

Lessons from the Events in Poland (1980-81)¹

“The workers were left no choice; they had to starve or let fly.” (Karl Marx – “The Class Struggles in France”)

1. The wave of strikes of the summer 1980 in Poland fully lied within the scope of the slow but deep re-emergence of the workers’ struggle all over the world and particularly in Europe where these last ten years have been marked (except some local explosions) by almost total domination of the bourgeois counterrevolution. This wave of strikes and the movement that it brought about differed from others by its mass character and its high degree of centralization, particularly in inter-factory committees (MKS). On the other hand, the movement in Poland fully reproduced the general characteristic of the present struggles: i.e. spontaneity. As communists always explained, this spontaneity expressed a double trend, both positive and negative. Positive because of the total loss of control of the democratic-Stalinist counterrevolution, the lack of influence from the unions and the whole of the repressive apparatus of the State over a young proletariat that didn’t experienced the darkest periods of the disintegration of the proletariat as a class. And negative because the rupture with past experiences of the class, the almost total lack of re-appropriation by the present movements of the past revolutionary waves lessons drawn by the communist factions, deprivation materializing by the inexistence of a communist direction, by the inexistence of a perspective allowing the movements to develop and to cause unrest in the whole world. These general permanent features are found in all the movements that developed under the pressure of the world capitalist crisis, from Salvador to Iran, from Turkey to Morocco, from Bolivia to South Korea, from Italy to Poland, etc. The weakness of the workers’ spontaneity never expresses itself by the lack of energy, will or creativeness of the masses that enters into conflict, but expresses itself on the other hand always by the weakness of the direction, by the inability to lead the movement towards its own revolutionary goals, by the inability of the movement to endow itself with a class party.² Historically also, it was never

¹ Draft translation and improved version from French in “Le Communiste” No.13 – March 1982.

² “The Communist Party is therefore the organisation of the revolutionary class which will bring about communism. Its essential determinations are those which make the proletariat into a class: organicity, centralisation and a single historic leadership. Without affirming the party, even in any embryonic form, the proletariat does not exist. (...) It is clear that the party (just like revolutions) is not invented nor created by revolutionaries. It is the necessary and spontaneous product of capitalist society itself. (...) The party arises spontaneously, in that it develops inevitably on the basis of a community of interests and perspectives, a real community of proletarian struggle. This inevitable fact can only concretise itself when, at the heart of this community, communism is simultaneously affirmed as its programme and leadership, prefiguring the international organ of revolutionary leadership. That is, when this historical determination specifically concretises itself in a conscious, wilful and organised action, when a compact minority of solidly organised revolutionary cadres (“the Communists,” as they are referred to in the Communist Manifesto) affirms the historical programme of the proletariat and assumes the indispensable task of leadership, not only concerning the objectives of the movement (as the “life plan” for the human species) but also concerning the strategic and tactical means for its triumph. Revolutions and the party cannot be created. The function of revolutionaries is to lead revolutions and the party. This minority of communists is a necessary and spontaneous (in the historic and not immediate sense of the word) product of the organisation of the proletariat as a single and centralised

the mass character, and spontaneity that was lacking to the victory of the communist revolution. It's always the clear view of goals and means of the movement, the fully communist direction, the World Communist Party that, from the Commune of Paris in 1871 to Germany in 1919, from the Chinese insurrections in 1926-1927 to the events in Spain in 1936, missed to the completion of the activity of the masses, to the definitive victory of the world communist revolution. And, today more than yesterday, all the class movements are marked with spontaneity, with their programmatic immaturity. The events in Poland didn't escape not at all to this observation: without a communist direction, there's no proletarian victory.

2. The importance of the movements in Poland, from the point of view of their class strength (duration and mass character of the movement) as well as from the point of view of the particular geopolitical situation (pivotal country between both imperialistic constellations) was a permanent danger for the world bourgeoisie. Both for the USSR and the Western banks,³ all the bourgeois had more and more a direct interest so that the capitalist order, the order of work, rules again all over Poland. They needed that the example of these struggles doesn't become a powder keg and doesn't cause unrest in the other countries of the Eastern bloc as well as the Western ones. For the world bourgeoisie, it was necessary socially as well as economically to find a capitalist solution to the events in Poland. This solution was and is the crushing.

It's this situation of exacerbated and latent class struggle, linked to a more and more catastrophic economic situation, that pushed more and more forward the most warmongering tendencies of the bourgeoisie (in the East as well as in the West), those which wanted to take the initiative for the confrontation in order to turn as soon as possible the danger of civil war into the reality of the material and ideological preparation for imperialist war. In this sense the events in Poland marked the future of the development of class struggle as well as the important development of bourgeois campaigns of preparation for the generalized imperialist war. Thus, the pacifist campaigns of "disarmament in Europe" (i.e. the so-called non-warmongering pole, in fact a pro-USSR one) were followed by "Freedom for Poland" and "Solidarity with Solidarity" campaigns (mottos common to Reagan and leftists), campaigns of rearmament in Europe in defence of the "free world" (i.e. the so-called more warmongering pole, in fact a pro-USA one). And, like a metronome, these successive campaigns bate out the rhythm of the preparation for the generalized imperialist war.

3. As we explained, the positive aspects of the movement in Poland were its mass character and its spontaneous tendency to centralize itself. But the formalisation of workers' organization tendencies into "the free union Solidarity" and the legal recognition of this union, its integration into the State apparatus, whose consequence was the signature of Gdansk agreements⁴ (i.e. the transformation of workers' struggle organs into their contrary), has been possible because of the serious weaknesses that this kind of young and spontaneous movement carried within itself. These

force and is also the axis around which it realises the inversion of praxis, permitting its passage from a simple object of this spontaneity to a conscious subject of the revolution to come." ("Theses of Programmatic Orientation," 1989, Thesis No.52)

³ Let's remind that the indebtedness of Poland to the Western countries was estimated at 27 billions of dollars and was getting worse.

⁴ Gdansk agreements materialized the death blow of the wave of strikes of the summer 1980 and gave to the bourgeoisie the initiative in the repression against the still combative workers' sectors.

weaknesses, the most important, are obviously not simple “mystifications” or “false awareness” tricking the workers, but find their material roots in the political immaturity of the movement that allowed the bourgeois ideologies to develop within it. And these bourgeois ideologies are in the practice nothing but material forces acting against the workers’ struggle.

A) The belief in the “non-inevitability” of the direct and armed confrontation with the bourgeois State (i.e. legalism) led to the progressive material and political disarming of combative bastions. The fact not to get ready (or in a completely insufficient way) to direct confrontation, not to deploy the elementary measures of self-defence, and arming of the proletarians (even in a limited way), not to keep (beyond the bourgeois structure of “Solidarity”) the links between the sectors in struggle, not to build up the clandestine connections that can alone prepare the victory of the proletariat,... left nearly completely this fundamental ground of the confrontation to the initiative of the class enemy.

Since Bydgoszcz events⁵ until the “test” of the occupation of Warsaw firemen school, the State only moved forward, occupying all the ground of the preparation for the confrontation, having thus more and more in its possession the monopoly of violence. Firstly by a selective repression (guaranteed in facts by “Solidarity”) against the “uncontrolled” elements, “hooligans,” “anarchists,” “agitators,” etc., then hitting more and more the trouble spots and the combative bastions, the repression culminated in “state of siege.” The State could thus beat militarily and politically the proletariat because, during more than one year, all the partial confrontations, all the preparatory skirmishes turned always to its advantage... The bourgeois State in Poland, contrarily to proletarians, got ready in all domains to this unavoidable fight; the more it won partial victories, the more it consolidated its capacity to start a large-scale offensive, and a generalized repression. To give way in the partial fights, it’s, as Marx said, to do without the possibility to undertake large-scale movements.⁶

B) Another weakness, often underestimated in the revolutionary ranks, is the weight of the religion as a material force: i.e. the church and its structures as a direct enemy to destroy. Too often, communists (or pretended to be) considered the destruction of the religion only as a simple consequence of the destruction of capitalist production relations. But the destruction of all ideologies will only be fully feasible if proletarians attack the totality of the bourgeois society, its material basis (i.e. the capitalist social relation) as well as the whole of superstructure apparatus. Religion, as all the ideologies, has to be fought from now on, not as a “religion” (it would revert to the idealist “struggles of ideas”), but on the very ground of class struggle, as a weapon used by the bourgeoisie to destroy practically the proletariat.⁷

⁵ Events where several workers got beaten up and jailed by the militia, and afterwards “Solidarity” decided to launch the threat of general strike. But on the eve of this, Walesa signed an agreement with the government and cancelled the call to strike without having received any counterpart but the vague promise of an investigation that never came to anything. What a surprise!?

⁶ Cf. Marx – “Value, price and profit.”

⁷ We refer the reader to the famous and great “Theses on Feuerbach” by Marx. Already Engels wrote in a letter to Franz Mehring (on July 14th, 1893): “Ideology is a process accomplished by the so-called thinker consciously, indeed, but with a false consciousness. The real motives impelling him remain unknown to him; otherwise it would not be an ideological process at all.” In this sense all ideology can be only bourgeois. The communist movement destroys all ideologies because it reveals the real driving forces of history: class struggles as well as humankind’s destiny, classless society, social humanity.

The events in Poland clearly showed us the strength that can constitute the conjunction between a “materialistic workers’ party” (vulgar materialistic) and the Catholic Church, as essential pillars (and the army is the principal one) of the bourgeois State. Not only “Solidarity” assumed the functions of social “buffer” but also the Church that even after the “putsch” fully played its role of temporiser, of social fire-fighter, in order to prevent all classist reaction against the attack of the bourgeoisie. It’s with the motto “Let’s avoid Polish bloodshed” that Mgr Glemp and all the other forces of the bourgeois State, the army, the PUWP, “Solidarity,” the EX-KOR, etc. shared the dirty work between them. Some of them, the army and the ruling faction of the PUWP attacked the working class head-on; the others, the Church, “Solidarity,” “the opposition” within the PUWP, prevented the workers’ riposte to the massive attack, to the generalized repression (even though it partially touched a part of “the legal opposition”). All of them, the army, the PUWP, the Church, “Solidarity,” etc. showed their true face indeed: the various parts of a same unity defending, in Poland, the world interests of capital, the various components of the bourgeois State.

C) The myth of a solution “to be found” in the framework of the pseudo-socialist system, either a self-management solution⁸ (like in Hungary or in Yugoslavia) or another kind of compromise, co-management and multi-party system. But, as the economic and social situation worsened, the program of such “alternative solution” succeeded less and less to differentiate themselves from the solutions put forward by the government itself. Nobody anymore, neither “Solidarity,” nor the PUWP, nor the Church, etc., was able to advance a coherent and feasible solution. Nobody was anymore capable to restore capitalist order, to oblige the Polish workers to seriously go back to work. Resorting to the “state of siege” was the solution of the world bourgeoisie before new social unrests break out, which would immediately have outflanked the union reformist containment, as Walesa forecasted.

The price to pay to really achieve and to accentuate the democratic reforms was a lot too high for a weakened bourgeoisie incapable to control the production. All the more so since such reforms (so promoted in Western Europe) didn’t yet feed to proletarians and didn’t succeed by no means to stop the crisis. This is why the Americano-European bourgeoisie, beyond its liberal speeches, pushed through its banks the Polish State to act as soon as possible, to restore capitalist order in Poland. All the bourgeois agreed with the opinion of the “Bank of America:” “Whatever the government, we must wish it good luck and hope for the return to a productive economy.” It’s true to such an extent that even, beyond Reagan and his show, the American State repaid to the banks 71 million dollars owed by Warsaw without declaring Poland in non-payment, as it had the possibility for doing like this. On the scene of the international spectacle Reagan waved his human rights (with the gracious collaboration of the socialist Mitterrand!). Behind the scenes the United States supported financially (as well as the whole of the Western banks) the process of restoring law and order with bayonets by the Polish State.

The opening appeared therefore directly for what it was: a simple smokescreen to prepare the repression and to subdue the workers. The very weakness of the bourgeois State in Poland –weakness of its economic structure (the famous foreign debt) as well as the “socialist” rigidity of its dictatorship⁹- made impossible any real and

⁸ Prefigured notably when workers required the democratic election of “their” managers.

⁹ Rigidity consolidated by the interweaving of the Polish State, ideologically as well as financially and militarily, in the capitalist Eastern bloc.

lasting process of liberal transformation. The Polish bourgeoisie was not able to pay the too high price of liberalism, it chose Bonapartism.¹⁰

D) Nationalism, the defence of the Polish homeland, of national independence, etc. in addition to the rescue of national economy. As for the other ideologies (religion, legalism, self-management, etc.) conveyed in the workers' movement, revolutionaries try to demonstrate the reality of the proletarian movement, its subversivity, beyond the ideologies developed by the bourgeoisie, beyond the bourgeois flags that are flying over the movement.

But, once this aspect is brought out, the communists understand that if the movement doesn't succeed in getting rid of the bourgeois flag, this last and the non-communist direction always lead the movement in short-term in the impasse of reformism (whatever shape it takes), prelude to the physical crushing of the still combative workers' forces. In a period of rise of the struggle the movement has always the tendency to practically overcome its internal limits, its confusions, to destroy the barriers that contain it. In period of backward surge of the struggle, such confusions, such bourgeois ideologies take a considerable weight and can transform a temporary backward surge into a lasting defeat.

Obviously, all the ideologies are mutually complementing one another in order to present to the eyes of proletarians a coherent and multiple whole. And "Solidarity" was propagating a self-management, nationalist, religious, legalistic, etc. mixture. And in this whole, nationalism more especially could prepared the transformation of the class movement into imperialist war, and this notably through its anti-Russian connotation.¹¹

But if, here in Western Europe, the putrid media made a great fuss about the "nationalism of Polish workers," some class reactions against the state of siege radically broke with nationalism, reformism and legalism. The extinction of ovens in metallurgy (in Huta Katowice), the resistance of miners in Silesia, and the sabotage of production in tractors factories of Ursus (where nearly no tractor was produced) marked de facto a dissociation with national economy, homeland, as well as with all reformist solution. Sabotaging is clearly expressing (whatever the proletarians are aware or not) the refusal of all capitalist solution. It means to attack directly the heart of capital, i.e. surplus-value.

¹⁰ "In order to distinguish the whole of the forms of government of the society that to a certain extent wander from a classic republican dictatorship, from a regime with a strict separation of the "three powers" (i.e. legislature, executive and judicial ones), like fascism, Stalinism, Peronism, monarchism, Francoism, etc., the communist movement used as generic term the word: Bonapartism." (From the text "Fascist or antifascist, the dictatorship of Capital is democracy" published in "Le Communiste" No.9 -February 1981).

¹¹ This bourgeois perspective of transformation of the workers' struggles into a war between two or several imperialist powers fully appeared at the time of the events in Spain in 1936 where a powerful class movement found itself thrown to the imperialist slaughter through anti-fascist militias. The present period is appreciably different than the one of the years 1930-1940 where the counterrevolution dominated in an efficient way. Nevertheless nowadays the bourgeoisie can still succeed in achieving this trick, dragging thousands of workers' cadavers. A direct intervention of the Russian army in Poland would obviously give to the American-European bourgeoisie such a possibility. If the balance of forces becomes unfavourable for the proletariat, it's possible to turn all the conflicts between bourgeoisie and proletariat into inter-bourgeois conflicts.

4. The period following Gdansk agreements, in spite of an almost intact potential of struggle, practically and politically prepared the bourgeois solution to the Polish crisis: i.e. the repression of combative bastions. The successive sporadic conflicts (e.g. Bydgoszcz and Marszalkowska cases, the Olsztyn printers... until the eviction by force of Warsaw school of firemen) expressed one after the other the disorganization made by "Solidarity" (e.g. the threats of strikes without effect and constantly postponed, the destruction of the links between factories) and the always stronger inability of "Solidarity" to contain a latent movement that the increase in prices, the interminable queues, and shortage,... could at any time redo breaking out and outflanking the trick called "Solidarity." This increasing inability of "Solidarity" to assume the reason why the Polish State had directly integrated it appeared notably at the time of its "last" convention where the multiplication of tendencies (but all of them were bourgeois) materialized the paralysis of the union, which was stuck between on one hand its function of manager of the national economy (with Walesa as future Minister of Employment!) and on the other hand its function of containment/quelling of the workers' discontent. As Walesa expressed it clearly:

"Then, explain as fast as possible to the people that the economic crisis was unavoidable, that the authorities knew it, that they even allowed our creation (...) because they knew that "Solidarity" would play a role of shock absorber, reasonable, serious, that was not going to eliminate the party." (Walesa - "last speech" of January 13th, 1982)

"Solidarity" has not been forbidden because it became too "dangerous" but because it didn't succeed anymore in answering to any of the reasons that had ruled over its birth. It had become incapable of controlling/repressing the struggles that were approaching and it didn't succeed by no means in differentiating itself from the government as for the anti-workers' measures taken and to be taken. The fact that it has been declared "outlaw" expressed that the bourgeoisie was not able anymore to use it directly and alone its existence underground could yet make it look more credible, after more than one year of existence at the exclusive and intensive service of the bourgeois State. This boosting of "Solidarity's" image in underground (that offered to the government the possibility of renegotiate with "Solidarity") went notably through the spectacle played around Walesa (collaborating without officially collaborating and not collaborating while continuing his activity of strike-breaker). It also went through the Pope and the Polish Church taking very moderate stands (appeals for calm and pacifism), the latter remaining thus always a good mediator between the government and its opposition. Mgr Glemp's statements in his homily are particularly enlightening on that subject:

"We go down on our knees to God to implore that blood is not shed anymore. Our nation never knew a civil and fratricidal war. We implore you, in the name of God, not to raise a hand full of hate against each other. Keep calm. Don't bring our country falling in an even bigger misfortune. Only self-control and preservation of calm can save the country and the Church that continues its mission here." (Homily read in all the churches of Poland)

This mission of the Church is the same than the one of the military and all the other bourgeois forces: it's the return to a state of calm after having subdued the proletarians. This allows what all the bourgeois factions long for: i.e. the normalization, the return to a social peace situation (restoring afterwards some liberties... to have illusions, the Mass on television, the free press, etc.).

This return to the capitalist norm, workers going back to work uncomplainingly, depends on the degree of crushing of the workers' movement. We know today that there was not, in Poland, a total crushing, that we are in a period of repeated attempts of an international rise of the proletarian struggles, and that the bourgeoisie has less and less the strength to impose a total crushing like in the years 1930-1940. However there had been a selective partial crushing. In spite of the intensity of the repression and its fierceness (some hundreds murdered, thousands deported and about 50,000 jailed), it didn't completely destroy the struggle will and strength. This partial crushing is not at all due to the sudden indulgence of the capitalist barbarism but, on the contrary, it's due to the workers' resistance, to the immense potentiality of struggle that the proletarian movement still have in Poland, in order to answer to austerity by sabotage, to answer to terrorism by terrorism. It's the workers who, by their reaction of armed struggle in the first days and active sabotage then,¹² succeeded in imposing an important limitation of the physical repression and its trail of massacres.

Besides the physical crushing of combative proletarians, the "state of siege" of general Jaruzelski also meant, or should have mean, the return of the bourgeois order in factories, the recuperation of concessions that the bourgeoisie had to give up following the strikes of summer 1980. It immediately resulted in several measures: the enactment of obligatory work for all men between 18 and 45 years old, the work-week of six days that ratifies therefore the famous free Saturday withdrawal that "Solidarity" had already suspended, and that could be extended at any time to seven days, the work day of eight hours could be extended at any time to twelve hours, the reduction of paid holidays from twenty-six days per year to one day per month of efficient work, the threefold increase in prices of basic consumables: e.g. meat, butter, sugar, coal, etc. The average increase in products prices was, at the end of January 1982, from an official source, of 241%, whereas for certain vital commodities the increase reached 400%. These increases practically meant the net recuperation of more than 50% of what had been granted under pressure of strikes.

And as for the repression the capacity of the bourgeoisie to impose always more anti-workers' measures entirely depends on the balance of forces with the working class. The more this one has been defeated and is defeated, the more these measures and the repression will continue to attack it frontally. On the contrary, a class that continues to struggle for its exclusive class interests (of course in other forms: e.g. sabotage, absenteeism, etc.) can stop the cannibalism of the repression as well as the immense social regression that falls on the proletariat. Today as yesterday, the dilemma for workers in Poland (as everywhere else) remains the same: either struggling or dying! If the workers' movement lost a battle in Poland in 1981, against all the bourgeois hopes, it didn't lose class war!

5. Another fundamental lesson drawn from the events in Poland is that of internationalism. Besides the obvious internationalist character of the movements in Poland, a key question was and will be the necessary outflanking of the national framework, the generalization of class war to the whole world.

Many statements and flowery language were just a matter of pure form, and there remains the central question of the means of this generalization. Since always, communist movement analyses that the best way to generalize a movement is neither to "invade" the other countries nor to "wait" that simultaneously the movement

¹² Reactions that were in opposition with mottos of appeals for calm, passivity, strikes while "sitting around idly," civic "resistance" launched by "Solidarity."

starts everywhere. On the contrary, the best way to generalize, to globalize a movement, it's to answer "blow for blow" against "its own" bourgeoisie or the direct representatives of the world bourgeoisie.¹³ It's to intensify the most possible the class war where it began. It's while organizing the armed insurrection in Petrograd that the proletariat in Russia contributed the more, beyond the awareness it could have about, to the development of the class strength, to the internationalization of the communist revolution. Waiting for the hypothetical maturation of the "other countries" means to betray the revolution. In the same way, the movement in Poland would have more contributed to the generalization, to the internationalisation of the workers' struggle, while outflanking "Solidarity," while organizing direct action against the State, while pushing further in intensity and therefore in extension, the class movement. It's while defeating "its own" bourgeoisie that the workers' struggle is directly a struggle against world Capital: each against "its own" bourgeoisie, all of us against world Capital.

This central issue has very clearly proved true at the time of the violent confrontations that immediately followed the complete monopolization of the power by the military. It's indeed while answering directly to the repression that the workers endowed themselves with the best conditions for, in these dramatic circumstances, "negotiating" at best their life! Contrary to fallacies of pacifists from all sides, it's never while not answering to violence, and terrorism of the bourgeoisie, that the proletariat succeeds in resisting the best. It's while answering force against force, with all the weapons at its disposal, economic ones as well as military ones, that the proletariat succeed the best in "negotiating," not only its life, but also the future possibility to resume the struggle, to maintain its class strength the most intact possible.

This is how the miners of Silesia, steelworkers of Katowice Huta steelworks, as well as workers of the Baltic harbours, have the best defended the interests and the life of the whole of the proletariat in Poland. Their courageous answer wasn't in any way a "desperate" one (as the pacifists were lamenting about) or an "angered" one (as if the workers' anger was an infantile or an irresponsible reaction). On the contrary, it's thanks to these class reactions that materialized the even immense strength of the workers, that proletarians could strongly limit the cannibalism of the counterrevolution, in particular, while undermining the "state of mind" of the army, and paralyzing its capacity to repress the workers' movements. This reality expressed itself notably in the numerous cases of disobedience, desertion and even while showing solidarity with the strikers. By using axes and old rifles, the workers

¹³ This issue is a fundamental one concerning for instance an intervention of the Russian army in Poland. It's the same each time there is an intervention of shock troops, gendarmes being in the pay of big imperialist blocs and therefore also being in pay of world Capital: e.g. the Cuban, German, French, Belgian, etc. troops that share Africa between them, the Chinese, Vietnamese, American, etc. troops that control Southeast Asia, the Israeli, Iraqi, Libyan, PLO, etc. troops that occupy the Middle East, etc. These troops correspond to the division into blocs and inter-imperialist wars, but can obviously intervene during a strong class movement that, according its strength, would quickly outflank the forces of "its" local bourgeoisie. Proletarians in struggle will thus confront not only "their" armies but also shock troops of world Capital sent for crushing them (cf. the international intervention of bourgeois troops against the revolution in Russia). Facing this reality of bourgeois gendarmes present everywhere, the real revolutionary line is put into practice immediately against the enemy who comes to slaughter, whatever his nationality, while answering to him in the same way as strikers attack the bourgeois State, while answering to the cops who come to dislodge them. It's therefore also with rifles against the bourgeois troops that the proletariat works on the disintegration of enemy forces.

defended themselves: during the confrontations at the “Wujeck mine,” “the miners attacked tanks with sharpened bars of metal, sinking material and Molotov cocktails. The miners were some hundreds confronting water cannons and anti-riot police. They succeeded in immobilizing a tank while blocking its caterpillars with bars of iron.” (Quotation from the French newspaper “Liberation”) In the same way in Gdansk numerous and violent battles opposed workers and “ZOMO” shock troops, etc.

Once again, it’s not while letting be pushed around, while capitulating before the enemy, that the workers give themselves the means to continue the struggle (then in other forms). It’s through their exemplary struggle that the proletarians in Poland gave the best encouragement to proletarians of the world to take up the torch and to struggle each against “its own” bourgeoisie, to destroy the capitalist beast. The real class solidarity, the real internationalism is thus expressed. The best way to help our brothers and sisters in Poland, it’s to repeat their example everywhere in the world, our interests as our enemies being everywhere the same. As Marx explained:

“In a word: The revolution made progress, forged ahead, not by its immediate tragicomic achievements but, on the contrary, by the creation of a powerful, united counterrevolution, by the creation of an opponent in combat with whom the party of overthrow ripened into a really revolutionary party.” (We emphasize)

This central lesson of “The Class Struggles in France” applied entirely to the events in Poland in which the strength of the workers’ struggle and its heroic fights forced all the bourgeois forces (whatever they could say about), the PUWP, “Solidarity,” the Church, etc. to completely align themselves behind the compact and powerful counterrevolution of general Jaruzelski. It’s “by the creation” of their historical enemy “in combat” that the proletarians in Poland showed us the way to follow. It’s up to us, proletarians of the world, to develop class war!

6. Through the events in Poland numerous false lessons have been drawn, numerous “interpretations” were only pure falsifications.

Besides the inevitable “leftists” (Trotskyites of many kinds, Maoists and their bunches, “anarchists”, ecologists, etc.) and their more or less critical supports to “Solidarity” and capitalism of one bloc or the other, other groups unmasked themselves in the apology of the weaknesses of the movement, either while praising unionism¹⁴ conveyed by Trotskyism disguised as “Bordiguism” or while praising in an

¹⁴ The general characteristic of unionism is the systematic lowering of the political affirmations of the movement toward reforms, adaptations of the wage slavery system. Under pretext to solely defend the so-called immediate interests of proletarians, unionism liquidates the historic destiny of the workers’ struggles, what means that it even doesn’t defend the still partial interests that emerge today in the struggles. It’s indeed deeply counterrevolutionary to separate the movements, because they are partial, from their potentiality to become widespread as well as from their possibility to go from the partial to the general, to the revolutionary struggle: “Behind every strike, lays the ghost of revolution.” However, what makes all the groups understanding themselves as being “the only political expression” of the movement, it’s literally to mutilate this movement of any future development under pretext that while them existing, the movement has nothing else to do than to be merely an “economic,” a “trade-unionist” one. However, Marx (in “Value, price and profit”) already warned the proletarians against such stupidities when he explained that trade-unions “fail generally from limiting themselves to a guerrilla war against the effects of the existing system, instead of simultaneously trying to change it, instead of using their organized forces as

eulogistic way the “mass strike,” “spontaneism,” and “direct democracy”¹⁵ of which the control, revocability at any moment, would be the universal panacea. (For them the movement was so democratic, so beautiful and strong that one wonders how it was able to be repressed!) But, all of them have in common the incomprehension of the internal limits of the movement, its own weaknesses, in the practical organization and centralization as well as in the awareness of the goals and means of the movement. Making a non-critique apology of the movement is nothing else in last extent than consolidating its weaknesses. It’s transforming them “for the cause of propaganda” into great victories. It’s making the proletarians incapable of drawing lessons of their mistakes and weaknesses. It’s preventing them theoretically and practically to go further, to avoid each time to restart their history, their hesitations, their lacks of decision, their mistakes. It’s preventing them to work for the consolidating of the Class Party.

While chitchatting about “Solidarity’s crossroads,” about “the sane basis and the corrupt leadership” of this union, about the fact that “Solidarity” is a bourgeois organization but “would nevertheless express a social movement,” or even about “the greatest workers’ movement since 1917,”¹⁶ they all of them blur the real difficulties of the struggle to become independent and autonomous, to lead the movement in the revolutionary sense, to become widespread, etc. Finally, they consolidate the bourgeoisie in its work of destruction of the only political benefits of the movement in Poland. The events in Poland catalyse thus more and more the counterrevolutionary positions of these groups that, facing the class struggle, are incapable to interpret, to foresee the events, to draw programmatic lessons from them, otherwise than while trying to make the reality corresponding to their respective ideological reasoning. This is how, for some of them, “Solidarity” would still represent more or less a class strength, whereas the structure, the practice and the ideology of this union never defended any workers’ interest but were always useful for eliminating all the class demands. For others of them, the lesson of the strikes in Poland would be the definitely superfluous character of a communist direction, of a fighting party that would be from then on replaced with mass organizations (no matter their

a lever for the final emancipation of the working class that is to say the ultimate abolition of the wages system.”

¹⁵ It’s clear that “direct democracy” (libertarians’ toy for many times), and its trail of formal and anti-bureaucratic guarantee, sovereign assemblies fetishism, democratically elected delegates revocability, imperative mandates, submissiveness to the majority, etc., are only the bourgeois old ideas and methods radicalized and located not in the parliament anymore, but within workers’ assemblies. The framework is changed, from the parliament to the Soviets, in order to boost in there the same methods and therefore the same bourgeois content. Because, in the parliament as well as in a workers’ assembly, either it’s the democratic rules that determine the action and most of the time, it’s exactly with these rules that all the counterrevolutionary scoundrels sabotage the class direct action, or it’s the interests of proletarians in struggle (and ultimately it means the application of the complete communist program), that determine the methods and action to lead. Only in very rare exceptions, “majorities freely elected” lead a movement in the revolutionary way, and even then the democratic practices are nothing but a vestige, still dangerous, of the past, overtaken by the subversive and antidemocratic content of the very movement. At any time, confusions over this issue will make the class movement falling back again, with democratic votes, into the reformist and bourgeois trick. Our only guide, it’s the general and historic interests of workers’ struggles and not such or such subterfuge or mechanism, before which we should yield. There is the same antagonism between proletariat and democracy than between proletariat and bourgeoisie.

¹⁶ This grandiloquent and apologetic affirmation is a real active oversight about the important class movement that shook the capitalist world these last twenty years, from Latin America to Iran, from Turkey to Korea, from Italy to China, etc.

names) within which revocability and other democratic stupidities would be required.¹⁷

All these conceptions are also found in the negation of central issues of the communist movement: i.e. the military question, and the art of insurrection.

Unionism and assemblyism as well (in fact both are a form with the same reformist, legalistic and pacifist content) unite in order to practically and politically destroy the long and vital preparation for the insurrection, which is an indispensable pre-requisite for the imposition of the dictatorship of the proletariat. It's in an unanimous chorus that they unite, either for considering the conspiracy and the art of insurrection to be a prehistoric vestige of the workers' movement ("an old remain of Blanquism") or for, while formally maintaining the claiming of armed insurrection, denying it practically while always postponing to the eve of "the big night" ("the revolution") its indispensable preparation. And all communists know, this preparation goes through innumerable partial conflicts and preparatory fights, of which the workers' reactions against the open repression in Poland are fully part of (cf. the terrorist actions that took place during the months of February and March notably in Wroclaw).

We don't say that a proletarian insurrection could have overcome, or even to be organized today in Poland. What we say against all the revolutionaries in speeches, it's that the workers' actions, class self-defence, and even partial arming of the workers in struggle, prepare and contain the seeds of the victorious armed insurrection. This arming is not a goal as itself (or even an idealized image), but it's a need of all workers' struggle development, it's a prerequisite (whatever the class demands that led to there) in the development of the workers' organization as a class, in the development of their conscience. Arming is neither a guarantee as itself for the struggle (the bourgeoisie also uses armed struggle to sort out its internal conflicts between different rival factions). It's simply the application, in a given context of intense class struggle, as in Poland, of the workers' strength against its mortal enemy. In such a context of acute struggle, and direct confrontation with the bourgeois State, not supporting the arming of the class, being below the attempts of arming (even minimal and elementary ones), it's betraying the struggle of our class. And worse, such as new Plekhanov, after having shed a few tears on the workers' cadavers killed in the class war, they all take up again (in their public or private lounges) the old and sordid sentence: "they only had not to rise up in arms." Basically for them, workers could only be defeated, they had not to resist therefore, and they had not to struggle! These gentlemen, a few years ago, would have been on the side of Mr Thiers in the crushing of the Commune of Paris! However, today, thanks to the exemplary struggles of the proletarians in Poland, the capitalist order still doesn't rule without contradictions...

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¹⁷ By the ICC, this conception is accompanied by the motto: "mass strike." However this so-called new conception is only the old trick of anarcho-syndicalism and self-management disguised behind a "Marxist" verbiage and references to democratic theories of Rosa Luxemburg, about strikes while "sitting around idly," that was used to paralyze the revolutionary movement in Germany, Italy, as well as all over Europe, during the revolutionary wave of the years 1917-21.