepared to use our right to strike; we are demanding joint discussions on wages and working conditions, on Saturday work and maintenance crews' Sunday work."

At the discussions there was apparently strong resistance from the minister in charge of mines, namely, the boss; but the attitudes and the way things developed were reminiscent of a "normal" Western-type union. On December 8, 1983, the 9,500 workers at the Warsaw Steelworks freely voted for a new workers' council; among the candidates were former Solidarity activists, including some who had been imprisoned. This does not seem to have been typical, however, since, on one hand, workers boycotted most of the council elections and, on the other, hard-liners in the Party complained that the new law on

government negotiators to get the police files on worker delegates in order to manipulate the workers more effectively by knowing their weaknesses and something of their psychological make-up). One worker stated on August 28, 1980:

> "We've learnt some important lessons from 1970. Then the workers staged a public demonstration in the streets which gave the authorities an excuse for using force. This time we're better organized, we've stayed in the factories and there are more of us."

Another worker, on August 31, summarized this development in worker mentality:

> "We've been promised reforms in the past-and were later disappointed, as they were first granted and then taken away. This time we're not so stupid as we once were. We're willing to give the government time to clear the mess up. But we also want our own interests to be permanently represented. . .It's we who have changed most. We know this, because we are strong and we have regained our self-respect. The Russians? It's not we who are afraid of them, but they who are afraid of us. The worker is not what he used to be 35 years ago. We are better educated now, more aware of what is going on around us."

Looking at the many struggles which took place almost uninterruptedly after July 1980, we find that the objectives underwent noticeable development, but the autonomous organizing remained constant. At first sight the specific demands seem to have been a fundamental part of the struggle since they provoked direct confrontations with the political power. They often served the function of "making the authorities

back down" on very concrete and limited issues. The most significant change in the evolution of goals, even if they remained within specific and often local programs, was their transition from a defensive program (for example, repeal of measures just adopted) to an offensive program (for example, demanding the recall of a high official or allocation of a police hospital to community use). On the other hand, the strike organization itself, which seemed to be only a means for achieving a limited objective, became, for the periods of time ranging from a few days to several weeks, the actual organizer of social life at the enterprise, city, regional or extended regional level, and totally circumvented the structures of domination. From Lublin to Gdansk to Bielsko-Biala, the same pattern was followed every time. In the period before the Gdansk accords, the strike organization tended to become a union organization which demanded to be recognized. Conflicts between the rank-and-file movement and the union, which established itself in the course of the struggles (and was already carrying out its capitalist function), are not generally known (except for the one in Gdansk, and this one concerned only the negotiating and the signing of the accords which put an end to the strike). Very little is known about the self-organization of the strike itself, how the essential services were kept functioning, or how liaisons, security and defenses against covert repression were maintained. This self-organization had a wide scope due largely to spontaneous initiatives, but in the official discussions, this crucial aspect of the struggle was ignored. The extent of its activities is nevertheless indicated by the workers' appropriation of the means of communication (installed to ensure control at every level) in order to use them for a special liaison network and to permit rank-and-file control over the union administration. Using the Gdansk shipyards' network of loudspeakers to broadcast "live" the MKS committee debates is a well-known example (which nevertheless did not prevent bureaucratic maneuvers since the experts' meetings were not

this when he said it was necessary "to outlaw the present union and start again from scratch."

In the direct confrontation between capitals repressive force and the workers, the realism of both sides was visible. 'The realism of the rank-and-file can be seen in a variety of responses. We have mentioned the most obvious one of the rank-and-file distancing itself from the reconstituted Solidarity, even though this same rank-and-file accepted the name of Solidarity. Other responses appeared inside the enterprises and are little known; one can assume that they varied between ignorance about the special committees which were set up in all large enterprises in order to assist the military representatives assigned to supervise the work, and some collaboration with these committees. In Nowa Huta, employing 36,000 workers, where all the Solidarity leaders had been arrested and the rank-and-file delegates ousted, the committee was composed only of Party representatives who reported directly to the Military Council for National Salvation. In contrast, at the Ursus tractor plant, employing 16,000 workers of whom only ten were imprisoned, the committee contained former Solidarity members who did not hide their intention of setting up another union.

The realism of the government could be seen in the new law on unions which was passed by Parliament on October 8, 1982. All the existing unions were abolished and a step-by-step reconstruction of new unions was projected: by the end of 1983, unions at the enterprise level; by the end of 1984, their organization into national industrial unions; by the end of 1985, a national confederation. Unions at the enterprise level could be organized by just fifty employees and statutes would have to conform to the law, which contained numerous limitations; the crucial limitation called for mandatory arbitration to resolve conflicts and permitted legal strikes only after a complicated procedure.

leaders by keeping them in prison. It is understandable why, at this time, the Catholic hierarchy advised Solidarity "to limit its political ambitions" and why Rakowski, addressing the Parliament on May 5, 1982, again referred to "the reconstruction of an independent and self-managed union movement," while rejecting Solidarity which, he said, had become "a political force of opposition."

In an April 22, 1982, statement from prison, Kuron declared that direct action against the government was the only alternative: "Force can only be countered by force and clearly spell out to the authorities. . . " The only method for controlling the more or less disorderly uprisings was to organize "a strong centralized resistance movement." This was essentially the route that Solidarity was attempting to follow-with some variations, of course. If Kuron supported an attack "aimed at the overthrow of martial law," the more realistic Bujak advocated construction of a movement of mutual aid and of self-education, as did Bogdan Lis, who declared that it was necessary "to avoid a frontal clash with the Communist authorities." In the August 31, 1982, Le Monde, Guetta stressed that "it is not the Provisional National Committee that disturbs the authorities, but the thousands and thousands who edit, reproduce, distribute. . . , read." One might also add, those who act.

A poll taken in September 1982 revealed that 90% of the workers wanted the return of Solidarity and, at first sight, it seemed foolish for the government, in the following month, to institute new union laws which completely ignored past history. But the cohesion of the rank-and-file and the fact that it managed to avoid control by any apparatus (as it had also done before December 1981), created an impossible situation which the military solution had in no way resolved. After just a few months, the new government realized that its plans involving Solidarity were unworkable because the basic problem which had led to the military coup (namely, the problem of dominating the labor force) was still there. Rakowski acknowledged

broadcast). Less well known is the use made of the telephone network to let people at a greater distance follow the debates, or the use of computer terminals which Gierek had set up to transmit his orders from Warsaw and which had been used for horizontal liaison by the Party. On August 21, 1981, when Walesa tried to persuade the miners to work on Saturdays (in doing this, he was paving the way for Jaruzelski), workers at the Debienko mine responded by saying that they had organized themselves and that they could make their production quotas without working Saturdays. At the August 9 Warsaw demonstration organized by Solidarity to protest shortages, the union advocated giving flowers and fruits to the cops; the people gave them to striking workers. When the "responsible" demonstration was blocked by the cops, it quickly turned into a sort of "happening," a spontaneous street celebration.

Other examples show that in August 1980 the rankand-file movement was very erratic. Jadwiga Staniszkis reported that "in many enterprises no one was authorized to leave the occupied factory, and there often was a shortage of food, lack of news about what was going on elsewhere, boredom and uncertainty. At the same time there was great determination, no preaching and, sometimes, the feeling of taking part in something important."

But after the Gdansk accords, when the union was set up and began asserting its authority in its officially recognized and government protected function, the rupture between the union and the autonomous movement became apparent. We have seen that when the Solidarity leadership was making great . efforts to arrange summit meetings to discuss general problems, the rank-and-file movement put forward very specific demands and undertook practical actions. When the union Solidarity was established as an organ of control from above and, as such, was accepted by the Party – everything was reversed. By way of the locals which furnished the union's administrative staff, the rank-and-file pushed for its

own objectives and actions, thus relegating the union to being an intermediary whose recommendations were not always followed. Bernard Guetta wrote in the February 10, 1981 Le Monde that this provided conditions for "tremendous political radicalization." An apt summary of this situation can be found in the response of a striking Olsztyn printer to Solidarity leaders Jacek Kuron and Bogdan Lis who had "come down" to urge workers to go back to work:

> "These con-men who just arrived aren't going to make the laws. . . For a long time, we've been lied to. I don't know what's true and then you and the others arrived. And then, shit! something became clear in my head. Shitty motherfucker, I understood that we have to resist and here you come to tell me to give in."

This political radicalization affected workers' attitudes more than it affected their demands or the organization of their autonomous actions. It evolved out of the struggle, out of the clash with earlier beliefs, among people carried to the forefront of the struggle by circumstances and by structures set up because of the struggle's requirements. The same people who, one day, supported the union, demonstrated behind the Polish flag and piously took communion in front of factories during a strike, were shamelessly robbing the state and were constantly scheming against the system of exploitation on an earlier day, and will abandon the union, will burn flags and churches, in the fight for their own interests, on the day when they find the organized force of union, army or church in their way; and they will probably still believe in them while they do it. The Gdansk workers let the KOR and other "experts" insert themselves in their strike. The observation that Jan Litynski, KOR militant and expert working with the new union at the Wazbrzych mines, made on September 9, 1980, undoubtedly

to organize movements in order to improve its credit rating with the government and to establish itself as a useful intermediary. There was, even so, quite a discrepancy between the imprisoned Walesa who said, "Even with tasks limited to purely union activities like workers' safety and salaries, and even with limited right to strike, it is worth fighting for," and Bujak, an official of the underground Solidarity committee who pointed out on May 11, 1982,

> "The fundamental factor which can force the government to come to an agreement, is the economic situation. The union should demonstrate that, after a compromise, real opportunities for stabilization would appear, since an agreement is the only way for Poland to regain access to trade with the West and to international credits."

The discrepancy shows that Walesa saw himself as union leader and Bujak as political leader, while both of them expected to find a rank-and-file on which to base their move toward power. One can ask why the military authorities and the union leaders did not come to an agreement, since they seemed to speak the same language. It was because the modifications and adjustments to the state of siege had not fundamentally changed the question of the union: a modern capitalist economy has to turn a union into an increasingly integrated mediator in the management of the labor force.

After April 1982, relations between the reconstituted Solidarity apparatus and the rank-and-file (even when acting in the name of Solidarity) reverted to what they had been before intervention by the army: the apparatus did not at all control the rank-and-file and was unable to rally it to its platform. For the same reasons as before, the apparatus had to present itself as a political intermediary and it increasingly identified with the KOR – even though the government tried to isolate the KOR

self-managed." At the same time, an article in the (London) Sunday Times (February 14, 1982) tried to define what the government's tactics might be in dealing with the problem of a union:

> "lf it wants to destroy popular unrest, then it must drive a wedge between the worker members of Solidarity and their advisers: the infrastructure of opposition. There is no other way of building a malleable, tame trade union."

This probably is the path the new regime will take but, in the Western branch as in the Eastern branch of capital, they always consider only the chiefs and leaders who incite the masses. This is the same logic that led the military regime to imprison the entire Solidarity staff, and after a year to detain only the leaders of KOR. This logic completely ignores the fact that it is the economic and social situation which determines the political situation, not the other way around. The government's selective action against the union leadership and its advisors is not what separated the rank-and-file from what remained of Solidarity or from the part of it that reconstituted itself underground; it was rather what this organization-before and after the military coup, before and after the repression – was forced to do in order to maintain its existence in the face of the rank-and-file movement.

Once the government announced its guidelines (which did not formally exclude Solidarity) this organization regrouped around two poles: one pole was centered among the rankandfile, who created a profusion of more or less autonomous factory organizations with informal networks of coordination; the other pole consisted of those officials who escaped arrest and who, in their contacts with the rank-and-file, tried to preserve Solidarity as it had been before the military coup. The main concern of the rank-and-file was to defend itself, to find efficient, appropriate means to do this; the concerns of the apparatus were to consolidate, to make contacts, to try out slogans,

corresponds to what was going on everywhere in Poland at that time:

> "People have no idea what self-management is. And very often they approach the founding committee of the new union as they would a new authority from which they expect orders and protection."

But he immediately went on to say:

> "We don't know what will become of this movement but one thing is certain, it's impossible to stop it."

What the expert did not understand was that people knew very well what they did not want; they were looking for instruments to change things and if the ones they found resembled what they did not want, they would reject them as soon as they realized it. A Frankfurter Zeitung reporter wrote about this on August 30, 1980:

> "The workers do not do what their leaders say. They are good Catholics, but they reject Wyszynski's appeals for calm and continue their fight. In talking with them, it is obvious that they do not trust anyone but themselves? Another reporter, from Die Welt, wrote, on the same day: "As always in a revolutionary situation, and in Poland this is what we have, things start to develop independently of anyone."

A reporter for the (London) Sunday Times also summarized this on August 31, 1980:

> "The most significant change was that the workers themselves were daily becoming more politically conscious."

This is what prompted Balcerek, one of the reformers, in a speech to the University of Warsaw's Sigma Club, to assert that:

> "This was not a liberation movement of the working class. By insisting that they wanted to have control over management, the workers thus accepted its existence as well as the Stalinist and bureaucratic formulas of the social system. They were not revolutionaries, they did not want to abolish the division of labor. They accepted their own role as workers and hoped only to make their work easier."

This may be true if one focuses on the formal and superficial aspects of the events, but this analysis assumes revolutionary workers of the bourgeois type – Jacobin, Leninist, or Maoist – who believe that the first step in achieving communism is seizing the state. Balcerek completely misses the point of what is revolutionary. To do, and not just think about, something that makes one's work and life easier, is acting in one's class interest and undermining the foundations of the capitalist system.

The strike which broke out in the Machow (Tarnobrzeg) sulphur mines in mid-September 1980 received little attention. No outside expert served on its strike committee, the workers adopted the twenty-one points from Gdansk but added twenty-seven of their own which affected their own situation. The strike "leader," a Party member, stated,

> "But now the volcano has erupted as the workers here see they are exploited. This strike has nothing to do with being a member of the Party or not…, we all have roughly the same sized stomachs. It is not important who governs but how we are governed. It all depends on whether the new union will get money or not."

opinion of this movement, which got underway in fact and not just in words, and that one of the main experts went so far as to call this movement "ultra-left." Even though everything was almost over, these same leaders revived the idea of the "active strike" as a tactic to counter the governments resort to force. In the face of the rank-and-file movement (ambiguous though it might have appeared at the time), Solidarity leaders adopted fundamentally the same position as capitalist leaders.

By the end, Solidarity had repeatedly demonstrated its inability to control the upsurge of wildcat strikes and to perform its role as union. Can the coup d'etat resolve all these problems, given the extent of the crisis in the Polish economy and the resistance of the rank-and-file movement? If capital expects to get the economy functioning and if it expects to control the workers in order to accomplish this, it will have to find something besides the army in the factories, the Party-dominated union or the resurrection of Solidarity.

In an interview with Oriana Fallacci published in the (London) Times on February 23, 1982, Rakowski defined the tasks of the military government:

> "Firstly, to re-establish the economy; secondly, to recreate the trade unions and resurrect Solidarity with the right to strike but not of disrupting; third step to offer concrete proposals to various political forces."

In an earlier statement (February 16, 1982), the intentions were stated more explicitly: "The union movement should be frozen at present." and "strikes would not be forbidden, but should not be used except as a last resort. Regional structures within the union would be abolished and unions ought to be organized according to profession." At the Seventh Plenum of the POUP on February 24, 1982, Jaruzelski spoke about "the reconstruction of a strong union movement, independent and

that he had "the impression that he was witnessing the birth of a political party." As in every monolithic political organization, various political currents emerged which tried to respond to what they thought were the concerns of the workers in their rejection of the system. The conflict between the rank-and-file and the bureaucracy of the union became a conflict between the rank-and-file and a political apparatus. One path was thus eliminated; Solidarity, which came to life in order to be a unionist mediator, found itself, through the very logic of the system, thrust in the direction of political power. As it increasingly lost its power as representative of the rank-and-file, it sought political legitimacy and then became vulnerable to the whims of the imperialisms.

The interview Walesa gave to Playboy in December 1981 undoubtedly expressed only his personal opinions, but it nevertheless clearly indicated the direction of Solidarity's endeavors:

> "l will help the Party whenever it is discredited or starts to disappear. There are no other realities here. We are not able to overturn the Party. We are not able to deprive it of its power. We should preserve it. . . At this time, everything is organized so the Party takes care of everything. lf some day there were no longer a Party, it would mean pandemonium. . . But we should create conditions favorable to this Party."

It is significant that Walesa made such a statement at the very moment when material necessities and the capitalist class's rejection of all attempts at reform were obliging workers as well as rank-and-file unionists to launch an economy run by them and for them, notably in the Lodz region (described earlier). It is just as significant that several members and experts on the national executive committee had a negative

These few simple sentences expressed the determination to carry the struggle beyond its present achievements and they also expressed a sharp sense of what a Gdansk worker summarized on August 26, after Gierek's speech:

> "Today I have confidence in no one but ourselves, in our own power."

On August 19, 1980, a Frankfurter Rundschau reporter observed:

> "The strikers do not want to abolish socialism, they want to finally achieve it."

Thus, already in August 1980, the breach became apparent – the breach between the workers' own movement and those who, in varying degrees, because they were "organized", were immediately concerned about managing society's – really capital's – institutions with all the complications of Poland's situation. In mid-August 1980, Kuron, leader of the organized opposition, expressed this:

> "The unfolding of events in Poland is beyond the control of the organized opposition. The extreme wage increases demanded by the strikers and granted by factory managers are not very sensible from an economic point of view. More and more it seems to me that the central leadership of the strike in Gdansk is under pressure from a militant rank-and-file."

A correspondent for Tageszeitung wrote on August 6, 1980, "The higher one goes in opposition circles, the more one finds willingness to compromise." On

November 21, 1980, a sociologist stated in the (London) Financial Times,

> "Yet the very fact that the country found itself on the brink of a serious conflict with the authorities ready to use force against a virtual general strike so suddenly and over so slight an issue shows how near the dangers are … The next time it could be over the fact that a train derailed or anything … The forces that were aiming at a confrontation are still there and they could try again."

In fact, after October 1980, extensive movements encompassing several regions spontaneously grew out of seemingly minor rank-and-file concerns: the arrest of two men who stole state secrets, the dismissal of two local directors, the transfer of a police hospital to the community, the firing of four union delegates, the appropriation of a former union's possessions, etc. From these examples which are know because they had wide repercussions, one can infer that there were innumerable conflicts which never broke through the media curtain but which were definitely a part of Polish reality at the enterprise level for more than a year. Here we can see the boundary between classes: although they did not express it openly, the workers showed by their actions that they had no confidence in any of the leaders, that the accords and debates were useless if they required "waiting", and that for matters considered important and urgent, matters concerning the everyday situation, only workers; direct action counted. Let others do the sorting out, let them find an acceptable solution (what the expert quoted above saw as "expecting orders and protection"). Everyone in Poland was talking about democracy, but the democracy of those who gravitate around state power is bourgeois democracy (and is already incorporated in the Polish capitalist state according to class divisions): for the workers, it is something completely different: the right to intervene directly in any decisions made over their heads.

tives of class collaboration and the hostility of workers toward the system itself and toward capitalist exploitation as such, was expressed not only in the wave of increasing wildcat strikes but also in the daily rejection of a system which the workers were convinced had nothing at all to offer them. These were no longer political actions, but ones which affected capital's very foundations and which again became political, but at a level where they were associated with the destruction of a system rather than its reform.

When the problem of the union was seen in these terms, the only recourse of the "workers' organization" was to try to offer political solutions which would permit it to play its role. The development of the self-management network had already forced the union to set itself up as coordinator on the highest level by proposing self-management as the best solution for assuring the survival of the system and a return to the "normal" exploitation of labor. By 1981, it was no longer possible to claim that Solidarity was simply a union; it was "also a social movement of conscious citizens determined to work for the independence of Poland" (declaration to the Congress on September 9, 1981). Everything propelled Solidarity along this path; not only the usual dynamics of a "workers' organization" in a capitalist society. Since the totalitarian control of the medias and the Party monopoly prevented all self-expression and all meetings with political themes, every political faction hastened to take advantage of Solidarity's existence and of the relationship of forces between capital and labor in order to use this organization as a political springboard. Just as the 1976 upheavals had permitted the rise of the KOR and underground unions, the 1980-81 struggles saw the entire movement become engulfed in political controversies, with views ranging from ultra-nationalist to trotskyist, especially after Solidarity itself became more a political than a unionist body. On September 12, the Solidarity leader from Szczecin declared that he thought that "the union now has people capable of forming a new national government" and

put an abrupt end to this attempt to change the structures of capitalist management.

The conflict within Solidarity stemmed from the impossibility of reconciling its position as a Western-type union (a mediator between the rank-and-file and the capitalist power) with its tendency to integrate itself totally within the system. The "self-management group" concentrated on bringing about this integration at the most basic level of capitalist production and power, the enterprise. In practice, economic reformers and reformers from the union collaborated to promote the "independent" status of the enterprise, and at this level there were almost no political problems which would have hindered the integration of the union within the state. In fact, the "independence of the enterprise" (namely, greater freedom for capital to establish flexible laws for the exploitation of labor) was put forward in opposition to one sector of the capitalist class – the centralist sector concentrated in the Party.

In Poland, as in every capitalist system, the crucial problem was to obtain, by any methods, the greatest amount from wage labor. In one form or another, the new union quickly found the place assigned it by the development of capital. In Western countries, the differences between the union organizations and the autonomous movement are often partially, and sometimes largely, disguised by the fact that in the post-war period of capital's expansion – and even today-capital could keep the system functioning by granting a certain number of concessions which were channelled through the union and which assured minimal but necessary participation. In Poland, the class struggle and the rulers' attempt to resolve the resulting total crisis of the system made it urgent to establish more elaborate structures permitting unions to participate in the management of capital. Such attempts not only collided with already established institutions but, more importantly, Polish capital had nothing to offer workers other than what they could grab through extensive and laborious struggles. The abyss between the impera-

Self-organization of the struggle grew out of this direct action of the workers and was responsible for the effectiveness of the movements which developed after July1980. The spread of the strike to encompass all of Poland was not due to a handful of opposition militants. Jan Litynski, one of the founders of KOR, himself declared: "During the strike, their role (that of KOR and independent union militants) was minimal." The rank-and-file was responsible for the continuation of the movements after October 1980, and probably made use of the new local union structures, but not at all in the way anticipated by the new union bureaucracy. In so many of the rank-and-file initiatives, the workers used what was available to them but diverted it from its original purpose to serve their own specific interests. And the new union was no more privileged than the state or the Party. Workers proceeded to use the union apparatus, the premises of the former union, factory organizations, telephones, telex and computer networks, systems of transportation and food distribution. Little by little, depending on requirements of the struggle, society began functioning quite naturally on a new basis, following the initiative of the people who were used to doing the work.

In these situations, what had appeared to be a common language shared by the organizations and the workers disintegrated, and the breach between the rank-and-file and the organizations was revealed. At this point, the union and the Party quickly came to an agreement to put out the fire, since union demands were less dangerous than the forms which the struggle was beginning to take. One good example of what was happening took place in Gdansk where the dockers one fine day decided that the potatoes they were loading for export should not be shipped since there were no potatoes in the local stores. Another example took place in Silesia where miners who were already accustomed to having their Saturdays free (having taken Saturdays off before they were officially granted), refused well-paid overtime work, even

though coal was the only export which the capitalist state could use to fulfil its obligations and obtain the necessary foreign currency for development. This was when the Solidarity leadership demanded and was finally allowed to ”participate” in making economic decisions at all levels. The workers did not participate; they took action when they considered it to be in their own interest to do so, and this brought much greater results than all the discussions with the authorities. A striker in Bielsko-Biala who was active in the fight to transfer the police hospital to the local population, gave this answer to the question as to whether the strike was “political”: “If the authorities consider an honest demand like this one to be political, then, sure, this is a political strike.”

It should be noted that while carrying out these actions, the workers did not have the slightest notion of constructing a new society (and this is sometimes used to prove that the workers lacked ”consciousness”). In fact, they left it to the authorities to grant what they were asking for, and once they obtained it, they abandoned the unique forms of their struggle which were simply means for achieving the immediate goal. It was the authorities who understood that these means represented a potential, if not immediate, threat to their power. In fact, while maintaining its position and (presumably) preserving intact its repressive apparatus, capital had essentially lost all real power. Even the new union Solidarity, model for a new apparatus of domination over the workers and grudgingly accepted by the capitalist class only under threat of a general strike, was already, even before functioning as an apparatus, reduced to the same role as the pre-July1980 institutions. The workers’ attitude can be seen as a continuation of the day-to-day struggles of the past; the economic and repressive apparatus did not manage to achieve even minimal efficiency because of the unceasing class struggle, which had been intensified during the large-scale revolts of 1970 and 1976 when the authorities had brutally tried to keep the power relations within acceptable bounds. In

-exchange of information and of recommendations with the administration and the Party;

-access to the media.

Propositions discussed at the July 8 conference went further; they aimed at making enterprises completely ”independent”; control would be administered through financial instruments: credit, taxes and interest rates. We will discuss later this ”economic reform,” which had support among some reformers in the Party.

This movement, dubbed ”the Network,” quickly spread to more than 3,000 enterprises. The Solidarity leaders could not long ignore this rank-and-file movement and were obliged to demand a co-management role with very extensive responsibilities. The demand for self-management–appointing enterprise managers, participating in decision-making – probably developed in response to pressure from rank-and-file workers (who wanted accountability) and from supervisory personnel. At the Ursus plant, it was the intermediate level unionists who supported such proposals. Few details are available. The only documented cases are Ursus and the Debienko mines; in addition, there was visible cooperation between the local Solidarity leaders and reformers from the Party at the naval shipyards and large factories in Gdansk. Some sources report that more than one thousand factories established ”workers’ councils” and that many of them chose to select managers according to ”competence” rather than according to their devotion to the Party. Parliament passed a law on self-management according to which politicians and unionists were to occupy different posts: some positions would remain under the control of the Party and some would be ”fully selfmanaged.” It seems likely that the legislation was aimed at regularizing a situation that had developed without either Solidarity or the Party being aware of it. Military intervention

replace the director, the Solidarity local came to his support and he remained at his post; the secretary of the Party organization in the factory was replaced instead. The six Ursus factories employ 17,000 workers; every day their grievances were brought to one of the fifty Solidarity delegates. They ranged from problems of money and assistance to demands regarding working conditions. Ursus served as a test for a new attempt at "worker self-management." A hundred-member council made up of representatives of Solidarity, of the official union and of the Party was set up on March 10, 1981. Solidarity wanted to supervise the decisions involving production. This council was to be "a consultative organ of experts which would supervise the distribution of funds and assist in improving working conditions but which would not assume the functions of the director or the managerial staff." It was more an organization of co-management than anything else. We are familiar with the functioning of such organizations in various European countries (France and West Germany).

On July 8, 1981, the first national conference of the Movement for Workers' Self-management in Poland was held at the Lenin Shipyards in Gdansk. This movement involved 150 of Poland's largest enterprises. The delegates that met in Gdansk came from seventeen industrial groups which had some form of council for worker management similar to the model at the Ursus plant (described above). Thus, inside the new locals, but on their margins, pressure groups were set up which assembled only union representatives from the large factories (between 17,000 and 30,000 workers). These groups were organized early in 1981 and by the end of April had advanced a number of positions which they considered desirable for the effective functioning of the economy (capitals economy, to be sure):

> -suspension of strikes and efforts to avoid them;
> no proposals for increase of wages;

1980, the same practical responses to the oppressive authority were causing a shift away from individual struggles for survival toward collective efforts. In whatever affected him directly, the worker put forward his own conception of how society functions in practice. This was not an ethical question but simply one of keeping track of what was done with his labor – and this was actually much more revolutionary.

Jadwiga Staniszkis reported that in 1980 "the workers did not want to take part in decision-making at the enterprise level." They undoubtedly were well aware of the accuracy of Walesa's statement in favor of self-management: "a truly selfmanaged enterprise will not go on strike because it would harm its own interests at the same time." Staniszkis also observed that "angry rank-and-file workers are the most radical, the most opposed to the authorities and the least inclined to make concessions."

The Polish workers' real gains were neither the renovated institutions, nor the reformed system, nor the self-managed enterprises more or less freed from the centralized authority only to fall directly under the imperatives of capital. Even if they once believed in these things, and continued to believe in them to some degree, they could see that, in practice, these reforms did not at all correspond to their interests. Their real gains could not be expressed in organizational terms even if the conditions created by their struggle came to be recognized, legalized and regulated. Their gains lay in the enormous leap forward in their own consciousness of their reality as workers and of their power in society. This consciousness, which they shared with all those who were equally exploited, gave them the straightforward, confident and steady force to directly and fearlessly confront all situations, even if the outcome was unpredictable. For them, this consciousness was the best guarantee that the material benefits they had won could not easily be taken away. They now knew that what mattered was what they themselves took and not what was

given or promised them. In this, they were true to themselves. Their fight could still take other forms and move in new directions. The summer of 1981 brought new developments: disruption of the economy, decline of both the Party and the union Solidarity. The rank-and-file struggles continued unabated. The shortage of basic necessities brought about by the economic chaos and by the maneuvers of the Party and of Russia gave rise to the conviction that something had to be done. But the response differed according to social class. Later we will discuss the attempts at self-management; they were undoubtedly initiated by intermediate level personnel in the enterprises, by people who were concerned about economic efficiency. But it is also likely that these informal and flexible structures were responses to a potentially much more radical rank-and-file movement. Shortages, whether real or contrived, pushed workers to organize themselves at the places of production as well as in the places of consumption. When the most elementary needs were no longer satisfied by the established social order, people tried to satisfy them in their own way. We can get some idea of what was happening in August 1981, both in the enterprises and in distribution. Spontaneous "ad-hoc committees" took charge of restoring some order in the public distribution of consumer goods. Not much information is available about them but we know that they tried to verify whether merchandise delivered to stores was actually sold and they delegated individuals to monitor people's place in line. Similarly, dockers and railway workers kept track of and sometimes stopped foodstuffs being exported. It is difficult to say how these two autonomous organizational currents developed. We do know that structures of a new society always grow out of such needs. Could the least known events from the last half of 1981 have brought the movement to a new stage? This stage would necessarily have involved coordination of local initiatives and it would have meant a far greater threat to the capitalist system.

> compatriots and have them accept the restrictions which we consider necessary, we have to clearly tell them the reasons and the objectives".

"Have them accept the restrictions" really is a very good description of capital's conception of the function of union activity. This is reflected at every level of power. The political level gets more attention, but the impact is greater at the economic level because this is where workers have to "accept the restrictions" not merely as words but in their experience of daily exploitation. The Guardian (London) commented on November 6, 1980, that Walesa sometimes spoke more like a prime minister than like a rebellious union leader and quoted him;

> "We need technological aid from abroad in areas like agriculture, engineering and building. We need foreign experts to come in and point out our mistakes and advise us how to solve our problems. . . (Solidarity) hopes to represent the direct interests of the workers and also to involve itself actively in the search for better management, higher productivity and improved output… "

But all this was made obsolete by the unionist role which Solidarity was to play in the capitalist Poland of today. This role required the union's integration at the level of the shop floor and-at the other extreme-its integration as a political organ at the national level of political decision making.

At the other end of the social spectrum, at the Ursus plant in January 1981, six months after the events mentioned earlier in this chapter, 83% of the factory workers were Solidarity members, 7% belonged to the official union and 10% were unaffiliated. One of the Solidarity representatives, a foundry engineer, declared, "It is our policy to cooperate with the factory management." In fact, when the Party organization wanted to

two daily meetings was discarded and even in the Presidium itself, there was practically no voting.

This way of operating would be transposed to the Solidarity union with changes in name only. Statutes adopted in Gdansk in mid-September called for election of union officials within three months; elections were not held until July 1981 and there was noticeable reluctance on the part of the rank-and-file to burden themselves with administrative machinery. The congress was held in September 1981. It was marked by the same kinds of conflict which are prevalent in a Western union organization: between advocates of a locally-based structure with regional federation and advocates of a vertical structure based on industrial sectors. Wildcat strikes up to this point had displayed a violent opposition between the local rank-and-files and the national coordinators of the Gdansk Presidium. In the statutes, the lion's share went to those who were already established: one-half of the National Executive Committee was made up of self-appointed representatives and only one-half consisted of representatives elected by the Congress of delegates, and these, for a three-year term.

As we said before, all this was not a result of chance. Individuals promote these conceptions but these individuals see themselves exercising a particular function in this capitalist society. Kuron, who had a very centralist conception of the union (as opposed to Walesa, more a tactician, who sought to preserve the positions of the Catholic faction without definitively committing himself to a single approach), defined in the January 9, 1981 Le Monde what he saw as the union's function:

> "I am sincerely convinced that anarchy and disintegration of the State are inevitable unless the powerful social movements clearly and unambiguously say what they want, what their expectations are and within what limits they are operating. . . if we want to convince the millions of our fellow

The following description of plans and concerns for the Lodz region gives an idea of the situation in this period. It is reported by Zbigniew Kowalewski, a regional militant of Solidarity, who escaped the repression because he happened to be travelling in France at the time.

> For the regional branch of Solidarity, the most urgent problem was the struggle to supply the population with food. For several months, the city of Lodz, comprising a large industrial complex, was threatened with starvation. Since July, when the union had organized the well-publicized hunger march of thirty thousand women, the rationing system for basic necessities had broken down about every two months. We were not satisfied with just protest activities. After studying how the rationing system operated, we became convinced that it was in absolutely scandalous disorder. The provincial administration was not able to determine the exact number of people who should receive rationing cards. Cards had been secretly distributed to people belonging to a group which was connected to the government apparatus. The disposal of used rationing cards was not supervised, and some of them returned to circulation. The result was that to obtain something in exchange for these cards, people had to stand in line for an entire day, sometimes even two or three days. For workers, in particular, the situation was tragic.
>
> In October, the Lodz local of Solidarity demanded that the printing of rationing cards for our region be decentralized. Social tensions in the city and the likelihood of strikes were such that the city administration got the central authorities to autho-

rize this. Our region is the only one in the country where rationing cards, from that time on, were printed by Solidarity according to a system which we set up and which was supervised by a joint commission made up of representatives from the union and City Hall. The number of cards printed finally corresponded to the number needed, which had been determined precisely. We also controlled the distribution of the cards and this made it possible to put an end to the privileges. And we succeeded in another way. The central authorities had denied Solidarity's right to monitor the distribution of basic foodstuffs, arguing that this was interference in government prerogatives. (As deputy Prime Minister Rakowski said to Lech Walesa, "In this country, whoever gains control over food distribution, holds the power.")

Now, in our region, we had gained this control! The Lodz mayor had authorized it. Special teams of union members supervised the situation at rural collection depots, in slaughterhouses, in warehouses and in wholesale and retail stores. The union had not been authorized to supervise warehouses containing government-owned goods. But this did not prevent us from knowing exactly the quantities and type of goods stored there. In this way, we were able to report information to the mayor which he said that even he didn't know. Solidarity's presence was everywhere and the authorities found it increasingly difficult to prevent us from gathering information on the state of the economic situation. As a result of our activity, there was improvement in food distribution and shorter lines. We were already preparing

that the Communist Party was in relative decline (and to the extent that the Party could not be fundamentally reformed).

It is difficult to determine what the structure of the strike committees had been, but it seems that in many places, as in Gdansk, they had been adopted and accepted without opposition in the initial enthusiasm of the struggle. We do know how the union's final formation came about, and that it happened mainly in Gdansk. The nucleus of the union originated as the Gdansk Presidium, which was self-appointed while there were only thirty-two striking enterprises represented in the MKS. There were subsequently four hundred of them but no one else was elected or added to the Presidium. This body became the Presidium of the Gdansk union and, in fact, of Solidarity itself, but it included only two workers among its fifteen or so members. Intellectuals played a decisive role in it (a shipyard engineer and the president of the Gdansk student organization, among others). From the beginning there was a hierarchical relationship between the Plenum of delegates and the Presidium. Alongside the Presidium, there were "experts" (whom, at one point, the Gdansk workers had wanted to expel) who managed to function as a still more decisive secret committee. Furthermore, certain ticklish problems (the resolution of which even the narrow base of the Presidium or the Plenum would not have accepted) were settled in private meetings between Walesa and Jagielski and then presented as accomplished fact. General assemblies of workers deciding between different positions were never held; there were only meetings at which the workers were presented with "achieved results."

Staniszkis revealed that in Gdansk, at the very time when the "elites" (prior to becoming unionists) were discussing censorship and other issues with the government authorities, there were covert discussions among the Presidium members about the need to censor the shipyard's daily bulletin, which had remained independent of direct control by the MKS. From the very beginning of negotiations, the MKS policy of holding

> "The agreements reached are very progressive. At the mine, the new union even got management to agree to as many paid delegates as for the official union. The situation is quite unusual because the president and vice-president of the committee are Party members. The union president is characteristic of a type quite common among young people. He does not know what collective activity is. Spontaneously, he seems to conduct himself more like certain Western union men."

Although they jumped on the bandwagon after things were already underway, these opposition militants and activists as well as the establishment reformers in the official union or the Party nonetheless joined, hoping for a transformation and seemingly sharing the hopes of the workers. This is why they were so quickly accepted at the beginning of the struggles. Their hopes were, however, quite different. In October 1980, Staniszkis observed that the rank-and-file movement was for direct democracy, "against all institutions and all hierarchy. . . for minimal hierarchy. . . for participation in the decisions." For the most part, the "militants" wanted to set up an organization in which they would have tight control over policies. Staniszkis stressed that "in their activity in the illegal unions, they evolved a veritable party mentality and they did not want to share what they had acquired." This attitude does not explain everything. In contemporary Poland, the creation of the union and its effective growth in the strike committees had transferred to these organizations political militants who had earlier been active in the Catholic Church, in working groups among intellectuals or in the Party, in underground associations like the KOR or an embryonic union. By its very existence, the "independent union" became a sort of party, that is, an organization prepared to furnish leadership to the extent

> a plan for supervising industrial production in the region.

Kowalewski then described how his union pressured enterprises to respond to needs of the peasantry, and he also discussed a plan for energy distribution. He added:

> The Solidarity union in Lodz was the first one in Poland to energetically support the idea of worker self-management, starting in January 1981, and to advocate workers' power in the enterprises. We supported the creation of regional committees to coordinate workers' councils – they already existed in twenty-six regions-as well as the activities of the National Federation of Self-Management Bodies which was founded last October.

Kowalewski described the government's postponement of plans for economic reform at the end of 1981:

> The government's decision caused agitation and extreme dissatisfaction in the factories: "We will have to institute the economic reforms ourselves, without the authorities and in spite of them, if necessary." This was the view more and more widely expressed by Lodz workers at enterprise meetings and by militants at regional discussions of the movement for self-management.
>
> This project ran into violent opposition from the government as well as hostility from a section of Solidarity's National Committee.
>
> On December 9th, six central committee members from the regional Lodz leadership met with workers from the city's twelve principal enterprises at a

> mass meeting. They held discussions about the active strike, formation of a workers' security guard and measures to combat sabotage of production. The great majority of workers declared themselves in favor of these forms of activity.
>
> That same evening, we met with Solidarity representatives from neighboring regions at a location outside the regional headquarters because we feared that our discussions would be bugged. We informed them that our region would probably begin an active strike on a very large scale on December 21st and we asked them to support our action, especially by guaranteeing that food supplies reached the Lodz population. It was only as a last resort, when faced with threats from the government and lacking any other form of struggle, that Solidarity's national leadership considered the active strike.

This text clearly shows the interaction between the rank-and-file movement and local Solidarity officials in responding to concrete situations. In the Polish context, taking over the economy would have been a revolutionary undertaking because the workers would have made it their own project even if certain leaders viewed it as an exercise of union authority. But on this point, neither Solidarity's national leadership nor the rest of the capitalist system were deceived.

There were undoubtedly great differences between regions in Poland but if the productive apparatus in one region had been taken over along the lines sketched above for the Lodz region, takeovers would have spread like wildfire. Here again, the union apparatus was lagging far behind the real movement and it served only belatedly as a tactical instrument; it was not at the forefront of the fight because its interests were completely different from the immediate material needs that the

experts, on the distribution of the old union's property, were a defense of an institution more than anything else. It seems paradoxical that a movement which grew to prominence in the underground and which succeeded in creating a network of contacts and newspapers should seek "guarantees" from the state at a time when the much more favorable relationship of forces would have permitted it to continue along its original path.

In an interview in the September 8, 1980, German magazine Der Spiegel, Rakowski (who later served as government liaison with the unions) gave a good summary of this situation:

> "It is very true that the existence of independent unions is inconsistent with structures which exist at present, but, as for me, for several years I have supported the view that our socialist system in Poland should be changed. . . I am not at all sure that the existence of two unions can continue in the long run. We will see from experience. These recent events have shown us the way. . . Moreover, I believe that the slogan for independent unions is a peculiar and temporary one. When I look around me in the world, nowhere do I see unions that defend workers' interests to the very end. . . For my part, I would very much like to see this new type of union leader who, as soon as he sees the accounting records, compares capacities and productivities and recognizes that his appeals to the workers are not always followed. At that point we shall see the real character and goals of the new unions and to what extent they take responsibility for production?"

Litynski, a KOR representative, referring to the agreements reached in the mines in early September, 1980, stated,

more apparent. The nascent union bureaucracy tried to impose "its" rule over the rank-and-file so that authorized strikes would exhibit its real power. We mentioned earlier the restrictions imposed on the wildcat strikes which broke out in Gdansk after September 1980. As in industrialized countries, union collaboration with capitalist power expressed itself in . economic rather than political terms. When Walesa insisted once again: "l am a unionist, I am not a politician," he could not have said it better. What he was doing was exactly what mattered to a union in a modern economy. On August 25, 1980, he proclaimed, "Strikes are the most expensive means of negotiation. An independent union is the only possible way to insure the efficiency of the economy," and he added on August 31, after signing the accords:

> "Throughout the entire strike we have thought about the interests of the Nation and it is these we are thinking of as we return to work tomorrow, September 1st. The strike is over."

Here we can recall the remark quoted above that at this point "things start to develop independently of anyone." The legal existence of an institution in capitalist society implied that its power stemmed not so much from its determination to carry on the struggle which had led to its creation, but rather from the authority which the capitalist class assigned it by "recognizing" it as negotiator, and, what is more, as sole negotiator.

This attribute of the institution became at least as important as the matters it would discuss and resolve for the benefit of capital. The ideal model of a western-style union bargaining over the price of the work force quickly gave way to increasingly open intervention in order to maintain social peace and economic efficiency. To a great extent, the union sought to preserve and consolidate the legal power to do this. All the debates on legislation, on media access, on protection of the

workers wanted to satisfy by themselves, without concerning themselves with power relations.

The principal function of the military units which Jaruzelski stationed throughout the country at the end of the summer of 1981 was to thwart the development of selforganization of social life, both in production and in consumption. It is obvious that such a situation would be intolerable for capital as a whole. The repressive action was designed to break up a whole series of activities that no capitalist state could permit. It is significant that prior to direct repression, efforts were made to totally disrupt all means of communication precisely in order to prevent coordination of rankand-file groups. We do not yet know what forms the workers' autonomous actions took during the struggles – at first open, later, underground-against the repressive apparatus after the military coup d'etat. But the new forms of struggle undoubtedly gave rise to new forms of organization which were adapted to the new reorganization of capital in Poland.

Capital and its repressive apparatus involuntarily demonstrated that a union apparatus is nothing and autonomous movement is all. Just about everyone belonging to the bureaucratic apparatus, from the highest to the lowest level, was in prison and nevertheless the Polish workers without hesitation directly confronted army and police for fifteen days. The unity of the struggle had no need of telephones. On the defensive, shut inside the fortresses of their enterprises, the workers once again knew how to confront the class enemy by using means provided them by their position in the productive apparatus. We have already mentioned the reported episodes; there were undoubtedly many others and the self-organization of the struggle no doubt determined the extent of the resistance. In this long battle which is the class struggle, after an episode which some call a defeat, the existence of this self-organization assures continuity of the struggle in other forms, since the repression now prevents using direct methods. Some accounts

suggest that everything had returned to the situation prior to December 1970. This is only in appearance. Just as the rebellion of July-August 1980 grew out of previous struggles and from the experience of daily resistance, the frontal attack by capital's mercenaries gives a new dimension to this forced return to other forms of struggle. Any illusions remaining after the months of governmental excuses and delays vanished with the direct confrontation; the reformist road opened by the June 1976 uprisings has been closed to the workers too, and this is what counts. It is not so much the will or experience of the workers which makes them take another path, but the level of economic development and the forms of repression, which are also modified on the basis of past experience.

There is no need to dwell on the workers' hostility toward the new power which robbed them of some of their gains by resorting to blood and violence against those who opposed it. Any or all of them could have made the scathing response given in Gdansk by a Lenin Shipyard worker to Rakowski, Jaruzelski's right-hand man, who spoke to a few thousand workers on August 25, 1983. The representative of capital started off with the old hackneyed formula: "We are here among ourselves, like a family," when the brutal and unequivocal response came from an anonymous worker; "Except for you." The authorities know this even if they always profess the opposite. And even the hand-picked moderates express this whenever officials try to renew contacts with or make advances to the rank-and-file.

"We are a state where the working class is in power and this class lives in the worst conditions. It is time for a change," a Lodz textile worker declared on April 2, 1983. A Polish worker quoted by Newsweek was more explicit; "I would be willing to sacrifice if I felt there was something to look forward to. But I don't see any prospects for the future in Poland." In response, the authorities have had to acknowledge their inadequacy in dealing with this: "The Polish government is facing an agoniz-

For the great majority of the workers, it is certain that the creation of an independent union corresponded, consciously or not, to what they hoped to achieve through their strike: a permanent structure where they could express their wishes and which they could control. A foreman at the shipyards expressed this on August 18, 1980:

> "The main thing at the moment is to start building an officially tolerated independent union movement here; if we get that out of these strikes, then we'll have gained a lot. As for our other demands, we'll work for them in the future" (Financial Times (London), August 19, 1980).

These efforts of the proletariat to set up unions have frequently been compared to efforts by the proletariat in already industrialized countries in the second half of the nineteenth century. As far as Poland is concerned, the comparison is valid if one compares the relative importance of the various social classes: peasantry, proletariat, middle classes, ruling class. There seems to have been an attraction to bourgeois democracy; the subordinate classes more or less believed in the fiction of parliamentarism. But in Poland, the real tendency was to completely destroy bourgeois democracy. When Walesa declared that "politics didn't interest him," he was expressing the workers' critique of parliamentarism. As modernization got underway in Poland, parliamentary inclinations were attacked by the advent of the real domination of capital, by production techniques and by methods of domination which were those of a modern society.

By the time the Gdansk accords legally recognized the independent union, it had already existed for weeks. But already conflicts between the newly constituted apparatus and the rank-and-file began to be seen. The class collaboration between opposition "experts" and Party "liberals" became

dissolving once the strikes were over, he emphasized that, "the future of Poland depends on whether or not we will succeed in securing fundamental changes. The first step in this direction should be the establishment of independent unions. The current negotiations with the authorities are an excellent opportunity to select representatives who will later become union personnel." This is exactly what happened during the course of events in August 1980. In two areas the strike in Lublin had already gone beyond the movement which until then had been limited to individual factories; organization was on a city-wide scale and an elected delegation negotiated with national leaders rather than with local enterprise or political leaders.

Baluka's "we" parallels that of Walesa. His assertion that liaisons were almost non-existent at the end of July 1980 parallels Walesa's assertion that "We were not prepared." In Gdansk, where nothing happened until mid-August, it appears that "union militants" did not attempt to launch any response to the outbursts elsewhere in Poland. In fact, the government itself, by its change in policy, provoked the explosion in Gdansk-a pattern identical to the outbreak of the Ursus strike. The spread of the strike locally was also identical to what happened in Lublin but the two earlier situations were surpassed both in the scope of the demands and the geographic extent of the Gdansk strike. Although the spread of the strike was undoubtedly due to the spontaneity of the struggle as well as to the setting up of rank-and-file organizations (the factory strike committees), the central control which everyone accepted for obvious tactical reasons was gradually lost by the rank-and-file and transferred to the political opposition. From this vantage point, we can see the previously mentioned convergence between the two currents – one inside and the other outside the Party – both committed to reforming the system. The entire autonomous movement converged here with a confrontation between two currents of the capitalist class.

ing problem: the need to create work incentives when there are no material rewards to distribute." Or, in a more precise formulation, "Problems of controlling Poland's working class would be greatly eased if people's everyday needs could be satisfied and shortages reduced."

The response of workers to this situation was; "In spite of the wage increases in our foundry, our families live worse and worse" (a Katowice machine operator). "The increase in the cost of living, uncertainty about the future, failure to consult workers about important decisions, all have an effect on attitudes and on the atmosphere at work" (a Rzeszow worker).

What place did organizations have in the variegated movement over which repression as well as corruption hovered? On July 18, 1982, a Financial Times reporter wrote that, "it is not difficult to get a crowd of several thousand out in the streets demonstrating, particularly among the young who are almost uniformly hostile to the system," but that "soundings in factories have shown that rank-and-file workers are not ready to confront the Government openly." "Are not ready" is incorrect and does not correspond to what agents of the state were saying at the same time. What workers were not ready to do was to follow appeals issued by the underground Solidarity leadership. Enormous rank-and-file activity in the enterprises was shown by the daily attitudes mentioned above, as well as by the 2,000 underground leaflets and bulletins which were put out in factories under the title of Solidarity. But at the same time, in April 1982, an underground leader had to leave a Warsaw textile plant after a serious run-in with activists in the plant who were irritated by the totally unrealistic strike proposals. A woman shouted, "Why should we listen to anything you say when it is clear you leaders don't know what you are doing'?" The rank-and-file movement was following its own course.

Le Monde reported on September 18, 1982, during the unrest in Lower Silesia: "One can observe a growing obstinacy over which the underground Solidarity leaders seem to have

less and less control, since they have asked their followers to avoid all demonstrations except those they themselves call."

sion. Later this would be the core of the new union. Baluka described this development:

> "In general, the strike originates in one specific shop or in a plant which is part of a specific industrial complex and it very quickly spreads to all the others. Workers shut off the machines and gather in the halls to have discussions. The atmosphere is calm and the occasional proposals to take to the streets are rejected; the workers want to talk with management. At Ursus, an official of the Party's rank-and-file organization wanted workers who were Party members to go back to work. Not only did they refuse, but they even organized themselves, ruling out any possibility of being used as strike breakers."

But after this admirable description of the rank-and-file movement, he added,

> "What we need above all is a solid, permanent liaison between the various enterprises, comprised of representatives elected by the permanent workers' commissions or of militants from the independent unions. Such groups exist only in Katowice, Gdansk and Szczecin and, at present, they do not have many contacts. One of the most important achievements of the recent strikes is that the Ursus workers elected a workers' commission which did not dissolve itself but continues to act in the name of the workers."

The language he used reveals what the political opposition expected from the class struggle. Baluka was even more explicit in another article; very similar language is used by other "leaders." Stating that most of the strike committees were net

5. The independent union: a new prop for the capitalist class

The appearance and development of an "independent" union in the Eastern branch of capitalism demonstrated both the importance of the autonomous rank-and-file movement and capital's need to impose limits on it. In Poland, where the diverse interests express themselves through Party-controlled institutions, within the framework of the economic and military imperatives of the dominant imperialism, the movement's dynamism pushed back the boundary between capital and labor. The enormous hopes carried by this movement in July and August 1980 inspired the creation of spontaneous organs of struggle, but six months later, the movement had to endeavor to define the boundary between itself and these organs, which had become permanent and recognized by the government. In doing this, the movement had to redefine the form and content of its struggle. This is how the class struggle proceeds.

We have already mentioned the judgment expressed more and more frequently in both branches of capital (especially in 1970 and in 1976) that if capitalist Poland hoped to avoid these periodic direct confrontations between the workers and the political power, it would have to find a regulating mechanism, an instrument analogous to the union in Western countries. This led to the recognition that the machinery of the Polish capitalist class was not adequate (if it ever had been); on one side a

draws on the valuable experience of previous years and on the existing opposition's organizational activities. it is not by chance that such an event occurred in the decade of 1970-80. Gierek had hoped to preserve the power of the Party and the capitalist class by pushing industrialization-copying what had been done in Western European countries in the 1950s. But by preserving (for good reasons) the same economic, social and political structures, even after the warnings of 1976, he only compounded the difficulties which he claimed to be surmounting. As industrialization proceeded, a different method of domination became more and more necessary; growing awareness of this situation created a latent crisis and caused splits in the capitalist class itself, namely in the economic bureaucracy and Party ranks. Thus, there was some common ground between the attempts of the rank-and-file organization which was responding to the requirements of the struggle and the tendencies toward structural reform which came from the apparatus of domination itself. Even before 1980, recommendations from increasingly numerous groups of economists, enterprise managers, intellectuals and politicians had resembled criticism voiced by the opposition. As the class struggle grew more intense, there was increased polarization within the ruling class.

What happened at the Ursus tractor factory in a Warsaw suburb can serve as an example of the chain of events which led to the birth of the union. In 1976, Ursus was one of the centers of spontaneous activity. Again this time, it was one of the first plants to join the resistance to the July 1, 1980, increase in meat prices. A KOR militant of three-months standing who was a member of the official union had been elected one of the 15% uncommitted delegates and took the initiative to go from crew to crew calling for an assembly. Everyone came and agreed about saying no to the price hikes and yes to the strike. A strike committee was elected which, immediately after the strike, transformed itself into a permanent workers' commis-

"Western-type democratic" current advocated modifying state power in order to achieve an equilibrium between the various classes which actually existed in Polish society, an equilibrium favoring the capitalist class, to be sure; on the other side a current advocating economic more than political democracy thought it impossible to set up the Western democratic form (especially at the union level) because of Poland's position in the Eastern capitalist bloc and because of the general tendencies of international capital, and this current emerged with formulas of participation and self-management. In the absence of any institutions of mediation (neither the Party nor the official union could begin to play such a role), other authorized or tolerated organizations stepped forward to fill the void even though mediation was not one of their original functions.

One of these organizations was the Catholic Church, which can be seen to have played a similar role to the one it played in Spain, under Franco, in the 1960s. Referring to this role, a Polish dissident, A. Smolar, observed as early as August 1980: "In a situation of bitter conflict, it (the Church) will become a major factor in social peace." Walesa confirmed this much later (March 1981) when speaking of Cardinal Wyszynski, "Without his intervention, I would never have been able to end those strikes."

Another organization was the KOR. A group of intellectuals, encouraged by the workers' actions in 1976, formed defense committees which, in spite of the repression, in five years developed into unions in embryo. In 1980, only a handful of militants was involved with these committees; intellectuals put out the newspaper Robotnik which attempted to serve as coordinator. Kuron, one of the KOR leaders, said in 1980, "We have some influence among the workers and we can increase it because they need assistance, information and advice. It is our responsibility to help workers organize themselves into independent, institutional groups, either workers' commissions or unions, or to take over the state-run unions." Robotnik proposed an initial formula; workers' commissions modeled on the ones in Spain. At the beginning of 1980, Walesa attempted to set one up at the Electro Montaz factory where he was threatened with dismissal. He failed. This is probably what made him say on August 22, 1980, "The events came too soon, we were not prepared."

This brief sentence says a great deal: by "the events" he means the autonomous working class actions, the "we" refers to the Polish political opposition, a few hundred members of KOR (including thirty or so activists) ranging from Catholics to more or less Leninist Marxists who wanted to reform the Polish Party. "The events," namely the autonomous activity of the Polish working class, were "the beginning of a relentless battle for the opposition, who sensed that here was a unique opportunity to win permanent political concessions – especially union rights-and who did not want to miss out." (B. Guetta in Le Monde, August 19, 1980).

But regardless of intentions, the KOR and the embryonic union were instruments accessible to the workers in their struggle; the workers used them and, for a time, made them their own. As soon as a new strike broke out, the strikers immediately notified the KOR, with the result that, due to all the Western medias that could be reached in Poland and to the already established network which was growing rapidly, no struggle would henceforth remain isolated, everyone heard about each action. Through news reports and by example, working class cohesion was shaped for a new advance.

This leap to a higher level occurred in July and August 1980, when the spreading strike grew to such a point that it created its own broad organization and reduced the intermediaries of the earlier period to the role of advisors. Baluka, former president of the 1970 Szczecin strike committee, was correct in his assessment; "The current wave is much more mature than anything we have known in the past. This is no longer a spontaneous and local uprising. This is a determined resistance which

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self-management left them little influence. At the Steelworks, underground leaflets supported the election of the workers' council and saw it as a chance to "break with the atmosphere of passivity and negativity" among the workers. At the end of December 1983, 1,780 workers out of the 13,800 at the FSO Zeran auto plants became members of an "independent and self-managed union," but this union competed for the role of managing the work force with the factory's workers' council, which had been democratically elected before the December 1981 coup and which continued to function.

Solidarity's underground organization was aware of the withdrawal of its rank-and-file but did not see how to proceed in order to define new tactics. Ultimately, one had to agree with Guetta's comment on Solidarity in the November 24, 1982 Le Monde:

> "The union is now only a vanguard which is seeking a path for itself."

After the ineffective strikes, which caused only the slightest inconvenience to the government, the Solidarity leadership had no choice but to acknowledge the state of affairs; first, its isolation from the rank-and-file, and second, the resulting impossibility of participating in the government's projects to construct a union better suited to the requirements of the Polish economy. Some leaders advocated a return to legality while leaving the rank-and-file to organize itself (this was largely recognition of a situation over which they had little influence). Other leaders advocated the development of an underground press in order to mold activists for the future (here, one sees the KOR tendency to create a political organization which awaits another worker revolt in order to insert itself into it). The middle position between these two extremes was entry into the new unions, where the Solidarity militants served to counterbalance other tendencies. Here, too, what remained of Solidar-

ity as organization was reduced largely to a political and ideological role.

This is the place to make some observations about Walesa, whose fate in some ways was the same as that of other Solidarity leaders but differed because of his role as unionist. The mass movement made use of organizational leaders as tools for the moment, but the leaders believed it was they who had created the mass movement. The ebbing of this movement and its changed forms left the leaders high and dry, desperately looking around for the currents which had sustained them in the past. This was even more obvious for Walesa than for the others. The occupants of the Polish structures of domination did not misjudge him. In an interview with Fallacci published in the (London) Times on February 22, 1982, Rakowski stated, "In fact, some in the church are kind of tired of him . . . So there are rumours that the church is considering the possibility of dropping him." In another statement (to Newsweek in January 1983), Rakowski said, "For a certain social group, Walesa is still some kind of symbol."

Walesa could no longer be regarded as head of the Solidarity which had become a secret organization with underground leaders and which was pursuing political goals. It is incorrect to say that Solidarity remained a union which was carrying on its operations illegally, because the underground movement was completely different from a union. As for Walesa, he believed in the union and considered himself a union leader who was concerned only with union affairs. But since Solidarity was no longer a union but a political group guided by persons who had been leaders of the KOR, Walesa was no more than a union chief without a following. He undoubtedly retained his popularity as a union chief, a popularity he would have lost had Solidarity succeeded in becoming a traditional union.

His popularity persisted because of a mistaken impression held by Polish workers: that Solidarity expressed their interests. Solidarity disappeared as a result of the coup d'etat, before

the conflict between the rank-and-file and the administration became visible. The conflict remained latent because of the tendency of Solidarity to become a traditional union, but it never appeared openly because events continually prevented Solidarity from assuming this role. There were now two distinct entities; Solidarity to a large extent became a dissident political movement and Walesa became a symbol.

This was a significant change, and even the Church had to take it into account. The Church's influence was derived from the peasantry and its influence among workers was due to the rapid shift of the peasant population toward industry. In order to maintain its authority, the Church had to adopt conciliatory and realistic attitudes, and had to seek relationships which would maintain social peace. The Pope and Archbishop Clemp had no alternative except to work for a reconciliation with the regime in power. These two churchmen might have seemed l like the natural allies of Solidarity and Walesa as long as the latter two remained within legal bounds and had a welldefined function. But when Solidarity moved in the direction of the underground, illegal and politically competitive KOR, and when Walesa became a union chief without followers, the Church rejected these potential allies. A compromise between Jaruzelski and the Church was worked out with a view to maintaining social peace.

The Church's attitude did not destroy Walesa's symbolic importance. The Walesa symbol objectively served as a prop to the regime; it reconciled the oppressed to their oppression.

6. Classes and capital in Poland: a capitalist class in transition

Before the combined effects of the class struggle and the economic crisis led to the disturbances of the summer of 1980, the development of capital in Poland had already affected the structures of the various social classes. The ruling class, the capitalist class, consisted of some 200,000 families situated in the Party, the official unions, the administration, and the management of enterprises. This class sought to perpetuate itself by way of personal enrichment (the scandals which the movement exposed in this regard merely touched the tip of the iceberg), by having privileged access (guaranteed by force) to the material goods available through collective ownership of the means of production, and, as everywhere, by reproducing itself as ruling class. As a journalist commented in the August 26, 1980, Tageszeitung,

> "the single preoccupation of the people who govern, is their desire to stay in power."

The head of the official unions expressed this candidly on Gdansk television on September 1, 1980:

> "When we took power into our hands thirty-five years ago, we did not do it in order to share it with others."

crisis is one manifestation; it also depends on struggles of workers everywhere within their own countries. This is the surest path toward the internationalization of struggles in response to the internationalization of their repression in Poland.

paying part of its debts by exporting raw materials. Attempts to direct foreign trade toward Comecon countries succeeded in shifting only 9% of the total.

The aim of capital is to increase capital; an industry operating at half capacity cannot generate the requisite profits for self-financing and for Western banks. Nevertheless, the sole capitalist solution to the Polish crisis was "to get the machine working again." This situation could not continue indefinitely; regular sources of supplies were needed for the machine to operate "normally;" a minimal consensus on the part of the workers was needed for them to agree to their own exploitation. The rescheduling of the debt in 1983 and the hesitant recourse to new credits for the re-launching of certain "modern" projects demonstrated the commitment to resolve the economic crisis with assistance from international capital. This meant that the Polish proletariat would be largely responsible for bearing the costs of the restoration, and also that the proletariat in every country would be increasingly exploited to underwrite part of the losses imposed on capital as a whole by the deferred debts and new credits. For the moment, capital has scored a point in Poland. But has it really won? Everything remains to be done; first of all, Polish workers have to produce "normally" (namely in conditions appropriate to present-day capital). Internationalization could come through direct financial channels; it could also come through political channels in a repartitioned world where it would be easier to directly repress the workers. If capital sees the solution to the Polish crisis in internationalization, this is also the path for class struggle – but not in the form of "solidarity with the Polish workers," which would remain nothing but an ineffectual intention.

As long as each branch of capital fears that the repercussions of a violent clash in Poland would upset the precarious equilibrium of its power relations with its own workers, harsh solutions are unlikely in Poland. The outcome depends on the effects of the international economic crisis, of which the Polish

The dividing line between this ruling class and the impatient middle class, which we will discuss later, is probably not very precise, but it is the same as in Western countries. The same class structure was noted in another, already cited, observation from the August 26, 1980, Tageszeitung referring to the strikes:

> "The higher one goes in opposition circles, the more one finds willingness to compromise."

Events in Poland can be understood only if one considers this country as a capitalist entity with a relatively weak national capital. This situation made Poland a field for confrontation and collaboration between the two capitalist groups: the West (especially Western Europe) and Russia. The confrontations were principally economic. Investments had to assure a return with an appropriate rate of profit-regardless of the forms. Each of the dominant capitalisms tended to dictate its own terms-which meant it imposed political conditions. Each was interested in the sector of development which would reinforce its own economy and the form of domination of capital within its own borders. This required a certain type of production, certain methods of production as well as social relations appropriate to that type of production.

As always happens within a capitalist class, major social upheavals in Poland provided occasions to rejuvenate the leadership. A new generation of 30to 40-year olds moved up toward positions of authority as a result of "Party reform" (which this group supported largely because it furnished the only opportunity to advance quickly). The capitalist class was rejuvenated: thousands of former "officials" were eased out; they lost their positions and the privileges attached to their power, but they were not sent back to the factories or the mines. These changes took place in a context of clans whose programs were determined by the struggles of inter-imperialist rivals for economic

and political influence in Poland. These clans really had no consistent line except to preserve their class power. As Staniszkis observed,

> "When far from power, people adopt a critical attitude, but they do not change their way of thinking."

Their temporary options were linked to whichever capitalist group best suited their economic and social position. This was especially true for enterprise managers. A director of the Ursus tractor plant, which is linked to Massey-Ferguson and Perkins, was certainly more "open" to the West than a director of a steel foundry which exported its products to Russia.

This is much less true for political leaders. Although some of them were clearly "marked" by their choice of imperialism, many others were difficult to define because of their opportunism. In the Polish situation, this is understandable: every member of the capitalist class, even if he leaned toward a Westerntype development, had to pay lip-service to Russia, which still controlled the critical economic fields. In their struggle to acquire the power of capital (which in Poland is just as ferocious as the capitalist and bureaucratic competition in the West), these clans needed leverage and supporters; the class struggle, the struggles of the workers and the peasants, furnished the leverage and supporters. In contrast, these clans saw the intermediate bureaucracy and intellectuals (the equivalent of the middle classes) merely as an auxiliary element which was also seeking advancement through the class struggle. When the Polish capitalist class insisted that it was capable of resolving its problems by itself, it meant that, in the context of the economic and social adaptations underway, it would be able to maintain its domination without any "assistance" other than what it already received from the imperialisms to which it was economically and financially linked. Even issues which

US, for example, the government quickly repaid its banks the entire amount overdrawn by Poland.) Jaruzelski was a savior to banks, and in financial terms the West gained much more than Russia. The February 1, 1982 Financial Times stated explicitly:

> "The West is right to withhold trade credits and rescheduling of debts not as a punishment but because Poland in a state of profound political conflict is a much worse risk than a Poland which is, within limits, at peace with itself. Sooner or later that means reform."

Beneath all the bombast, this was the reality of capital. International capital was waiting for the fire to be extinguished, or at least contained, so it could determine how things could be made secure at the financial level. Just as in Poland's internal affairs, these spokesmen were neither politicians nor economists but financiers, those who expressed capital's direct interests. Finance Minister Krzak, Poland's representative in all the discussions dealing with the country's debt, said,

> "We speak a common language of roll-over, revolving credits and interest accumulation ...We never talk about politics when negotiating with Western bankers."

Having backed Poland up against a wall, the international financiers looked to their national counterparts to carry out the expected task, to assure adequate social peace so that the country would again be a solvent client. (In September 1982, this solvency was still doubtful since for 67% of Poland's imports, cash was required; in 1981, cash was required for just 28%.) As mentioned earlier, the economic confusion itself was responsible for reducing demand for imported goods and this had a snowballing effect, since the lack of parts or of raw materials further diminished this demand. Poland was able to begin

> "What I say may be brutal, but I think that it was no longer possible for the Polish government to govern the country. Goal production had been considerably reduced, exports were only 20% of what they had been, the country had practically come to a halt. I now see the likelihood of Poland's returning to a more normal functioning and this could be a good thing for the banks."

In reality, the West as well as the East helped Jaruzelski put his house in order. Russia, doubly concerned, provided material assistance to the army and police in carrying out their mission for capital. Russia saw to it that there were contributions from the Comecon countries, especially from East Germany which by then was something like a rich relative and had, more than Russia, a direct interest in the "normalization" of its next door neighbor (no revolutionary contagion, more coal). The West roused itself to "save Poland" with a deluge of hypocritical tears and hatred which were processed by the medias. The facade of humanitarian concerns quickly evaporated behind sordid discussions concerning "food assistance," extension of the debt, new credits and fierce competition for markets in the Eastern countries. One thing was clear; no-one did a thing to diminish the harsh repression which fell on the Polish workers or to hinder the attempt to "get the economy going" so that Poland could fulfil its obligations toward capitalist countries in the West and East.

Poland was not the worst defaulter on debts. (Debts in 1982 in billions of dollars: Brazil $88, Mexico $85, South Korea $39, Argentina $38, Poland $25.) Poland's debt disturbed Western Europe more than it did the US; this explains the difference in response to the so-called economic sanctions. The concern of the lending banks was not so much the "bankruptcy" they cried so much about; a portion of their loans was guaranteed by their own governments or by special organizations. (In the

seemed specifically political, such as the Russian military presence or the dominant role of the Party, actually came within the framework of inter-imperialist rivalries because of the way they were treated by the clans of the Polish capitalist class. When the governments of South American countries started to look more to West European capital than to US capital for their development, the United States, freed from the burden of the Vietnam war, re-established the balance in its favor by unparalleled political and military violence. Russia found itself in the same position in Poland, except that direct intervention would have had more dangerous consequences because the crisis in Poland is to some extent the crisis of the Eastern capitalist system.

In Poland the peasants make up 30% of the population; they are not agricultural workers but small, independent farmers who, by the size of their holdings, their methods of producing for the market, and their habits of consuming their products themselves, could be compared to French peasants at the beginning of the century. On the average, they are quite elderly and their children have had to move to urban centers because the land could not support them. We have already mentioned that the 1980 class struggle aroused the peasants, who had previously remained aloof from the workers' economic and political demands, but their involvement was due mainly to a single cause, the rapid industrialization of the country during the past ten years, which had shaken up this class. The peasant demands were not so much for the right to form an agricultural union but rather for the guarantee of land ownership–the right to dispose of their land through sale or inheritance–and for access to modern methods of production. (The peasants cultivated 80% of the land but received only 25% of the investments, while the rest went to state farms.) Most of these demands seem to have been met. In France, for example, the unionization of farmers had been a factor, along with mechanization and widespread use of fertilizers, in agricultural concentration which brought

about a transition toward production for the capitalist market. In Poland, there were parallels between the peasants' demands, which were concerned with greater productivity, and demands in the industrial sector which were concerned with similar problems. (In the industrial sector, however, private ownership did not exist, and the "freedom" demanded was for investments through self-financing or bank loans.) To a certain extent, the failure of the plan for industrialization was due to the system's inability to get the peasants to produce enough food to maintain a low-cost labor force; the explosion of July 1980 was a direct result of this situation. The fact that the peasants entered the struggle also shows that their static situation of the preceding decades had already been left behind and that the impetus toward concentration was under way. The large proportion of private ownership in this sector inclined it toward traditional capitalist paths of concentration. The peasants' struggle hastened this concentration; this gave rise to other movements similar to those in Western Europe. The kiss of the capitalist class – its recognition of the agricultural union and its providing access to modern techniques-will prove to. be a kiss of death for the peasantry (and also for the Catholic Church, whose power stems mainly from the peasantry). The elimination of the peasants will be achieved by direct capitalist pressure and not by authoritarian bureaucratic methods. The speed of the process will depend on the total development of the economy and on its capacity to absorb both the manpower ejected from agriculture as well as the increased agricultural production. These problems are of utmost importance for the capitalist class since the transformation of agriculture is its key to resolving, "by itself," on a medium and long-term basis, the formidable problems presented by the economic crisis and the class struggle.

In the economic and political crises which intensified throughout 1981 and in the face of the Party's manipulations of food supplies, the peasants showed that they constituted a

Newsweek, a French financial expert perceived a monetary crisis, a crisis in balance of payments, a crisis in industrial structures due to dependence on foreign markets both for supplies and for outlets, and an agricultural crisis (one typical of "non-capitalist" agriculture), complicated by a crisis in urban-rural relations. His conclusion was that the West had "an interest, perhaps an obligation, to reduce the risk of what could be the worst bloodbath in Europe since the Second World War." When the representatives of capital talk like this, they are not thinking of a world war, but of a bloodbath like the one ending the Paris Commune, and of its innumerable and unforeseeable consequences in a modern, industrialized world.

lf all else fails, this onerous task falls to Russia which, in the guise of defending its strategic and imperialist interests, serves as capital's watchdog in this part of the world. Russia was not, however, in a position to intervene directly, as it had in Hungary in 1956 or in Czechoslovakia in 1968; the dimensions of the Polish problem were completely different. Poland ranks eleventh among world powers and this country of 36 million people experienced a class struggle which lasted eighteen months and which could not be vanquished. Furthermore, Russia could not intervene because Russia itself was in the midst of a crisis. As suggested earlier, the Polish situation pushed Russia further toward ruin. Russia too was on the threshold of an economic reform whose initial features appeared on January 1, 1982, when there were significant price increases. Thus it also saw the advantages of a peaceful solution reached through cooperation among capitalisms, as was suggested by the Financial Times.

In fact, Jaruzelski's intervention on December 13, 1981, was greeted as the last attempt to avoid the worst. "Western reactions to the actions of the Polish authorities have been surprisingly calm," commented the same Financial Times already on December 15. A German banker drew the unambiguous conclusions for capital:

the same uncertainty between the forces which defend the interests of capital, the movement of capital itself and the class struggle. The class struggle in its various forms manifests itself in any case, whether openly or underground, and to such a degree that it spoils the day-to-day solutions adopted by the ruling class to protect its interests. On December 5, 1980, the Financial Times offered clear advice on what capital should do in Poland:

> "The best way to deal with Poland is to internationalize it and to seek a peaceful solution through international cooperation."

The internationalization of aid to Poland is an admission of the weakness common to both branches of capital in the face of the economic crisis and the class struggle. The commitment to prop up Poland so it would not become a powder-keg could not be assumed by one country alone, but needed the cooperation of all capitalist countries. It is obvious that "saving Poland" meant saving Polish capital. Internationalization was first and foremost a common agreement to defeat the class struggle in order to make the workers again accept the legal status of their exploitation under conditions appropriate to "their" country. Since the return to "normalization" of exploitation involved profits, this also meant the protection of all economic and financial interests and the assurance that everything could proceed on a secure basis. With all appropriate qualifications, this can be compared to the international cooperation (including Russian) which smashed the Spanish workers' uprising in 1936-37.

Poland experienced the same intervention. Under the combined effects of the world economic crisis, the class struggle and the blockage of any reform, the country drifted steadily toward economic bankruptcy. The debts owed to the West and to the East reached record heights; the gross national product declined by 20% in two years. In the December 14, 1981

distinct class. They continually reduced their deliveries to the state because there was nothing to buy with the money they received, and they said so. As always in such situations, they resorted to a barter economy and turned to the black market. They made almost no attempt to deliver their produce directly to the workers-in spite of the existence of Rural Solidarity and of connections through the Catholic Church. Walesa betrayed his disappointment in an interview with a Dutch journalist on December 5, 1981:

> "The farmers think only of themselves."

In his confrontations with the working class, Jaruzelski took care not to arouse the peasants or to interfere with their harvests. In addition, the values brandished by the general – patriotism, order, etc. – were the traditional peasant values and were those advocated by the Church. This served to legitimize the new regime and to reassure the peasants, the Church's most devoted supporters. With the bitterness of an idealist, Walesa said in his interview with Playboy at the beginning of December 1981,

> "Along with the intellectuals, the peasants are the people hardest to negotiate with. The farmers think only of themselves."

The project of direct management in the Lodz region (which was mentioned earlier) depended on everyone recognizing that it furthered his interest. Industrial products were to go directly to the peasants in exchange for agricultural products. This would have been the only way to organize production autonomously in a non-capitalist context, and it would have meant the dispossession of all the classes that dominated the productive process. This project was not given enough time to show its possibilities.

The working class had been changed by the shift from heavy industry to processing industries. A significant portion of the young workers probably still came from the countryside, but, more than earlier, they were relegated to the assembly line and worked in the more modern industries. For many of the unskilled workers, heavy industry meant repetitive labor. During the events of July and August, it was largely workers from the newer sectors who were the first to rebel while in the more traditional sectors like mining, steel and ship building, workers joined the movement only in mid-August. The former seemed to be satisfied with guarantees on matters of consumption while the latter, particularly the skilled workers, were more concerned about structural reforms leading to economic integration. The dynamics of the development of capital changed the composition of the working class. Some workers might have developed defensive reactions in order to retain certain advantages and this could have led to a temporary understanding with other classes. But, on the whole, the workers' movement followed its own autonomous development, since the forms of exploitation were constantly changing and the only thing the capitalist class could guarantee was increased exploitation in order to improve productivity and production. Even those workers interested in economic integration could not have achieved it because "there was no basis on which they could have taken part in the decisions." Staniszkis continued,

> "This workers' movement is anarchist in a way, but in the good sense of the term, that is, it opposes all institutions and all hierarchy."

In the modern sectors, where most of the work force is unskilled, the same tendencies were appearing as are found in every society of consumption. It is certain that if capital had attempted rationalization – which would have meant, as some

At the international level, new policies were adopted day by day with a view to relieving tensions. There was obvious agreement between East and West to grant credits and assistance in the hopes of disguising the economic failure and of saving what could be saved:

> "It is in the bankers' interest to continue to extend financial support to Poland… If money was refused, Poland might have defaulted on existing borrowings which would have meant considerable losses for a number of major international banks… In the present situation the banks have little choice but to make the best of a difficult problem… The banks do not expect long term political or economic disruptions to result from the present wave of strikes" (Financial Times, August 27, 1980).

Polemics over possible intervention by Russia made the same point. The Financial Times of November 27, 1980 stated:

> "There ought to be a common interest in preventing anarchy and then perhaps escalation. It is a lot to ask especially of Russia but there should now be an East-West dialogue on what is going on. A western aid consortium is not impossible in return for the guarantee of greater Polish freedom."

(We have already described what such "freedom" means in capitalist terms.) But as another article in the Financial Times noted in regard to both Poland and the Iraq-Iran conflict, "Such conflicts are in no one's interest yet nobody knows how to stop them." This is what emerges most clearly in any situation involving capital; wherever a crisis erupts, no matter what specific features characterize the individual state, one encounters

to justify the existence of this society that had supposedly put an end to the capitalist system. Behind the facade and the pretensions of half a century of propaganda, Russian centralized planning (like its reformist Social Democratic counterpart in the West) shows that it is completely dominated by the real movement of capital. The slow-down and cessation of growth in Russia is the same manifestation of crisis as in every other country. In Italy, Spain, Brazil, Great Britain or South Korea, no one would consider holding the regime or any ruling political faction responsible for effects of the economic crisis. Today, no one claims that any of these countries possess a remedy to the crisis other than to destroy working class resistance to increased exploitation; and if this fails, to face the destruction of capital.

It is striking that since the coup in Poland, it has been almost impossible for the government to follow a clear-cut course, to choose between direct repression or a reformist approach. One can find an analogous situation in the Western democracies which, unable to proceed resolutely along one path or the other, are reduced to constant procrastination. In Poland, the path of direct repression – either by internal methods using the union and/or the police, or by external means using Russian intervention-could not be used basically because of the class struggle (in all its forms), which made recourse to any violent solution very risky, more destructive than beneficial for everyone, and as dangerous for the precarious equilibrium in the West as in the East. In addition, having been invoked repeatedly, it had lost its deterrent power. As for the reformist approach, we have seen that it was present at all levels. From the start, it considered measures appropriate to advanced capitalist countries, but nothing came of them since any reform was caught in the squeeze between the class struggle and opposition from a privileged sector of the capitalist class.

observers foresaw, a significant pool of unemployed – attacks against capital at the workplace would have been extended to attacks on commodities at the marketplace. Some indication of this has already appeared; looting of the stores in Zamosc on May 28, 1981, for example.

Precise information on the middle classes in contemporary Poland is difficult to obtain, but we can get some idea from the importance of the various agencies of control and restraint: the Party, the unions, the Church, the police, the army, the intellectuals, the vast bureaucracies of civil servants and of economic managers. To those should be added the owners of small, independent handicraft and commercial enterprises, who were numerous enough to ask for and be granted their own ”autonomous” union; there were about 200,000 to 300,000 of these private enterprises employing five or six workers.

Changes in the economy probably also changed the balance of forces within the highly diverse sectors of the Polish middle class. This can be seen in the fact that, within this class, an opposition group had been able to develop which based itself on the workers' movement and which, in June1976, openly called for a change in the relations of power. In spite of the repression, this opposition group had not endured severe Russian-type persecution and it had succeeded in establishing and unifying itself on a nationwide scale. It was not by chance that this class was attracted to a form of government similar to bourgeois democracy. The 1980 class struggle aroused these people as well as the more privileged sectors of the working class, which until then had remained quite loyal to the bureaucracy. On July 20, 1980, Kuron revealed that the KOR was receiving many petitions from skilled workers who no longer looked to ”management” (the Party and official union) for satisfaction of their grievances. At the beginning of the strike in the Gdansk naval shipyards, all the factory security forces went over to the side of the strikers instead of trying to break up the gatherings.

Litynski, who was arrested at the end of August, stated after he was freed,

> "The police kept us informed. As the days went on, they supported us more and more."

Staniszkis reported that the July movement was also a revolt of the middle echelons within the bureaucracy, who had gradually been excluded from any role in decision-making. It is probably difficuIt to determine specific causes for this exclusion, but one can see parallels to the movement within industrial structures in the West where trained personnel tend to be ousted from decision-making roles and become involved with demands for participation in management decisions. All these currents appeared in the strike committees, in the union Solidarity and in the subsequent requests for restructuring enterprises. The (London) Sunday Times wrote on October 12, 1980:

> "It is not only a battle between discredited hardliners and resurgent reformists but a complicated realignment and settling of accounts involving many different factions and regional interest groups."

Economic crises make class conflicts within capitalist societies very visible. Within each class, clans confront each other and vehemently defend those interests which are threatened by the crisis and by the reorganizations which grow out of it. In bourgeois democracies, a powerful technocratic current appears with the elimination of family capital, the increased control by banks, the expansion of the nationalized sector, the repeated attempts of the state to regulate economic mechanisms. Unions increasingly depart from their original role and become more closely associated with the management of capital, particularly in its modern forms. In Poland, when the middle classes called for "democracy," they all understood it to be on the same advanced level as in the bourgeois democracies. But this seems

collectivization of the land), and the same internal conflicts in the capitalist class between the backward ones advocating totalitarian political methods and the "progressive" ones seeking methods appropriate to the real domination of capital. One-half of Poland's trade was with the West, and this fact has sometimes been used to explain the social crisis in Poland, but this is certainly not the case with Russia. It was rather the movement of capital itself which prompted the demands for structural changes involving enterprise "autonomy," along with all the debates and infighting between clans, that we saw in Poland. In Russia, too, the same class struggle has been developing, expressed most notably by a tenacious resistance to any increase in productivity, and using methods which are as varied as they are ingenious. From this standpoint, the assertion that the Polish crisis could furnish a solution to the crisis of the Russian system seems valid. Might Poland be a testing ground for a reform of the Eastern branch of capital?

This perspective considers only one part of capital's larger problem in the Eastern branch. And it treats the Russian system of planning as a model of management of capital which is superior to the Western model and which could, with some adjustments, resolve a problem which capital in the West is seemingly unable to resolve. To some extent, what is happening in the Eastern countries today is a sort of double setback to the "socialist" system, namely to the system of management and development of capital (exploitation of wage labor) which is based on complete centralization and its corollary, the planning of the entire economy. This system has shown itself to be as incapable as any Western "democracy" of making internal changes, of adapting its political and social structures to its development and its technology, and this inability has led to serious and dangerous political crises. Furthermore, this "socialist" system has shown itself incapable of solving, or even foreseeing and facing the central problem of capital, the problem of crises; it is unable to do the very thing that was supposed

class had made to win over one section of the working class. In the West, capital's setback was marked by the disappearance of the ideology of indefinite growth and by the elimination of all the participation schemes which had originated at the onset of the crisis. Capital could no longer burden itself with onerous attempts to lure workers into saving the system. By now it was quite clear that if the system was to be saved, it would be in opposition to the workers, and that policies at the governmental and enterprise level would represent capital's own interests and no others. The only function of institutions like unions, which formerly collaborated in and often initiated various forms of self-management, would be to negotiate layoffs, distribute minimal welfare relief and administer poverty. The class struggle would grow more intense, especially in countries like Poland, which had been counting on the continued expansion of world capital and were hit by the economic crisis at a critical period in their industrial development. Just as one wonders if there is a role for bourgeois democracy in countries like Spain and Brazil, one wonders if there is any chance for reform in Poland, even though the class struggle provided the outline for one as sketched above

One might be tempted to think that the answer to this question lies in the Eastern branch of capital. Many people think that the form of domination by capital in these countries might permit political solutions to have more impact over the hidden movement of capital. In the Eastern bloc, and particularly in Russia, capital's development is concealed by the institutional facade, by the pretensions of the planning institutes, and by the enormous mass of propaganda produced by bureaucrats who are its most gullible believers. In some ways the Polish crisis can be seen as the crisis of the entire Eastern branch of capital. Russia was experiencing the same inability to adapt its structures (even though a large part of capital had gone beyond the level of formal domination), the same backwardness in agricultural production (in spite of the facade of almost complete

to have been an impossible demand, since Poland had already gone quite far in abolishing the type of state which is associated with bourgeois democracy. The union was hardly aware that it was centering its greatest efforts on this very same self-management of capital-on direct, economic self-management without the traditional mediation of politics.

Of course it is important, when considering all the talk and all the activities in Poland, to make a distinction between what was simply a project, a momentary concession designed to gain time so as to return later in a stronger position, and what would remain permanently in the class structures and social relations. One thing is certain, that the pre-198O system could not go on. As the economic crisis deepened, reforms became more and more urgent for the capitalist class. Already in January 1981, there was a "small reform" which essentially abolished restrictions relating to employment and ended the determination of aggregate wages by the central planning authorities. This "small reform" aimed at closely tying aggregate wages to increased production (for each percent of increased production, aggregate wages could grow by 0.3%). In a period of crisis like the current one, the goal of legislation like this was to transform workers' concern for their wages into a general concern for increased production; in practice it resulted only in a wage freeze. The new legislation shifted the responsibility for dealing with wage demands away from the higher echelons of the capitalist class so as to keep wage conflicts from degenerating immediately into political conflicts. Enterprise managers took over the power to decide – according to the specific development of their firm – the aggregate wages, the total work force and the schedules of shifts. Olszowski, one of the economic reformers but a hardliner in political matters, stated on September 21, 1981,

> "In the broadest sense, a reform will increase the power of individual enterprises and of the workers

themselves . . . An authentic system of economic costs must be introduced; planning methods and top level decision-making mechanisms must be reformed."

At the same Party meeting, another expert, Professor Jan Majzel, declared,

"The basic economic unit in the future must be the individual enterprise. Management would be allotted centrally determined tasks but also be given full freedom to carry them through as well as they saw fit."

The intention was to shift the task of resolving conflicts to enterprise managers, but this did not keep Polish workers from knowing that the firms still depended on directives from the central authorities. It was obviously impossible to reverse decades of development of a collective capital simply by issuing administrative regulations. It was just as obvious that one section of the capitalist class would not even consider resolving the problems of a very centralized capital (as Polish capital was at that time) by cutting it into little pieces, as one would cut a cake. The centralization of economic decisions was not a mere whim of a bureaucratic party hungry for power, but an indication of the extent to which capital had become centralized in Poland. The functions of the central bureaus could neither be eliminated with the stroke of a pen nor simply delegated. Moreover, this was not the goal of either the "small reform" or the "big reform" projected for 1983. Greater participation was to be authorized for the periphery, so that sections of the capitalist class would have more power over secondary issues in the management of enterprises. But there was to be no fundamental change in the centralization of the system. The guidelines for capitalist reform, as defined by a joint Party and government commission in January 1981, did not call for sweeping

the light of day, they were rendered ineffective because of the class struggle, which also prevented a consensus within the capitalist class itself. Since it could not prove that it had the situation under control and would be able to guarantee profits in the future, the Polish capitalist class encountered only hesitation and delays when it approached the international capitalist class. And although this international capitalist class seemed to agree pretty well on what should not be done (in order to avoid yet greater difficulties), it too was uncertain about what should be done.

One thing was clear: the class struggle had compelled the capitalist class to drastically revise "priorities." Supplying goods for immediate consumption took precedence over investments, food imports were increased, significant concessions were made to independent peasants. Nevertheless, the class struggle did not subside and it intensified yet more the problems that capital could not resolve.

In the December 7, 1980 Sunday Times (London), Kuron declared,

"The Polish tragedy does not consist of the fact that we are under a superpower but that the superpower has nothing to offer us."

His sentence can be made plural: the superpowers have nothing to offer Poland. In fact, they demanded a great deal from Poland: the maintenance of relations in which Russia had a privileged status, the repayment of debts to Western capital, which presupposed continued trade relations with the West. In other words, the superpowers demanded that the Polish workers continue to support the burden of "obligations" toward Russian as well as Western capital.

Capital was in crisis in every part of the world. Everywhere the fierce race for profits through competition as well as speculation was gradually eliminating the concessions the ruling

7. National and international capital

For a period of eighteen months, Poland was no longer a real state; authority was constantly scoffed at and the economy seemed to be adrift. There were constant strikes and threats of strikes, often over seemingly minor issues but ones which were so explosive and so central to the interests of capital that the rulers (Party, union, Church, etc.) had to stifle their disagreements and join forces in order to hurry to the location and attempt difficult negotiations which almost always ended in capitulation to the workers.

No state, in the West or in the East, could have tolerated for long a situation where strikes obliged it to dismiss high public officials, to reassign the function of public buildings, to make the rich return ill-acquired wealth, to halt proceedings against persons revealing state secrets. And to make matters worse, the economy increasingly suffered from the effects of the international crisis and the class struggles. The workers thought only of their own interests and not at all of the ”general interest” – the interest of capital. The rulers were completely incapable of making the slightest improvement; the only remedy familiar to them – making the workers work harder for less money- could not be applied. On the contrary, the rulers were having to accept less work for more money. Repercussions were particularly serious at the international level. The Polish capitalist class was unable to fulfil commitments it had made in previous years and it was reduced to begging to its creditors like an importunate debtor. Before any reform projects managed to see

away the centralized system, but for substituting a different centralism – this time a flexible one – in place of the inflexibility of a rigid mechanism (the system of directives from above).

Greater flexibility was to be achieved by redefining the functions of central planning and by setting up new procedures for accomplishing it. The central plan was to be limited to ”strategic” objectives which would be defined by the five-year plan. The annual political and economic plans would determine only the global estimates which were to be reached, not by directives, but by manipulation of ”instruments of economic control” (prices, interest rates, import duties, taxes, etc.), and by the so-called ”rules of the game” mentioned above, which linked net production to wage increases. In the domain of foreign trade, however, the central authority would continue to set import quotas and to formulate export directives. Regulations for furnishing raw materials were to remain in effect for a time, but eventually they were to be suspended. Directives on investments were to continue, but only to determine what would go to the infrastructures, to industrial projects of a structural nature, to housing construction, etc. All other investments were to be covered either by self-financing or by bank loans. Banking credit, too, was to be free of central control; it would have fixed limits in order to insure some regulation over investments. As for prices, most of the enterprises were to be allowed to set the level themselves within the limits established before the summer of 1980. At that time, an enterprise could fix prices on approximately 30% of all its finished industrial products and on about 60% of so-called ”new products” (new items which the firm added to its line).

As for wages, enterprises were to be allowed to raise the level if they were able to reduce the work force involved in production. Managements had been seeking such a ruling, since it would provide more flexibility on wages. The director of a copper foundry explained in October 1980 that

> "if management could get more control over wages and employment, it could reduce the work force by 10% or even 15%"

While the capitalist class was hoping to assure the continuation of its leading role by devising a plan to replace its instruments of direct control with more indirect methods, analyses of the economic crisis and conceptions of reform expressed by certain Polish economists were imbued with illusions. The principal target of most of these critiques was centralization and the incompetence of the central bureaucracy. An influential Polish economist wrote in the (London) Financial Times on November 11, 1980:

> "Socialism means public ownership of the means of production. What we have to ensure is that the management of those public assets is in the hands of men educated at the Harvard Business School, not half educated bureaucrats in the planning Ministry."

Such critiques foreshadow reforms like the one proposed by a working group from the Warsaw Planning and Statistics Institute at the end of December 1980. Their suggestions included: abolition of all directives on production and of all financial constraints; reduction of economic administrative personnel by one-half and, if possible, reduction of the actual work force by one-third; reduction of planning commission personnel by one-quarter; the possibility of firms to go bankrupt; abolition of the central government's right to require the merger of enterprises; supervision of voluntary mergers by an anti-monopoly commission with wide powers; limitation of the central government's authority over determination of prices to simple approval of increases. These suggestions in no way corresponded to the reality of

reduced to fifty. Of course one might interpret as an indication of confidence in the recovery the fact that in September 1983, 452 of the 1600 projects that had been cancelled in 1981 were reinstated; a year earlier, October 29, 1982, a report to the Political Bureau spoke of "recession and collapse of the economic equilibrium, of weariness, of apathy, of passivity, of little confidence on the part of the workers, of confusion within Party ranks and of lack of cohesion in the ruling bureaucracy." The explanation of this apparent contradiction is that Polish capital, with the help of international capital, was condemned to forge ahead in "the hope that the economic reforms would improve conditions sufficiently to dissolve the discontent" (as a 1982 report of the Experience and the Future technocrats put it). In other words, Polish capital was counting on assistance from international capital and on the isolation of the Polish workers.

Ferguson tractors and Perkins motors, it produced only a few hundred of them, whereas it had previously supplied Polish agriculture with tens of thousands of old-model tractors. For various complex reasons–the class struggle is one of the central ones – international capitalist . competition was a severe shock to capitalist Poland. The December coup caused a sharp decline in Poland's standing in the hierarchy of industrialized countries. Drawing its subsistence from extractive industries, operating obsolete high-tech plants which manufactured only out-dated equipment for internal use, relying on agriculture and small industry, and letting a black market grow out of control, Poland in some ways resembled an underdeveloped country rather than a modern state even though it had the industrial structures of the latter.

The economic impasse was intensified yet further by resistance from the bureaucracy. One sector of the capitalist class had no interest in making any change whatsoever, since these people clearly saw that it would eliminate their positions of authority. This sector's conceptions of management were those of another era and were completely inappropriate for modern industry, and even less suited to an economy in crisis. In an interview in the January 10, 1983 Newsweek, Rakowski claimed: "During the last two years we changed from 70% to 90% of the managerial staff at all levels. They are new people." This was far from obvious, since in October 1982, a governmental report stated that the authorities were "finding it hard to overcome the deep-rooted conservatism of the country's bureaucracy," and on April 22, 1983, a different official report called for energetic measures to encourage the central bureaucracy to restore its dominant position, which had been undermined by policies of decentralization.

The clout of this bureaucracy is evident from accusations of sabotage of the economic reform, and it is more concretely illustrated by the "revision" of a list of 550 enterprises which the banks had marked for bankruptcy; in the end the number was

Polish capitalism. The economic crisis did not arise because of bureaucratic incompetence, nor from poor planning or wrong decisions on the part of the central institutions, but because of the dynamics of the class struggle. All reforms expressed in terms of centralization or decentralization are inadequate, because neither centralization nor decentralization could resolve long-term productivity problems (which are also an expression of class antagonism).

All attempts to decentralize showed very quickly that the managers of individual firms were no more competent than the central institutions to resolve the crisis of profitability of capital. This only confirmed that no capitalist class (nor any part of it, even if it could afford the luxury of an education at the Harvard Business School), was actually able to manage the development of capital or class relations according to its conceptions or will. The capitalist class already sensed its own powerlessness when it tried to closely link its conception of economic reform to the reappearance of workers' councils and to a new definition of union rights and obligations. Workers' councils, which had already played a role from 1956 to 1959, were to replace management councils, which were composed of delegates from the Party's factory committees, officers of the official industrial unions, and factory managers. Councils were now to be elected by the workers; they would be authorized to determine planning in the factory and would have a voice in choosing the director. Union reform was supposed to give unions the right to strike, but complicated arbitration procedures had to be observed before the legality of any strike would be recognized. The union was to have rights of actual comanagement as foreseen earlier in agreements between the strike committees and the government. The unions were also to take part in discussions on basic issues concerning the general standard of living (distribution of national income between consumption and accumulation, areas and structures of invest-

ments, price adjustments, determination of principles for setting wage levels, etc.).

A journalist wrote that "slowly Poland is groping its way toward another form of social relations which could be beneficial for other communist countries." The head of Interpress elaborated this point in Der Spiegel:

> "The new unions will gain confidence in themselves from the fact that they are an element in the political and social climate of Poland. There has to be a change in the current system, there has to be a change in people's attitude toward their work and toward participation in a different organization of production; sooner or later, this will be the task of the new unions as representatives of the workers. lf the role of the unions is not understood in this way, it is impossible for a State to function in a society where there is production for the market."

The question was whether the new structures could even be set up – not so much because of opposition from Russia, the dominant imperialism, but because of internal conflicts in Poland, the class struggle on one hand, and resistance from privileged strata of the established ruling class on the other. This aspect of the proposed economic reform aroused a great deal of interest among the officials of Solidarity because it coincided with their interest in self-management and also with certain practical conceptions of the rank-and-file. One part of the capitalist class did everything possible to hinder the adoption of this reform; even pending legislation for a temporary compromise arrangement was set aside and replaced by a decree. The former system of management would remain in effect through 1982 and there would even be more centralization in certain areas. The allocation of all raw materials and of all ma-

previous year. In 1981, the gross national product declined 13%, industrial production 11.2%, trade 20% and investments 26.7%. In 1982 there was a further decline of gross national product by 2%, industrial production 10.7%, trade 5% and internal consumption 20%. In the first two quarters of 1983, industrial production rose 12%, trade 6% and internal consumption 22%. At first glance, it might seem that things "had returned to normal" but the 1983 figures indicate that there was a return only to the situation of 1981, the year with the most unrest, the year which preceded the December coup. Also, after examining the data closely, one can see that a large part of the recovery came from extractive industries, particularly from increased coal production, and this was due to the modernization of techniques during previous years, the compulsory extension of the work week, and the addition of 20,000 more miners while those already working in the mines were forbidden to change jobs. Another part of the recovery came from various measures such as the one introduced by the Church. New ways for introducing foreign capital were found; investment of foreign capital was permitted in small enterprises. In 1982, more than three hundred of them were set up and their production jumped by 500%. They were exempted from taxes for three years and were allowed to export 50% of their profits. Some of them had as many as one hundred employees and the high wages they offered attracted highly skilled workers. Another example was the employment of Polish workers in foreign, largely German, factories.

These developments indicate that the central aim of the new policies – to lower wages in order to increase surplus value – continued to be unrealized due to the interrelated effects of economic chaos and the class struggle. The most modern sector of the economy attracted large amounts of foreign capital in the expectation of handsome profits, but it operated at barely 60% of capacity. A typical example was the Ursus tractor factory in a Warsaw suburb. Equipped to manufacture modern Massey

Again on August 24, 1982, he reiterated that the Church "is an indispensable element in the social and political relations of our country," and added that dialogue "had never ended and still continues." In fact, the Church was an important link in the system of domination because, in addition to possessing real power, it retained great influence among the peasants and workers with a peasant background. And as was the case in Spain under Franco and in Poland in the period before July 1980, the Church served as refuge and rallying point for opponents of the regime. For the workers, because of its position in Polish society, it directly and indirectly provided a substitute for the non-existent union. The Church appealed for calm on behalf of the regime just when its role as rallying point of the resistance was giving it the status of opponent. The Church's ties to the peasants were stronger and more important for the system. Peasants make up one-third of the population and the new economic policy needed to manage them so as to achieve self-sufficiency, a crucial element for "economic recovery." It was not by chance that the leader of Rural Solidarity joined the new official peasant organization. In September 1982, the government conceded an important point; it guaranteed inheritance of the land for peasants farming their own land and it permitted the size of private holdings to increase from 30 to 100 hectares. The government also took measures to provide more agricultural machinery. In the long run, these were policies which would lead to agricultural concentration. It did not even seem strange to see the Church (itself a landowner with extensive holdings) negotiating with the government for the establishment of a sort of ecclesiastical bank (with funds coming largely from West Germany) for the financing of agriculture and small private industry, so as to encourage cooperation between the two.

After two years of various measures to get the machine working again, what could be said about the Polish economy? In 1980, industrial production declined by 6% in relation to the

terials important in production would remain the monopoly of a special bureau of the state apparatus.

At some regional levels of Solidarity, this setback gave rise to preparations to take over production, which was to be supervised by a strike committee according to a plan elaborated by the workers themselves with a view to social needs. Supervision of distribution was to be set up at the same time. The threat of such a takeover caused as much panic in the state apparatus as it did in the union and among the economic experts. This was going much too far beyond the progressive reform of an economy administered by capitalists. This is the context of Jaruzelski's announcement on December 25, 1981, that "'the process of disintegration of the State has been stopped." In effect, he was announcing that all decisions dealing with the economy were henceforth to be made at the top rather than under constant pressure from a rank-and-file movement, and that there was no chance of condoning any rank-and-file action which would deprive the bureaucrats of their power.

Military intervention undoubtedly raised hopes of revenge among ruling Party members eager to settle accounts and reestablish their lost authority. Albin Siwak, a spokesman for Party hardliners, commented on February 4, 1982, "The people who've been running this country since the war got the fright of their lives with the rise of Solidarity. They sat there biting their nails in the months since August 1980. Now they want to get their own back." But the extent of the repression and the additional vengeful punishments should not disguise an essential fact: capital still had the same problems to resolve. The military intervention was directed principally against the rank-and-file movement, but it was also directed against opponents of reform projects, even opponents within the capitalist class. The intervention simply replaced a chaos controlled by no one. The December 19, 1981 Le Monde observed,

> "What we are seeing in Poland since the proclamation of a state of war is .. .the first attempt to interrupt the continuity of power in a communist country."

Militarization of key sectors of the economy was not for the purpose of intimidating the population. One apparatus replaced another and, as the Financial Times pointed out on December 19, 1981,

> "General Jaruzelski's intervention, however deplorable in many ways, nevertheless offers the last faint hope for the reform movement in Poland." Once Solidarity was suppressed, there was in fact continuity with the reform movement, not only in the declarations of the military rulers but also in their policies: "The government will resolve on its own all the problems which were originally to have been negotiated with Solidarity" (Le Monde, February 10, 1982).

The now superfluous Solidarity was not the only body excluded from taking part in the reform of the system. Many agree that the dominant role of the Party was finished for the time being and that, in the future, the military council, an informal group of military personnel and civilians, would not act on behalf of what remained of the Party, a Party whose basis remained questionable (see the figures cited earlier). On December 30, 1981, a spokesman for the military council stressed that

> "it will be necessary to maintain all staff in their current jobs, given the exigencies inherent in the state of war and the difficult economic situation of the country."

> -Anti-cartel legislation was directed against collusion among large enterprises (and such legislation can be trenchant in a "socialist" state). This means the reappearance of competition. In other words, financial requirements took precedence over production requirements – a common response to the crisis in all capitalist countries.

In order to successfully implement this reform in the midst of an economic and social crisis (which, ironically, had made the reform necessary), the rulers had to prevail over not only the workers but over an entire sector of the political and economic bureaucracy. Aside from the repressive machine-police and army-the rulers could count on only two allies. One was the Party, which itself was in great disorder and which served as refuge for the ousted section of the capitalist class; the other was the Church, which was in a position to cash in on its power. It is significant that both allies had strong ties with world capital; the former, with the Eastern branch, the latter with the Western branch. This meant that Polish national capital had to make its mark not only in exploiting the workers but also among the competing imperialisms, whose presence was felt not only in penetration of capital or commodities, but also internally, in the active factions of the capitalist class itself. At this point the Church took over the role that Solidarity had not been able to play-even though the Church was itself an integral component of capital. The Pope's visit in 1983 was a recognition of this situation. Statements made by the rulers after the military coup always recognized this role of the Church. Rakowski stated in the February 15, 1982 Newsweek, "We treat the Church seriously as a partner shaping Poland's future;" and in an interview with Fallacci (reported in the (London) Times on February 23, 1982), "they (the Church) need us as much as we need them."

had to focus its offensive on the workers and on reforming the system, thereby affecting the high status of a sector of the capitalist class that was clutching its privileges; only then could the capitalist class get the workers to pay the price for this rescue of capital. A statement by Finance Minister Krzak on September 15, 1982, defined the situation in much more precise terms. He pointed out the

> ”other aspect of martial law: it provides a shield for the introduction of economic reform in pricing, in self-financing for enterprises, and in profit and loss accounting . . . These reforms, if they are fully implemented, will add to the power of the Finance Ministry at the expense of the central planning organization.”

In other words, with Poland in the throes of a crisis, the government was making a shift toward what could be called finance capital and away from industrial capital.

A list of some of the provisions included in the economic reform initiated in 1982 makes it clear that considerations of capitalist profit were primary:

> -State-run companies were free to set prices within categories that covered 10% of consumer goods and 60% of industrial goods;
>
> -They had more freedom to raise workers’ wages;
>
> -They were permitted to set their own production targets except for ”operational programs” and ”state contracts” which covered 30% of the output;
>
> -They were free to hire and fire workers;
>
> -In cases of bad management, credit was suspended and there was possibility of bankruptcy;

Several committees were set up to study projects of economic reform, new political structures (there was again talk of a new national front), and new formulas for setting up unions which would be different from both the official unions and Solidarity. In his short speech of December 25, 1981, Jaruzelski specifically mentioned that “in our socio-economic system, there is room for self-managing and really independent unions” and added that ”the chances for national accord could be greater than before.” On February 9, 1982, Rakowski further elaborated:

> ”Authentic, independent and self-governing representation of professional and social interests of the working people should be harmoniously linked with the supreme aim of strengthening the State and socialist democracy.”

Beneath the elegant words, his statement was an admonition for the union to restrict itself to the function assigned it by capital. But the fierce struggles between clans made it impossible to decide on a concrete proposal; some still wanted to seek an agreement with Solidarity, others wanted a new union subordinated to the government. Specific needs of enterprises made it urgent to decide quickly on the status of committees which had been set up on a local level to fulfil certain union functions.

These discussions were not simply academic debates or geared to propaganda: they went together with the drastic measures taken by the military authority as soon as it entered the scene. A profusion of economic rulings had constantly been postponed because of the class struggle and now the military government tried to impose them in the wake of its repressive actions. Beyond their immediate effects – an increase in the level of exploitation resulting from a lowered standard of living as well as an extension of working time—they sought

to provide long-term financial and social means to restructure the economy. For this reason, it was soon necessary to go further.

The following measures affected essentially all areas of the production process:

> -Average working time of 42 hours a week, Saturday work obligatory and manipulation of paid vacations.
>
> -Considerable price increases on basic food products (between 200% and 400%), on coal, gas and electricity (200%), but smaller increases on industrial products (70%); some adjustments in wages (small increases for low-paid jobs and arduous work such as mining). In this domain, the new regime, at least initially, succeeded in doing what no other government since December 1970 had managed to do.
>
> -Devaluation of the zloty and free circulation of foreign currency to finance selective imports.
>
> -Exchange of goods furnished by peasants for machinery which would not be available until 1983, but at current prices for the equipment.
>
> -Assignment of military commissars to factories in order to assure co-ordination between enterprises, especially provision of spare parts.
>
> -Massive lay-offs which took the form of a political-unionist purge; obligatory jobs in factories and on public works for anyone unemployed between the ages of 18 and 45. (In Lodz alone, forced labor was imposed on 7,000 out of 11,000 unemployed).

This super-technocracy, which used quasi-military methods in the hopes of achieving efficiency, seemed to think that

extending the hours and increasing the number of workers was all that was needed to increase production. It also nourished hopes of achieving some degree of economic autarchy, namely of strengthening Polish national capital by means of agricultural self-sufficiency, development of natural resources needed by Polish industry, and reduction of dependence on the West. This is the response of every national capital when confronted by the international economic crisis, but a national capital cannot simply disregard the class struggle in the country it controls, nor its links of interdependence with world capital. As for the class struggle, the central problem in Poland was still productivity, which could not be resolved in the current context of violence, super-exploitation and disorganization of the structures of domination of labor. As for the links of interdependence with world capital, they could be strengthened only if the class struggle could be contained within limits comparable to those in other industrial countries. The struggle of the Polish workers was more than ever the key to future prospects for the national capital, and these prospects were dubious at best, since across the threshold lay the international crisis of capital.

Shortly after the accession of this super-technocracy, Baka, a government minister responsible for economic reform, stated:

> "It was necessary to pass through the state of war before this change was possible."

And on February 16, 1982, a member of Parliament regretted that

> "for Poland's history, the imposition of martial law has the ring of defeat for the existing socialism."

Behind the travesty of words, we recognize that the capitalist class really did consider itself defeated and saw that it